



OUTER SUBURBAN/INTERFACE SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

BUILDING NEW COMMUNITIES

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Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee (2006)

Inquiry into Building New Communities

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Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee
Level 3, 157 Spring Street
Melbourne, Victoria 3000
Phone: (03) 9651 8387
Fax: (03) 9651 8323
Email: osisdc@parliament.vic.gov.au
Website: <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/osisdc>

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OUTER SUBURBAN/INTERFACE SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP - 55TH PARLIAMENT

Chair	Mr D. Nardella, MLA
Deputy Chair	Hon K. Smith, MLA
Member	Hon L. Argondizzo, MLC
Member	Ms R. Buchanan, MLA
Member	Mr T. Baillieu, MLA (<i>resigned 6.06.2006</i>)
Member	Mr M. Dixon, MLA
Member	Hon C. Hirsh, MLC (<i>appointed 29.03.2006</i>)
Member	Hon P. Honeywood, MLA (<i>appointed 6.06.2006</i>)
Member	Hon A. Somyurek, MLC (<i>resigned 28.03.2006</i>)

For this Inquiry, the Committee was supported by a secretariat comprising:

Executive Officer	Mr S. Coley
Research Officer:	Mr K. Delaney
Office Manager:	Ms N-M. Holmes

OUTER SUBURBAN/INTERFACE SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE CONTACT DETAILS

Address: Level 3, 157 Spring Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000

Telephone: (03) 9651 8387

Facsimile: (03) 9651 8323

Email: osisdc@parliament.vic.gov.au

Internet: <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/osisdc>

FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee consists of seven Members of Parliament, two drawn from the Legislative Council and five from the Legislative Assembly. It is chaired by Mr Don Nardella, MP.

The functions of the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee are to inquire into, consider and report to the Parliament on any proposal, matter or thing concerned with –

- a) The provision of services to new urban regions
- b) The development or expansion of new urban regions

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Inquiry into Building New Communities

On 18 January 2005, the Committee received by Order in Council:

For inquiry, consideration and report by 31 March 2006 on building new communities and, in conducting the Inquiry, the Committee is to:

1. Investigate existing forms of community engagement and recommend ways to strengthen and empower communities and build social capital;
2. Examine the role of community groups and all levels of government in promoting community engagement, with a view to strengthening outer suburban communities;
3. Investigate the role of new forms of communication, including the Internet and associated technologies, in supporting and enhancing community engagement;
4. Identify opportunities for increasing community engagement between Melbourne's outer suburban municipalities and communities;
5. Identify barriers to participate in various forms of community engagement and ways to overcome these barriers;
6. Investigate and report into how life-long learning, neighbourhood houses and other organisations can strengthen local communities;
7. Investigate and report on options for engaging, with a culturally diverse community, older persons, people with a disability and youth in the local community;
8. The role of volunteers and volunteer organisations in strengthening local communities;
9. The role of mentoring in the outer suburbs;
10. Examine national and international initiatives relevant to these issues; and
11. Investigate the implications of building new outer urban communities, on community cohesion in nearby rural communities, particularly during the transition period from rural to urban.

The Committee commenced the Inquiry in February 2005. On 18 May 2006 the Cabinet agreed to a request for an extension of the Inquiry, with the report to be presented to Parliament by 31 July 2006.

ACRONYMS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACCC	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
ACE	Adult Community Education
ACFE	Adult Community and Further Education
AFL	Australian Football League
AFV	A Fairer Victoria
ANHLC	Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres
BBBS	Big Brothers Big Sisters
BME	Black, Minority and Ethnic
BMLLEN	Brimbank/Melton Local Learning and Employment Network
CAE	Centre for Adult Education
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CBI	Community Building Initiative
CBRS	Community Building Resource Service
CFA	Country Fire Authority
CMYI	Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues
COGS	Community Organisation Grants Scheme
Cr	Councillor
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
CVA	Conservation Volunteers Australia
DET	Department of Education and Training
DHS	Department of Human Services
DIA	Department of Internal Affairs
DPI	Department of Primary Industries

DSE	Department of Sustainability and Environment
DVC	Department for Victorian Communities
EMS	Environmental Management System
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EU	European Union
FaCSIA	Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
GAA	Growth Area Authority
GoL	Government Office for London
GST	Goods and Services Tax
HACC	Home and Community Care
IAP2	International Association of Public Participation
ICACC	Inter Council Aboriginal Consultative Committee
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IRSED	Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage
IT	Information Technology
ITC	In The Community
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
KANDO	Kinglake Action Network and Development Organisation
LDC	Local Distribution Committees
LGA	Local Government Association
LGAQ	Local Government Association of Queensland
LLEN	Local Learning and Employment Network
LRRN	Local and Regional Volunteer Resource Network
MATES	Mentoring and Tutoring Education Scheme
MAV	Municipal Association of Victoria
MCH	Maternal and Child Health

MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
MPHP	Municipal Public Health Plan
MSC	Most Significant Change
MSD	Ministry of Social Development
MSS	Municipal Strategic Statement
NCOSS	Council of Social Services of New South Wales
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NHCP	Neighbourhood House Coordination Program
NHLC	Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres
NSW	New South Wales
NZ	New Zealand
OCGC	Office of Commonwealth Games Coordination
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFY	Office for Youth
OSC	Office for Senior Citizens
OTTE	Office of Training and Tertiary Education
PAKU3A	Pakenham University of the 3 rd Age
RIS	Regulatory Impact Statement
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
SDAC	Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
SES	State Emergency Services
TAC	Transport Accident Commission
TAFE	Tertiary and Further Education
TRACE	Tourism Research and Community Empowerment

U3A	University of the Third Age
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USA	United States of America
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VFF	Victorian Farmers Federation
VLGA	Victorian Local Governance Association
VMP	Volunteer Management Program
VRC	Volunteer Resource Centre
VWI	Voluntary Work Initiative
WA	Western Australia
WVRS	Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service
YACVic	Youth Affairs Council of Victoria
YJB	Youth Justice Board

CHAIR'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Final Report of the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee's Inquiry into Building New Communities.

This report focuses on the task of building stronger communities in Melbourne's urban-rural 'Interface' areas.

This has been a fascinating Inquiry to be involved in.

As the Committee travelled around Victoria's Interface and peri-urban councils, we had the pleasure of talking to numerous enthusiastic and committed people who are passionate about making a difference to their communities, suburbs and townships.

We wanted to make the Inquiry as open and as welcoming to the community as possible. I know of few Parliamentary Committees to have received submissions and evidence from such a diverse range of people: the stand-up comedian in the Shire of Yarra Ranges who highlighted issues for young people, the presentation in song from a musician in Kinglake on cultural development, through to Can Survive (a cancer survivors support group), representatives of the Wongabeena Association – a disability service at Rosebud, the Scout Association, the Country Fire Authority, volunteers from the State Emergency Services and many others.

The core ideas in this report – community strengthening, community engagement and social capital – are currently evolving and being debated around the world. At the United Nations International Conference on Engaging Communities, held in Queensland in 2005, the Committee was privileged to hear from international experts and inspirational speakers, such as Professor Robert Putnam and Ms Georgina Beyer MP from the New Zealand Parliament.

Overseas, the Committee was excited by what we observed, in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, to strengthen grassroots local democracy, build the capacity of community groups and improve the way governments and communities work together. Of particular note in the UK were partnerships between government and the voluntary and community sectors and the work of organisations such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in supporting research and community development programs.

The Committee's experience in New Zealand was also very valuable. We were alerted to many innovative and far-sighted initiatives with relevance across our Terms of Reference but particularly the terrific local mentoring programs run by the YWCA, Maori and Pacific organisations and others.

The Committee also undertook an extensive review of the international and national literature. Balancing this material with the ideas and experiences of practitioners – the people on the ground who are actively involved in working with local communities – has resulted in the Final Report having a strong practical focus. The Committee finds

it important to share people's experiences on these issues to make it easier for others to learn and not have to 're-invent the wheel'.

In many ways I see this report as a companion to the Committee's previous investigation into sustainable urban design in Melbourne's outer suburbs, which looked at the way new urban areas should be designed and built. The current Inquiry has focused on the people who live there. Both make an important contribution to building successful communities over the long-term.

We have made 40 recommendations – many are practical suggestions which, we believe, will improve community engagement and assist in the development of communities where people have strong social networks, a shared sense of belonging and an ability to come together and influence the issues which matter to them.

The structure of the report reflects the multiple Terms of Reference on which the Inquiry focused. Each chapter is written so as to be able to be (largely) read in isolation to other chapters, with ease of reading being uppermost in our thinking. Useful websites and references are included in the chapters for those who wish to look further into certain topics or make contact with the organisations and individuals mentioned.

This Inquiry has, at all times, been a collaborative effort, led by Members of the Committee, who have provided valuable insights into often complex issues. I would like to sincerely thank my colleagues for their contribution to the Inquiry – the Hon Ken Smith (Deputy Chair), Ms Rosy Buchanan, Mr Martin Dixon, the Hon Phil Honeywood, the Hon Lidia Argondizzo and the Hon Carolyn Hirsh. I would also like to express my gratitude to former Committee Members who took an active part in this Inquiry – Mr Ted Baillieu and the Hon Adem Somyurek.

The Inquiry planning, research, report preparation and executive support has been undertaken by the Committee secretariat – Mr Sean Coley (Executive Officer), Mr Keir Delaney (Research Officer) and Ms Natalie-Mai Holmes (Office Manager). Their expertise, attention to detail and commitment to the project has been unwavering.

Finally, I would like to extend my appreciation to all those people who freely gave their time and shared their knowledge and experiences, in written submissions, at briefings, public hearings and during site visits, in Melbourne, interstate and overseas. Their contribution has resulted in a Final Report of benefit to both new and established communities in Melbourne's thriving outer suburbs.

I commend this report to the Parliament.

Don Nardella, MP

Chair

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context and Concepts

This report is about building stronger communities in Melbourne's rapidly growing urban-rural 'Interface' areas.

The Committee's core finding in this report is that good urban design alone is not enough to build successful new communities in the context of rapid growth and demographic change. More can be done to assist and empower communities to work through their own issues by supporting the individuals and community groups that sustain social cohesion, by removing impediments to community action and by encouraging and being more open to engagement by citizens.

In receiving evidence across the broad Terms of Reference, the Committee became aware of the complex and interlinked issues involved. This chapter offers some discussion of the key terms and concepts encountered throughout the report. 'Community' itself is a fluid term with several interpretations. Approaches to 'community strengthening' have a different character in different jurisdictions. In Victoria, the emerging community strengthening agenda is focused on achieving better outcomes in health, education, the environment and economic development through encouraging participation and cross-sectoral partnerships. Major community strengthening initiatives have been place-based and have focused on joining-up the work of institutions and groups to address the complex and interdependent nature of disadvantage and social exclusion.

Community Engagement

In this report, the Committee has taken community engagement to refer broadly to consultative techniques or processes of government which seek to involve people in the decisions and actions that shape the quality of life in their communities. Community engagement both relies on and supports much wider forms of community involvement (such as participation in community organisations, mentoring and volunteering) which make our communities better places to live.

Community engagement is becoming an increasingly prominent focus for governments around the world. This is driven by various factors, including concern about levels of trust and cynicism of government as well as an emerging realisation that governments cannot solve complex problems without citizen input. At the local government level in Victoria, recent legislative changes and the broader community strengthening agenda, have meant an increased role for local governments in seeking to involve citizens.

There are a variety of formally established community engagement mechanisms in Victoria. The Committee has particularly focused on efforts by the Department of Sustainability and Environment to improve its engagement processes. The Committee finds that an opportunity exists for the Victorian Government to further embed in the public service a culture that enables and supports community engagement and makes government easier to work with.

Drawing on international literature and experience, the chapter provides examples of the principles which underpin effective engagement practice and discusses these with reference to a prominent model of community engagement. The Committee heard that governments need to make clear to the public the purpose of consultations and the level of influence the public can expect to have. Special efforts need to be made to ensure the views of ‘hard to reach’ groups are represented in consultation and decision-making.

In general, the Committee believes that governments at all levels should be much bolder in experimenting with community engagement techniques. A number of examples of innovative community engagement practices from interstate and overseas are put forward.

Community Groups

There are around 700,000 community groups in Australia, most of which are entirely dependent on volunteers. In compiling this report the Committee has considered evidence from a wide range of organisations.

This chapter discusses the critical role for community groups in strengthening new and existing communities in the outer suburbs of Melbourne. In addition to the services they provide, community groups create social capital by providing opportunities for people to come together, volunteer and participate in local activities. It is also through participation in groups that many people become involved in local decision-making and democratic participation.

Issues of capacity building for community groups arose throughout the Inquiry and the chapter has drawn on Victorian and overseas initiatives to suggest a number of practical measures for assistance. The Committee found that increased support for community organisation boards and committees of management is necessary, as they face a range of legislative and regulatory demands which can make it more difficult to recruit and retain volunteer members.

Similarly, the Committee has given attention to concerns around public liability insurance for community groups and the need for different forms of governance training and assistance.

One of the strongest themes to arise during the Inquiry related to the funding of community organisations and community strengthening activities. The Committee

believes that building social capital in new communities, and re-building it in communities marked by disadvantage, is a long-term prospect. The Committee heard the need for funders to, firstly, take more account of the complexity of funding application processes, secondly, to consider the time-frames needed to achieve outcomes, and thirdly, to look for ways to make reporting and evaluation requirements less onerous, better targeted and more focused on sharing good practice across the sector.

Volunteering

Volunteers are vitally important to strong communities in the outer suburbs. Volunteers are fighting fires, running football clubs, sitting on kindergarten committees, delivering meals and working in schools, prisons and art galleries. The economic value of all forms of voluntary activity in Victoria has been estimated at around \$10 billion a year.

The Committee heard that although levels of voluntary activity in Victoria remain relatively healthy, a number of challenges exist, particularly around demographic and workforce changes. The Committee's focus in this chapter was to consider these challenges and suggest practical measures to overcome them in new and existing communities in the outer suburbs. The Committee has made specific recommendations regarding the issue of volunteer police checks and the training of volunteers. Strategies, programs and insights from Victoria, interstate and overseas are also outlined.

The Committee's overall finding is that volunteering can be made more inclusive of the population groups mentioned in the Terms of Reference: young people, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, people with disabilities and older people. To this end, the Committee has highlighted specific issues and put forward recommendations which emphasise the need for community organisations and government to ensure the benefits and experiences gained through volunteering are accessible to a diverse range of people.

Neighbourhood Houses

There are approximately 1,000 neighbourhood and community houses operating in Australia, of which 360 are in Victoria and 200 in metropolitan Melbourne. In Victoria, Neighbourhood Houses are community-based, non-profit organisations, managed by voluntary committees and operated by part-time staff and volunteers. Approximately 95,000 Victorians make use of Neighbourhood Houses each year.

This chapter looks at the history and evolving role of Neighbourhood Houses. Their value lies in their ability to provide educational, recreational, community and social

programs and courses at low cost. They are also recognised as venues in which people build friendships and social networks across different cultures, ages and ethnicities.

The Committee heard from a number of witnesses of the potential value in establishing neighbourhood house-type infrastructure at an early stage in the building of new communities, although there was debate about what form they should take. Other models such as neighbourhood centres and the use of schools as ‘community hubs’ were proposed by some witnesses in place of the traditional Neighbourhood House.

The Committee identified funding shortfalls as an issue of concern to Neighbourhood Houses, particularly with increasing demand for courses tailored to the needs of the local community. The Committee welcomes the 2006/07 State budget allocation of \$27.8 million to boost services provided by Neighbourhood Houses and on this issue, the Committee has called for continued Government consultation with the sector to ensure funding remains adequate over time.

Finally, the chapter looks at the role of technology in Neighbourhood Houses and identifies the need for information technology support for Neighbourhood Houses and the provision of broadband capacity to all metropolitan and Interface Neighbourhood Houses and, where feasible, for Houses in rural or peri-urban municipalities.

Lifelong Learning

The concept of lifelong learning first emerged internationally in the early 1970s, in recognition that education and training are lifelong pursuits, continuing on, rather than ending, upon completion of formal education.

This chapter outlines a number of definitions of lifelong learning. Despite its enhanced profile internationally (promoted through such institutions as the European Community, UNESCO and the OECD) the Committee notes the opinion of some researchers that lifelong learning is a poorly understood concept in Australia and as such, acts as a limit on opportunities for developing an inclusive and successful society.

In Victoria, the Government’s *Growing Victoria Together* document places education and lifelong learning as one of its three main goals, while the Government’s *Future Directions for Adult and Community Education in Victoria* identified ACE providers, including Neighbourhood Houses, as playing a pivotal role in the process of lifelong learning.

While a greater focus on lifelong learning would assist the transition from full time to part time work, this chapter notes the views of Australian researcher Mr John Cross, who has taken issue with what he views as lifelong learning being overly vocationally focused.

The chapter also highlights the Melton Learning Precinct, in Melbourne's west, which was launched in November 2004 with the aim of providing a greater level of support and learning provision, for the Melton community.

Notwithstanding the important role played by Neighbourhood Houses, the Committee considers many other educational and learning organisations have a crucial role in bringing people together and linking communities. The report calls for improvements in the provision of suitable and affordable facilities for agencies involved in lifelong learning programs, such as the University of the Third Age (U3A) and other educational institutions outside the Neighbourhood Houses structure.

Mentoring

Mentoring can be defined as a helping relationship between a younger person and an unrelated, relatively older, more experienced person who can increase the capacity of the young person to connect with positive social and economic networks to improve their life chances.

This chapter reviews some of the Australian and international literature on mentoring for young people and also relates evidence gained from the Committee's discussions with groups involved in mentoring programs. The Committee believes that mentoring programs can be effective in helping young people reach their potential. However, the Committee also found that mentoring programs need to be promoted wisely and targeted carefully. Programs need to be well planned and structured and include clear processes for selection, screening, orientation, training and support. At-risk young people are most likely to benefit from mentoring if they are not already disengaged from family and community or systems of training, education and employment. The expectations of mentoring programs directed at at-risk young people need to be realistic and programs should be integrated with other services.

The recent release of the Victorian Government's *Strategic Framework on Mentoring Young People: 2005-2008* is an important development in youth mentoring in this State. While the strategy is yet to be fully implemented, the Committee has suggested areas where it believes government and community action should be focused, namely, in the provision of resources for mentoring programs in Interface areas, in the recruitment and matching of mentors (particularly male mentors) and in the dissemination of good practice models of mentoring through a 'gold-star' program.

Partnerships

In many western nations, Australia included, there has been an increasing trend towards governments working in partnership with non-government agencies, community groups and the private sector.

The focuses of this section is on ‘community partnerships’. The report describes a number of examples of partnerships that have been entered into between governments (at all levels), business and the community sector, including instances where partnerships could have been improved and cases of successful partnership arrangements.

The chapter also identifies New Zealand research indicating that existing models of community-business partnerships often reflect the experiences and interests of large corporations, rather than small to medium sized enterprises. The Committee acknowledges the desirability of smaller community groups receiving the benefits of partnerships and notes many are looking for assistance to make links with business.

Various partnerships in Victoria are also discussed, including those between government departments and local councils, primary health care agencies, the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) and businesses. Various Australian Government partnerships are then outlined, including the Prime Minister’s Awards for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships (CBPs), while a number of high profile business partnerships are identified. The chapter concludes with an outline of various partnerships in selected cities overseas, based on the Committee’s overseas evidence seeking trip in October/November 2005.

Community cohesion in peri-urban areas

In this report, the term ‘peri-urban’ is applied to the next ring of (mainly rural) local government areas beyond the boundaries of the Interface. As specifically directed by the Terms of Reference, the Committee has given attention to the implications on community cohesion in these areas arising from building new urban communities. Discussions with individuals and organisations also suggested the need for the Committee to consider two other types of change in land use: the development of new urban communities alongside older urban developments in the Interface and the proliferation of small farms and rural residential living in the Interface and peri-urban local government areas.

Several of the peri-urban local government areas are experiencing relatively high rates of population growth, affecting land values, increasing the need for infrastructure and services to be provided over a larger distance and resulting in difficulties for agriculture and other industries traditionally located in these areas. Community cohesion is also affected as the ‘sense of place’ of longer standing residents is challenged by the influx of new residents from urban areas (including ‘tree changers’ and ‘sea changers’) with different expectations and values. In the growth corridors, the Committee heard of tensions between more established urban communities and newer housing estates.

Drawing on experiences from around Australia, this chapter outlines examples and suggestions to improve the way rapid urban growth is managed. In particular, the

Committee believes that managing the social implications of transition from rural to urban requires a greater commitment to dialogue and collaboration with communities in planning how areas are to develop. The Committee believes more can be done to support peri-urban local governments in this process.

More generally, the Committee finds local governments experiencing rapid population growth need to prioritise the development of social connections and community cohesion. Strategic planning should have a focus on integrating new residents within the larger identity of the existing community. It should also seek to identify, monitor and manage the impact of change on existing communities.

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 2.1:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government work with the Interface local governments to further encourage small-scale street parties in local neighbourhoods.

Recommendation 2.2:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government examine and promote web-based tools and similar applications which empower local communities to assess the impact of small-scale community events.

Recommendation 2.3:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government work with developers, local government, universities and TAFE colleges to encourage social capital research to be carried out during the initial stages of new housing developments in the Interface areas.

Recommendation 3.1:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government undertake an audit of community engagement practices across the public sector. The audit should assess support for community engagement within departments and identify any resourcing, skill or capacity needs, as well as opportunities for expertise to be shared across organisations.

Recommendation 3.2:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government promote awareness of community engagement principles, planning and evaluation across state and local government through training and skills development.

Recommendation 3.3:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government commission research into the financial costs of community engagement techniques, with a view to providing practical guidance to local governments, organisations and individuals.

Recommendation 3.4:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government establish a high profile annual awards system, open to both state and local government, in order to showcase and reward best practice examples of community engagement.

Recommendation 3.5:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government investigate and review the Baw Baw consultation mapping initiative. Following this, the Committee further recommends the government promote the initiative with Interface local governments and provide resources to assist with its implementation.

Recommendation 3.6:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government establish an agreement with local government in Victoria to:

- i) coordinate local and state government consultations, and
- ii) share information gained from consultations between the two levels of government.

Recommendation 3.7:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government consider the feasibility of trialling a ‘community organisation small grants scheme’ administered by local communities, along the lines of the New Zealand COGS model.

Recommendation 3.8:

The Committee recommends local government in Victoria investigate the suitability of ‘community precinct committees’ as mechanisms to provide ongoing opportunities for community engagement and participation.

Recommendation 4.1:

The Committee recommends the Department for Victorian Communities, in consultation with the community sector, review and publish its findings on the extent to which legislative and regulatory obligations faced by community boards and committees can be simplified.

Recommendation 4.2:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government work with the Adult and Community Education (ACE) Community Building Hubs to promote the need for ongoing governance training and the services provided by the Hubs to community organisations in the Interface areas.

Recommendation 4.3:

The Committee further recommends the Victorian Government examine opportunities to increase funding to Adult and Community Education organisations to enable the enhancement of the ACE Community Building Hubs initiative in the Interface areas.

Recommendation 4.4:

The Committee recommends the Department for Victorian Communities, in consultation with the community sector, establish a ‘skilled specialist’ program as part of its capacity building strategy for the sector.

Recommendation 4.5:

The Committee further recommends the Department for Victorian Communities examine the suitability of establishing a network of skilled and experienced advisors able to provide expert advice and guidance to local community strengthening projects.

Recommendation 4.6:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government, as a matter of priority, work with local government to ensure community groups in Victoria have access to affordable public liability insurance.

Recommendation 4.7:

The Committee recommends Interface local governments investigate the Caroline Springs community bank model and work with developers to establish similar arrangements in new housing developments.

Recommendation 4.8:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government, in implementing *A Fairer Victoria*, move towards the development of funding models for community strengthening with greater flexibility and timeframes of a minimum of three years. As part of this, monitoring and evaluation requirements for projects should be well targeted and provide opportunities for learning, dialogue and networking between projects and stakeholders.

Recommendation 5.1:

The Committee recommends the Department for Victorian Communities work with Victoria Police to identify and report back on measures to substantially reduce both the cost of police checks for volunteers and the length of time for police checks to be processed.

Recommendation 5.2:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government, in implementing *A Fairer Victoria*, work closely with the Interface local governments and existing training providers to coordinate, support and expand local training opportunities for volunteers.

Recommendation 5.3:

The Committee recommends the Office for Youth improve the *YouthCentral* website to make it easier for young people to access information on local volunteering opportunities.

Recommendation 5.4:

The Committee recommends the Department for Victorian Communities provide support to the Municipal Association of Victoria, the Victorian Local Governance Association, the Victorian Multicultural Commission and volunteering peak bodies, to develop a model for promoting local opportunities for volunteering and other forms of community involvement at citizenship ceremonies.

Recommendation 5.5:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government develop a comprehensive, practical guide for community organisations to involve people with disabilities as volunteers.

Recommendation 5.6:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government undertake research into Australian and overseas strategies aimed at linking baby boomers with volunteer opportunities and identify programs best suited to Victoria.

Recommendation 6.1:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government work with local government and developers to ensure community centres, such as Neighbourhood Houses, are accommodated and provided for as essential infrastructure in development plans for new communities.

Recommendation 6.2:

The Committee welcomes the increased funding provision for Neighbourhood Houses in the 2006/07 State Budget and recommends continued consultation with the Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres to ensure funding for the sector remains adequate over time.

Recommendation 6.3:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government, in conjunction with the Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres and the Interface group of local governments, investigate options to provide information technology support for Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres.

Recommendation 6.4:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government provide broadband capacity to all metropolitan and Interface Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres, ideally as part of its roll-out of broadband to schools across the state. Where feasible, broadband should also be extended to Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres in rural or peri-urban municipalities.

Recommendation 7.1:

The Committee recommends the Department for Victorian Communities monitor the progress of the Melton Learning Precinct and the Hume Global Learning Village, with particular focus on outcomes from the two projects in working collaboratively with the local governments and learning organisations, to improve the provision of high quality, integrated learning and education to residents, businesses and industry.

Recommendation 7.2:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government work with local governments and learning organisations, to investigate and improve the provision of suitable and affordable facilities and programs for agencies involved in lifelong learning programs, such as the University of the Third Age, which are outside the Neighbourhood House and Learning Centre sector.

Recommendation 8.1:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government, in implementing the *Strategic Framework on Mentoring Young People*, ensure targeted funding and support is directed to youth mentoring programs in the Interface areas.

Recommendation 8.2:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government, in implementing the *Strategic Framework on Mentoring Young People*, specifically focus on providing guidelines and practical assistance for the recruitment of mentors. In doing so, particular attention should be paid to investigating issues concerning the recruitment and suitable matching of male mentors.

Recommendation 8.3:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government establish a ‘GoldStar’- type program recognising organisations with good practice mentoring models. Grants should be made available to assist these organisations to share their expertise.

Recommendation 9.1:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government develop and promote guidelines, protocols and tools to assist Government agencies to form partnerships with local government, communities and other stakeholders.

Recommendation 9.2:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government work with local government, the Australian Government, business representatives and community groups to ensure small to medium sized enterprises are encouraged to enter into partnership arrangements of benefit to their local community.

Recommendation 10.1:

The Committee recommends local governments in peri-urban and rural areas apply a triple bottom line assessment process to large-scale urban developments, with specific regard to the likely impact on community cohesion in the local area. In doing so, local government and developers should seek to provide greater opportunity for public input in the siting and design of new communities.

Recommendation 10.2:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government ensure resources are provided to assist all peri-urban and rural local governments experiencing rapid growth to undertake enhanced community engagement around the development and planning of new urban communities.

Recommendation 10.3:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government establish a role, in conjunction with relevant peri-urban local governments, for the Growth Area Authority to monitor and report on the impact of urban growth on community cohesion in nearby peri-urban and rural areas.

Recommendation 10.4:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government consider providing assistance, such as guidelines and small grants, to encourage the establishment of farmers' markets in the Interface areas.

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE INQUIRY

The Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee comprises seven Members of Parliament, two drawn from the Legislative Council and five from the Legislative Assembly. Mr Don Nardella MP chairs the Committee.

On 18 January 2005, the Committee received by Order in Council, a reference directing it to “report to Parliament on issues relating to strengthening communities through improved community engagement in outer urban areas, including both developing and established communities.”

In particular, the Committee was requested to:

1. Investigate existing forms of community engagement and recommend ways to strengthen and empower communities and build social capital
2. Examine the role of community groups and all levels of government in promoting community engagement, with a view to strengthening outer suburban communities
3. Investigate the role of new forms of communication, including the Internet and associated technologies, in supporting and enhancing community engagement
4. Identify opportunities for increasing community engagement between Melbourne’s outer suburban municipalities and communities
5. Identify barriers to participate in various forms of community engagement and ways to overcome these barriers
6. Investigate and report into how life-long learning, neighbourhood houses and other organisations can strengthen local communities
7. Investigate and report on options for engaging with a culturally diverse community, older persons, people with a disability and youth in the local community
8. The role of volunteers and volunteer organisations in strengthening local communities
9. The role of mentoring in the outer suburbs
10. Examine national and international initiatives relevant to these issues
11. Investigate the implications of building new outer urban communities on community cohesion in nearby rural communities, particularly during the transition period from rural to urban.

The Committee began work on the Inquiry in February 2005 and was required to report to the Parliament by 31 March 2006. On 15 March 2006 a request was made to extend the reporting date to 31 July 2006. The request was approved by Cabinet on 18 May 2006.

Scope of the Inquiry

The Terms of Reference provided to the Committee were multi-faceted and allowed the Committee some freedom to consider issues from a broad range of stakeholders and perspectives. The Terms of Reference also referred to a number of different geographical locations for the Committee's investigations: outer suburbs and outer suburban areas, new and established communities and nearby rural communities.

In this Inquiry, following the approach established in the Committee's previous report¹ and the definition used by the Municipal Association of Victoria's (MAV) Interface Councils Group, the Committee has defined 'outer suburban' and 'outer urban areas' as the eight Interface municipalities:

- Cardinia Shire Council
- Hume City Council
- Melton Shire Council
- Mornington Peninsula Shire Council
- Nillumbik Shire Council
- Whittlesea City Council
- Wyndham City Council
- Yarra Ranges Shire Council.

Geographically, the Interface municipalities are located at the boundary between urban Melbourne and rural Victoria, although all contain considerable proportions of rural land; Marston et al. define the Interface councils as Local Government Areas (LGAs) where roughly 70 percent of the population lives in about 30 percent of the area.²

Figure 1.1 below shows the location and boundaries of the Interface councils and gives a sense of their physical size relative to other metropolitan LGAs.

Figure 1.1: The Interface Local Government Areas

Source: Local Government Victoria, Department for Victorian Communities.

The Committee has also examined issues pertaining to both new communities (that is, new residential housing estates) and older, more established communities within the Interface areas. Additionally, the Committee has considered evidence from and relating to the next ring of LGAs beyond the Interface. These are the more rural LGAs and in this report they are generally referred to as ‘peri-urban’ or ‘orbital’ councils.

Relationship with the previous Inquiry

This report focuses on strategies and actions around the themes of community engagement, social capital and strengthening communities. As this report follows soon after the Committee’s previous Inquiry into sustainable urban design for new communities, the Committee has chosen not to return to certain topics regarding the physical infrastructure of building new communities. The houses, roads, drainage and sewerage systems, walkways, parks and meeting places are crucial parts of the story – without them community engagement is meaningless. Similarly, crime prevention and public transport is covered in some detail in the urban design report and is not further investigated here. We encourage readers who are interested in these topics to visit the Committee’s website or contact the Committee for a copy of the previous report.

The Inquiry process

An Inquiry centred on community engagement has a particular responsibility to seek an assortment of opinions and advice.

The Committee has undertaken an extensive review of the international and national literature; has called for, invited and received written submissions from the community; sought expert opinion; held public hearings at Parliament House, in all Interface councils and elsewhere; attended conferences and seminars and visited sites, organisations and key stakeholders in Australia and overseas. This process is further detailed below.

Briefings and public hearings

Between 2 May 2005 and 3 April 2006, the Committee held several briefings and public hearings in Melbourne and one in each of the eight Interface councils. The Committee also held a public hearing in Warragul, hosted by the Baw Baw Shire Council. While not an Interface council, the visit to Baw Baw gave the Committee an insight into urban development pressures beyond the boundaries of Melbourne, as well as providing a further perspective on community engagement issues.

In total, the Committee received oral evidence from 315 witnesses and recorded over 900 pages of Hansard transcripts.

Written submissions

Advertisements outlining the Terms of Reference and calling for submissions were placed in *The Age* and the *Herald Sun* in early February 2005 and in 11 outer suburban and peri-urban newspapers in early March. The Committee also wrote to over 250 key stakeholders inviting submissions. The Committee received 78 written submissions in total (see Appendix A for details).

Overseas evidence seeking trip

The Terms of Reference require the Committee to have regard to approaches both nationally and internationally.

Mr Don Nardella MP (Chair), Hon. Ken Smith MP (Deputy Chair), Mr Martin Dixon MP and Hon. Lidia Argondizzo MP, along with Mr Sean Coley (Committee Executive Officer), travelled to North America, the United Kingdom (UK) and Italy, for an overseas evidence seeking trip between 28 October 2005 and 11 November 2005, investigating issues relating to the Committee's Inquiry into Building New Communities.

The Committee visited Los Angeles, New York, Vancouver, London and Rome, following background research identifying these cities as either having programs which were identified as being international best practice or where recognised experts resided. The Committee scheduled meetings with people who were both well informed and well regarded, on issues affecting communities in their city,

state/province or country. These five cities also provided the Committee with a diversity of perspectives across its broad Terms of Reference.

The Committee visited key international organisations, government agencies (representing local, state and central government), Members of Parliament, community and voluntary organisations, industry groups and universities, to discuss issues relevant to the Committee's Inquiry into Building New Communities.

Visiting five cities in four countries on two continents over 11 working days, the Committee met with almost 80 people representing 30 groups.

The Committee's *Overseas Evidence Seeking Trip Report* provides further details on the various programs and issues discussed with the Committee.³ The Committee is most grateful to all the people who either helped organise meetings or met with the Committee during its study tour and gave so generously and freely of their assistance, time and expertise.

New Zealand study tour

A sub-committee comprising Mr Don Nardella MP, Ms Rosy Buchanan MP, Ms Carolyn Hirsh MP and Hon. Lidia Argondizzo MP, along with Committee staff, travelled to New Zealand to collect evidence from 8-12 May 2006.

In Auckland and Wellington, the Committee met with 21 organisations, including community groups, local governments, universities, businesses, members of the New Zealand Parliament and a number of government departments. The Committee's investigations focused mainly on evidence relating to the mentoring, volunteering, community groups and community engagement themes of this report. A large number of inspiring programs and ideas were encountered, many of which appear in this report, while others have been influential in guiding the Committee's thinking. Once again, the Committee is grateful for the assistance and warm welcome provided by those with whom it met in New Zealand.

Appendix B includes further details of the Committee's overseas investigations.

Seminars and conferences

Various Committee Members and staff attended conferences, seminars and forums, including:

- Communities in Control Conference 2005, held in Melbourne
- International Conference on Engaging Communities, held in Brisbane
- Building Community & Rapid Urban Growth, held in Brisbane.

Appendix C provides a complete list.

Notes

¹ Parliament of Victoria, Outer Suburban/Interface Services & Development Committee (September 2004) *Inquiry into Sustainable Urban Design for New Communities in Outer Suburban Areas*, Parliament of Victoria, p.3.

² Marston, G., Morgan, L. & Murphy, J. (2003) *Human Services Gaps at the Interface between urban and rural*, Centre for Applied Social Research, RMIT University, Melbourne, p.1.

³ Parliament of Victoria, Outer Suburban/Interface Services & Development Committee (June 2006) *Report of the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee: Overseas Evidence Seeking Trip*, Parliament of Victoria.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXT AND CONCEPTS



Image courtesy of Bizjournals, USA

The faster the speed and spread of global flows – the greater the desire and need for local knowledge, local governance and local connectedness.¹

During the course of this Inquiry, Committee Members and staff attended the first United Nations International Conference on Engaging Communities, held in Brisbane in August 2005. The introductory comments from the conference organisers noted:

Around the world, greater engagement of citizens, clients, consumers and communities is becoming a feature of many governments and both public and private organisations. People are expecting to be able to be involved and to have a say in the business of government and in the decisions of organisations that affect their interests. Many are concerned about low levels of knowledge and the poor relations with communities that reduce the trust in public and private institutions. This in turn, impedes effective decision-making and the achievement of social and economic development and environmental sustainability outcomes. Accordingly, some governments and organisations are responding with a renewed commitment to effective engagement and some are using innovative methods of doing so to deliver better results for customers, citizens and communities.²

In Victoria, ‘a renewed commitment to effective engagement’ with communities is arguably nowhere more critical than in Melbourne’s rapidly changing rural-urban Interface, where in recent years, some of the highest rates of growth in Australia have been recorded. To put this growth in perspective, Wyndham, for example, welcomes around 50 families each week.³ Three or four families move into Hume every day.⁴ Around 300 new residents settle in Whittlesea every month.⁵ Melton Shire expects to double in population over the next 10 years to be more than twice the (current) size of Shepparton.⁶ Many of these new residents are young families moving to the urban fringe in search of cheaper housing or the opportunity to live in a modern, master-planned housing estate. At the same time, many people come for lifestyle reasons, for bigger or smaller houses or to experience the semi-rural character of these areas. These incoming populations settle alongside rural townships and agricultural areas, as well as the pockets of older, sometimes poorly designed and supported housing developments found on the fringes of most Australian cities.

As growth areas push out, tensions can arise from communities old and new, urban and rural, coming together with different levels of attachment, different histories and expectations. Faced with a changing demographic landscape, the pressure is on service provision and infrastructure to be better sequenced; to keep pace, adapt and expand as the community grows. Effective and genuine engagement with communities is challenging in this context but critical for governments at all levels. Reflecting on the past experiences of government engagement with fringe suburbs in Australia, historian Mark Peel has written:

The problem is not that the people of Broadmeadows or Mount Druitt or Inala don't speak, the problem is that they don't get heard. Greater trust must be placed in their ideas, and in their ability to improvise and find solutions.⁷

The Committee's previous report examined the contribution of sustainable urban design in establishing new communities in the Interface areas. It canvassed the issues of housing design and accessibility, water conservation, public open space, road safety and car dependency, among others.

However, building successful neighbourhoods in Melbourne's outer suburbs requires more than good design. Communities, after all, are about people. Our primary concern in this report is to examine and suggest ways to improve community engagement and assist in the development of strong, cohesive communities in the outer suburbs – participatory communities where people have strong social networks, a shared sense of belonging and an ability to come together and influence the issues that matter to them.

In conducting this Inquiry the Committee has become aware of the complex and interlinked issues involved. The Committee also encountered many different interpretations of the matters raised in the Terms of Reference. Concepts such as 'community strength', 'social capital' and even 'community engagement' vary widely in meaning and consequently, a vast range of topics were identified by witnesses as pertinent to the task of 'building new communities'. This chapter aims to introduce some of the main ideas discussed throughout this report, as well as outline the wider context of community strengthening in Victoria.

What is meant by community?

The Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS) notes the term 'community' can refer to either social networks or to the setting in which the networks occur. It is possible to talk about the global community or the national community, as well as our local neighbourhoods having (or not having) 'community'.⁸ Another common way of looking at community is to divide it into three types: it can be a group of people who share a similar interest (such as a sporting club) or identity (such as groups based around ethnicity or age) or who live in the same place, neighbourhood or area. This last meaning is probably the most common in the literature and general use. In reality, most people are involved in all three and sometimes a fourth: online or 'virtual' communities.

However, this is still a fairly sparse typology. Adams and Hess describe community as "groups of people, who create relations based on trust and mutuality, within the idea of shared responsibility for wellbeing."⁹ For Lochner, Kawachi and Kennedy, a 'sense of community' includes four factors:

- Membership – the feeling of being part of a group

- Influence – the sense that individuals can have an influence on the actions of the group and vice versa, thereby creating community ‘norms’ which bind the group
- Integration – the idea that members’ needs will be met through membership of the group
- Shared emotional connection – a sense of the shared history with other members.¹⁰

Ife’s account of community broadly aligns with some of these and includes the criterion that a community is small enough to have a ‘human scale’, in which interactions can be readily controlled and accessed by individuals.¹¹

Many more aspects and models of community could be cited (one author identified more than 90 different definitions).¹² Regardless, the term itself has become increasingly prominent in policy circles over recent years. The British Prime Minister Tony Blair reflected this when he stated in 2000: “at the heart of my beliefs is the idea of community ... the renewal of community is the answer to the challenges of a changing world.”¹³ On the other hand, others perceive this current focus on community as something of a rhetorical touchstone and a ‘back to the future’ phenomenon:

Listen to the talk of politicians, bureaucrats, agency heads and corporate chiefs around the country. One word like a mantra rises above the usual blah-de-blah of our modern lives – Community. Community is the new (old) Eden, the new (old) solution to all our woes.¹⁴

Adams and Hess note there was a “flurry of activity” in community-based policy-making in Australia in the 1970s with “numerous publications and national workshops held on ‘community’.”¹⁵ It was then not until the late 1990s that community re-emerged as “a central organising idea for public policy.”¹⁶ ‘Community strengthening’ is a popular overarching title for the work that has followed but the field remains crowded (and somewhat confused) with related concepts like community building, community empowerment, community capacity-building, community cohesion, community resilience, healthy communities and community wellbeing.

It is not only governments who are talking about community. In the business sector, the trend towards corporate social responsibility and the triple bottom line continues. More and more businesses now report on their community activities and consider their impact on the communities in which they operate. Building and selling ‘community’ is also on the agenda of developers constructing the master-planned housing estates on Melbourne’s fringes:

We at Delfin Lend Lease very much regard our business as the development of communities rather than simply the

development and sale of land in the marketplace. As a business we adopt a long-term view and believe we must focus on building community rather than simply selling and developing land. We have a long-term focus as a business, and because we undertake projects that are typically large scale and lengthy in duration it is therefore important to build community and have a strong community evolve. It reflects on your success in the marketplace. The advantages as we describe them ... are the elements that we consider are essential to deliver for each and every one of our projects. At the top of the list you see 'A sense of belonging'. That goes very much to the creation of community.¹⁷

Award-winning Rose Grange is more than an estate, it's a real community. In just a few short years a vibrant, active and friendly neighbourhood has developed to make Rose Grange the most talked-about and sought-after new address in the west. In just a few years, the estate has grown into a warm, established community.¹⁸

Clearly, community is a fluid and elusive term, yet defining it, giving shape to it, remains a real-world issue. Policy-makers grapple with such questions. Who is in (or out of) a community? Who is entitled to speak for a community? Can community be 'measured'? What makes a strong community?

In designing policy interventions or government structures (such as local government boundaries), policy-makers need to be aware of how people themselves experience or think about community. Professor David Adams from the Department for Victorian Communities (DVC) gave a practical example of this in his presentation to the Committee:

The issue of the scale effects is another important issue that has only emerged in the last five or 10 years in the literature and that is the question of what is the appropriate scale at which, in particular, governments can invest and have the best effect. Is it at the level of the street? Is it at the level of a neighbourhood? Is it at the level of a suburb? Is it at the level of a region? A good example I often suggest to people is to ask them where they come from. Often people will give their name and then they will say, 'I come from a street or a suburb,' but rarely would they say, 'I come from the Hume region.' So often we have administrative boundaries that do not connect all that well with how people live their lives, and the same from a business point of view.¹⁹

Two further points are worth noting at this stage. First, through the course of its discussions the Committee encountered community as a topical and plainly powerful idea. Many reflected on it in similar terms. Community was frequently described as

something under threat, breaking down or already in trouble.²⁰ There was a focus on those who may be excluded from community in some way or face barriers to participating in certain elements of community life. Second, a theme the Committee heard repeatedly was that the role of government is not to somehow engineer community, indeed this was seen as a task beyond a government's powers. As an example, Scouts Australia advanced a common view in their presentation to the Committee:

What seems to be clear though is that communities cannot be created by mandate. We are very glad that the Parliament has created this committee. We support it totally but the reality is that Parliament and government do not make rules for community ... governments can only assist, I believe, by addressing the causal factors which lead to community creation or destruction.²¹

The Committee has tried to be guided by this as an overarching principle throughout the report. Governments, at all levels, can play a role which enables communities to solve their own problems, by supporting the individuals and community groups that sustain neighbourhood cohesion, by removing impediments to community action and by encouraging, and being more open to, engagement by citizens.

Community strengthening

'Community strengthening' is now well established in the discourse of many governments, although approaches, policies and parameters vary and it can be a difficult concept to pin down.²² One definition based on Australian and international literature has been put forward by Professor Mark Considine from Melbourne University:

Any sustained effort to increase the connectedness, active engagement and partnership among members of the community, community groups and organisations in order to enhance social, economic and environmental objectives.²³

In the community strengthening literature, partnerships are seen as critical because no government agency acting alone can hope to solve complex problems without different stakeholders (business, government and community) working together and without the involvement of citizens. Community strengthening, then, implies new forms of local governance through which partnerships can work and "this presents major challenges to both government and non-government stakeholders."²⁴ Chapter 9 of this report takes up the discussion of partnerships.

One of the challenges for governments is in the organisation of public administration itself. Complex problems require governments to 'join-up' the previously disparate work of departments and promote collaboration across projects and portfolios. As

Considine notes, this differentiates community strengthening from earlier community development approaches from the 1960s and 1970s.²⁵

Some of this re-organisation, and the popularity of community strengthening in general, can be seen in the fact that all Australian states and territories have recently set up departments or units with a stated or implied remit for community strengthening. DVC was established in December 2002 by combining 10 portfolios. Other examples include:

- Western Australia's (WA) Department of Community Development (established in 2001/02). The department aims to "enhance the social capital and sustainability of communities by working in partnership with not for profit organisations building the strengths and capacities of individuals, families, children and young people and communities."²⁶
- South Australia's Social Inclusion Unit (established within the Department of Premier and Cabinet in March 2002).
- The Communities Division within the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Community Services (established in July 2004). The Division coordinates programs involving multiple government agencies and the non-government sector and has responsibility for strengthening communities and various community development initiatives.²⁷
- Queensland's Department of Communities (established in February 2004 with an emphasis on strengthening communities and enabling citizen input into decision-making).

At a more practical level, the development of regional management forums in Victoria is an example of an administrative process designed to better coordinate state government departments at the level of regions; an intermediary between the centre and smaller local communities.²⁸ *A Fairer Victoria*, the Victorian Government's social policy action plan, also makes provision for the creation of multi-agency Community Project Teams to plan and deliver integrated outcomes for regions and communities.²⁹

The Australian Government has also taken up the cause of community strengthening. Much of the activity so-labelled falls under the aegis of the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) and specifically under Outcome 2 ('Communities are strong') of the department's strategic plan. In support of this Outcome,³⁰ the department pursues a range of strategies including building partnerships with governments, communities and business; administering programs that address the barriers of economic and social participation, particularly for disadvantaged groups; and building the capacity for self-reliance of at-risk individuals, families and communities.³¹

FaCSIA coordinates the 'Stronger Families and Communities Strategy', which is intended to give "families, their children and communities the opportunity to build a better future."³² The Strategy has a focus on early childhood initiatives, parenting skills, mentoring and leadership programs, small grants and volunteering. Four

hundred and ninety million dollars is allocated for the period 2004-2009 across four streams: Communities for Children, Early Childhood – Invest to Grow, Local Answers, and Choice and Flexibility in Child Care.³³

DVC is primarily responsible for driving the community strengthening agenda in Victoria. According to the department, community strengthening begins from the premise that “communities with higher levels of social capital, cohesiveness and partnerships achieve better outcomes in health, education, environment and economic development.”³⁴ The department also notes that community strengthening:

- Engages local people in a shared vision for revitalising their communities
- Develops a range of community initiatives and projects to achieve long-term positive change
- Builds local skills and knowledge to increase participation in community life and improved delivery of services locally
- Increases opportunities for positive social interaction within communities
- Encourages and celebrates social and cultural diversity
- Improves understanding, value of and utilisation [of] community assets and strengths.³⁵

DVC has established an outcomes framework by which it illustrates the impact of its community strengthening work (see Appendix D). The framework has three high-level outcome areas: improved services, improved community connectedness and improved community strength.³⁶ In a submission, DVC listed a range of mechanisms which are used to support community strengthening:

- Grants and funding programs
- Partnerships with local groups and organisations
- Supporting community enterprises
- Supporting volunteering (including skills development to enable people to volunteer and engage in their local community)
- Targeted community building programs, such as Neighbourhood Renewal.³⁷

Local government is identified as having a central role in Victoria’s community strengthening agenda:

Local governments’ focus on locality, its closeness to citizens and its interactions with many different levels and parts of government, community and private sector interests, places it in a unique position to inform the direction of future policies to strengthen communities.³⁸

Research compiled for DVC found local governments were pivotal to the success of community strengthening initiatives and indeed, already undertake a range of

community strengthening activities of their own.³⁹ The research suggested a list of best practice features which would assist local governments to continue and further develop this role. These included actions around improving the position of local government as advocates for their communities, initiatives to develop community-wide interventions, the joining-up of council services, and investment to build council capacity and change the way business is currently done. A set of actions were also recommended for the Victorian Government to provide greater support to councils. These included promoting partnership tools and protocols for joint action by state and local levels of government, removing unnecessary bureaucratic barriers and regulations, undertaking research into appropriate tools for community strengthening and developing collaborative planning and implementation models and flexible funding.⁴⁰

The policy context

Three main policy statements inform the community strengthening agenda in Victoria and provide further context for this report. These are discussed below. Given the breadth of the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry, numerous other policy statements and documents impact in some way on the matters under discussion and could also be cited.

*Growing Victoria Together*⁴¹ outlines the Government's vision for Victoria over the next ten years. All Victorian Government departments are involved in implementing *Growing Victoria Together*. The document was released in 2001 and updated in 2005. It sets out ten goals and identifies measures of progress, a number of which relate to the Terms of Reference, including:

- The extent and diversity of participation in community, cultural and recreational organisations will increase
- More Victorians will be able to get help from friends, family or neighbours when they need it
- Disadvantage in health, education and housing among communities will be reduced
- The appreciation of diverse neighbourhoods and communities will increase
- More Victorians from all backgrounds will have the opportunity to have a say on issues that matter to them
- There will be regular reports on progress in improving the quality of life for all Victorians and their communities.⁴²

*A Fairer Victoria*⁴³ is the Victorian Government's social policy action plan. At the heart of the plan is a focus on strengthening local communities. It was launched on 28 April 2005, shortly after the Inquiry commenced.

The document sets out four overarching themes:

- Ensuring that universal services provide equal opportunity for all
- Reducing barriers to opportunity
- Strengthening assistance to disadvantaged groups
- Providing targeted support to the highest risk areas.

Under these, 14 strategies and 85 actions are identified. Many intersect with issues discussed in this Inquiry, including:

- Initiatives directed at children and young people, including a boost for youth mentoring
- Initiatives directed at reducing barriers to opportunity, including support for lifelong learning for seniors
- Community strengthening initiatives, including an expansion and modernisation program for Neighbourhood Houses, expansion of the Neighbourhood Renewal program, support for volunteering, promoting schools as community facilities and improved public and community transport in growth areas
- Initiatives to streamline the delivery of services and to work together with the business and community sectors, such as the alignment of government department regions to create eight common regions across the state.⁴⁴

*Melbourne 2030 – planning for sustainable growth*⁴⁵ is the Victorian Government's 30-year plan to manage population growth, transport and planning across metropolitan Melbourne and the surrounding region. A number of initiatives are relevant to note here, including:

- Planning for the growth areas at Wyndham, Casey-Cardinia, Whittlesea, Hume and Melton-Caroline Springs, in partnership with relevant local councils and government departments and agencies
- Committees for Smart Growth to make recommendations on the development of new and expanding communities in the growth areas
- Facilitation of investment and urban improvements at transit cities to encourage more jobs, housing and services
- A new grants program – 'Creating Better Places' – to implement *Melbourne 2030* and fund heritage improvements
- Activity Centre Structure Plans to support the development of vibrant urban centres.

The 2005-06 state budget allocated \$52.8 million to implement these and other key *Melbourne 2030* initiatives.

In November 2005 the Government released *A Plan for Melbourne's Growth Areas* and tabled in Parliament changes to Melbourne's urban growth boundaries. The plan covers a number of components to manage growth including new land releases, long-term planning in each of the growth areas, revised developer contribution

arrangements in order to pay for the cost of new services and infrastructure, and a new Growth Areas Authority to oversee the release of land and new infrastructure.⁴⁶

Other relevant policy statements include *Future Directions for Adult Education in Victoria* (launched in June 2004), the Victorian Government's ten year plan for the arts: *Creative Capacity +*, and the *Victoria: Leading the Way* action plan to strengthen Victoria's investment, exports and business growth.⁴⁷

Place matters

To date, major community strengthening initiatives have generally been place-based and targeted at disadvantaged neighbourhoods. According to Smyth et al., place-based approaches to addressing disadvantage have a long but chequered history in Australia and have re-emerged with some force since the late 1990s at both federal and state government levels.⁴⁸ Examples include Victoria's Neighbourhood Renewal program (see box below), Community Renewal in Queensland and various place management initiatives in NSW.

The details of one example of a place-focused approach to community strengthening were announced by the Victorian Government in February 2006, during the course of this Inquiry. The Community Building Initiative (CBI) has been allocated \$10 million over four years for 19 project locations, including the Interface/peri-urban locations of Whittlesea, Warburton, Bunyip and Kinglake. To be eligible to participate, applicants needed to be small rural towns, rural communities experiencing rapid population growth or significant change (such as bushfire or drought), rural communities located within the Interface councils, or new housing estates or rural Interface communities experiencing rapid growth.⁴⁹

Place-based approaches to community strengthening find support in evidence from studies showing social disadvantage is a fundamentally spatial phenomenon.⁵⁰ In Victoria, as in other places, disadvantage appears to be increasingly clustered in particular suburbs or postcodes.⁵¹ Research by Vinson found that on each of fourteen indicators of social disadvantage (such as low income, low work skills, unemployment and early school leaving) less than five percent of Victorian postcodes accounted for 25 percent of 'instances'.⁵² Vinson explains further:

So for example, one fourth of the Victorian prison population came from just 2.1 percent of postcodes, and for confirmed cases of child abuse or neglect, only 2.7 percent of postcodes, and for long-term unemployment, just 2.9 percent of the 647 postcodes in the state.⁵³

Neighbourhood Renewal Program

Victoria's Neighbourhood Renewal Program was introduced in 2001. It is a whole-of-government initiative (significantly influenced by UK forerunners) which attempts to address the complex problem of locational disadvantage.⁵⁴ One of the major obstacles to improving conditions in disadvantaged areas is seen to be the limited ability of narrowly-focused government departments and programs to deal with the interdependence of the causes of disadvantage. Neighbourhood Renewal emphasises joining-up the activities of different government agencies and levels of government and on forming strategic partnerships with local business, residents, community groups and service providers.

Neighbourhood Renewal has six key objectives: increased community pride and participation; improved employment, learning and local economic activity; enhanced housing and environment; reduced crime and greater safety; better health and wellbeing; and increased access to services and improved government responsiveness.⁵⁵

Local neighbourhood teams (typically comprising a place manager, project officers, a community development worker and an employment and learning coordinator) work with residents to prepare and implement community-based action plans. The project areas are relatively small and clearly defined and are characterised by concentrations of public housing and relative disadvantage.⁵⁶

By early 2006, 19 renewal projects had been launched or were proposed across Victoria, including one each in the Interface municipalities of Hume (in the suburb of Broadmeadows), Wyndham (in Werribee) and Mornington Peninsula (in Hastings – scheduled to begin in 2006).

The Government claims a number of successes for the projects so far, including the upgrading of 2,500 public housing properties; a decline in public housing turnover, vacancies and rent arrears in 80 percent of the areas; over 1,000 new community jobs; the establishment of 11 community businesses; a reduction in crimes against property in 70 percent of the areas; and improvements in education and training outcomes.⁵⁷

Surveys in 2005 also showed residents perceived improvements across a number of indicators, most noticeably housing (43 percent said it improved, compared to 7 percent who said it worsened), the physical environment (31 percent said it improved, 12 percent worse) and local learning and training opportunities (22 percent said it improved, 7 percent worse). On the other hand, residents reported that their personal health and the local economy both worsened slightly over the period. These are measures which may take longer to show improvement and may need better targeted and sustained investment.⁵⁸ One of the challenges for Neighbourhood Renewal will be to not only consolidate the gains it has made for the urban infrastructure, but also to move beyond them and effect improvements in residents' health and economic status.

While there is little debate about the existence of spatial concentrations of disadvantage, Australian and overseas studies have explored the question of whether the area itself has an effect on people. ‘Neighbourhood effects’ are thought by many to compound the difficulties for people living in such places over the life-cycle – from infant well-being to youth development and adult employment prospects.⁵⁹ A recent report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), a leading UK research and charity organisation, cited evidence showing “concentrated poverty limits opportunities for people above and beyond their own personal circumstances” and discussed how area deprivation reduces local job networks and employment ambitions, exerts downward pressure on school quality, stimulates higher levels of crime and exacerbates health inequalities.⁶⁰

On a smaller scale, two (separate) Melbourne studies have found neighbourhood effects with regard to firstly, aspirations for higher education and secondly, body weight. In the first study, the educational expectations of young secondary students living in low and high-unemployment neighbourhoods were compared and found to vary substantially, indicating the presence of significant neighbourhood effects at either end of the wealth spectrum.⁶¹ The second study found that area disadvantage is an important predictor of adult body weight. People living in the most disadvantaged areas of Melbourne were, on average, heavier (that is, they had a higher body mass index) than those residing in more affluent neighbourhoods. The weight differences existed regardless of a person’s income, education or occupation.⁶²

However, it seems important not to overstate the neighbourhood effect, for (at least) three reasons. Firstly, research in this area is still evolving and findings remain inconsistent.⁶³ Secondly, and following from this, a good deal of the research cautions that while neighbourhood effects might be important, individual and family characteristics probably have more impact on outcomes.⁶⁴ Thirdly, wider macroeconomic or structural forces should also not be overlooked as sources of inequality and concentrations of disadvantage.

These perspectives are associated with broader critiques of the motivations and effectiveness of place-focused community strengthening activities. For example, Mowbray argues that Victoria’s community strengthening/community building approaches deliberately avoid tackling the root causes of inequality and are essentially cost-cutting exercises.⁶⁵ In this view, community strengthening programs are poor substitutes for larger interventions and concerted public investment in social programs and services. Similarly, Parkinson attacks place-focused attempts to remedy social disadvantage in particular areas of cities, arguing that the causes of the problems and their potential solutions – “whether they are economic and social changes or institutional resources and programmes” – are to be found outside disadvantaged areas.⁶⁶ In support of this, Ziller contends that “the UK Government has been tackling concentrations of poverty on housing estates since 1963 with one area-based program after another” and “these programs have demonstrably not worked.”⁶⁷ Further, others have pointed out that many people experiencing poverty and deprivation do not live in deprived areas and would therefore be missed by place-based community strengthening.⁶⁸

Criticisms along these lines are answered by those who contend that local projects are supplements to, not replacements for, broader focused policy to tackle disadvantage. For example, Klein argues that Victoria's Neighbourhood Renewal does not defray the need for broader policy interventions but it does demonstrate the ability of state and local governments, community groups, local business and residents to resist the trend towards greater inequality and social exclusion, in spite of global and national forces.⁶⁹ Gabriel Chanan from the UK's Community Development Foundation points out that "even the most global approach cannot solve problems without special action at a local level."⁷⁰

The key, then, appears to be finding the right policy mix; balancing "spatially-targeted measures for distressed areas and 'aspatial' policies for health, employment, education and so forth."⁷¹ Johnson et al.⁷² have reviewed the literature on best practice in local area targeting from the UK and Australian experience. Their synopsis of generally agreed principles is further summarised below.

- There is near universal agreement that the public sector, the private sector and community should all be involved, and many consider local government should be the lead partner
- Capacity building (skills enhancement) is likely to be needed to enable partners to work together effectively
- Special funding for deprived areas should be used to leverage additional funding from other levels of government and the private sector. Fund-pooling of mainstream and targeted funding is desirable
- Strategies focused primarily on improving physical capital (housing, open space, transport) are rarely successful in the absence of human capital investment
- Links must be established between deprived areas and adjacent better off areas, especially to take advantage of employment opportunities
- Evaluation and information management systems at the local level are required to check on progress and value for money.

Other reviews stress the need for flexibility in funding and implementation, longer timeframes to achieve success, community control over priorities and resources, and a coordinated, national policy framework for area-based targeting.⁷³

Social Capital

The theory of social capital has significantly influenced approaches to community strengthening. The Committee's previous report discussed the origins of the theory and its rise in popularity.⁷⁴ The report detailed several different definitions of social capital from the literature and observed that its worth and limitations remain hotly debated. While the theory is still developing, most definitions agree on some

common characteristics, including social connectedness, networks, reciprocity, co-operation, trust and social norms. Social capital exists in relationships between people and it facilitates co-operation within or between groups. It is sometimes referred to as social cohesion or social connectedness.

Social capital – positive and negative

Social capital has variously been found to impact positively on:

- physical and mental health and self-reported wellbeing⁷⁵
- educational outcomes and child welfare
- crime rates and public safety
- the performance of government
- democratic participation
- economic performance (such as increased productivity and employment).⁷⁶

However, social capital is not always positive. Putnam describes social capital as being most easily created “in opposition to someone or something else.”⁷⁷ This is manifest where, for example, a small rural community with strong social networks (‘close-knit’) is highly antagonistic to newcomers or those who are ‘outside’ the community. Social capital can also have adverse effects for the insiders. Strong groups can demand conformity and stifle personal freedoms, as well as deterring the inflow and uptake of new ideas – thereby limiting the economic advance and perhaps the cultural development of the group as a whole.⁷⁸

Three forms of social capital are commonly identified:

- ‘Bonding’ social capital refers to close relationships between people who are similar, such as families and close friends or within ethnic or faith groups. Bonding social capital is good for ‘getting by’.
- ‘Bridging’ social capital refers to links between people or groups who are different (for example, in terms of age, race or ethnicity). This is good for ‘getting ahead’.
- ‘Linking’ social capital refers to ties between people and individuals or institutions which hold power or influence.⁷⁹

According to Woolcock, people in disadvantaged areas may have a lot of bonding social capital, smaller stocks of bridging and almost no linking social capital: “they

tend to be completely disconnected from institutions of power.”⁸⁰ Similarly, in its submission to the Inquiry, DVC pointed towards the different types of social capital and the actions taken to build them:

DVC’s experience is that stronger communities, those with high levels of social capital, are better places to live. DVC’s objectives and strategies are largely related to building bridging and linking forms of social capital through mentoring, volunteering and partnerships between governments, business and communities.⁸¹

Stone and Hughes also note that sustainable communities require different types of social capital and this should direct where government chooses to invest:

In promoting social capital, governments and other service providers should be mindful of the mix of social capital required. Too much emphasis on what is termed “bonding social capital” might not provide communities and their members with the resources required to be either self-reliant or self-determining, whereas “bridging” or “cross-cutting” ties are argued to open opportunities and enable access to greater and varied resources (Narayan 1999). The logic of understanding social capital within a resources framework implies a need for the facilitation of all bonding, bridging and linking forms of social capital.⁸²

Following from this, it is important to note that the role of government in relation to social capital, like so much of the entire theory, is debated at every turn. One school of thought argues (broadly) that governments (particularly non-local government institutions) can reduce personal and community self-reliance and inadvertently damage social capital. In this view, it is families and/or local community groups acting separately from government who are chiefly responsible for creating social capital. Michael Duffy, writing in the Sydney Morning Herald,⁸³ articulates one example of this perspective. According to Duffy, government regulations and even government funding of community organisations have been detrimental to social capital in Australia:

... the state, with its superior funding, has taken over the role of protecting people against uncertainty and adversity once filled by voluntary organisations. In the process it has invaded the life of the community and laid waste the traditions of co-operation and self-reliance.

He goes on to write:

For our emotional wellbeing and to preserve what social capital still exists, we need to oppose anything that will extend the reach and power of government.⁸⁴

Social capital, informal interactions and community events

One criticism of the way social capital has been promoted by academics and policy-makers relates to the focus on creating it through formal modes of interaction and participation – that is, through volunteering, mentoring, community organisations, participation in local decision-making and so on.

Campbell and Gillies argue far more notice needs to be taken of the role of informal networks of friends and neighbours in the construction of community life.⁸⁵ These networks are marked by neighbourly acts such as holding a neighbour's spare key, lending tools or minding a pet. These are basic but valuable social interactions which occur independently of organisations. Research by Brock and Green finds that informal interaction contributes to social capital formation by fostering negotiating skills, the sharing of opinions, companionship and by creating networks of mutual obligation.⁸⁶

In London, the Committee met with community development consultant and researcher Kevin Harris, who has commented and written extensively on these issues. Harris criticises the Blair Government's approach to promoting formal participation as the main vehicle for improving community life:

My take on the government's record ... is that hugely encouraging insights into various needs under the broad theme of social capital tend to have spawned cautious policy that is very much oriented to formal measures. Hence what I regard as a heavy over-emphasis on formal volunteering and on democratic participation, for instance, perhaps at the expense of putting effort into all sorts of possible ways of stimulating networks of informal connections among neighbours, that in themselves might provide such outcomes, along with many others.⁸⁷

In a paper co-authored with Toby Gale, Harris argues that fully formed models of social capital must also consider the informal interactions and meetings which occur in public and semi-public contexts, "typified by parents at the school gates, dog walkers in the park and the grunt of recognition as neighbours pass one another outside the local corner shop."⁸⁸ These are often overlooked as modes and sites of social capital formation. Those who design the urban environment would seem to have a role here in discovering such spaces where informal encounters occur and, as far as possible, planning for them in new communities or refurbishing them in existing ones. But mapping technology is also emerging which can assist communities to gain and use this information for themselves. Projects like OpenStreetMap and Urban Tapestries show how technology can be used by the public to draw out the hidden secrets of neighbourhoods and how people move through them and experience them. The information gained can empower local communities in the development of community visions and plans for the future of their neighbourhoods.⁸⁹

Harris also suggests that small-scale street parties are one way of stimulating informal connections among neighbours. Street parties occur in many places around the world. In the UK, Streets Alive is a not-for-profit organisation which provides support to residents and councils to organise street parties (www.streetparty.org.uk). The Victorian Government recently began offering grants of \$6,000 for local governments to provide practical help and equipment to local residents to organise street parties.⁹⁰ The program is based on the StreetLife initiative in the City of Port Phillip, which gives equipment, advice and assistance, including free public liability insurance, to organisers of street parties. According to DVC, street parties in the City of Port Phillip have lead to shared childminding, swapping of recipes and garden tools, informal support for home-based carers, local safety procedures for burglaries or emergencies and enabling older people to stay in their homes longer “because they know they’ve got support from their neighbours.”⁹¹

The Committee considers that many local events such as these are discouraged by the complexity and cost of seeking permissions, arranging insurance and other necessary procedures. Street parties may be subject to event approvals, town planning permits, Food Act registration, traffic management plans, liquor licence and occupancy permits. In some cases, councils levy fees for the holding of street parties or similar small-scale events. Actions to make the application process less daunting to ordinary residents should be further encouraged.

Recommendation 2.1:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government work with the Interface local governments to further encourage small-scale street parties in local neighbourhoods.

Other, slightly larger community-based events – such as music festivals and cultural festivals – can equally generate community connections and social interaction, but they can also have important economic impacts for a local area. As an example, the Committee was informed of the work of Gippsland Field Days and other community organisations in the Baw Baw and Gippsland regions in putting on a series of significant events which have considerable economic flow-on to their communities. The events (including ‘Farm World’ and ‘Harvest of Gippsland’) generate an estimated \$100,000 per year for community groups and have additional spin-offs for local businesses.⁹²

The ability to demonstrate the economic impact of a local event or festival can be a powerful lever to build support from business, government and the wider community.

In this regard, the Committee was impressed with the potential of technologies developed by the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute at the Auckland University of Technology. The Tourism Research and Community Empowerment (TRACE) program is developing free online tools for stakeholders to use in the planning and assessment of small-scale ('micro') community events. The tools developed by TRACE currently have a focus on micro sporting events run by community organisations but they are also suitable to be used by local governments and for other types of community activities and events. The Economic Impact Calculator can be used to gauge the economic dividend out of events in their local area. Another tool, the TRACE Survey Builder, assists organisers in gathering feedback to improve the quality of future events. The Committee considers TRACE is a good model for the creative use of new technologies to empower and strengthen local communities in Victoria.

Recommendation 2.2:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government examine and promote web-based tools and similar applications which empower local communities to assess the impact of small-scale community events.

Measuring social capital and community strength

As the popularity of social capital as an idea has flourished (and to some extent, coalesced with that of community strength), policy-makers and researchers have looked for ways to measure it. Several instruments have been developed in Australia.⁹³ The ABS recently developed a statistical framework for capturing social capital information and forthcoming ABS surveys will include questions relating to social capital.⁹⁴ Similar efforts by statistical agencies have been taking place internationally.

There has also been a related global movement towards the development of 'community wellbeing' frameworks, which typically combine indicators around social capital, democratic engagement, quality of life and even happiness, alongside more established or traditional measures of how a community is faring, such as school retention rates, employment statistics and crime rates. These wellbeing frameworks are often linked to strategic community plans setting out long-term goals. The involvement of citizens in developing both the frameworks and community plans is being pursued by some local governments in Victoria and elsewhere, as a way to strengthen people's sense of belonging and to improve local democracy. For

example, Wyndham City Council involved more than 2,000 community members in the development of its *Quality Community Plan* in 2004/05. The Council has issued a 2005 report card tracking progress against indicators for the plan's 15 goals, which include 'Managing Growth', 'Sense of Community' and 'Local Employment' and 'Business Prosperity', among others.⁹⁵

Another important initiative currently in development is the Victorian Community Indicators Project. Funded by VicHealth, this project will support local councils to "develop and use community wellbeing indicators, to measure health, wellbeing and sustainability and improve citizen engagement, community planning and policy making."⁹⁶

New Zealand's Ministry of Social Development (MSD) produces an annual report on its monitoring of social outcomes, called *The Social Report*.⁹⁷ The 2005 report monitored national and regional indicators across 10 'domains' or areas of peoples lives, such as the economic standard of living, civil and political rights, cultural identity and social connectedness. The combined picture is intended to contribute to the development of integrated social policies capable of addressing the often complex and interrelated causes of social problems. Members of the Committee met with MSD representatives and in these discussions heard that the report had been well received internationally and there were plans to further disaggregate the information down to a more local level.

A much broader and more ambitious project is occurring in Canada where a number of prominent organisations are combining various social capital, health and quality of life indicators to produce the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (also colloquially known as a measure of 'Gross National Happiness'). Indicators will be made available at the national, provincial, regional and community levels with data allowing comparisons across jurisdictions and internationally. There is a focus on ensuring the Index will be accessible to a wide audience:

We want to use this as the basis for improving our performance in areas that matter to Canadians. We want to provide a valuable public policy tool that resonates with opinion leaders, media and decision makers, while informing the 'water cooler chat' about how we are really doing. To do that, we have to create a tool that is easy to communicate and simple to understand.⁹⁸

Social capital in the Interface areas

In 2005, DVC released a report on aspects of community strength/social capital called *Indicators of community strength at the Local Government Area level in Victoria*.⁹⁹ This report provides the results of a telephone survey across the 79 LGAs in Victoria.

According to the department, the report is “an important information source for considering policy around community strengthening ... and particularly around the preconditions and effects of disadvantage.”¹⁰⁰ DVC claims the results can point policy-makers towards investing in activities which build social connections, “such as learning and volunteering programs, in order to build community strength in different areas.”¹⁰¹

The 15 indicators used in the report are drawn from the Department of Human Services’ (DHS) *Victorian Population Health Survey* (2002-2004). The indicators range across various topics, including volunteering, group membership, participation on decision-making boards or committees, attendance at community events, participation in organised sport, ability to raise \$2,000 in an emergency and parental involvement in schools. They also take in the perceptions of residents on safety in their local area, their ability to have a real say on issues or to get help when needed, multiculturalism and their satisfaction with living in their local area.¹⁰²

There is a need for caution in drawing comparisons and firm conclusions from what is fairly limited data from one year. Nevertheless, the report is of interest to the Inquiry as it provides some insight into the different character of social connectedness and participation across the Interface LGAs. The survey results relevant to the Interface areas have been extracted and are reproduced in Appendix F. A closer look at the data shows:

- Nillumbik rated higher than other Interface areas on almost all indicators and was also the only member of that group to rate above the state average on a majority of indicators.
- Whittlesea, Melton, Hume and Wyndham were all grouped among the lowest rating Victorian municipalities for most indicators. Cardinia, Yarra Ranges and Mornington Peninsula all scored slightly higher across the board. Yarra Ranges and Mornington Peninsula ranked highly when compared with metropolitan LGAs.
- Looking at specific indicators, Nillumbik residents were significantly more likely than residents of other Interface areas to be able to get help when needed (89.7 percent, compared to 77.7 percent in Whittlesea), raise \$2000 in an emergency (74.8 percent, compared to 52 percent in Whittlesea) and to have attended a community event in the past six months (76.3 percent, compared to 52 percent in Hume).
- Compared to other Interface areas, residents in Mornington Peninsula were more likely to say they liked living in their local community (96.4 percent), although positive responses to this question were high in all areas.
- Whittlesea scored significantly below the state average on measures of volunteering, safety and residents feeling they were able to have a say on issues, but above the state average on the indicator ‘multiculturalism makes life in the area better’.

Clearly, many factors influence the individual picture of community strength in each municipality. Among them, the relative socio-economic status of each area is likely to be important. To provide a point of comparison and further background to the areas discussed in this report, Table 2.1 below provides data about disadvantage in each of the Interface LGAs, using the Socio-Economic Indexes for Area (SEIFA) product issued by the ABS and derived from the 2001 Census.

SEIFA 2001 comprises four indexes measuring different aspects of socio-economic conditions by geographic areas. The Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSED) is recommended for use by the ABS to identify or rank disadvantaged geographic areas. IRSED is derived from Census attributes believed to reflect disadvantage, such as low income, low educational attainment, high unemployment and proportion of the workforce in relatively unskilled occupations.

In Table 2.1, the lower the score, the more disadvantaged the area. The LGAs are ranked against the 31 metropolitan Melbourne LGAs; so, for example, Hume and Whittlesea are ranked the 4th and 5th most disadvantaged areas respectively. On this index, Nillumbik is one of the least disadvantaged areas in both metropolitan Melbourne and Victoria. It is important to note, however, that these statistics mask the pockets of advantage and disadvantage which exist within each of the Interface areas.

Table 2.1: IRSED Disadvantage Index for the Interface areas

LGA	Disadvantage	IRSED ranking (a)
Hume	954.2	4
Whittlesea	962.4	5
Melton	997.4	11
Wyndham	1007.5	12
Cardinia	1018.9	15
Mornington Peninsula	1027.8	17
Yarra Ranges	1037.1	18
Nillumbik	1107.7	28

Source: ABS, Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) 2003. Notes: (a) of 31 LGAs in the Melbourne Statistical Division.

The following Table 1.2, is a snapshot of more recent ABS data on two separate measures: estimated unemployment rate and mean taxable income. Compared to the SEIFA index, this provides a less sophisticated picture of an area, although the distribution of the Interface LGAs is similar.

Table 2.2: Unemployment and income

LGA	Estimated unemployment rate (%) (a)	Rank (from most unemployment to least) (b)	Mean taxable income (\$) (c)	Rank (from lowest to highest) (b)
Cardinia	3.2	27	37 291	10
Hume	9.0	1	36 541	6
Melton	5.5	11	36 263	5
Mornington Peninsula	4.8	16	39 990	17
Nillumbik	1.9	31	44 397	23
Whittlesea	6.4	7	35 081	2
Wyndham	5.4	12	38 614	13
Yarra Ranges	4.6	18	37 172	8
STATE	5.4	-	40 805	-

Source: ABS, *State and Regional Indicators Victoria: March Quarter 2006, June 2006, Cat. 1367.2*; ABS, *State and Regional Indicators Victoria: June Quarter 2005, August 2005, Cat. 1367.2*. Notes: (a) December 2005 quarter; (b) of 31 LGAs in the Melbourne Statistical Division; (c) for the year 2002-03, calculated on estimated population of taxpayers.

The table shows Hume had the highest unemployment rate (at 9 percent) of the Interface LGAs for the December 2005 quarter and also the highest unemployment rate in Melbourne. Whittlesea and Melton had higher unemployment in the December 2005 quarter than the Victorian average. The remaining Interface LGAs recorded unemployment equal to or lower than the Victorian rate, with Nillumbik also having the lowest unemployment in Victoria for the quarter.

Social capital in new communities

In its previous report, the Committee discussed the impact of the urban form on social capital and physical and social wellbeing and related how urban planners and others have advanced theories about using urban design to facilitate the emergence of urban fringe communities with high levels of social capital.¹⁰³ However, there has been very little research into social capital in new urban communities on the fringes of cities. Indeed, most studies of social capital concentrate on existing communities, rather than new communities where social capital is in formation.¹⁰⁴

The Committee is particularly interested in research occurring in Queensland through a partnership between the University of Queensland's Boilerhouse Research Centre and Delfin Lend Lease, a major developer of masterplanned communities in Australia. The research goes beyond examining urban design and instead seeks to understand the role of developers in ensuring the communities they build are successful over the long-term. The research is currently ongoing. The Committee heard from Dr Geoffrey Woolcock, the manager of the project, who commented:

Again, I come back to saying it is very important for governments, state governments in particular, to be leading and show how this can be better researched and how the evidence base can be built a lot stronger. Sure, some of that can be through universities, but I think the private sector can do a whole lot more. We are going to do this large survey in Springfield Lakes purely through – the grants are some help, but we would not be able to do it without significant help from Delfin Lend Lease. You cannot tell me that with the kinds of budgets that I know go into most of these new developments – even some of the smaller ones – there is not a small percentage that can go into a regular census, if you like, of the social attitudes of members of the community. I think a lot of work could go into building a much stronger information base so that we do not keep seeing communities being tagged invariably by very negative indicators.¹⁰⁵

Given the lack of prior research in this area and the Committee's interest in understanding the effects of rapid growth in the outer suburbs, the Committee considers that much more research along these lines is worthwhile. Ideally, developers and local governments should be seeking to work in partnership with local universities (and other institutions) to improve the evidence base around the building of successful communities in the long-term.

Recommendation 2.3:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government work with developers, local government, universities and TAFE colleges to encourage social capital research to be carried out during the initial stages of new housing developments in the Interface areas.

Community Engagement

While the Terms of Reference direct the Committee to consider how communities can be strengthened through ‘improved community engagement’, there is no single definition of the term and consequently, evidence to the Committee ranged widely. The term is sometimes applied by businesses or institutions to their corporate social responsibility activities or their interactions with the community in which they are located. Others see community engagement as referring to the participation by individuals in education, employment, sport or other facets of life. Most commonly, however, community engagement is considered to be a function of governments and their relationship with citizens:

Community engagement commonly refers to the many ways in which governments connect with citizens and stakeholders in the development and implementation of policies, programs and services.¹⁰⁶

Definitions roughly comparable to this can be found in the literature¹⁰⁷ and in the evidence received by the Committee. In the context of this report, the Committee has taken community engagement to refer broadly to government practices which seek the involvement of people in the decisions and actions that shape the quality of life in their communities. It refers, in part, to consultative techniques or processes that may include simply ‘having a say’, but may also go far beyond that, often working through partnerships and collaboration.

Community engagement is becoming an increasingly important part of the work of governments. Wiseman¹⁰⁸ identifies three related developments which have driven this: rising public distrust and cynicism of politics, public expectations of greater political transparency and effective leadership, and, finally, an increased understanding that the challenges of a complex and volatile world require a diverse range of knowledge, experience and expertise if they are to be successfully addressed. Wiseman notes all three of these trends reflect the paradox of globalisation: “the faster the speed and spread of global flows – the greater the desire and need for local knowledge, local governance and local connectedness.”¹⁰⁹

The Committee’s view is that community engagement both relies on and supports much wider forms of community involvement that build social capital and make communities better places to live. This follows Gabriel Chanan’s useful distinction

(in a report prepared for the UK's Office of the Deputy Prime Minister)¹¹⁰ between two interrelated types of community involvement:

'Vertical involvement' relates to community participation in governance and public decision-making and would include participation in government consultation, local forums or committees and even voting in elections.

'Horizontal involvement' relates to the participation of people in community activities such as friends groups, volunteering, sports clubs, faith groups or carers groups. The majority of these activities are not about public decision-making but rather to share interests, make friends, entertain or give something back to society.¹¹¹

According to Chanan, governments often focus on the visible forms of community engagement, "such as the community representatives on LSPs [local service providers] and neighbourhood forums and on responses to official consultations ('vertical involvement')", without acknowledging that "these expressions of local interest depend on an abundance of participation by 'average' residents in 'ordinary' community groups and networks ('horizontal involvement')."¹¹²

DVC's submission also pointed to the link between general forms of community participation on the one hand, and participation geared more towards decision-making on the other:

Local social networks foster a sense of social purpose, social solidarity and willingness to take social action such as tree planting, participation in a walking school bus or membership of a community action group (Moen 1992). Through these networks individuals learn how to assess issues, appreciate public policy debates/environments and take action to get things done. Increases in the simple activities that create connectedness, including general participation such as volunteering, have been shown to increase participation in community oriented activity and governance.¹¹³

The existence of community groups to facilitate these kinds of activities is clearly integral to the development of social capital and social networks which, it is argued, increase the capacity, opportunity and willingness for community oriented activity and governance.

However, social capital and social networks do not automatically 'convert' into participation¹¹⁴ – opportunities must exist for people to become involved in consultation and decision-making. As this report makes clear in the following chapter, governments must foster such involvement and actively seek it out, through the provision of information and through consultative techniques which are inclusive, genuine, empowering and appropriate for different communities.

Notes

¹ Wiseman, J. (2003) 'Engaging citizens and communities in urban planning: Learning from recent Australian and international experiments', *Paper presented at the State of Australian Cities National Conference, Sydney, 3-5 December*, Urban Frontiers Program, p.1.

² International Conference on Engaging Communities, 'Conference overview', 14-17 August 2005, www.engagingcommunities2005.org/overview.html

³ Briefing to the Committee, Mr I. Robins, Wyndham City Council, 1 June 2005.

⁴ Briefing to the Committee, Mr M. Sullivan, Dianella Community Health, 20 June 2005.

⁵ Cr S. Alessi, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 June 2005, p.501.

⁶ Ms E. Healey, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 June 2005, p.312. The Committee was informed Melton would have roughly 140,000 residents by 2016. Greater Shepparton has an estimated resident population (2004) of 60,025.

⁷ Peel, M. (2004) 'The forgotten lessons of the past: housing, security and justice', speech delivered at the Shelter SA Annual General Meeting, 20 October 2004, p.9, www.antipovertyweek.org.au/documents/Dr%20Mark%20Peel.doc.

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004) *Measuring Social Capital: An Australian Framework and Indicators*, ABS, Cat no. 1378.0, Canberra.

⁹ Adams, D. & Hess, M. (2001) 'Community in public policy: fad or foundation?', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 60, 2, p.14.

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¹³ See <http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page1526.asp>

¹⁴ Randell, M. (2002) 'The commercialisation of community', *Online Opinion*, posted 24 December 2002, <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/2002/Dec02/Randell.htm>

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¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Mr B. Moore, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 June 2005, p.572.

¹⁸ Rose Grange is a Dennis Family development located at Tarneit, 24 kilometres west of Melbourne. See www.rosegrange.com.au/rosegrange/home.sok?ID=

¹⁹ Prof. D. Adams, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 April 2006, p.910-911.

²⁰ See for example, Scouts Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 May 2005.

²¹ Mr A. Walsh, *Transcripts of Evidence*, 23 May 2005, p.227.

²² Some programs now appearing under the banner of 'community strengthening', such as early childhood programs, appear to be a re-branding of activities governments have been involved in for some time.

²³ Considine, M. (2004) *Building Connections: Community Strengthening and Local Government in Victoria*, Department for Victorian Communities, Melbourne, p.4.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p.2.

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Western Australian Government Department for Community Development (n.d.) *Strategic Plan 2005-2007*, <http://tinyurl.com/m823m>

²⁷ See <http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/html/communities/communities.htm>

²⁸ Prof. D. Adams, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 April 2006, p.912.

²⁹ Department for Victorian Communities, *Submission number 78*, 18 November 2005, p.7.

³⁰ In this context, an 'outcome' is the impact of a service or product on the status of an individual or group.

³¹ Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services (2005) 'Part 2: Performance Reporting', *FaCS Annual Report 2004-05*, <http://www.facsia.gov.au/annualreport/2005/part2/outcome2.html>

³² See <http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/sfsc-sfcs.htm>

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ See http://www.communitybuilding.vic.gov.au/graphic/vic_gov_approach/faqs.shtml

³⁵ See <http://www.communitybuilding.vic.gov.au/graphic/overview/>

³⁶ Department for Victorian Communities, *Submission number 78A*, 24 May 2005, p.13.

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³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.7.

⁴¹ *Growing Victoria Together: A Vision for Victoria to 2010 and Beyond*, <http://tinyurl.com/nrvau>

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⁴⁵ See <http://tinyurl.com/8u7lk>

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⁴⁷ Department for Victorian Communities, *Submission number 78*, 18 November 2005.

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⁴⁹ Department for Victorian Communities (n.d.) *Community Building Initiative Expression of Interest*, p.4.

⁵⁰ Smyth, P., Reddel, T. & Jones, A. (eds) (2005) *op. cit.*

⁵¹ Department of Premier & Cabinet (2005) *Challenges in addressing disadvantage in Victoria: Reporting on progress, identifying future directions*, DPC, Melbourne, p.20; Department of Human Services (Neighbourhood Renewal Branch) (2005) *op. cit.*, pp.19-20.

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⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Klein, H. (2004) 'Neighbourhood Renewal: Revitalising Disadvantaged Communities in Victoria', *Public Administration Today*, September-November, pp.20-29.

⁵⁵ Broad, C. (Minister for Housing) (2005) *Evaluating Neighbourhood Renewal: passing the first test*, Department of Human Services, Melbourne.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Department of Human Services (Neighbourhood Renewal Branch) (2005) *Neighbourhood Renewal: Interim Evaluation Report*, p.6, <http://tinyurl.com/jujab>

⁵⁹ Bradford, N. (2005) *Place-based Public Policy: Towards a New Urban and Community Agenda for Canada*, Canadian Policy Research Networks, Ottawa, p.7.

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⁶¹ Johnson, D., Headey, B. & Jensen, B. (2005) 'Communities, social capital and public policy: literature review', *Policy Research Paper Number 36*, Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra, p.23.

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⁶⁵ Mowbray, M (2004) 'The new communitarianism: Building great communities or Brigadoonery?', *Just Policy*, 32, June, pp.11-20.

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⁶⁸ Johnson, D., Headey, B. & Jensen, B. (2005) *op. cit.* p.41.

⁶⁹ Klein, H. (2004) *op. cit.*, p.29.

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⁷¹ Bradford, N. (2005) *op. cit.*, p.v.

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¹⁰⁵ *ibid.* p.202.

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¹⁰⁷ See for example, Tamarack (n.d.) *Our Growing Understanding of Community Engagement*, see <http://tamarackcommunity.ca/g3s11.html>

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¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ The ODPM is now known as the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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¹¹² *ibid.*, p.14.

¹¹³ Department for Victorian Communities (Strategic Policy and Research Division) (2005) *op. cit.*, p.8.

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CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Photo courtesy of Simon Marchant for Involve, UK

The problem faced by contemporary democracy is horribly simple: governments have come to believe that the public don't know how to speak; the public has come to believe that governments don't know how to listen. Faced with apparently 'apathetic' citizens, the political class complains about the difficulty of governing in a vacuum. Convinced that the political class is not interested in them, the public is increasingly pursuing a conversation in which politicians are outsiders.¹

Re-engaging and reconnecting citizens – with each other and with the organisations and institutions around them – has become an important task for public policy in recent years. Governments at all levels, here and overseas, are seeking to change the way they work and are pursuing various methods to make citizens “more active, more engaged and more prepared to be self-governing.”²

The Committee is aware of a plethora of guides and checklists to assist governments and organisations with community engagement practices. The Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) has a suite of excellent, freely available resources on its website. The Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) also has useful case studies and guides for local governments. The intent of this chapter is not to replicate that growing body of work but rather, to add to it with some of the insights and selected examples gained by the Committee from its investigations in Victoria and elsewhere.

The first part of this chapter provides a snapshot of community engagement at the Victorian Government (focusing particularly on DSE) and local government levels. The second part examines the principles of community engagement (with reference to three prominent examples) and is followed by a discussion of the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) model of community engagement and issues around engaging with ‘hard to reach’ sections of the community. The final part of the chapter sets out various approaches to community engagement from the Interface areas, interstate and overseas.

Many factors drive the current enthusiasm for community engagement. Some commentators see a public increasingly disenchanted with politics and withdrawing from participating in decisions which impact on their everyday lives (although debate exists about whether this is a new phenomenon or genuinely represents a crisis in democracy).³ One survey found three quarters of Victorians agreed to the proposition that it is important ‘government is responsive to local needs’ but less than one quarter felt it described the situation in their own community. Further, 72 percent of Victorians thought it important that ‘people have opportunities to participate in the decisions made by government’ but only 26 percent thought such opportunities existed where they lived.⁴ These attitudes are a global trend and there is also an argument that “the withdrawal of the public from the auditorium of democratic politics”⁵ is matched by an upsurge in informal or grassroots types of participation, such as demonstrations, local or global activism, consumer politics and volunteering.⁶

The renewed interest in community engagement is also bound up with ideas about social capital. Participation in decision-making has value in building relationships between people and fostering trust, ownership and empowerment. This is seen to generate social capital and its attendant pay-offs, as Brackerz et al. note:

Consultation leads, in this model, to broader forms of participation, to community engagement and thus to social connectedness and social capital, with all its associated social and economic benefits, from employment to crime prevention.

Thus when a council consults community members on policy, planning or service issues it may be assumed that the benefits will be both short-term and long-term: the council will have better information on and understanding of the community's requirements and preferences, but it will also have invested in social capital and in increased social and economic participation. In turn, local government can draw on social capital as it continues to make decisions in dialogue with more informed and engaged community members.⁷

Another driver for greater public participation comes from what the Queensland Government describes as “the realisation that government does not have the expertise, resources or influence to solve all issues.”⁸ Faced with complex problems, there is an emerging understanding in policy-making of the value of citizen input to identify issues, make known the consequences and impacts and to proffer solutions or alternatives. Policies developed in this way are seen to be more sustainable and result in services better targeted to people's needs. This view was put to the Committee by Mr Harry Van Moorst of the Western Region Environment Centre at a briefing held in Wyndham. In discussing an example of a consultation process (conducted by VicUrban, the Victorian Government urban development agency), Mr Van Moorst stated:

I can understand the pressures they feel to produce a good plan, a blueprint, to have everything set out. But if they have not engaged the community with it they have, in a sense, either got to bulldoze it through if there is opposition or they have to go back and renegotiate it. That is a waste of time.

Mr Van Moorst went on to say:

In many cases, they would have got far greater community buy-in – and the community is very sensible about this, the community is not radical, they are not going to go way beyond what is practical. If anything, the compromises the community makes are likely to be more conservative than the ones VicUrban would like to make. The risk factors are very slight.⁹

In a similar vein, the Australian academic Dr Lyn Carson, who has written extensively on public participation and facilitated a number of deliberative processes, argues:

Typical citizens are capable of dealing extremely well with complex issues. That's what has happened in the citizens' juries, consensus conferences and deliberative polls of which I have been a part. Don't take my word for it; examine the recommendations and decisions that have emerged from the many citizens' juries and consensus conferences that have been conducted throughout the world. This should dispel any suggestion that typical citizens might be incapable of dealing

with complex issues, with attention being paid, not to self interest, but to the common good.¹⁰

Dr Christina Gillgren, Executive Director of the Western Australian Government's Office of Citizens and Civics, put the view at a conference in Melbourne that this new push to 'let the public back in' through community engagement, is linked to changed ideas around the nature of expertise. There is recognition that local people can be experts in their own right, either on specific issues they are interested in or on local issues which they are best placed to understand:

It was (and sadly is) often the case that policy-making was left to the 'experts', justified because there was supposedly a knowledge deficit in the community. But these experts were making their policy recommendations in situations of "non perfect knowledge" and based upon their own values and beliefs. It has become evident that if decisions are going to be made on the basis of value judgements, then the values should be those of the communities most affected. Clearly, without community input, it is difficult for governments to fully understand the values of the community or the impacts that are felt by community members in their everyday lives.¹¹

This raises debate around the role of representatives and the nature of representation. Some fear that participatory initiatives have the potential to undermine or devalue the role of democratically elected public officials. An alternative view promoted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and others, holds that the decision-making legitimacy of elected officials, and representative democracy more broadly, is strengthened rather than diminished by citizen involvement.¹² Hartz-Karp argues that an engagement process which is fair, transparent and accountable creates 'political capital' for governments, as citizens gain greater trust in the ability of elected officials to represent them on other issues.¹³ Similarly, a 'Good Governance Guide' for Victorian local government states:

A community is more likely to feel trust and confidence in its local government if the community is engaged in and involved with its governance. That is, the community participates, is consulted, is informed and generally feels part of the governance process. Engaging the community should be highly valued and a goal which influences all activities of local government.¹⁴

The Victorian Government context

Growing Victoria Together, the key document setting out the Victorian Government's vision for the next ten years, states that a vibrant democracy is achieved through greater public participation and more accountable government. A measure of success identified in the document is that more Victorians from all backgrounds are given the opportunity to have a say on issues that matter to them.¹⁵ *A Fairer Victoria*, the Victorian Government's social policy action plan released in 2005 (and further updated in 2006), focuses many of its strategies and actions on "giving individuals, families and communities more choice and power to make decisions for themselves."¹⁶

The Victorian Government's written submission to this Inquiry defined community engagement as: "the many ways in which governments connect with citizens and stakeholders in the development and implementation of policies, programs and services."¹⁷ It noted that improving community engagement involves steps to change the way government works, including changes to the public sector's governance arrangements, culture and capabilities. Across government, various departments are pursuing engagement in a wide range of different ways; as the submission stressed, there is no 'one size fits all' approach to community engagement:

Considerations include the issue in question, the nature of the community, the issue's profile and the available time and resources for the engagement process. Hence the Victorian Government's approach to ensuring public participation is based on diverse models and strategies which are matched to appropriate functions, structures and memberships ... They also vary in their scale and scope: some are highly localised, others are state-wide.¹⁸

Given this, the Committee has not sought to attempt to reflect the totality of the government's community engagement activity. However, it is useful to list here some specific examples which give a sense of the diversity of activities and approaches:¹⁹

- VicRoads Regional Reference Group – groups in each of VicRoads' seven regions meet quarterly to raise issues of local and strategic significance
- RoadSafe Community Road Safety Councils – 24 RoadSafe groups have been established (6 in outer metropolitan areas) to develop and implement local road safety programs and support government road safety initiatives. The groups are made up of community members, police, VicRoads, local government, emergency services and others
- Crown Land Committees of Management – established across Victoria and supported through the DSE. These include representatives from local government and the community
- Coast Action/Coastcare – a program to assist communities to understand the marine and coastal environment and address issues of concern. Public meetings, forums and information days have been held in various coastal

locations, including the Interface councils of Mornington Peninsula and Wyndham

- Working across the municipalities of Casey, Cardina and Mornington Peninsula, the Inter Council Aboriginal Consultative Committee (ICACC) promotes engagement between Indigenous communities and local government and is developing improved ways of dealing with heritage issues in the administration of planning schemes
- Victorian Indigenous Youth Affairs Council – the Committee was advised of the re-establishment of this advisory council with support from the Office for Youth (OFY) and auspiced through the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic)
- Ministerial Advisory Council for Senior Victorians – this body provides advice to the Minister for Aged Care and acts as a conduit for communication between seniors and the government.
- Women's Consultative Forum Program – this program of events, comprising an annual Premier's Women's Summit and a series of consultative forums, provides an opportunity for women to raise awareness of the concerns affecting women's lives and to have direct access to the decision-making processes of government.

DVC also hosts a series of forums called In The Community (ITC) which bring together DVC staff, officers from other departments, elected representatives, community and business leaders and other stakeholders to explore ideas about working in partnership to build and strengthen local communities. According to the department, ITC has been successful in connecting groups who share common issues or have complementary interests and in promoting information about local events and opportunities.²⁰ Participants have the opportunity to speak with Ministers and senior officials first hand and to receive practical information on grants programs. The DVC advised that between April 2004 and September 2005, 10 ITC events were held across Victoria, including four in outer suburban/Interface areas.²¹

Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment

Some of the more innovative work to improve government community engagement processes in Australia comes out of departments with responsibility for issues like land use/planning, infrastructure and the environment. These are often complex and highly contentious areas of public policy, affecting people's homes and livelihoods. Additionally, many outcomes sought by these departments require community involvement. For example, problems like salinity, saving water and energy and preventing bushfires all require citizens to be involved and to actively 'co-produce' the solutions with government. Finally, these departments often have regionally-based staff who work closely with communities and have a need for high quality engagement skills.

In Western Australia, the Department for Planning and Infrastructure has taken a leading role in exploring innovations in community engagement, through its 21st Century Town Meetings, deliberative surveys, citizens' juries and others.²²

Here in Victoria, DSE has been particularly active in examining how government might engage better with communities to achieve sustainability outcomes. *Effective Engagement: building relationships with community and other stakeholders* is a kit for DSE staff (though freely available to the public at www.dse.vic.gov.au/engage) consisting of three books which contain an exploration of the theory of engagement, guidance in planning engagement and a ‘toolkit’ detailing various engagement practices and methods. The kit has been revised through a number of editions and shares the experiences and learnings of DSE staff from across the department. DSE also has an ‘Effective Engagement Planning Tool’ available for download from its website.²³ This application provides a step-by-step guide to developing an engagement plan.

Based on the experience gained through developing these resources, DSE is moving to embed effective engagement practices into the culture of the organisation. Community engagement will be included into DSE’s business processes, including project planning, recruitment criteria, learning and development, performance planning, risk management and communications. An internal Community Engagement Network is supporting these changes and providing coaching and training to project teams and staff involved in engagement work.

At a public seminar held in 2006 and attended by Members and staff of the Committee, Ms Frankie MacLennan from DSE discussed how a focus on community engagement is part of the larger impetus to change the way government works. Table 3.1 (presented at the seminar) illustrates the changes in organisational and staff behaviours that are part of this shift:²⁴

Table 3.1: Embedding a community engagement culture

OLD Behaviour	NEW Behaviour
Advocating for the organisation at all times	Brokering/facilitating decisions across stakeholders, communities and the government
Being technical – “we know the right answer, we’ll tell you” OR “if only you understood you would see we are right”	Balancing technical, social and economic issues – “we value the experience and knowledge of all community members and stakeholders”
We hold information close to our chests and defend ourselves at all costs	We are honest about information at all times and admit to our mistakes
We are separate from the community	Together we are all the community

Source: Presentation notes, ‘A Community Engagement Journey: The DSE Experience’, presented at DVC Seminar, ‘Distrustful, Disengaged or Disenchanted? Engagement and the Hard to Reach’, 13 April 2006, Melbourne.

In 2005 and again in 2006, DSE has produced an internal ‘snapshot’ to gain an understanding of the breadth and depth of community engagement practised in the department. The snapshot captures information on attitudes, impact, opportunities and trends through focus groups conducted across the regions and business units. Staff needs and concerns can be identified and it provides a useful internal indicator of the department’s progress towards achieving organisational change.

DSE is also examining the difficult issue of evaluating community engagement. This is a relatively under-developed area of engagement practice; according to the OECD, there is a “striking imbalance” between the resources OECD countries invest in strengthening government-citizen relations and the amount of attention paid to evaluating its effectiveness and influence on policy-making. In 2001, the OECD found no OECD country was conducting a systematic evaluation of government performance in community engagement.²⁵ However, some governments (such as in Western Australia and Queensland) or individual agencies are starting to develop tools to monitor performance in this area. There is a strong theme of ‘learning what works’ in this, but, as more time and money is invested in community engagement, there is likely to also be growing pressure for clear targets and measurement of effectiveness and efficiency.

In this regard, the Committee acknowledges a recent pilot project initiated by DSE’s Community Engagement Network and others, which aims to take an ‘action learning’ approach to understanding more about evaluating community engagement. Three project teams (Ringwood Transit Cities, Dandenong Ranges Fire Management Team, and Warby Ranges Fire Team) are designing and trialling evaluation plans as part of their engagement processes, with the intention of establishing a robust generic process including best practice for evaluating community engagement.²⁶ The pilot project is due for completion later in 2006. The Committee welcomes this initiative and believes it should be further supported within government to ensure its learnings are widely available.

The Committee’s investigations found a number of innovative and successful community engagement initiatives occurring across government. The Committee agrees with comments in the Victorian Government’s submission that there can be no one-size-fits-all approach for engagement practices and the different needs and profiles of communities and stakeholders must be taken into account. However, the Committee also sees benefit in the government taking steps to further embed a culture that enables and supports community engagement within all departments, as part of making government easier to work with.

Recommendation 3.1:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government undertake an audit of community engagement practices across the public sector. The audit should assess support for community engagement within departments and identify any resourcing, skill or capacity needs, as well as opportunities for expertise to be shared across organisations.

Recommendation 3.2:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government promote awareness of community engagement principles, planning and evaluation across state and local government through training and skills development.

Local Government context

Local governments have a number of fundamental roles, including setting overall directions for the municipality, making and enforcing local laws and other legislation over which they have authority, developing and implementing policies, advocacy on behalf of their constituencies and ensuring the delivery of quality services.²⁷

As the tier of government closest to the people, local governments in Victoria have also been the drivers of community engagement at the local level for some time. The VLGA identifies five primary issues around which local government community engagement generally takes place:

- *Major strategies and policies* – these are municipal wide, involve the whole population and present complex consultation challenges for councils
- *Policies/targeted strategies* – includes policy and strategy development on issues which impact on particular groups and/or areas
- *Operational/services* – focusing on services and operational issues
- *Projects/site specific* – includes site-specific statutory building and planning matters and council developments
- *Performance* – council-wide and individual service/issue assessments of council performance (often known as council satisfaction surveys).²⁸

Community engagement has become an increasingly prominent part of the work of local governments in recent years.²⁹ The introduction of various statutory requirements has been influential in this and in further shifting the emphasis towards increased accountability of local government to the community. Coupled with the state government's shift towards more decentralised forms of policy and program

development (in which local government plays a significant role), strategies for citizen participation have been put firmly on the agenda.³⁰

The *Local Government Act 1989* and the *Local Government (Democratic Reform) Act 2003* provide the legislative framework defining the purposes and functions of local government in Victoria. The former sets out the six Best Value Principles with which councils must comply. Principle (e) states “a Council must develop a program of regular consultation with its community in relation to the services it provides.” Councils are further required to take into account community expectations and values when establishing quality and cost standards and to report annually on their achievement against all six Best Value Principles.

The *Best Value Victoria Guide* was produced in late 2000 and advises that consultation should take place early in the implementation of the Best Value Principles for specific services, so councils can be sure the principles of quality and costs standards, accessibility, responsiveness and continuous improvement are informed by consultation.³¹

Under the *Local Government (Democratic Reform) Act 2003*, councils are also required to consult with the community in the preparation of a four-year Council Plan setting out strategic objectives and strategies for the period. The Council Plan is to be reviewed annually and sits above the other two main legislative planning requirements of local government: the Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) and the Municipal Public Health Plan (MPHP).³²

Community plans are a further addition to this framework. About half of Victorian local government authorities have produced community plans and they are often the key mechanism by which councils engage and provide feedback to the community.³³ In a presentation to the Committee, Mr Andrew Rowe of the VLGA noted the development of community plans represented a huge opportunity for councils to strengthen their community engagement processes. Mr Rowe also discussed the relationship between community plans, Councils Plans and the role of elected councillors:

That is where the council plan comes in as the ultimate political document owned by the political, elected representatives to determine how they will respond to a community plan. Let us acknowledge that people may well have been elected to make something happen or to stop something happening and they will continue to exercise that right because that is what they believe their mandate is. That is where the council plan will still exist as the political document owned by the elected leadership of that council to determine how it responds to the broader discussions in a community planning exercise, as well as actually being itself part of that community planning exercise.³⁴

Indicators of engagement at the local government level

The 2005 DVC report *Indicators of community strength at the Local Government Area level in Victoria*, gives data on two indicators of community engagement within an LGA: firstly, the perception of residents that they have opportunities to have a real say on important issues, and secondly, the level of citizen participation on decision-making boards or committees.³⁵

Table 3.2 below shows how the Interface areas rated on the two indicators. Melton and Wyndham recorded the highest ratings on the ability of residents to have a say (58.2 percent and 57.5 percent respectively) but were below other Interface areas on the indicator of participation on decision-making boards and committees.

Table 3.2: Indicators of community engagement

LGA	Residents who report they can have a 'real say on issues' (%)	Residents who report involvement on a decision-making board or committee (%) (n/d = no data)
Cardinia	53.8	19.9
Hume	51.4	17.6
Melton	58.2	16.3
Mornington Peninsula	57.4	20.0
Nillumbik	55.4	23.7
Whittlesea	37.3	n/d
Wyndham	57.5	14.4
Yarra Ranges	41.3	n/d
STATE AVERAGE	59.6	23.6

Source: DVC, *Indicators of community strength at the Local Government Area level in Victoria*, 2005.

Again, however, caution is needed in comparing LGAs or otherwise drawing conclusions from this data. DVC states that these should not be seen as local government indicators. For example, a lower rating on the ability of residents to have a real say on issues important to them may be a reflection of federal or state government engagement processes, not merely local government. However, over time this data could potentially be monitored by local governments as they seek to scale-up their engagement activities. Nillumbik Shire Council informed the Committee of how it has used this information:

Looking across the interface areas, Nillumbik achieves the highest indicator in 11 of those 15 [indicators]. In some areas it is quite substantially higher than other interface councils.

Interestingly, one of the four remaining indicators where we came fourth rather than receiving the highest ranking was a question about ‘Do you feel there is an opportunity to have a real say on issues?’ Given that we have an articulate, participative community, that raises the challenge in terms of whether they have even greater expectations of this council in terms of how the community can participate in issues and be engaged.³⁶

Principles of community engagement

A search of the national and international literature reveals a large number of attempts to codify the principles which underpin effective community engagement. The following section gives three prominent examples, from the United Nations (UN) International Conference on Engaging Communities, the OECD and Involve. There is some overlap but also divergence in the principles each identifies.

Brisbane Declaration

The *Brisbane Declaration on Community Engagement* was developed in 2005 with initial input from practitioners, academics, policy advisers, governments and others, and then further informed by the contributions of delegates at the UN International Conference on Engaging Communities, held in Brisbane in August 2005 and attended by members of the Committee. The completed Declaration was forwarded to the UN through the Australian Prime Minister. Having participated, along with many others, in the formulation of these principles, the Committee believes they represent a sound over-arching framework for community engagement and supports their being more widely known.

Points 7 to 15 of the Declaration read:

7. [We] *affirm* that community engagement is critical to effective, transparent and accountable governance in the public, community and private sectors.
8. *Recognise* that community engagement is a two way process:
 - by which the aspirations, concerns, needs and values of citizens and communities are incorporated at all levels and in all sectors in policy development, planning, decision-making, service delivery and assessment
 - by which governments and other business and civil society organisations involve citizens, clients, communities and other stakeholders in these processes
9. *Affirm* that effective engagement generates better decisions, delivering sustainable economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits.
10. *Also recognise* that effective community engagement enables the free and full development of human potential, fosters relationships based on mutual understanding, trust and respect, facilitates the sharing of responsibilities and creates more inclusive and sustainable communities.

11. *Further* recognise that meaningful community engagement seeks to address barriers and build the capacity and confidence of people to participate in, and negotiate and partner with, institutions that affect their lives, in particular those previously excluded or disenfranchised.
12. *Further* recognise that inclusive engagement requires that Indigenous peoples and the poor and marginalized, are adequately resourced to participate meaningfully in the broader community and that they have a stake in the outcome and benefit equitably as a result of being involved.
13. *Endorse* the core principles of integrity, inclusion, deliberation and influence in community engagement:
 - Integrity – when there is openness and honesty about the scope and purpose of engagement
 - Inclusion - when there is an opportunity for a diverse range of values and perspectives to be freely and fairly expressed and heard
 - Deliberation – when there is sufficient and credible information for dialogue, choice and decisions and when there is space to weigh options, develop common understandings and to appreciate respective roles and responsibilities
 - Influence – when people have input in designing how they participate, when policies and services reflect their involvement and when their impact is apparent.
14. *Recognise* the availability of a wide range of methods and technologies, including new and emerging tools associated with the internet, to facilitate appropriate and effective community engagement.
15. *Affirm* the value of education, ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge sharing about active citizenship and community engagement processes and outcomes.³⁷

The full text of the Declaration is provided in Appendix G.

OECD's Guiding Principles for Engaging Citizens in Policy-Making

In 2001, the OECD published *Engaging Citizens in Policy-making: Information, Consultation and Public Participation*. The paper identifies ten guiding principles for “successful information, consultation and active participation in policy-making.”³⁸

1. **Commitment** – leadership and strong commitment to information, consultation and active participation in policy-making is needed at all levels – from politicians, senior managers and public officials.
2. **Rights** – citizens’ rights to access information, provide feedback, be consulted and actively participate in policy-making must be firmly grounded in law or policy. Government obligations to respond to citizens when exercising their rights must also be clearly stated. Independent institutions for oversight, or their equivalent, are essential to enforcing these rights.
3. **Clarity** – objectives for and limits to, information, consultation and active participation during policy-making should be well defined from the outset.

The respective roles and responsibilities of citizens (in providing input) and government (in making decisions for which they are accountable) must be clear to all.

4. **Time** – public consultation and active participation should be undertaken as early as possible to allow a greater range of policy solutions to emerge and to raise the chances of successful implementation. Adequate time must be available for consultation and participation to be effective. Information is needed at all stages of the policy cycle.
5. **Objectivity** – information provided by government during policy-making should be objective, complete and accessible. All citizens should have equal treatment when exercising their rights of access to information and participation.
6. **Resources** – adequate financial, human and technical resources are needed if public information, consultation and active participation in policy-making are to be effective. Government officials must have access to appropriate skills, guidance and training as well as an organisational culture that supports their efforts.
7. **Co-ordination** – initiatives to inform, request feedback from and consult citizens should be co-ordinated across government to enhance knowledge management, ensure policy coherence, avoid duplication and reduce the risk of ‘consultation fatigue’ among citizens and civil society organisations. Co-ordination efforts should not reduce the capacity of government units to pursue innovation and ensure flexibility.
8. **Accountability** – governments have an obligation to account for the use they make of citizen’ inputs received through feedback, public consultation and active participation. Measures to ensure that the policy-making process is open, transparent and amenable to external scrutiny and review are crucial to increasing government accountability overall.
9. **Evaluation** – governments need the tools, information and capacity to evaluate their performance in providing information, conducting consultation and engaging citizens in order to adapt to new requirements and changing conditions for policy-making.
10. **Active citizenship** – governments benefit from active citizens and a dynamic civil society and can take concrete actions to facilitate access to information and participation, raise awareness, strengthen citizens’ civic education and skills as well as to support capacity-building among civil society organisations.

Involve’s Principles of Good Participation

Involve is a UK-based organisation of practitioners and researchers established in 2003 to improve public participation and democracy. The following principles are drawn from Involve’s 2005 publication: *People and Participation: How to put citizens at the heart of decision making*.³⁹

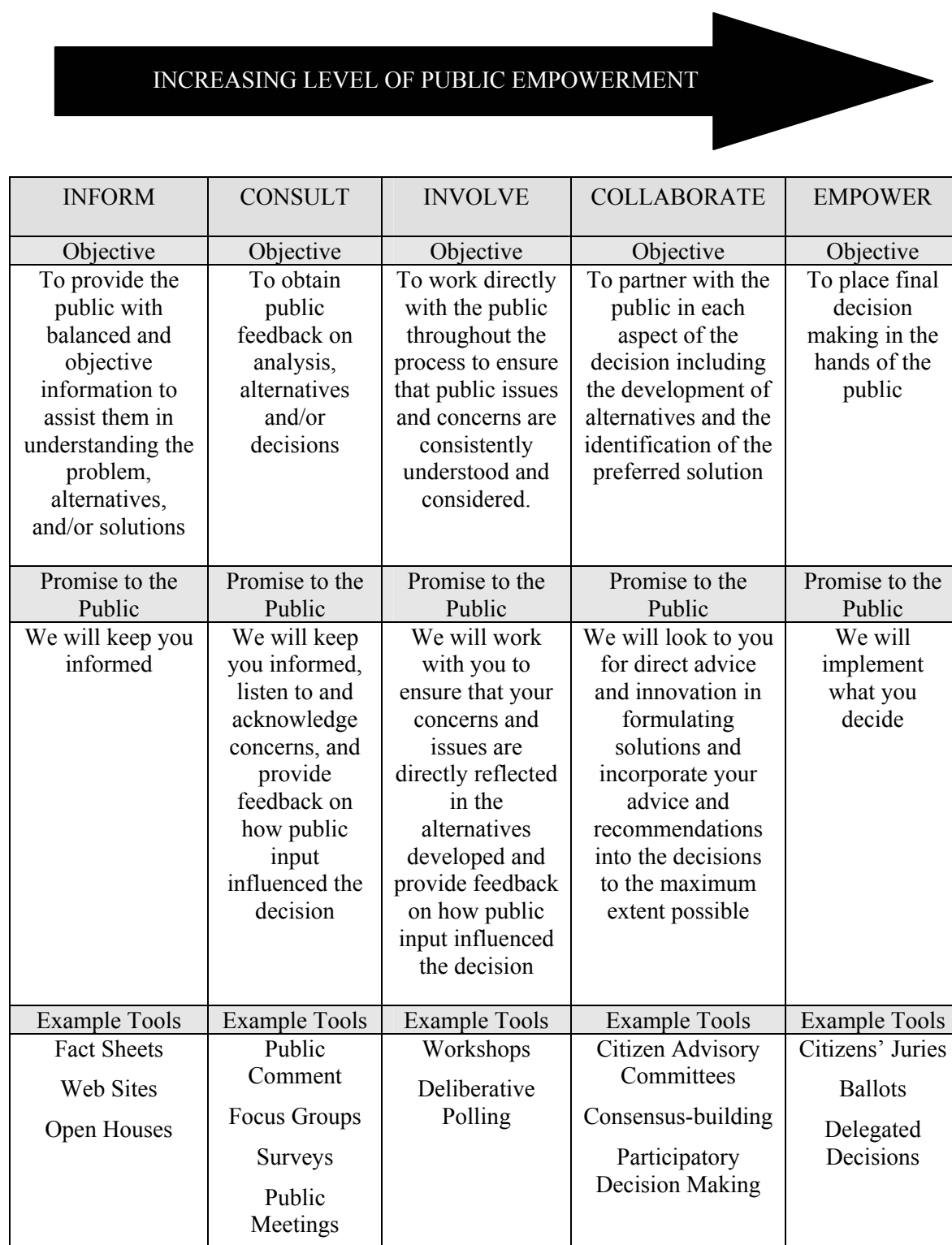
1. **Makes a difference** – the purpose of participation is to achieve change in relation to the purpose identified; it may also make a difference to all those involved in terms of learning, confidence and sense of active citizenship.
2. **Voluntary** – people may be encouraged to be involved and even paid for involvement, but effective participation requires them to choose to be involved. Participation can never be compulsory.
3. **Transparency, honesty and clarity** – about the purpose, the limits of what can and cannot be changed, who can be involved and how, and what happens as a result.
4. **Adequate resources** – to manage the process well and to deliver on the results.
5. **Appropriate participants** – representative and/or inclusive, depending on the purpose of the exercise, with traditionally excluded groups given special support and encouragement when their involvement is appropriate.
6. **Accessibility** – so that no participant is excluded because of lack of physical access to meeting places, timing or appropriate support.
7. **Accountability** – participatory processes need to be accountable to all those involved (including the organisation that may be running/commissioning the exercise, and to the wider community). This requires good-record keeping and reporting of both processes and outcomes.
8. **Power** – participatory processes should have sufficient power to achieve the agreed objectives. This may require a change to the existing power-sharing arrangements.
9. **Learning and development** – participatory processes should seek to support a climate of mutual learning and development among all those involved.

Models of community engagement

There are numerous models of community engagement.⁴⁰ Most take their cues, to some extent, from Arnstein's famous 'ladder of citizen participation', first published in 1969.⁴¹ 'Arnstein's Ladder' ranks different levels of interaction between government and the community into a hierarchy, with each ascending rung of the ladder representing an increased level of influence granted to citizens, from the bottom rung ('manipulation') up to the top rung ('citizen control').

Others have since recast the ladder by depicting public participation as a continuum or sliding scale. At one end of the scale generally sits information provision – a limited and one-way relationship between governments and citizens. Media releases and newsletters are examples of this. At the other end is active citizenship or empowerment (depending on the model followed), both of which entail a much more powerful role for citizens in agenda-setting and decision-making.

Figure 3.1 below shows a model of public participation developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum has been adopted by (among others) DSE (following internal testing) and Involve. A submission from DVC to this Inquiry also described the Victorian Government's community engagement activities in terms similar to the IAP2 model.⁴²

Figure 3.1: IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Source: International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) 2000.

Five broad categories of public participation are identified: inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower. Moving from left to right along the spectrum there is a corresponding increase in expectation for public participation and impact. 'Informing' stakeholders contains no expectation of receiving feedback and there is a

similarly low level of public impact. At the other end, ‘empowering’ stakeholders to make decisions has increased expectations and an increased level of public impact.⁴³

Each category shown here is associated with different tools or methods. The most well-known and commonly used (such as surveys and public meetings) typically fall within the ‘inform, consult, involve or collaborate’ parts of the spectrum, indicating that community members are generally allowed only a limited degree of influence over final decisions and outcomes.⁴⁴

Organisations might adapt the model to suit their stakeholders or to stress certain components. DSE’s engagement resources, while adopting the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum, alert DSE staff to a component of engagement which is missing from it: ‘social capacity’. This is defined as “the ability of stakeholders/community to act.”⁴⁵ It suggests that those planning engagement processes need to be aware of how well placed the community is to participate.

As mentioned, other models depict engagement from different perspectives, with different terminology and with equal claims to legitimacy. From a practical standpoint, one of the key values of models such as the one shown above lies in encouraging those conducting the engagement process to be explicit about its purpose and what its outcomes could be. A common reason for public disappointment with engagement initiatives is the gap between rhetoric and practice. As Mr George Wright stated in a submission to the Committee (on the subject of public participation):

... the nature of each exercise needs to be defined: is it for information dissemination, information collection, issue identification or decision making? If this is not clear, the community will be disaffected and the [result] will be destabilising for the community rather than supportive and developmental.⁴⁶

Similarly, Involve has noted:

Too often the fanfare that accompanies a participative process is not matched by the actual opportunities to participate or the eventual influence of the process.⁴⁷

Involve identifies three factors underlying this, which are often symptomatic of an inexperienced or naïve approach to engagement:

- The focus on having large numbers of people involved driving an over-enthusiastic marketing of the process, “your opportunity to save the world”, when in reality you may be simply informing a local policy; or
- The will and commitment to promote participation being greater than the individual and organisational capacity to deliver; or

- The interest in participation not being matched by a willingness to change anything as a result.⁴⁸

A further point to note when looking at the IAP2 Spectrum (and other similar models) is that the goal should not always be to move community engagement practices further along to the right of the spectrum. Different levels of participation suit different circumstances; most practitioners now recognise that one method need not be better than the others: what matters is how appropriate the choice is for any given context.⁴⁹

Equally, more is not always better in community engagement. In the literature, there is discussion of the problem of policy-makers seeking input on every possible issue, leading to ‘consultation fatigue’ in the community. Engagement techniques need to take into account the level of interest in the community on the topic at hand. If an issue is of little significance to the community or unrelated to their current concerns, then they will have limited motivation to get involved.⁵⁰

Professor Stephen Coleman, in his recent paper on representation and democracy, argues that while people do not necessarily want to be involved on every question of public policy, they do want to be a part of an ‘ongoing conversation’ with politicians and policy-makers in which the public’s contribution is heard and responded to:

Citizens don’t want to go through the time-consuming process of examining every area of policy and piece of new legislation. They do not expect every decision to go their way, nor that politicians will perform miracles. They do expect, however, ordinary levels of competency and efficiency, and to be engaged in the political conversation as equals. And they want to know that their contribution will be valued – that it will make a difference ... It is vital to demonstrate clear and honest connections between individual actions and collective results, neighbourhood input and global output, and single-issue choices and systemic effects.⁵¹

Coleman is here also pointing to the importance of feeding-back the outcomes of community engagement processes to those who participate in them. Citizens need to know what happens to the opinions or information they provide. The Committee heard that this does not always appear to be done successfully. One witness, from a community organisation, gave a practical example of this and the effect it can have:

We have been invited to participate in certain think tanks or groups like that, but have never really understood where that information goes or what the impacts of those things are. We sometimes feel powerless.⁵²

One community engagement resource written for councils advises that providing feedback can assist in ensuring all input is considered in the decision-making process. Feedback can be general; it is often not practicable to tailor a response to each individual input, though the feedback should go to all participants.⁵³ Nillumbik Shire

Council provided the Committee with examples of how it has used newsletters to inform residents of the results of consultation surveys. The Committee also heard that, following a significant community forum, the council sent a forum report to the 148 participants, as well as to an additional 650 people in the area who had not participated but who, the council hoped, might be prompted to get involved if they could see how the information had been developed and used.⁵⁴

The ‘hard to reach’ and the ‘usual suspects’

The Committee heard from a number of Inquiry participants, most commonly local governments, on the topic of engaging with the ‘hard to reach’ sections of society, as well as their mirror image, the ‘usual suspects’.

The definition of who is ‘hard to reach’ differs from place to place and issue to issue. An ongoing Swinburne University research project involving eight councils (of which two – Whittlesea and Nillumbik – are Interface councils) and the VLGA, reports there are three broad categories of people whom local governments find hard to reach: the disadvantaged, the disengaged and the disaffected. CALD, indigenous, young, elderly, disabled and homeless people all face barriers to involvement. Other groups identified by councils included drug users, sex workers, those on low incomes, high rise apartment dwellers, faith based communities, single parents, newly arrived residents, gay and lesbian people and others.⁵⁵ Some people are seen as hard to reach because they are time poor, either due to working long hours, commuting for long distances or heavy domestic responsibilities (such as caring).

Engaging with these different groups is a challenge for most governments and organisations. However, to some extent at least, this is an issue of particular concern for local governments at the Interface, whose communities typically contain pockets of disadvantage, relatively large CALD communities, young families who are becoming established in the area and numerous time-poor commuters. Without feedback and participation, the task of urban planning, making decisions about community needs and services and advocating for their communities is especially problematic for these councils in the context of rapid growth. Furthermore, unless great care is taken not to leave out those who lack the confidence, time or resources to participate or who are isolated by, for example, language, cultural difference, geography or disability, participatory exercises can magnify social exclusion and disadvantage.⁵⁶

The literature focusing on the ‘hard to reach’ and ‘the usual suspects’ (a common term for the people who can be relied on to respond to all engagement invitations) suggests the problem is not their distinctive characteristics but rather, the unwillingness or inability of consulting authorities to seek involvement in the appropriate manner.⁵⁷ As one author states, “if we want to include a wider range of people, it is the system itself that needs attention.”⁵⁸ The Committee acknowledges there are a number of resources available which can assist practitioners in planning community engagement

so that it is more inclusive. The VLGA provides information on its website on engaging with young people, Indigenous people, older people, CALD communities and people with disabilities. DSE has also addressed these groups within its *Effective Engagement* kit. Practical suggestions include providing information in appropriate formats and languages, ensuring venues are accessible to all, scheduling engagement activities at appropriate times (perhaps after-hours or on weekends), providing childcare facilities or paying travel expenses.

In addition, the Swinburne University *Hard to Reach* project has the potential to be of considerable assistance. Developed in collaboration with its research partners, future stages of the project will:

Investigate the social and demographic characteristics of each municipality and the particular challenges involved in consultation efforts that are underway. The result will be a pool of examples, offering instances of best practice and endemic difficulty. The research will benefit councils and Victorian citizens by providing insights into the rationales and techniques available to councils who face a range of inherently difficult consultation issues. In addition to academic publications, outcomes will include much-needed information and new strategic resources for the industry partners.⁵⁹

The Committee was informed by a number of participants that one of the most critical ways to engage in an inclusive manner was to ‘go to where the people are’; that is, seek involvement from people where they meet, shop or recreate. As an example, the Macedon Ranges Shire Council stated in a submission that it had tried a number of strategies to engage its large commuter population in local governance, including “moving council meetings around the shire, advertising and promoting activities at local train stations and hosting events on the weekend.”⁶⁰

Mr Andrew Rowe told the Committee that “the best consultations are going out to people in their own spaces, halls and communities and not in the formal events you run on a Thursday night.”⁶¹ Mr Rowe also discussed the importance of working through the local groups and organisations to which people belong:

Firstly, acknowledge the existing groups and organisations that meet that are active representatives of their communities ... You talk to those groups. I have got tonnes of examples where I go out to speak to University of the 3rd Age groups where they say, ‘We cannot talk to our council. No-one talks to us’... They are crying out for the council or someone else to say, ‘What do you think about something?’ It could be about rates, increased prices or timetabling. When community organisations meet, trust that they are prepared to talk about more things than they might actually look like they have been organised to do.⁶²

Mr Rowe went on to say:

The general meeting idea of who comes along to a public meeting usually gets the most committed and dedicated followers of those sorts of discussions ... but fails to acknowledge a huge groundswell of public opinion that might well be of a different view, or might not be. You trust existing community groups and organisations.⁶³

With people who may lack confidence or motivation to engage (such as young people or new migrants), there can be a need to take an informal approach to engagement. Ms Stephanie Lagos, CEO of the Northern Migrant Resource Centre, outlined to the Committee some examples of community engagement techniques which, in her experience, are **not** effective in engaging newly arrived communities:

- Calling for formal public meetings
- Outreach via newsletters and surveys
- Flyers/invitations in formal or bureaucratic language
- Consultation with little perceived benefit to the participants
- Government driven campaigns/programs (many migrants come from countries where government agencies are not trusted)
- Visiting community centres.⁶⁴

Ms Lagos suggested the more successful strategies were those involving face-to-face contact. These include community BBQs, overnight camps or excursions, youth sporting competitions and council-run orientation tours to assist new migrants with using public transport and accessing services.⁶⁵

At a more formal level, there are various consultative and advisory committees representing the interests of CALD communities. For example, the Migrant Settlement Committee in the City of Dandenong has the following functions:

- To monitor implementation of policy commitments of the three levels of government
- Identify issues of concern related to the delivery of post-arrival services
- Providing an employment forum for migrants and refugees focussing on qualification assessment and upgrading
- Focusing efforts on resourcing newly settled communities to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness
- Connecting newly arrived and emerging groups to existing organisations such as the Ethnic Communities Council of the South East, the Interfaith Network of the City of Greater Dandenong, Neighbourhood Houses and other community organisations
- Resourcing communities to access possible funding to assist in the development of community events and to include them in all other appropriate community events.⁶⁶

The Committee also received evidence around the issue of engagement with young people. YACVic's submission stated:

Often young people are not invited to engagement in decisions around issues that affect them. Narrow perceptions around the types of issues that young people may wish to contribute to can mean they are not considered as stakeholders. For example, issues considered in urban planning or service delivery are often of very direct relevance to young people, but young people are not typically consulted or engaged in these planning processes.⁶⁷

The Committee was particularly impressed with a series of handbooks developed by YACVic entitled *Taking Young People Seriously*. These handbooks explore a range of options for engaging with youth, with a specific focus on consultation, participation on boards and committees and activities to create change.⁶⁸ The handbooks highlight the need for flexible processes and adequate resourcing in any initiatives which seek to engage young people.

The Committee acknowledges the work of YACVic and the OFY in continuing to advocate for greater attention to be paid to the involvement of young people in decision-making. The Victorian Government's recently released framework for youth policy and program development (*Respect*) outlines a number of achievements to date and commits the government to valuing the contributions of young people, listening to their views and providing them with genuine opportunities for involvement.⁶⁹ The Committee further notes the recent publication by the OFY, in partnership with the MAV and RMIT University, of documents intended to help local governments engage young people in the development of Youth Charters.⁷⁰

Finally, the Committee notes that one of the main reasons why more inclusive approaches to engagement are not pursued is the view they are too expensive. There appears to be very little guidance for organisations on the financial costs of undertaking various forms and techniques of community engagement. The Committee believes this information would assist organisations to budget appropriately for community engagement and encourage greater efforts to be inclusive of hard to reach groups. While noting the complexity involved in assessing these matters, the Committee believes research into costs (and benefits) would be of practical assistance to both state and local governments.

Recommendation 3.3:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government commission research into the financial costs of community engagement techniques, with a view to providing practical guidance to local governments, organisations and individuals.

The following section outlines two examples of community engagement processes brought to the Committee's attention, which utilise innovative ways to involve people who may not normally participate.

Women in Community Disaster Recovery

The Women in Community Disaster Recovery project was facilitated through CFA brigades in the Shire of Nillumbik, with assistance from the council, the local Living and Learning Centre and other stakeholders. The project was of interest to the Committee as it demonstrates the value of looking beyond the most vocal community representatives and the benefits of skilling people up to become active citizens.

The objective of the project was to strengthen women's leadership capacity through information, training and resources and by focusing on the important issue of community disaster recovery. Twelve women were identified through networks, local schools and newspaper advertising and invited to participate. Ms Kay Hawkins, a CFA volunteer and one of the organisers of the project, informed the Committee of some of their backgrounds:

... they ranged in age from early 20s to probably in their mid-60s. Some were young and single, some were retired and two or three of the women I know had at least three children. One of the people that I approached specifically was, you could say, not confident. In fact I would say a few of those people were perhaps not confident that they had anything to offer but still wanted to feel they could participate.⁷¹

The project consisted of six workshops over six weeks, exploring disaster recovery and the respective roles of the council, state government and local community. Participants were asked a range of questions about how best to contact people and coordinate the recovery response in the event of a disaster. Various experts and guest speakers, including a psychologist and state and local government officers, were brought in to discuss different aspects of the disaster recovery process. There was also a focus on the development of communication and leadership skills. Ms Hawkins stated that the participants generated information and ideas which were fed directly back into the Shire's community recovery planning.⁷² In addition, the women were given the skills and motivation to participate in future committees or to volunteer for local emergency services.

Hill End Community Study Group

Hill End is a rural community of around 75 residences located in the peri-urban shire of Baw Baw. Members of the Hill End Community Study Group addressed the Committee at a public hearing held in Warragul and discussed a 10 week study circle program run through Monash University. The program has empowered a small group

of local residents to become involved in reinvigorating the Hill End community. Mr Iain McLean, a resident and one of the initiators of the program in Hill End, described the background to the formation of the study group:

We were concerned that the school was going down in numbers; the hall was starting to look a bit dilapidated because it was not being looked after; and the congregation at the church was dropping off.⁷³

Participants in the study circle worked through various themes and skills (such as “networking”, “adversity as opportunity”, “reflection”) and examined the experiences of other Victorian towns that had faced similar challenges.⁷⁴ With assistance from the Shire and Monash University, the study circle program built the confidence and capacity of participants to identify local needs and to mobilise other residents. The program culminated in a community meeting attended by 40 people at which several ideas and projects were formed, including developing a community plan, preserving and promoting the history of the town and renovating community buildings. Mr McLean stated:

The focus of this meeting was to engage the broader community in future directions. From this very exciting night, a night to remember, we all got terribly nervous and excited and then thrilled because we workshopped with these people on ideas and concerns they might have and the buzz in the room was just unbelievable. The amount of information we got back from them, the feedback, was just so exciting. There is so much on these bits of paper and in the plans that it is going to take us several weeks to sort through it and decide what are going to be our priorities: what we can handle first, second, third and how we can handle it. We do not want to move too quickly; we do not want to exhaust ourselves; we need more people to come on board, so we have got a fair bit to do — we are just at the beginning.⁷⁵

The Committee heard the study circle methodology has been used successfully in other parts of rural Victoria and could also be employed by local government or community groups in urban fringe locations.⁷⁶

Online engagement

Conducting engagement activities online has the potential to open up new channels of participation and be of considerable benefit to the public. Issues around online consultation were the subject of the Victorian Parliament’s recent Inquiry into Victorian Electronic Democracy, conducted by the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee and published in a final report in May 2005.⁷⁷ The report states that the

advantages of using new technologies in consultation and participation can be found in:

- Areas of access to consultation and participation processes:
 - Participation by people with limited time and mobility, or who live in remote locations
 - Non-business hours participation
 - Participation by those with a disability
- Changing the environment of consultation:
 - Benefits of informality, where appropriate
 - Options for anonymity
 - Reaching members of the community with high literacy levels but low levels of participation in formal political processes, such as young people
- Exploring new avenues for participation:
 - The facilitation of citizen-to-citizen interaction and debate
 - Capacity to increase the numerical level of predication in more complex consultation processes
 - Introduction of polling and voting practices
 - Combining processes that focus on individual contributions as well as contributions from peak bodies or community organisations
- Applying effective and enhanced information management to consultation:
 - Provision of greater levels of information, or information in multimedia formats, in a way that allows participants to determine how much or how little information they require
 - Ability for participants to be provided with information about the results of the process in a direct and expedient manner
 - The ability to digitally capture information provided and apply analytical or indexing software to the contributions.⁷⁸

The report also noted a number of online consultation activities occurring across state and local governments. However, as the report makes clear, the suitability of new technologies for use in community engagement depends very much upon the issue being considered and the context of the process.⁷⁹ Any engagement process needs to be designed in a way that is fair, transparent and as representative as possible and does not disadvantage people due to a lack of technical proficiency or ITC access.⁸⁰

DVC informed the Committee that its Youth Central website (www.youthcentral.vic.gov.au) seeks to deliver relevant information to a broad age range of young people. The Australian Government has developed a similar website

(www.thesource.gov.au) as a gateway to youth information, programs, services, resources and entertainment for young people between the ages of 12 and 25. It also provides young people with information on youth consultative bodies, such as the National Youth Roundtable and the National Indigenous Youth Leadership Group.

The Queensland Government's youth website (www.generate.qld.gov.au) was of interest to the Committee as it is currently re-developing its 'online meetings' function. From 2001 to 2004, the Generate website held regular online chats between young people and members of Queensland Parliament. This service was called Ministers Online. The online chats allowed young people to comment directly on issues of interest or concern. According to Generate, the website aims to re-launch the service in 2006 with better quality software, more focused topics and the ability to request particular government and community representatives as special guests in the online meeting environment.

Aotearoa Youth Voices (www.youthvoices.govt.nz) is a website developed by the New Zealand Ministry of Youth Development, which seeks to provide ways to have young people's voices heard by government. The website provides information on topics like preparing submissions to parliament, writing to politicians and organising campaigns. The website also invites young people to vote or provide direct feedback on important issues currently being considered by the NZ Parliament, such as the youth minimum wage.

The Committee was informed by the Ministry that its Youth Advisory Group had been involved in facilitating youth involvement in the minimum wage debate (through the website and the production of a free postcard on the issue) and this has been somewhat challenging for politicians and the Ministry itself as it may question government policy or open it up to criticism. Despite this, the Ministry also thought it was important for democracy that young people were assisted to put their views forward. Initiatives such as these will fail or breed cynicism if they are not genuine or are tightly controlled by government.

The Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee supports the recommendations put forward by the recent Victorian Electronic Democracy Inquiry, with their general theme of advocating for increasing the use of ICTs and online consultations to strengthen democracy in Victoria. In this Committee's opinion, there is scope for government, Parliament and elected representatives to be much bolder in experimenting with the use of ICTs in community engagement and connecting citizens with the political process.

Community engagement in local government

The following section outlines selected examples of community engagement practices raised with the Committee during its discussions with local governments.

Melton Shire Council

Many of the Interface councils face the challenge of planning services for a rapidly growing population of young families. However, engaging with young families can be challenging as they are often unlikely to have time to attend public meetings or respond to written information requests. A consultation process carried out by Melton Shire Council for its Children's Strategy 2005-2008 sought ways around this and illustrates a number of best practice elements.

The consultation period ran for seven weeks and was aimed at capturing the views of families with children aged 0-12 years. Fifteen local service providers were also consulted. The Council developed a survey which, while focused on a specific issue, was open-ended enough to allow respondents to raise related concerns and feedback new information.

Critically, the Council adopted a strategy of going out to locations where the target demographic could be found. Ms Emma Healey, General Manager, Community Services, informed the Committee:

What we actually did, rather than send a survey out, was to send staff out in this instance and we sent them to all the places and locations where we thought we could actually capture parents. So we were capturing them effectively at schools, the Waves Recreation Centre, shopping centres, food banks, outside Centrelink, MCH [maternal and child health] services, playgroups, at community events and festivals — I think we targeted 26 individual sites over that period of seven weeks where we thought we could get a full range of community. We also identified that there was a need to get responses from both urban and rural locations so we went to primary schools in the rural areas and spoke to parents there.⁸¹

Ms Healey stated that the use of staff to conduct the surveys was particularly valuable as it created stronger connections between the community and the Council and contributed to staff learning and development.

The Council also linked into specific service organisations and networks to gain participation from smaller or harder to reach sub-groups, such as those who are financially disadvantaged, geographically isolated, people with a disability (or with a child with a disability) and Indigenous people. The Committee heard that the final strategy adopted by Council was improved by the consultation process:

The outcomes of the methodology are that we will probably look at reviewing and including in future consultations because it was so targeted and probably delivered one of the best consultation results in terms of information for us in the last number of years ... With the reach of the survey, we were confident when we produced it and came up with the outcomes

of the strategy that the community out there who do not usually participate in public events were actually being reflected in the strategy outcomes, and there was a real assurance for council that the broad community view and opinion had been captured in the results ...⁸²

Nillumbik Shire Council

Cr Bill Penrose of Nillumbik Shire Council addressed the Committee at a public hearing and discussed some of the thinking behind Nillumbik's approach to community engagement. Cr Penrose stated that greater resident involvement increased the legitimacy of council decisions and developed a sense of belonging and empowerment in the community:

One should ask, why do we want community consultation and council involvement ... one of the policies that this council has set about to do is community engagement and consultation for the purposes of raising the respect and confidence in council decisions. This has the potential for reducing conflict, reducing criticism and basically in the long term, I can hope anyway, that people will gradually get a feeling that they are proud of their shire and they have a feeling of ownership of the shire...⁸³

Cr Penrose and Nillumbik staff informed the Committee of various examples of Nillumbik's participatory practices. The Nillumbik Community Planning Think Tank is a group of around 30 residents who meet monthly and are consulted by the Council on an ongoing basis. In the past, the group has considered issues such as the development of a public health plan or the design of the Council's website. Members of the Think Tank are drawn from different community groups and feed back local opinion into Council policy-making processes. The Committee heard that the effectiveness of the Think Tank depends to a large degree on the willingness of Council officers to be open to the debate and ideas generated by its members.⁸⁴

Nillumbik's Community Pulse Survey is an example of a different approach to what is a common consultation technique. Rather than use consultants, the Council enlisted local residents to contribute to the design of the survey and receive training as volunteer action researchers. The volunteers then surveyed people within their local networks in face-to-face meetings.⁸⁵

Cr Penrose also advanced the view that there was a considerable amount of research and activity currently occurring in the field of participation/community engagement, but what was needed was a way for councils to determine what works and what does not. Cr Penrose suggested an awards process recognising best practice might be one way of doing this.

My suggestion is that we need to somehow consolidate all this research in a way that councils can use it, give some sort of

advice about what works in some areas and does not work in other areas and as a result end up with a structure where you can recognise those councils that are doing it in the best possible way, by some sort of award for best practice and so that these good examples can be used by all shires.⁸⁶

The VLGA's Mr Andrew Rowe also raised the issue of an awards process for local governments that have used innovative and effective ways to consult and engage with communities as part of their strategic planning processes.⁸⁷

Recommendation 3.4:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government establish a high profile annual awards system, open to both state and local government, in order to showcase and reward best practice examples of community engagement.

Wyndham City Council

The Household Panel is a key element of Wyndham's community engagement strategy. The panel consists of around 400 local residents who have been selected, through surveys and workshops to make up a group as reflective of the attitudes and characteristics of the overall Wyndham community as possible.⁸⁸ An invitation to join the panel is included in an information package which Council sends out to all new residents. Panel members must be willing to be surveyed every six to eight weeks and the membership is re-assessed every year to ensure it remains representative. Survey results for the panel have been shown to be within one or two percent of the broader population, demonstrating its accuracy as a guide to local attitudes.

The Panel is consulted on a wide range of topics, such as substance abuse issues, shopping patterns, home-based business growth and satisfaction with Council services. The CEO of Wyndham City Council, Mr Ian Robins, stated to Committee members that the Household Panel was "highly successful, cost effective and has worked well for us."⁸⁹

Yarra Ranges Shire Council

The *Vision 2020 Yarra Ranges Community Plan* was singled out to the Committee as a particularly notable example of a local government community plan.⁹⁰ The process

of developing the plan was seen as strengthening the local community as well as making a contribution to the council's own strategic planning processes.

The original *Vision 2020* was developed in 1999 following extensive community consultation. It sets out a vision for the future of Yarra Ranges based around seven integrated themes:

- The social fabric and quality of life of the shire in 2020
- Environmental stewardship in 2020
- The built environment in 2020
- The local economy in 2020
- A tourism and cultural icon in 2020
- A living and learning community in 2020
- A safe and accessible shire in 2020.⁹¹

The document underwent a review process (*Checking our Shared Vision*) in 2002 which identified a number of issues requiring updating and greater integration with council and state government policies. A further review occurred in 2006. The aim of this latest review was to pick up any shifts in community priorities that might need to be reflected in the document. Approximately 4,500 community members were involved in consultations on the review. Techniques used by the Council included four public consultation forums, a community survey, four staff workshops, 15 different key stakeholder sessions and a written submissions process.

The Council notes the review process will be used to inform other Council documents, including the Municipal Strategic Statement, Community Wellbeing Plan, Environment Strategy and the Community Engagement Framework.⁹²

According to an outcomes paper, the review highlighted important views in the community, including:

- Having a long-term vision is very important
- *Vision 2020* by and large reflects current community values and priorities
- There is an exceptional level of recognition of *Vision 2020* across the community
- The imperative to focus on the long-term sustainability of the environment, communities and local economy continues to grow
- Individuals, households, groups and organisations want to contribute to the planning of the shire's future
- People have appreciated having the opportunity to openly have a say.⁹³

An updated community plan is scheduled for release later in 2006.

Baw Baw Shire Council

Baw Baw Shire Council informed the Committee of some of the extensive work it has undertaken to develop its community engagement processes as it attempts to manage population growth (with increasing numbers of both younger and older age cohorts), pockets of significant social disadvantage, human services planning and urban/rural land use concerns.

Mr Stephen Chapple, Director of Community Development Services at the Shire, described the variety of engagement techniques used:

... we have used a range of different tools, we have not used just one approach. We have used our local newspaper, particularly the Gazette. We have used flyers and the Internet and we have had one-on-one interviews with landowners and other stakeholders. We have conducted a series of focus groups with various people in the community. We have also used things called listening posts, where on Saturdays and Sundays our staff and others have been at supermarkets, post offices and all the places people use regularly.⁹⁴

Mr Chapple went on to discuss a ‘future search conference’ trialled by the Shire. A future search conference is a participatory planning process used to determine a vision or direction for an organisation or community. The process, generally held over one or two days, helps different stakeholders acknowledge their interdependence and encourages them to work together to manage their common concerns.⁹⁵ Mr Chapple stated:

That brought together 100 people — 50 people from the local community and 50 agencies or organisations from across this region. That was a phenomenal day where we were able to get people working at a high level. These are people who would not normally necessarily work together. So, for example, it might have been environmentalists working with developers or it might have been police agencies and other not for profit agencies. So we felt we had a diverse range of people who reflected the community in its broadest sense, and that was a catalyst to helping us set the scene for our engagement for future activities.⁹⁶

The Committee was alerted to another initiative of the Baw Baw Shire Council, aimed at coordinating consultations occurring across the Shire. The Council has mapped the full range of consultations its various divisions and units are involved in or are planning to carry out. The Committee understands very few councils in Victoria or Australia have done this type of mapping.⁹⁷ This initiative has obvious potential to create efficiencies (through combining surveys, for example), but more importantly, it reduces the likelihood of consultation overload for residents. There is scope to further improve on the initiative by encouraging its take-up by locally-based state government departments, as Mr Chapple explained:

What we hope will happen next is that the 10 state government departments which are based in Gippsland which we work with will pick up that template and do something very similar. It means that we have an opportunity, rather than going through and consulting the community to death — you know, one day we are there, the next day the state government is there and the next day someone else is there; this does happen — that we are actually trying to do it in a more strategic and planned approach.⁹⁸

The Committee considers this to be an initiative which goes to the heart of joined-up government and good community engagement practice at the local level and one which warrants wider implementation. Evidence received in a submission from the DVC acknowledged that local government experiences difficulties with overlap and duplication in state and local government methods of consulting communities.⁹⁹

The Committee is aware of developments to coordinate consultations between levels of government in Queensland. In December 2005, the Queensland Department of Communities and the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) signed an agreement to have local government consultations listed alongside state government consultations on ConsultQld – Queensland’s community engagement website.¹⁰⁰ This will display the details of community engagement exercises from both levels of government and provide the public with the opportunity to make submissions or get involved in other ways. Further to this, teams of state and local government officers will work cooperatively to identify issues of mutual significance, design joint consultative processes and, importantly, share response data gathered from the public. The LGAQ advises this will also help to inform the policy development processes at both levels of government.

Recommendation 3.5:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government investigate and review the Baw Baw consultation mapping initiative. Following this, the Committee further recommends the government promote the initiative with Interface local governments and provide resources to assist with its implementation.

Recommendation 3.6:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government establish an agreement with local government in Victoria to:

- i) coordinate local and state government consultations, and**
- ii) share information gained from consultations between the two levels of government.**

Moorabool Shire Council

At a public hearing in May 2005, representatives from Moorabool Shire Council informed the Committee of a community consultation plan being developed. Central to the strategy is the proposed establishment of community reference groups throughout the Shire. The community reference groups are intended to be representative of the statistical profiles of the various townships or communities of interest in Moorabool. Mr Robert Dobrzynski, CEO of Moorabool, explained to the Committee the manner in which the reference group members will be chosen:

We will be working with the community groups, with some champions in the community, to advertise for representatives and those representatives will be required to put their CVs forward, so that we do at least have some idea of the expertise they bring and what sector of the community they seek to represent. It will be done through an invitation to submit an expression of interest to serve on those committees.¹⁰¹

Mr Dobrzynski discussed the assistance to be provided to the community reference groups:

The council will undertake support to facilitate their purpose by council staff assisting in the preparation of terms of reference, some seed funding and, where it is productive, perhaps even some computer technology for them to communicate more readily with council and council with them. Seed and administrative funding will be made available on an annual basis as of right and there will be also some specific project funding that will be made available from a number of programs.¹⁰²

The Committee was informed that the reference groups would play a number of roles, including:

... formal involvement in the council's annual planning cycle through an invitation for submissions on funding for services

and facilities. So in the lead-up to council reviewing its council plan and its strategic document, as a preliminary to moving into its budget deliberations, invitations will be forwarded to these community reference groups to put forward services and facilities that they believe the council should be considering financing. Importantly, though, there will also be ongoing interaction between service units within council directorates and the community reference groups on a whole variety of different matters, on a weekly if not daily basis. Some of those could be outreach services and accessibility to council services. Some of these communities lack public transport, obviously, and there are some real accessibility issues to some of the services, so it will inform us better in terms of the way we tailor our services.¹⁰³

The community reference group model is intended to be flexible and evolve over time; the Committee heard it may in the future even include some form of local election for the group representatives.¹⁰⁴

Interstate and overseas initiatives

Western Australia

The WA Government's policy direction on citizen participation is guided by its State Citizenship Strategy, which was developed by the Office of Citizens and Civics and launched in 2004. The Strategy aims to ensure all Western Australians can "participate in the decision-making that shapes their everyday lives and that there are mechanisms available for their positive and meaningful contribution to the public policy making process."¹⁰⁵

The Strategy is organised around four objectives:

- Building knowledge and understanding (civics)
- Greater inclusion and addressing barriers to participation
- A higher rate of participation
- More robust democratic governance.¹⁰⁶

To meet these objectives, the Office of Citizens and Civics has developed a number of key projects. These have included various community engagement guides and workshops for government agencies, establishment of an Internet portal (Citizenscape) providing information on active citizenship and how communities can engage in decision-making, *ConsultWA* – a website listing current government consultations and linking citizens into ways to get involved, and *e-Engagement* – a guide for agencies running online consultations.¹⁰⁷

The Strategy and the experience of its implementation have emphasised the need to embed participation in the culture and practice of the public sector. In 2004, the Office of Citizens and Civics undertook an audit of senior managers, policy officers and community consultation managers in the WA public sector and found scope for improvement around capacity, consistency and culture. The audit identified the following issues:

- Some agencies had not developed a systematic approach to community engagement nor had they developed standards, policies and manuals which would support a consistent approach
- Significant gaps in available skills and competencies needed to undertake consultation
- Public participation and consultation was often pushed to the end of the policy cycle and left to junior officers and regional staff
- A severe lack of resources for officers to undertake consultation
- Agencies taking a silo approach to public participation and consultation, rather than dealing with complexity
- Engagement practices tended to be undertaken in isolation with little regard for community expectations or overlapping consultations by other agencies
- Engagement effort was not aligned within agencies and there was no sharing or pooling of information from community engagement across government.¹⁰⁸

According to a recent speech by Dr Christina Gillgren, Executive Director of the Office of Citizens and Civics, the WA Government's approach to resolving these issues is focused on "changing norms in the public sector ... which, over time, will increase community confidence."¹⁰⁹ To that end, the government plans a number of initiatives, including:

- Facilitating the development of whole of government process auditing and a framework for evaluating consultation
- Further developing, making use of and linking the expertise which already exists in government
- Developing new training opportunities for skills and professional development
- Working with allied professional organisations to build and share professional knowledge and increase service capacity.¹¹⁰

Dialogue with the City

'Dialogue with the City' was a 2003 WA Government initiative which used several methodologies to involve citizens in developing a vision for Perth in 2030. The context for the initiative was concern around urban sprawl in the Perth and Peel regions, brought on by rapid urban and economic growth.

Elements in the process included an attitudinal survey of 8,000 residents, a series of issues papers published on the web and reported in *The West Australian* newspaper, a one hour TV program on Channel 7 about future scenarios for the city, an interactive

web site and ‘listening sessions’ with youth, indigenous and non-English speaking people.¹¹¹

The process culminated in what has been called “the largest deliberative forum ever held in the southern hemisphere”, involving 1,100 participants.¹¹² The forum drew upon the ‘21st Century Town Meeting’ model developed by the AmericaSpeaks organisation and applied across the United States.¹¹³

Participants were drawn equally from three categories: stakeholders, random selection and self-nomination. They were organised into tables of 10 and seated with a mixture of others from the three categories. As discussion developed, trained volunteer scribes entered into computers each table’s commonly-held views and any strongly held minority views, which were then analysed around themes and broadcast back to the room. A regional mapping game was also held with the aim of helping participants understand some of the dilemmas faced by urban planners on issues such as employment centres, transport links, public open space and density.

A consensus emerged around a ‘network city’ model as the urban form participants wanted for the future of Perth. Subsequently, more than 100 participants were involved in developing *Network city: community planning strategy for Perth and Peel*. According to the WA Government, Dialogue with the City was highly successful as a deliberative exercise. Forty two percent of participants stated they changed their views as a result of the dialogue. Most of the participants also found it a very positive experience, with 97 percent saying they would like to participate again in similar events.¹¹⁴

Dr Janette Hartz-Karp was responsible for the design, coordination and facilitation of Dialogue with the City and its continuing processes. In a follow-up report, Hartz-Karp notes the effectiveness of the deliberation relied on various strategies – opportunities for open dialogue, respect, access to information – but these were not evaluated except through largely qualitative participant feedback forms. However, the report also describes the willingness of participants to defend the process against subsequent media criticism.

Key learnings from the process are listed as:

- More work needs to be done to include those who shy away from participating in community engagement
- More innovation is needed to achieve greater in-depth dialogue
- More innovative processes are needed to broaden community ‘ownership’ of the outcomes to prevent implementation from becoming stalled.¹¹⁵

Elsewhere, the WA Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Ms Alannah MacTiernan MLA, takes up this last point, commenting “we have learnt that if we want to implement new directions from participative engagement, we need to keep broadening the numbers of people involved immediately after the consultation.”¹¹⁶

Citizens' juries

Citizens' juries are small panels usually involving 15 to 25 non-experts. Jury members are paid for their time and usually meet over a number of days to carefully examine an issue of public significance or controversy and deliver a 'verdict'. Citizens' juries are intended to provide advice rather than make decisions; "they are about enhancing representative democracy, not direct democracy."¹¹⁷

Citizens' juries have been conducted for over three decades in Germany, the United States, Denmark and elsewhere. A number of recent experiments with citizens' juries have occurred in Western Australia. In one instance, a jury was assembled to discuss the siting of an exit ramp from a new highway, an issue which had divided the local community for five years. In another, jury members examined a proposed change in zoning for the building of a new town administrative centre. Both exercises were reported to have successfully led to viable decisions being implemented with community ownership.¹¹⁸ A further example was recently held in the south-west of WA to debate the question: "would you rather have a hospital that cares for very few people or, with that money, invest in a range of community health services?" According to a report in *The Age*, jury members decided in favour of ambulatory care and mental health services.¹¹⁹

Queensland

The Queensland Government has followed a policy approach specifically around 'community engagement' and delivered through the Department of Communities. Figure 3.1 depicts the government's integrated, multi-level approach involving Parliament, executive government and agencies.

Figure 3.2: Community engagement: an integrated and multi-level approach

Source: Queensland Government (July 2003) *Engaging Queenslanders: Get Involved – Improving community engagement across the Queensland Public Sector*.

A key thrust of the Queensland approach is aimed at building the capacity of the public service to engage with citizens. In 2002, the government developed its Community Engagement Improvement Strategy, a two-year cabinet-endorsed public sector capacity development plan. Notable elements of the Strategy include:

- The development of a suite of guides around engagement methods for practitioners, showcasing engagement events and the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- A focus on coordinating and integrating community engagement projects
- A more coordinated approach to the provision and content of training in community engagement methods across government
- Promoting the inclusion of community engagement responsibilities, skills and capabilities in Queensland Public Service position descriptions, selection tools and accountability statements.¹²⁰

A strategy for community engagement evaluation has also been developed. It recognises the need for evaluation of engagement efforts at project, agency and whole-of-government levels. Government agencies are required to report on community engagement in their annual reports and highlight where improved community engagement has delivered better outcomes for communities.¹²¹

The Glenorchy City Council Precinct model (Tasmania)

Glenorchy City Council is located within the Greater Hobart area of southern Tasmania. Glenorchy's Community Precincts program was established in 1999 along the lines of similar programs operating in other Australian councils.¹²² The program was subsequently re-launched in 2004 with a new logo ("Precincts are people powered – Your voice in your city") and promotional material. There are currently nine Precincts covering nine distinct geographic areas in Glenorchy. The Precinct Committees meet monthly. Their functions include:

- To contribute to strategic and infrastructure planning for both the local Precinct area and for the whole city
- To identify and bring to the attention of Council or other agencies issues of concern or interest to local people
- To establish project groups to undertake community projects in consultation with Council or other community groups
- To act as a sounding board for Council and other groups (e.g. business groups) to test the workability of proposals
- To provide input into Council's capital works programs and strategic directions (along with other interest groups).¹²³

The Council sees the precincts as a vehicle for community involvement, communication and community building.¹²⁴ They are not intended as decision-making bodies but are rather one of a number of information dissemination and community engagement mechanisms which feed into the processes of the Council.

Swinburne University researcher Dr Ivan Zwart has written in some detail on the role and outcomes of the Glenorchy Precincts program. His research cites a number of successful examples of Council using the precinct groups to inform and consult with the community, as well as various community projects which have been initiated by the precincts themselves. Other benefits are identified: participants are seen to have become generally more interested and active around public issues influencing their lives, more understanding of the views of others in the community and more empowered to scrutinise the performance of Council.¹²⁵

Dr Zwart's research highlights considerable support for the program in the local community – even from those residents who do not participate. Importantly, the program is also supported by the majority of elected representatives, some of whom see it as strengthening their position as advocates of their local community and thereby providing greater legitimacy to the system of representative government.¹²⁶

However, despite the best efforts of those involved in the program, the self-selecting participants are not always representative of the wider community. On the other hand, where broader input from the community is needed, other participative mechanisms are used, such as surveys or workshops. According to Dr Zwart, this should not be viewed as invalidating the precinct program as method of community engagement, rather it illustrates a general principle which should be borne in mind when

considering participatory techniques: “... all methods have their benefits and pitfalls, it can be argued that what is more important is to understand these and plan accordingly.”¹²⁷

Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS) (New Zealand)

COGS is managed by the Local Government & Community Branch within the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) and has been running in New Zealand for the past 20 years. In that time, almost \$200 million (A\$168.5 million) worth of funding has been distributed to community organisations in the form of small grants (generally \$3,000 or less).¹²⁸

COGS funds are distributed by 37 regionally-based Local Distribution Committees (LDCs). The LDCs operate as a grassroots form of local governance as they are completely volunteer-run and democratically elected by their local communities at nationwide elections. They typically consist of seven members who make all funding decisions, within the overall policies and guidelines for COGS set down by DIA. The department provides training to committee members on their roles, how to assess grant applications, codes of conduct and managing conflicts of interest.

The LDCs contact and often visit applicant groups to discuss applications and are responsible for making difficult decisions on where to best allocate their limited funds. The Committee was informed by DIA staff that most LDCs will also hold public meetings to determine funding priorities for the area.

The Committee was interested in COGS as an example of government empowering local communities and enhancing local decision-making opportunities by allowing small grants to be allocated according to locally determined priorities. The Committee believes further investigation of this (and similar programs) would be warranted in Victoria, perhaps initially as part of Neighbourhood Renewal.

Recommendation 3.7:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government consider the feasibility of trialling a ‘community organisation small grants scheme’ administered by local communities, along the lines of the New Zealand COGS model.

Recommendation 3.8:

The Committee recommends local government in Victoria investigate the suitability of ‘community precinct committees’ as mechanisms to provide ongoing opportunities for community engagement and participation.

Participatory budgeting

At the UN in New York, Committee Members met with Dr M. Adil Khan, Chief, Socio-Economic Governance and Management Branch, United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA).

Dr Khan discussed the community strengthening impact of participatory budgeting (that is, including people in the budget processes of government). He put the view that Australia's 'community cabinet' approaches (used in Queensland and analogous to the In the Community program in Victoria) were a good start but could go further in engaging the community on how their taxes are spent.¹²⁹ Participatory budgeting takes place in many countries around the world and Dr Khan discussed a number of specific examples:

- **Brazil** – people are encouraged to participate in the budget process through regional forums¹³⁰
- **Mauritius** – prior to the budget being prepared, the community is asked to contribute on where the funds should be allocated
- **Ireland** – since the 1970s, the National Council for Social and Economic Development has been instrumental in involving community groups, government agencies and businesses in coming up with a budget proposal based on consensus. The result is then promoted to the government
- **Alberta, Canada** – citizens are able to present an alternative budget to that of the government
- **Ecuador** – local government has begun to recognise the capacity of indigenous people to contribute to the budget process. The UN is working on a project with Ecuador which investigates the capacity of local government to work with communities.

In the UK, experiments with forms of participatory budgeting have been undertaken in the last few years in a number of locations, including Harrow and Bradford and in a Neighbourhood Renewal site in Newcastle.¹³¹

According to Dr Khan, the participation of local residents in budgeting has significant community strengthening benefits as it establishes clear links between the way resources are distributed by local governments and the community's own priorities. People then feel a greater sense of pride in their local government and local area. Dr Khan believed the first step should be for governments to educate people about the budgetary process, such as via websites or schools.¹³²

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CHAPTER 4: COMMUNITY GROUPS



Image courtesy of Sturgeon County, Canada.

The most successful community organisations start with the people with whom they work. They revitalise the public realm not by walling it off or opening it up, but by bringing it to life: helping to connect it to people's lives, to make it meaningful to them, and in the process empowering them to reshape it for themselves. They function as *civic intermediaries* not by working to a set of predefined purposes but by contributing to communities of participation, in which citizens have the knowledge, capacity, confidence and motivation to act in whichever public or semi-public spaces and in whatever ways have most meaning for them – whether that means a neighbourhood, a school, a primary care trust, their home or the local supermarket.¹

This chapter focuses on the role of community groups in the outer suburbs. The Committee was fortunate throughout the Inquiry to benefit from the perspectives of many different organisations, reflecting the diversity of the community sector. These ranged from small, grassroots, entirely volunteer-run groups, through to much larger organisations employing hundreds of staff. The Committee heard from emergency services, basketball and netball clubs, food banks, Rotary, the Scouts, the Red Cross, environment and arts organisations and youth and senior citizens groups, to name just a few.

Australia-wide there are around 700,000 non-profit community organisations (that is, organisations which, typically, do not distribute any profits they make to their members). Most of these are entirely dependent on volunteers and around 380,000 organisations are incorporated in one form or another. The sector also employs nearly seven percent of Australia's workforce and has a total revenue estimated at \$33.5 billion per year.²

The first part of this chapter discusses aspects of the community strengthening role of community groups. The chapter then examines a number of topics raised by Inquiry participants, focusing on specific capacity building issues and issues relating to funding. A number of relevant Australian and international initiatives are also discussed.

The role of community groups

Community sector organisations make important contributions to both social wellbeing and the democratic system, beyond the value of the essential goods and services they provide. Community groups create social capital by providing opportunities for people to volunteer and participate in local activities, mix with others and build trust and a sense of belonging. These attributes were well illustrated in comments to the Committee by Mr John Huf of Nillumbik Landcare Network at a public hearing. Mr Huf discussed the role of 'friends groups' (groups who do environmental restoration work on public lands) in the following terms:

It is an outlet and an opportunity to interact with their environment beyond the immediacy of their own residential plot, their own quarter-acre block or their own small backyard. The friends groups also offer a recreational outlet for many people and provide an opportunity to become involved in something. It is an opportunity to meet people, to socialise and to be engaged in the community ... We see the friends groups as a means of creating those community bonds and identities and providing people with ways for participation as an alternative to the seemingly alienating and isolating effects of suburban living.³

Some groups have particularly significant roles in communities in the growth regions of Melbourne. The Committee heard that in areas where there are many young families and the potential for social isolation, local groups in the early childhood context, such as playgroups, toy libraries and kindergartens, are valuable entry-points into the community for new residents and rich sites of social interaction.⁴ It is often through these groups that people meet others and form long lasting friendships.

Sport and recreation clubs are also important community focal points in the outer suburbs. A flourishing football, netball or basketball club is traditionally taken as a rough indicator of the vitality of a community, as Mr Geoff Spring from the Country Fire Association (CFA) commented to the Committee:

If you want to do an assessment of a local community, look at the strength of the volunteer [fire] brigade and the local football club. If they are both strong and viable, you have a reasonable expectation that the health of the community is okay as well.⁵

Sport and recreation organisations support social networks, provide opportunities to contribute to community life through participation on boards and committees and offer a wide range of volunteering roles.⁶ There are more than 16,000 volunteer-based sport and recreation clubs in Victoria, supported by 349,000 volunteers annually.⁷ In a briefing to the Committee, Ms Nicole Mahony of Hume City Council, described the importance of sporting clubs to the community and the contribution made by Council to assist them:

I would not say the people are quite sports mad but they are very keen on sports in Sunbury and the Craigieburn areas, and our sporting clubs have become key sites of mutual support and self-help. When there is a fire or when something goes wrong in the community, the sports clubs are the ones that pitch in and help, but it is council that underpins that by building the sports clubs, by supporting the sporting groups through community grants, to assist, particularly in low-income areas, the purchase of sweaters and equipment. By building sports grounds, council underpins community connections and I think without council's role in providing venues and resources to underpin community participation and engagement, that is not going to happen.⁸

DVC informed the Committee that it administers a range of grants programs aimed at building the capacity of sport and recreation organisations and increasing the participation of population groups (such as people with a disability and CALD groups) traditionally underrepresented in organisations and pastimes.⁹ For example, the Active for All Abilities program provides specific funding to support and build local communities' capacity to engage people of all abilities in sport and recreation.¹⁰ DVC also informed the Committee of the Community Facilities program, which has contributed to various sport and recreation facilities in Interface (and other) municipalities over the past three years.¹¹

There have been a number of studies examining the barriers to participation in sport and recreation. The findings generally point to factors such as a lack of time and interest, expense, and injury or illness.¹² Transport was another common barrier raised with the Committee during its investigations in the outer suburbs. A 2003 survey of participation in clubs found that people living in outer metropolitan Melbourne were more likely than those in regional areas to find activities were inaccessible without a car. According to the survey's authors, "this is a confirmation of the transport barriers to participation for those living in newly developed suburbs on the outer fringes of Melbourne."¹³

A feature and strength of many successful community groups is their ability to adapt to emerging needs in their local area. The Committee heard from dozens of groups which had begun by focusing on discreet areas of need and then shifted and expanded with their communities over time. It might be a family day care centre which runs health promotion and nutrition programs for carers (such as Cardinia Family Day Care), a food bank providing financial counselling and low interest loans (such as in Pakenham) or a CFA brigade offering a men's health program.

Skidmore and Craig describe such groups as 'community platforms'.¹⁴ Platform organisations are willing to be shaped by the needs of their users and are capable of sustaining diverse sets of services and activities. They often act as incubators for other local groups, helping them to become self-sustaining. They put a high priority on forming networks and relationships across the community. Neighbourhood Houses are probably the prime example of this sort of flexible and agile community organisation. Another example is the Pakenham-based Big House Communities – a community development organisation supported by local churches and combining social research and advocacy on local youth issues with activities and events which seek to serve the community.¹⁵ Due to their myriad services and their flexibility, platform organisations such as these may struggle to describe exactly what they do, but as Skidmore and Craig argue, this should be seen as a strength and a sign of their responsiveness to community needs, rather than a weakness.¹⁶

The Committee was particularly impressed by the vision and achievements of Burrinja, a 'community cultural access centre' located in Upwey in the Shire of Yarra Ranges. Burrinja has a vision of building community through arts. It shows itself to be a platform organisation in the cross-cutting nature of its programs and partnerships (from arts to education to health) and in its insistence that it be guided by the needs of its community. Burrinja's programs and events are predicated wherever possible on active community participation, as opposed to the idea of a passive audience. It focuses particularly on those groups in the Shire of Yarra Ranges who do not traditionally engage with the arts.¹⁷ In a presentation to the Committee, the Executive Officer of Burrinja, Dr Ross Farnell, outlined some examples:

We have things like 'babes in arms' gallery tours, music programs where people are encouraged to bring their young children, indigenous art workshops that are for the whole family, not just for school kids or not just for a seniors group

... There is sound engineering and computer animation for younger people ... The art of sport: a program to bring together sporting groups and cultural groups to see what they can do together and how they can come together instead of looking at each other as being on a different side of the fence the whole time ... Getting kids skateboard decks and running workshops and classes with professional artists on painting skateboard decks and designs and going through that and doing an exhibition of skateboard decks ...¹⁸

Dr Farnell went on to describe how Burrinja developed a program with DHS for ‘at-risk’ homeless people:

... We bring in about 13 or 14 residents per week. We get a volunteer bus, through volunteer organisations and volunteer drivers. We go and pick them up from their supported residential services and we bring them in. They do two to three hours with an art therapist, and that can be sometimes working on a big mural, sometimes it is looking at another exhibition, sometimes it is music.¹⁹

Burrinja encourages volunteer participation in the operation of the Centre and has longer term plans to expand its volunteer training program.²⁰ Burrinja is also a business incubator for arts businesses in the local area. In answer to a question from the Chair, Mr Don Nardella MP, concerning the types of businesses involved, Dr Farnell replied:

We have got ‘Wrapt Ya! Textiles’ dyeing their own materials there and then turning them into clothes and becoming very successful. It is actually in two studios now. It is expanding, empire building. There is a web site designer, two jewellery studios, the state dance association. I think it took people a little while to realise it is not necessarily just about having painters in studios — and in fact we do very little of that in those actual incubator studios. There is a whole other side to being an arts or cultural business. You might be a graphic designer or you might be something like the state dance association which is really administrating the whole lot of cultural organisations out there on the ground doing things. So it might be literally an office, but it is still doing arts development work and still facilitating arts development in the community.²¹

Finally, community groups play a critical role in empowering citizens to understand and take action on the issues and decisions affecting their lives. Representatives from the Macedon Ranges Residents Association gave an example of this in their presentation to the Committee. In answer to a question from Committee member Ms Rosy Buchanan MP, on how the Association seeks to engage residents on issues of

importance to the local community, Ms Christine Pruneau and Ms Louise Whitefield replied:

We use our web site and emails to alert people in certain areas that there are things happening in their place that they need to be involved in or do something about. We try to encourage people to come along and get involved in things the council is running or that are happening somewhere else that may be of interest to them ... We also utilise things like public notice boards around the town, and if there is an issue you will always have a number of shopkeepers who can let us put a sign up with phone numbers and web site addresses for people to contact us. We also encourage people to contact the Shire and to know and utilise the services of their Shire ... We try not to do everything for people but to empower them to take on these issues and to grow. At some levels there are genuine efforts at participation in our community. That is how I came on board, because of something that was happening in my area, and now it has brought me to have this wonderful opportunity to put our point of view to you people today.²²

For many people it is through participation in community groups that they are connected into the public realm. Volunteering for a kindergarten committee or a Landcare group, for example, can lead on to advocacy on education policy or local environmental issues. However, as Jochum et al. point out, the ‘core business’ of most community groups is not to engage with political processes but is rather more about enabling people to come together and provide services or community activities.²³ This network of ‘horizontal involvement’ in the groups and structures of civil society is valuable because the social ties and interactions it creates strengthens social connectedness and helps communities tackle the challenges they face.²⁴ However, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this report, this horizontal involvement also creates the necessary conditions for effective participation in consultation and community engagement. Put simply, without participation in clubs, groups and associations, governments would find it much more difficult to engender the participation they seek from citizens on questions of public policy and decision-making.²⁵

Capacity building

Capacity building strengthens the ability of community groups to build their structures, systems, people and skills and assists them to reach their potential. The Committee received evidence throughout the Inquiry suggesting that the success of community strengthening approaches depended to a large extent on developing the capacity of community groups as key participants. Dr John Murphy from Mornington Peninsula Community Connections informed the Committee:

I see a lot of programs that sometimes do not reach their full potential, and sometimes fail entirely, simply because the people involved do not have the knowledge, the skills or the experience to operationalise the project. It is very important to prepare people to do community building.²⁶

Organisational capacity can be defined in different ways. A discussion paper on capacity building needs in Western Australia's non-government sector, authored by the WA Department of the Premier and Cabinet as part of an industry plan, identifies seven (high level) areas of organisational capacity:

- **Governance:** for example, organisational roles and responsibilities, legal and duty of care obligations, risk management, strategic planning and decision making processes
- **Financial management and accountability:** for example, compliance issues, financial policies and procedures, business planning
- **Human resource management and development:** for example, workforce information, job quality and career paths, skills and training
- **Leadership and policy development:** for example, support and celebration of leaders, mentoring, advocacy and lobbying strategies, decision-making, team development
- **Service delivery and evaluation:** for example, social and ethical auditing, connecting evaluation and the policy development process
- **Information Technology (IT):** for example, IT planning, adopting new administration technologies, learning strategies and social support, infrastructure and maintenance issues
- **Managing industry change:** for example, industry structures and relationships, cross sector partnerships and networks, potential for service collaborations and mergers.²⁷

The discussion paper gives an 'indicative inventory' of capacity building services available to WA organisations. It lists the top five formats for the delivery of these services as: training, seminars, resources, consultancy and information referral.²⁸ This accords with Backer's categorisation of capacity building delivery in the US as typically one of three types of interventions: management consultation, training and technical assistance.²⁹ Consultation is focused on process issues such as conflict management or strategic planning. Training involves small group seminars and classes. Technical assistance is more hands-on, site based support to a project, program or problem-solving process in which the organisation is involved.

In London, the Committee met with the Home Office and the Government Office for London (GoL). During these meetings, the British Government's ChangeUp strategy was discussed. ChangeUp is a ten year capacity building and infrastructure framework for the voluntary and community sector, initially funded for £80 million (A\$200 million) over two years (2004/05 and 2005/06). It aims to ensure that by 2014, frontline community organisations will have access to a high-quality,

nationwide support infrastructure.³⁰ In June 2005, the Home Secretary announced the creation of the new Capacity Builders Agency to implement the ChangeUp framework from 2006 to 2008, with an additional budget of £70 million (A\$175 million).³¹

Under ChangeUp, six National Hubs of Expertise have been established. Each of the six Hubs addresses an area of capacity building need identified for the sector:

- Performance improvement
- Developing a highly effective workforce
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) support and advice
- Governance
- Recruiting and developing volunteers more effectively
- Financing voluntary and community sector activity.³²

The Hubs bring together existing voluntary and community sector infrastructure and other key stakeholders to provide strategic leadership and act as ‘beacons of good practice’ on each area of need. The Governance Hub, for example, has a focus on strengthening the governance of medium-sized and smaller organisations, and working with a full range of organisations, including BME (black, minority and ethnic), faith-based, youth, disability, rural and social enterprise organisations, and local infrastructure organisations.³³ The Hubs are also intended to reduce confusion in the sector by providing a single gateway for organisations to access existing support and development services and opportunities.³⁴

The scope of this Inquiry does not extend to a thorough review of the capacity building needs of the community sector in the outer suburbs of Melbourne. However, throughout the Inquiry, the Committee received evidence on various capacity-related issues including the recruitment of volunteers (discussed in Chapter 5: Volunteering), governance issues and training for the boards and committees of small organisations, and the value of expert assistance. The Committee also received evidence regarding the cost of public liability insurance. These topics are discussed in the following sections, as well as some of the key initiatives encountered by the Committee from its discussions in Australia and overseas.

Boards and committees of management

A board or committee of management is the body of people given the power to supervise, manage or govern a company, organisation or group.³⁵ Despite many differences in size and form, community boards and committees have the same basic responsibilities:

- Providing purpose, leadership, direction and strategy
- Ensuring the group’s finances are well managed
- Ensuring the group’s operations are legal.³⁶

Boards and committees need to be aware of the process of incorporation. Incorporation is a system of state or territory government registration that gives an association or community group certain legal advantages in return for accepting certain legal responsibilities. Incorporation allows an association or group to:

- Continue regardless of changes to membership
- Accept gifts and bequests
- Buy and sell property
- Enter into enforceable contracts
- Sue or be sued
- Invest and borrow money.³⁷

An incorporated association receives recognition as a legal entity separate from its members and offers some protection for office holders from any debts or liabilities incurred by the group as long as the association does not make a profit for its members. Incorporation is voluntary, but once a group has been incorporated it has to abide by relevant legislation.³⁸

An incorporated organisation can be cancelled or wound up in the following ways:

- Cancellation – this applies where the association has ceased to operate and has assets under \$1,000 and no liabilities, and if there are no current or proposed legal proceedings against it
- Voluntary wind up – this applies where an association wants to wind up its operations and it has assets over \$1,000
- Court wind up – an application to the Supreme Court for the winding up must be made by the association, a member or creditor of the association or the Registrar of Incorporated Associations
- Certificate of the Registrar to wind up – the Registrar may issue a certificate to wind up the association.³⁹

Organisations seeking information on these and other aspects of incorporation should visit the website of Consumer Affairs Victoria (www.consumer.vic.gov.au), which has a range of important information for community groups on this and related topics.⁴⁰

Tips for successful committees: Upper Beaconsfield Kindergarten Committee

Many people have their first experience of a community board or committee when they volunteer for their child's kindergarten or school committee. Ms Cherylle Hampton, President of the Upper Beaconsfield Kindergarten Committee, addressed the Parliamentary Committee at a public forum in Pakenham in June 2005. Ms Hampton noted many parents joined the committee to meet new people, to improve the services, to build their sense of community and to gain or maintain skills while they are out of the workforce. Ms Hampton's presentation suggested a number of tips for running a successful committee:⁴¹

- Keep it fun and social
- Search out and target skilled, available people
- Have an induction process for new members and a handover process for outgoing members
- Match people to roles that fit their motivation and skills
- Allow people to reduce or change their input as their lives change
- Aim for open communication where opinions and ideas are respected
- Make meetings a social event; hold them at the local pub, in homes and around lunches
- Have a collective vision, renewed every year
- Communicate with the community and survey clients/users
- Liaise with and support other local groups and coordinate fundraising.

Boards and committees frequently struggle to attract new members. Even those organisations which have numerous volunteers and clients can find it difficult to find people prepared to take on responsible administrative roles. By all accounts, longer-term commitments to community organisations and a willingness to do the work that sustains their governance are waning.⁴² The Committee heard that as a result, many boards and committees rely on a small core of overworked volunteers, with little diversity in ages or backgrounds. Ms Tracey Trueman of Sorrento Community Centre on the Mornington Peninsula informed the Committee:

... A lot of the time we are bringing the same people onto different committees, so you are getting a very narrow view sometimes of what a local community could look like and, as we talked before about ageing members of our community, we need to encourage younger people to step up to the job.⁴³

The Our Community organisation states that the best boards and committees are inclusive, comprising people from all backgrounds who can represent a variety of views and offer diverse skills. Through its Boards, Committees & Governance Centre (supported by DVC and the MAV), Our Community provides information and guidance to community groups seeking to make their boards and committees more representative of their communities and more inclusive of population groups traditionally excluded from such positions.⁴⁴

In this regard, the Committee met with representatives from New Zealand's Office for Disability Issues, within the Ministry of Social Development, and was briefed on the Office's work to establish a 'nominations register' of people with disabilities interested in serving on boards and committees. The Office is developing an understanding of current levels of participation and will then set up a database register listing people's skills. The Office will also consider the training and skills development options available to ensure potential board and committee members are well prepared for the roles.⁴⁵

A major deterrent for many people to serve on a board or committee is what is perceived to be an increasingly complex and professionalised environment in which community organisations work. The Committee heard that voluntary members find themselves confronted with a host of legislative and regulatory requirements, including food-handling and occupational health and safety regulations, accreditation, GST compliance and privacy legislation. The net effect of this, according to a number of witnesses, is to create a heavy workload which deters prospective members and generally frustrates the efforts of community organisations.

... As a committee we have an increasing responsibility and workload. The workload and expectations are growing, as is the need for specialised knowledge ... We feel we have a huge responsibility and sometimes I do not know that we fully understand that. We just pray that nothing ever goes wrong. This is a challenge because it may be stopping people from enjoying the experience and achieving the things that they would really prefer to achieve in terms of improving the service.⁴⁶

In its submission, the Scout Association (Victorian Branch) commented on what it saw as the effects of 'red tape' on community organisations and the activities they are now willing to engage in:

In recent years, voluntary organisations have faced GST compliance, privacy legislation, food-handling regulations and, crucially for an organisation like Scouting, increasingly onerous expectations as to the level of competency required of a leader engaging in even quite innocuous outdoor activities ... Agencies now think twice before running an event, having to make a judgement as to whether the effort and costs incurred in

running the event is justified by the benefits expected. Even more importantly, new volunteers are forced to consider whether they are prepared to open themselves to the sheer burden and complexity of the bureaucratic processes and paper-chase in which they are routinely expected to engage. As a result, the volunteer pool will inevitably shrink, organisations will be forced to reduce services and even go out of business.⁴⁷

According to an Australian expert on the not-for-profit sector, Professor Mark Lyons from the University of Technology, Sydney, the issue should be of wider concern to Australian democracy:

It is vitally important that management committees are open to lots and lots of people, its important for our democracy that people have that experience, and if it appears to be the case, and there's anecdotal evidence, not good research evidence but certainly anecdotal evidence, that the increasing demands of government regulation and the insurance risks and so on, are frightening people away, then that's a real loss for us.⁴⁸

The findings of the Victorian Parliament's 2004 Inquiry into Country Football are relevant to this discussion.⁴⁹ In its final report, the Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee outlined the difficulties for rural and regional Australian Rules football clubs in recruiting and retaining volunteers, particularly to serve on club boards and committees. In summary, the Committee recommended, firstly, that the state government consult with volunteering peak bodies and others on regulations likely to have an effect on volunteer recruitment and retention. Secondly, the Committee recommended that the government's Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) process give specific consideration to the effect of proposed regulations on volunteering.⁵⁰ In its response, the Victorian Government indicated its support for both recommendations, noting that the Community Strengthening and Volunteering Division of DVC would be involved in ongoing consultation and liaison with volunteer organisations and, secondly, that the RIS process, as it stands, requires all significant impacts of a regulatory proposal to be considered, including impacts on the economy and the community at large, which, by extension, includes any impacts upon volunteers and voluntary organisations.⁵¹

The Committee's consultations suggest the pressures on community boards and committees are unlikely to have abated since 2004 when the Inquiry into Country Football made those recommendations. Indeed, a 2005 survey conducted as part of the Australian Government's *Giving Australia* series of reports identified the "rising costs of compliance and risk management" as a key issue for smaller not-for-profits.⁵²

The Committee acknowledges part of the solution lies in making information, training and skills development for boards and committees more accessible. However, given a lack of spare time for many people who may volunteer in their community, training can only be a partial remedy. A longer-term strategy for encouraging volunteering,

particularly for boards and committees, should include both understanding impediments and attempting to alleviate the current regulatory burden.

Governance training and support for boards and committees

In the context of a community group, ‘governance’ can refer to the systems and processes concerned with ensuring the group’s overall direction, effectiveness, supervision and accountability.⁵³ Governance for a board or committee might include such issues as having a constitution, developing a set of policies, having a written plan and job descriptions for members. Governance might also take into account the manner in which members interact and operate.

Good governance is important for community organisations, as it is for business and government agencies. In an evaluation of a capacity building program for the governance needs of small groups in the UK, Kumar and Nunan noted:

The issue of building governance capacity within community groups and small voluntary organisations is critical. This is not only due to the issues of accountability and sustainability, but is also due to the central role which these groups and organisations are expected to play, in current government initiatives, in relation to regeneration, empowerment and civil society.⁵⁴

The Committee considers these comments equally applicable to the not-for-profit sector in Victoria. Committees and boards require sound governance practices to ensure they are accountable for the funds they hold, remain viable and in a position to participate effectively in the broader community strengthening agenda.

The Committee was made aware of the existence of various sources of support for groups seeking to develop their governance capacity. There are a number of private providers of governance assistance, such as Our Community, which has resources on its website and offers training. Some community groups are part of larger associations or networks to which they can turn for training, information and advice. For example, Pony Club Victoria (a riding association for young people) has an extensive club resource kit on its website with model rules and policies for new clubs and information for their committees.⁵⁵ Mr Jim Hurley, Acting President of the North Metro Zone, Pony Club Association of Victoria, described to the Committee some of the initial and ongoing assistance typically provided to new pony clubs:

Annually we have new committees formed in April, and we have the first meeting with the committee in May. We sit down with all new committees and teach them how to run the club, particularly about the fact that they have to stay incorporated ... We visit each club once a year and do an inspection for safety, that they are keeping up to our safety

standards and the safety system, but we are always ready to provide people to go and assist ...⁵⁶

The Committee also acknowledges the work of community legal centres, such as the Peninsula Community Legal Centre in Frankston, in helping local groups to understand incorporation and other legal requirements.⁵⁷ Similarly, Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA), with support from the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust, has provided capacity building workshops and training on the topic of risk management for other community conservation groups.⁵⁸

The Committee further notes many of the Interface local governments are cognisant of the needs of the community sector in their area and offer training programs for volunteer boards and committees. Ms Emma Healey, General Manager of Community Services at Melton Shire Council, informed the Committee at a public hearing:

... We run training programs which may look at [developing] skills in budgeting through to business-type skills and services that are required, information around managing insurance or those types of skills that are necessary to effectively run a community association or community group. They may have 12 particular sessions that are tailored that community groups can apply for and attend.⁵⁹

In Wyndham, the Council currently runs free training sessions on topics like:

- Committee roles and legal responsibilities
- Budgeting, cash flows and budgeting for voluntary committees
- How to hold annual general meetings (including effective end of year procedures, succession planning and financial requirements)
- Conducting an effective meeting (for presidents and chairpersons)
- Dispute resolution for voluntary committees
- Insurance for voluntary organisations
- Risk management for voluntary committees.⁶⁰

The City of Casey's Community Training and Development Program places a particular emphasis on the skills needed by committee members. The council informed the Committee that the demand for training has been increasing on a yearly basis.⁶¹

While there are different sources of governance assistance, it appears some smaller groups often do not have the financial resources or time to access or appropriately implement them.⁶² Training may also be targeted at larger or more established groups. Research by Kumar and Nunan demonstrated that, for small community groups, the *type* of assistance is important. They emphasise establishing trust, taking a flexible and tailored approach and focusing on networking and peer learning.⁶³

The Committee understands this to be the approach taken by the Adult Community Education (ACE) Community Building Hubs initiative, which was funded by the Community Support Fund and managed by the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) from May 2003 until funding ceased in November 2005. Under this initiative, 130 ACE organisations across the state were funded to act as Hubs, providing training and support to boards and committees of management on governance-related issues, including strategic planning, financial and risk management, how to conduct an AGM, conflict resolution, how to become incorporated, working with volunteers and fundraising.⁶⁴ In the Interface areas, ACE organisations taking part as Hubs included Lalor Living and Learning Centre, Nillumbik Shire Living and Learning Centre, Sorrento Community Centre and a number of others.

The Hubs received flexible funding (a total of \$1.9 million over two and a half years) to tailor the training and resource materials to the needs of particular organisations. Some of the participants were groups working with refugees and recent migrants, disability groups, Landcare and Neighbourhood Renewal committees, toy libraries, child care organisations, senior citizens groups and sport and recreation clubs.

A June 2005 evaluation of the ACE Hubs initiative reported a number of positive results. The initiative was found to be highly successful in providing community organisations with increased access to governance information, resources and skills.⁶⁵ Over 700 community organisations participated in some way and a majority (of those surveyed by the evaluators) reported improvements in their organisation's governance and governance capacity, ability to plan, risk management and volunteer management.⁶⁶ Other positive results included increased networking between the ACE Hubs, local government and community organisations and an enhanced profile for the ACE providers within their local area. In totality, the 130 Hubs formed a statewide, community-based infrastructure supporting and strengthening community organisations.

As noted above, the initiative has reached the end of its funding term. The Committee understands many ACE organisations have managed to sustain their provision of governance services in one manner or another.⁶⁷ However, the report indicates there remains a high level of ongoing need for governance training and support, particularly for small, geographically isolated community groups without the budget for organisational development. The report also noted some Hubs had to work hard to convince committees that governance was an issue they needed to consider:

For some committees, particularly in the more remote areas of Victoria, there was no recognition that times, and the laws, had changed over the last 20 years. In other organisations, the entrenched committee members may have a vested interest in not changing the current systems and procedures.⁶⁸

The evaluation report concludes that the ACE Community Building Hubs initiative could continue to be a successful model of service delivery for the knowledge and

skills required by community organisations. However, the sustainability of the initiative depends on a number of factors, including identifying funding from government and non-government sources, assisting the Hubs to promote their services and ensuring the Hubs continue to maintain and update their knowledge of governance issues and training techniques.⁶⁹

Recommendation 4.1:

The Committee recommends the Department for Victorian Communities, in consultation with the community sector, review and publish its findings on the extent to which legislative and regulatory obligations faced by community boards and committees can be simplified.

Recommendation 4.2:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government work with the Adult and Community Education (ACE) Community Building Hubs to promote the need for ongoing governance training and the services provided by the Hubs to community organisations in the Interface areas.

Recommendation 4.3:

The Committee further recommends the Victorian Government examine opportunities to increase funding to Adult and Community Education organisations to enable the enhancement of the ACE Community Building Hubs initiative in the Interface areas.

Expert assistance

Community groups can also benefit from access to more individualised, hands-on forms of assistance. This might be to help a group with strategic planning, applying for grants, developing partnerships with business, improving relationships with government or around an organisation's IT and information management capacity.

Expert assistance of this kind is often undertaken by community development workers or project officers employed by local government or larger community groups. The Macedon Ranges Shire Council noted in its submission that access to a community development worker is a proven way to promote the capacity of local community groups.⁷⁰ The City of Casey's submission detailed the essential role of the project officer in strengthening groups in a new estate community in Narre Warren South.⁷¹

In a presentation to the Committee, Dr John Murphy from Mornington Peninsula Community Connections, an organisation which assists grassroots community groups, stated that there can also be value in groups receiving assistance from independent outsiders:

You may have senior practitioners who are available to mentor small community groups on things like policy and planning, project development and evaluation, public relations and all those kinds of things. I think there is a lack of access to communities to help them with their funding applications and to help them generally. The kind of stuff that I do is troubleshooting, project development or service development and just supporting coordinators who are isolated in their work. I think there is a great need for people to do that kind of work. There are community workers around. There are community development workers who do that kind of work but in the first instance, those people are employed by larger organisations and, in the first instance, they are accountable to their employer rather than to the community in which they are working. I see myself as accountable to the community groups that I work with and for, rather than to council or a big welfare agency, or something like that.⁷²

The Committee has not been able to gain a clear account of the current supply of community development workers or similarly qualified practitioners in Victoria. However, it did receive evidence of a "dearth of skilled community project workers, with recruitment periods sometimes taking months" and a shortage of "experienced, skilled and readily available advisors and problem solvers"⁷³ able to work across sectors and assist and empower individuals, groups and communities.⁷⁴ The Committee also heard that community workers were often on short-term contracts (as many community projects last for only 12 months) and moved from community to community on a regular basis. This was seen to undermine their effectiveness in establishing relationships with key people and understanding the needs of the community.⁷⁵

The following section outlines examples of four quite different initiatives which have involved the use of expert assistance to build the capacity of community groups.

Community Building Resource Service

The Community Building Resource Service (CBRS) was funded by DVC at a cost of \$1 million over two and a half years from October 2003 to February 2006 and delivered by a collaboration of external partners. The primary target audience of the CBRS was local groups engaged in the Victorian Government's Community Building Demonstration Projects.

There were seven components to the CBRS:

- A central coordinating unit (run by Victoria University)
- Development of DVC's community building website
- Local data support and brokerage
- An electronic clearing house to provide online resources to support government and community building practitioners
- A review of community information gathering processes and systems and the development of guides and tools for use by community workers and organisations
- Skills development and training to support effective practice in community strengthening
- Pilot programs to foster the leadership skills of groups and individuals within selected communities.⁷⁶

The Committee understands that while the CBRS did not receive further funding and has ceased, future community building projects will have arrangements for the provision of similar services and support through other means. The website component of the CBRS (www.communitybuilding.vic.gov.au) will also continue to be maintained.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation Neighbourhood Programme (United Kingdom)

In London, the Committee met with Lord Richard Best MP, Director of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), and his research group. The JRF is one of the largest social policy research and development charities in the UK and has a budget of around £10 million a year. Its research seeks to understand the causes of social difficulties and explore ways to overcome them.⁷⁷

Lord Best discussed the JRF's Neighbourhood Programme. This is a three year initiative (scheduled to run until June 2006) providing 'light-touch' support and networking for 20 community groups or projects, with the aim of assisting them to

become effective voices in the community. The participants typically operate in communities which are divided and fragmented and where local activity depends on too few people. The groups also had limited organisational capacity and were often receiving short term funding with poor prospects of long-term sustainability.

According to a summary of an unpublished interim evaluation report, access to a skilled and independent facilitator was seen by the participants as one of the most useful resources provided under the Programme.⁷⁸ Facilitators spent most of their time in the first year supporting groups to build organisational capacity through the development of planning skills, mapping of local needs, effective meeting skills and others. As a trusted outsider, the facilitator was also valuable to help mediate and establish dialogue between different interests in the community. Other assistance included:

- Small amounts of credit (between £5,000 and £10,000 over the three years)
- Opportunities to meet and network with other projects
- A website and signposting to relevant JRF and other research
- Mediation between groups/projects and local authorities.⁷⁹

The report notes some participants have flourished under this light-touch approach to capacity building, demonstrating the value of providing assistance to groups involved in community strengthening: “with a small amount of input and low level resources, they are delivering on the government’s agenda as a well as their own – building social capital and influencing local priorities and the delivery of local services.”⁸⁰

Community Development Scheme (New Zealand Government)

New Zealand’s Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) administers the Community Development Scheme. This provides funding to community, hapū/iwi/Māori, Pasifika (Pacific islands) and other groups in areas of identified need to employ community development workers to facilitate sustainable community capacity building projects.⁸¹ In 2004-05, 24 workers were funded, nine of whom were Māori and one Pasifika.⁸²

Community Internship Programme (New Zealand Government)

DIA also currently funds the Community Internship Programme. An experienced and skilled person from a large organisation (public, private or community sector) is matched to a smaller community organisation with specific capacity building needs. The department provides a grant to the community organisation to cover the intern’s salary for a period of six, four and a half or three months.⁸³ The total grant over six months is NZ\$23,065 (A\$19,405). Currently, 13 six-month internships are offered and the Committee was informed these have been highly successful and popular.

The department notes the Community Internship Programme is not about work experience or student placement. Nor is it intended as an alternative to a project grant for the completion of a specific task. Rather, the emphasis is on skills-transferral, personal and professional development and the building of relationships between sectors and organisations.⁸⁴ Public and private sector agencies can improve their understanding of specific communities, perhaps leading to ongoing partnerships, and the interns, on their return, can influence the planning and delivery of policies and services based on their experiences.

The Committee considers this initiative could be of considerable benefit to communities in Victoria and recommends its adoption by government. However, the term ‘skilled specialist’, rather than ‘intern’, may more accurately convey the nature of the program.

Recommendation 4.4:

The Committee recommends the Department for Victorian Communities, in consultation with the community sector, establish a ‘skilled specialist’ program as part of its capacity building strategy for the sector.

Recommendation 4.5:

The Committee further recommends the Department for Victorian Communities examine the suitability of establishing a network of skilled and experienced advisors able to provide expert advice and guidance to local community strengthening projects.

Public liability insurance

The Committee heard from a number of community groups on the issue of public liability insurance. Public liability insurance covers an organisation where a third party is killed, physically injured or their property damaged due to the negligence of the insured organisation.

In 2001/02, the collapse of the HIH insurance company and the coincidence of other global and local factors provoked rapid premium increases for public liability

insurance (and for professional indemnity insurance). Many community groups struggled to find affordable insurance or in some cases, any insurance cover at all.

The states and territories and the Commonwealth, along with the insurance industry, responded with separate and joint strategies to counteract the premium increases. Reforms focused mainly on minimising personal injury claims costs by implementing caps and thresholds on court-awarded settlements, provisions for structured settlements, changes to negligence laws and minimising legal costs.⁸⁵ In some states, governments reduced (as in New South Wales) or abolished (as in Queensland) stamp duty on insurance premiums for eligible not-for-profit organisations, although this step was not taken by the Victorian Government. In Victoria, key reforms enacted since 2002 included protection for volunteers and good Samaritans from the risk of being sued, caps on general damages claims and claims for loss of earnings, impairment thresholds for general damages claims and reform of the Statute of Limitations.⁸⁶

What has been the effect of these reforms on insurance premiums? According to the latest available information from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), the average premium for a public liability insurance policy fell by four percent in real terms over the year 2004. This was the first fall since 1998. The ACCC notes most insurers believed the reforms were having an effect and they expected premiums to fall by at least 5 percent in 2005.⁸⁷

A continuing trend towards lower premiums would indeed be welcome news for community groups, as the average premium for public liability insurance in 2004, despite falling by four percent, remained expensive when compared to 2002 and 2001 levels. Unfortunately, the ACCC is not able to report disaggregated data on insurance premiums to show the impact on the not-for-profit sector as opposed to other sectors.⁸⁸ However, evidence received by this Committee suggests some groups in the not-for-profit sector are yet to see decreases in their public liability insurance premiums. The Scout Association (Victorian Branch) noted at a public hearing that its insurance costs had risen substantially:

In the last four years, the Scout Association's public liability insurance alone has risen from \$175,000 to \$235,000 to \$370,000 to \$500,000. In the last year, we were up to \$600,000. It is coming in at around about \$25 a person.⁸⁹

Further evidence along these lines comes from a 2005 survey of not-for-profit organisations by the Council of Social Services of New South Wales (NCOSS). The survey found that not-for-profits experienced an average increase of 9 percent on public liability insurance premiums for 2004-05.⁹⁰ However, it should be noted the NCOSS survey was based on a very small sample of NSW organisations.

The Ministerial Advisory Council of Senior Victorians' submission advanced what was a common view concerning the effects of unaffordable insurance on community organisations and community activities generally:

The costs of public liability insurance are not affordable for disadvantaged people and many volunteer-based organisations, eg self help groups. Concern about the possibility of legal action and the cost of insurance deters community groups from undertaking a range of activities. This is particularly true of the events which used to bring people together, such as sausage sizzles and community barbeques.⁹¹

The Committee finds that the public liability insurance ‘crisis’ is not over for at least some groups in the community sector and it remains an issue of concern for many. On the one hand, given the scope of the reforms enacted in recent years it seems further time will be needed to assess any changes to the accessibility and cost of insurance for the sector. The Committee also notes a number of positive developments (in addition to the overall fall in the cost of public liability insurance discussed above). Several insurance companies are now providing cover for the sector in Victoria.⁹² There are also freely available risk management resources for community groups, including checklists, seminars, advice and training.⁹³ These are valuable and essential resources for community organisations to manage their risk profile. However, given the level of concern which remains in the community, the Committee also believes further consideration of the public liability insurance issue by the Victorian Government is necessary.

Recommendation 4.6:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government, as a matter of priority, work with local government to ensure community groups in Victoria have access to affordable public liability insurance.

Approaches in new communities

The Committee observed an emerging recognition in the residential land development industry that community groups are important producers of the ‘sense of community’ developers are seeking to promote. Mr Neil O’Connor from the Dennis Family Corporation described the importance his company places on establishing residents groups within new housing developments:

One of the first things that we do in our developments — for example, in Rose Grange — is to start up a residents association. We do that by trying to get a person who is

involved in the community to say, ‘Listen! Do you want to come to the residents association?’ We feed in some money. I guess what is on their agenda is to start up a neighbourhood watch. They can be the go-between between us, the developer and perhaps council on the other side. They might start to have issues about the maintenance of parks and rubbish collection — all those sorts of nuts-and-bolts-type things.⁹⁴

Local groups are also seen by developers as a way to generate community stewardship for the physical environment of the estate and increase the likelihood of maintenance occurring once the developer leaves.⁹⁵ The Dennis Family Corporation has an annual grants program which assists registered not-for-profit community groups and associations.⁹⁶

There is clear value in developers planning at an early stage to provide facilities for local sport and recreation clubs, as these will become focal points as the community develops. The Committee was informed of the unusual example of the Laurimar Pony Club, located in the City of Whittlesea. The Laurimar Pony Club has a long association with the Laurimar housing development (now managed by Delfin). The developer provided the land for the club with a view to it becoming a point of social cohesion and an asset to the development.⁹⁷ The Committee heard the club has emerged into a social group of young people who all share the same love of horses and riding. To extend this involvement to children without a horse of their own, the club now has a ‘riders without horses’ program to teach children all aspects of horse care and riding and the responsibilities and commitment of owning a horse.⁹⁸

The establishment of local volunteer-run emergency services such as the CFA and the SES can be more problematic in new communities in the Interface areas. Traditionally the social hubs of rural communities, these groups can struggle to attract volunteers and support from a population more used to professionalised emergency units. However, with some active promotion, they can also help develop a sense of cohesion and belonging in the early stages of a new community. The Committee was informed of a successful example of establishing a CFA brigade in a new community at Point Cook:

It is a fantastic example of where they started from — there were not any houses; they actually moved in and started from scratch. Those relationships that they built doing that still exist with the school, with the council and so on. They have successfully built not only a fire brigade, but a social connection within the community. They actually got in there — although this was a bit coincidental — before any of the other clubs or anything started. The community was sort of crying out for some way to make some social networks. So 75 or so people turned up at a meeting, and I think 45 people signed on to join the brigade. They have had a stable base of 25

or so since then. So as well as providing fire services there is also a social connection in the community.⁹⁹

In answer to a question from Committee Member Mr Martin Dixon MP, regarding the fact that many residents of new Interface communities may not have encountered the CFA before, Mr Geoff Spring from the CFA responded:

We actually think that is a potential strength because once they get over the expectation of ringing 000 and having the firefighters turn up, they understand they are part of the community and are expected to contribute to the community by maybe volunteering with the CFA. That helps build the community and opens it up for people to meet their neighbours and deal with other groups within the community. It actually helps build and strengthen the communities.¹⁰⁰

A submission from Delfin Lend Lease pointed to the existence of more than 30 groups or associations within its Caroline Springs development (in the Shire of Melton) whose activities had been facilitated to varying degrees by the company, including sporting clubs, learning groups and others.¹⁰¹ At a public hearing, Mr Bryce Moore, Delfin General Manager, raised the important issue of the longer term sustainability of these groups, noting “while we have a good number of community groups, and we actively support them, in recent times we have pondered how to see a community supported once we move on.”¹⁰²

Part of Delfin’s answer in Caroline Springs has been to develop the Caroline Springs Community Bank. The bank differs from other community bank models as it is currently owned jointly by the developer and the Bendigo Bank. Over the next three years it will move towards a community ownership model where a community association will control and distribute the ‘community dividend’ that flows from the bank. Delfin advised the Committee that this model was chosen in the absence of an existing community to fund a local bank. The Committee understands that Delfin intends to roll-out the Caroline Springs Community Bank model to other locations.¹⁰³

While the bank is still in its early stages, the Committee considers it to be an innovative model with the potential to provide longer term support for community groups in new housing estates and also to reduce funding and infrastructure maintenance demands on local governments.

Recommendation 4.7:

The Committee recommends Interface local governments investigate the Caroline Springs community bank model and work with developers to establish similar arrangements in new housing developments.

Funding issues for community groups

The Committee received a considerable amount of evidence relating to funding for community groups involved in community strengthening activities. Evidence focused mainly on funding application processes, the length and flexibility of funding and issues relating to reporting and evaluation. These are discussed below.

Applying for funding

The Committee heard from a number of witnesses of poorly designed or excessively complex funding application forms.¹⁰⁴ One witness commented:

I recently completed a couple of application forms for philanthropic trust funding. The application forms that we completed were quite straightforward. It appeared to have all the information that a funding body might require. One was for the RACV Foundation and the other one was the R.E. Ross Trust. I also completed one for state government funding, which I found incredibly hard to complete. I did that because the other group just struggled; they could not understand the questions. They thought there was repetition; they could not understand the language of community capacity building. I had been completing applications for years and I found that extremely difficult.¹⁰⁵

The Committee notes the efforts of governments at different levels to make the grant application process easier for community groups. For example, Melton Shire Council provides hands-on assistance to groups who apply for its own community grants program.¹⁰⁶ DVC has also undertaken a considerable amount of work in providing accessible grants information on its website, reviewing forms and ‘packaging up’ community strengthening grants to reduce the burden on community groups seeking funding.¹⁰⁷ Notwithstanding this, the Committee is cognisant of the fact that many smaller groups are not always aware of the assistance available or able to take advantage of it. There is a distinct need for funders to continually review their grant application (and other) forms to ensure they can be easily understood. Given many groups reported spending a considerable time on funding submissions, sometimes to the detriment of service delivery, the Committee finds that much more thought and direction needs to be given by funding bodies to simplifying application forms and piloting them, prior to release. Governments should determine from the outset what actual information is needed and what can be omitted.

The Committee also received evidence from community groups around the (apparently common) requirement when applying for grants that proposed initiatives demonstrate innovation.¹⁰⁸ In a submission to the Committee, Ms Pat O’Connell, Executive Officer of the Frankston Mornington Peninsula Local Learning & Employment Network, noted that successful initiatives were often built up over time

and the requirement to come up with something new for each funding round was a barrier to implementing sustainable community solutions.¹⁰⁹ At a subsequent public hearing, Ms O'Connell elaborated on this point:

For new communities, for emerging communities and so on, if you have to come up with something new every time you put in a proposal, I think you are going to be in a lot of trouble getting people together and getting that level of entrepreneurship happening in the early stages ... I would be suggesting very strongly that government needs to take a more logical approach to requests for submissions and not consistently ask for something new, something that has not been done before, something that government can claim as its own, but that might not necessarily do much strategically for a local area.¹¹⁰

The Committee heard that it is not unusual for funding to be taken from an existing program and given to an 'innovative' or new program with essentially the same purpose.¹¹¹

Length and flexibility of funding

The Committee understands the majority of community development or community strengthening-type programs are funded for between one and three years. This appears to be common from both government and philanthropic funders.

The view was put strongly and repeatedly to the Committee throughout the Inquiry that a funding timeframe of one, two or three years is almost always too short to achieve the community strengthening outcomes sought and to achieve program sustainability. Many stakeholders working with disadvantaged or new communities in the Interface areas found that it generally took three years for programs to establish themselves:

If you put out a program in the community and fund it for three years and that is it, it takes that long for the program to take hold, and it is like pulling the rug out from underneath the community. It is soul destroying.¹¹²

Mr Jemal Ahmet from Whittlesea Community Connections informed the Committee of the difficulties his community agency has encountered with funding from all levels of government for projects within Whittlesea:

We have to talk about the problem with the current funding models that are used by government, not just the state government but local and federal, too. There is a real problem with how government aspires to build community strength. One, two and three-year funding is the norm for most government departments and obtaining recurrent funding for

new initiatives, new programs and new services is almost impossible now. Meaningful and sustainable community development can only occur in areas such as Whittlesea with its low service infrastructure if there is a different approach to how services in this area are funded. What we are talking about here is recurrent funding of basic services and for other services looking at 5 and 10-year minimums as the norm rather than the 1, 2 and 3-year minimums. It takes so much out of the community in order to reapply year after year for programs that continually change. It is not cost-effective for government, it is not cost-effective for agencies and it is not cost-effective for the community.¹¹³

Similarly, the City of Casey informed the Committee that, in its experience of working with rapidly growing new communities in Melbourne's outer suburbs, "physical development may be fast but community development is slow."

Current provision of pilot program funding for 12 months and program funding for a maximum period of three years tends to not be adequate in terms of assuring sustainability ... Long term funding for community building projects is critical, not only in terms of training and development, but for the message it communicates to communities about their role in self help and the role of government in fostering this. Adequate time and resources must be allocated.¹¹⁴

The North East Neighbourhood House Network wrote in its submission that short-term program funding was flawed because "there is no investment in the time it takes for engagement, to connect and facilitate people's identification of needs and issues, time to strategise and plan solutions ..."¹¹⁵ These views are echoed in a 2004 review of the CBRS and community strengthening approaches and initiatives in Victoria. A key learning recorded in the document is that short term investment of funding and effort can be a barrier to achieving community strengthening goals.¹¹⁶ Short term funding can lead to wasted effort, a diversion of staff time away from program delivery and towards developing funding applications, a loss of local expertise and most importantly, community scepticism or resentment.¹¹⁷ Ms Di Ford from Berry Street Victoria provided an example of this to the Committee in a presentation in which she related key learnings from a program to keep young people in school beyond Years 9 and 10. Ms Ford stated:

Firstly, the funding period must be for at least five to seven years. That is about the time needed for the community to develop an understanding of the project, to develop respect for the workers and to develop trust in the organisation that is running the program.¹¹⁸

Ms Ford went on to note that flexible funding had been important to the success of the Berry Street program, allowing it to develop according to community needs and input:

Secondly, the funding must be flexible. We started with a particular aim and we had a particular outcome we wanted, but we needed to have flexibility around the strategies we used. This is because [there were] some strategies we thought as an organisation might work for the community but the community might not think that was the way to go, so we needed to have the ability to change them. That has been a very important part of our success in the area.¹¹⁹

The Committee received further practical insight into the benefits of flexible funding arrangements in a presentation by Ms Judith Brown from the Cardinia Cluster of Neighbourhood Houses. Ms Brown discussed a Neighbourhood House program funded by VicHealth to promote community festivals:

... instead of just running a festival, we have actually run that through our Certificate in General Education throughout the whole of this year, so that in Adult Learners' Week, this group of people who do not have literacy skills – half of them are migrants, and in each of the sessions is a person with an intellectual disability taking part – have set up their committee; we have done the governance training and they have some money to play with ... The skills that those people have learnt are just amazing. They are standing up, they are talking to us. They are coming in, knocking on the door and putting their case forward. That was flexible funding. It is only a small amount, but because we could deliver it through the existing process, the ripples out have just been amazing.¹²⁰

Reporting and evaluation

A related area of concern raised with the Committee by a number of community groups was around reporting and evaluation requirements. The Committee heard that overly onerous or time-consuming reporting and accountability requirements present a barrier to the work of community groups as well limiting the types of groups who can apply for funding.¹²¹ To give an example of such requirements, albeit an extreme one, a community arts organisation informed the Committee it was required to complete lengthy evaluation forms identical to those given to public hospitals, despite the obvious differences in the scale of the organisations and the funds involved.¹²² According to the Our Community organisation, concerns about funding requirements are common across the sector:

Community groups are facing increasing demands to demonstrate their outcomes and efficiency. In the name of accountability we are seeing the ramping up of endless demands for elaborate reporting requirements that are overwhelming many groups ...¹²³

Of further concern to the Committee was the perceived lack of feedback or learning coming out of evaluations of community strengthening projects. Dr John Murphy suggested to the Committee that inappropriate methods of evaluation and unrealistic expectations from funders for rapid results can lead to community groups reporting outcomes inaccurately, which in turn undermines the ability of other groups to learn from different approaches:

No-one wants to publicise their failures, but we need to know what works and what does not work when we are planning our projects. We have access to very few genuine case studies outlining successes and failures. Most case studies nowadays are just marketing documents. It is important that we benefit from and build on the experience of others and, importantly, avoid making the same mistakes, but this is simply not achievable when outcomes are exaggerated and failures are either hidden or understated.¹²⁴

This point is supported by the Our Community organisation:

Too often community groups spend their precious time, resources and energy on completing evaluations rather than on finding creative new approaches to their work, and see little evidence that their evaluative efforts are being used to improve policy, guide programs or assist other groups ... Outcome measures should be about sharing strategies. We need to shift the focus of evaluation to sharing data on performance and outcomes across networks of community groups ...¹²⁵

The Committee notes that in many fields of public administration there is a move towards exploring different styles of evaluation which have a stronger learning focus, particularly for projects which attempt to achieve social change of some kind. This includes action research-type techniques or ‘balanced scorecard’ approaches. Most Significant Change (MSC) is one evaluation technique (but there are many others) which has been widely used in diverse contexts such as Australia’s overseas aid delivery, the dairy industry and in South Australia’s Department of Education and Children’s Services.¹²⁶ MSC is dialogue-based; it uses stories from program participants, often to complement other more traditional measures in monitoring and evaluation. It is also participatory in that stakeholders are involved both in deciding the sorts of change to be recorded and in analysing the data.

Such approaches will not be suitable in all cases. However, the Committee noted that VicHealth incorporates comparable elements in monitoring its Audience Access program. Dr Ross Farnell, from Burrinja Community Cultural Centre, informed the Committee of the benefits of VicHealth’s approach both for participating organisations and for VicHealth itself:

The way VicHealth is structuring under its Audience Access program is really quite interesting. It is a lot of mentoring with

other arts organisations; it is getting together three times a year with everyone else who is doing that program and giving your feedback verbally in terms of, ‘How is it running?’; ‘What is working and what is not working?’ So you can really get some of the qualitative evaluation in there instead of just the quantitative numbers that you are going to get on the forms with ‘tick all the boxes’ and ‘fill in the numbers and send it back’. I think that is the type of thing you need, to get towards being able to get these organisations together, that might have got funding in similar areas and tried to run similar programs, even if it is only once a year or bi-annual because getting feedback from each other is wonderful — the types of things you can get back like, ‘Oh, you tried that? We had never thought of that. That is a really great way’ or especially, ‘We have tried this and it just does not work’. For the organisation that is giving the funding it is hugely relevant — it’s fabulous feedback.¹²⁷

Dr Farnell went on to say:

It works both for the organisations that have got the funding but also for the organisation that is giving the funding if you are getting that type of feedback instead of the paper report – no doubt you will need that level of paper evaluation as well – and if you can really sit down with the groups and talk about the issues and set aside that time a couple of times a year ... that sort of thing is going to be really valuable.¹²⁸

The Committee recognises these issues around funding, reporting and evaluation are complex and persistent for community groups and funders alike. Governments need to reconcile the community’s needs with the realities of accountability requirements, individual departmental responsibilities or the electoral cycle. On the other hand, it seems abundantly clear from the views of those participating in community strengthening (and communicated to this Committee), that communities and programs suffer if funding is tied too rigidly or results expected too soon. Rebuilding social capital is a long-term prospect in areas which have been marked by disadvantage and under-servicing. This may also be true in parts of the Interface areas where demographics and needs are in rapid transition and funding may need greater flexibility to allow re-targeting over time. The Committee therefore welcomes the commitments in *A Fairer Victoria* seeking to make it easier for communities to work with government and specifically mentioning the problem of “limited flexibility in funding and performance agreements.”¹²⁹ The Committee considers it important for this approach to continue to gain momentum as part of a general shift to ‘scaling up’ the Victorian Government’s approach to community strengthening.

Recommendation 4.8:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government, in implementing *A Fairer Victoria*, move towards the development of funding models for community strengthening with greater flexibility and timeframes of a minimum of three years. As part of this, monitoring and evaluation requirements for projects should be well targeted and provide opportunities for learning, dialogue and networking between projects and stakeholders.

Notes

¹ Skidmore, P. & Craig, J. (2005) *Start with People: How community organisations put citizens in the driving seat*, Demos, London, p.22.

² Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership (2005) *Giving Australia: Research on Philanthropy in Australia, Summary Findings*, Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra, p.21; see also Lyons, M. (n.d.) *BRW on the "Nonprofit Sector": Terminologically Confused but Right Bottom Line*, Australian Centre for Co-operative Research and Development (ACCORD), see <http://www.accord.org.au/social/commentaries/brw305.html>

³ Mr J. Huf, *Transcript of Evidence*, 5 July 2005, p.659.

⁴ Ms M. Aveling, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 June 2005.

⁵ Mr G. Spring, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2005, p.607.

⁶ Department for Victorian Communities (Sport and Recreation Victoria) (2005) *Sport and Recreation 2005-2010: A Five Year Strategic Plan for Sport and Recreation Victoria*, DVC, Melbourne, p.11.

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ Briefing to the Committee, Ms N. Mahony, Hume City Council, 20 June 2005.

⁹ Department for Victorian Communities, *Submission number 78A*, 24 May 2005, p.24.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.51.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.24. DVC also advises that more than \$7 million was distributed to projects in the Interface municipalities during this period.

¹² *ibid.*, p.45.

¹³ Australian Research Group (2003) *Quantitative Research for the Together we do Better Campaign*, report to VicHealth, Melbourne, p.9.

¹⁴ Skidmore, P. & Craig, J. (2005) *op. cit.*, pp.48-51.

¹⁵ Mr A. Van Eymeren, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 June 2005.

¹⁶ Skidmore, P. & Craig, J. (2005) *op. cit.*, p.48.

¹⁷ Burrinja (n.d.) *Vision: Building community through arts*, http://www.burrinja.org.au/community/Content/about_contacts/contacts_frame.htm

¹⁸ Dr R. Farnell, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 May 2005, pp.269-270.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ http://www.burrinja.org.au/community/Content/about_contacts/contacts_frame.htm

²¹ Dr R. Farnell, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 May 2005, p.273.

²² Ms L. Whitefield, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 September 2005, p.747.

²³ Jochum, V., Pratten, B. & Wilding, K. (2005) *Civil renewal and active citizenship: a guide to the debate*, National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), London.

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Dr J. Murphy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 May 2005, p.92.

²⁷ Department of the Premier & Cabinet (Sector Reform and Development Working Party) (2005) 'Discussion Paper 5: Building the organisational capacity of non-government organisations: supporting sector reform and development', *Industry Plan for the Non-Government Human Services Sector*, Government of Western Australia, p.7.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p.9.

²⁹ Backer, T. (2000) *Strengthening nonprofits: capacity building and philanthropy*, Encino, Human Interaction Research Institute, www.humaninteract.org/images/hiri_capacity.pdf

³⁰ Frontline organisations are voluntary and community organisations that work directly with individuals and communities in order to provide services, offer support and campaign for change.

³¹ See <http://www.changeup.org.uk/overview/capacitybuilders.asp>

³² <http://www.changeup.org.uk/overview/introduction.asp>

³³ <http://www.changeup.org.uk/hubs/governance.asp>

³⁴ <http://www.changeup.org.uk/hubs/index.asp>

³⁵ Boards, Committees & Governance Centre (n.d.) *Step One: The Essential Facts*, Our Community, www.ourcommunity.com.au, p.4.

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ Consumer Affairs Victoria: <http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au>

³⁸ Our Community Help Sheet, http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/management/view_help_sheet.do?articleid=733

³⁹ Consumer Affairs Victoria (May 2006) *Cancel/wind up an incorporated association*, Associations Factsheet 12, <http://tinyurl.com/o94kx>

⁴⁰ See <http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au>: The Committee was also made aware of a comprehensive resource for community groups developed jointly by the New Zealand Government's Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector and the New Zealand Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organisations. The resource, 'Keeping It Legal E Ai Ki Te Ture', was published in December 2005 and covers the gamut of compliance and legal issues.

⁴¹ Ms C. Hampton, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 June 2005.

⁴² Stewart-Weeks, M. (2004) 'Third Sector Blues: Crafting a contemporary framework for Australian voluntary organisations', *Policy*, 20, 2, p.46.

⁴³ Ms T. Trueman, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 May 2005, p.116.

⁴⁴ See http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/boards/boards_main.jsp

⁴⁵ Briefing to the Committee, Office for Disability Issues, New Zealand Government, 11 May 2006.

⁴⁶ Ms C. Hampton, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 June 2005, pp.462-463.

⁴⁷ Scout Association of Australia (Victorian Branch), *Submission number 24*, 20 April 2005, p.20.

⁴⁸ ABC Radio National (2004) *Not for Profit, Not for Volunteers*, Background Briefing program transcript, originally broadcast 27 June 2004, <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/bbing/stories/s1265448.htm>

⁴⁹ Parliament of Victoria, Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee (2004) *Inquiry into Country Football: Final Report*, Parliament of Victoria, Melbourne.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p.139.

⁵¹ Victorian Government Response to the Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee Inquiry into Country Football. See response to Recommendations 2 and 3. <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/rrsdc/inquiries/footy/govresponse.htm>

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- ⁵² Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership (October 2005) *Giving Australia: Research on Philanthropy in Australia*, Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra, p.46.
- ⁵³ The Governance of Voluntary Organisations, quoted in ACEVO et. al. (2005) *Good Governance: A code for the voluntary and community sector*, first edition, NCVO on behalf of The National Hub for Expertise in Governance, p.4.
- ⁵⁴ Kumar, S. & Nunan, K. (2002) *A lighter touch: An evaluation of the Governance Project*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Laverthorpe, p.26.
- ⁵⁵ See http://www.ponyclubvic.org.au/default.asp?MenuID=Club_Resource_Kit/11024/0
- ⁵⁶ Mr J. Hurley, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2005, pp.593, 595.
- ⁵⁷ Ms J. Galloway, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 May 2005.
- ⁵⁸ See <http://tinyurl.com/oj5jm>
- ⁵⁹ Ms E Healey, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 June 2005, p.322.
- ⁶⁰ See <http://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/community/volunteers/train/calendar>
- ⁶¹ City of Casey, *Submission number 44*, 10 May 2005, p.21.
- ⁶² HLB Mann Judd Consulting (2005) *Evaluation of the ACE Community Building Hubs Initiative*, summary of the report prepared for the Adult Community & Further Education Division, Department of Education & Training, p.1.
- ⁶³ Kumar, S. & Nunan, K. (2002) op. cit., p.26.
- ⁶⁴ HLB Mann Judd Consulting (2005) op. cit.
- ⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.4.
- ⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p.6.
- ⁶⁷ Ms T. Trueman, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 May 2005, p.116.
- ⁶⁸ HLB Mann Judd Consulting (2005) op. cit. pp.9-10.
- ⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p.11.
- ⁷⁰ Macedon Ranges Shire Council, *Submission number 52*, 16 May 2005, p.4.
- ⁷¹ City of Casey, *Submission number 44*, 10 May 2005, p.11.
- ⁷² Dr J. Murphy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 May 2005, p.92.
- ⁷³ West, S. (2004) *From Strength to STRENGTH: Initial learnings from the development and implementation of the Community Building Resource Service*, ICEPA Discussion Paper No 2., p.18.
- ⁷⁴ For example, Mr T. Fitzgerald, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 June 2005, p.438; Ms F. Shepherd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 5 May 2005, p.653.
- ⁷⁵ Mr J. Cauchi, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 May 2005, p.89.
- ⁷⁶ Department for Victorian Communities, *Submission number 78*, 18 November 2005, pp.27-28.
- ⁷⁷ See <http://www.jrf.org.uk/about/>
- ⁷⁸ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2005) *Lending a hand: The value of 'light touch' support in empowering communities*, summary report of the JRF Neighbourhood Programme, based on an unpublished Interim Report.
- ⁷⁹ *ibid.*
- ⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p.6.
- ⁸¹ 'Hapū' are Maori sub-tribes, 'Iwi' are tribes.
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⁸² Department of Internal Affairs (2005) *Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2005*, Government of New Zealand, Wellington, p.30.

⁸³ Department of Internal Affairs, 'Community Internship Programme', information sheet provided to the Committee.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ ACCC (2005) *Public liability and professional indemnity insurance*, fifth monitoring report, ACCC Publishing Unit, Canberra, pp.5-8.

⁸⁶ Lenders, J. (Minister for Finance), *Reduction in insurance premiums is welcome news*, media release, Melbourne, 17 February 2005.

⁸⁷ ACCC (2005) *op. cit.*, p.18.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, pp.43-44.

⁸⁹ Mr A. Park, *Transcript of evidence*, 23 May 2005, p.230.

⁹⁰ NCOS (2005) *2005 Insurance Survey Results*, see www.ncos.org.au/projects/insurance/downloads/2005_Ins_Survey.pdf

⁹¹ Ministerial Advisory Council of Senior Victorians, *Submission number 42*, 5 May 2005, p.4; Ms L. Squires, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 June 2005, p.483.

⁹² ACCC (2005) *op. cit.*, pp.43-44.

⁹³ The website of the Our Community organisation (www.ourcommunity.com.au) is an impressive source of help on this and other issues relevant to the sector.

⁹⁴ Mr N. O'Connor, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2005, p.175-176. Rose Grange is located in Wyndham Shire.

⁹⁵ Mr N. O'Connor, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2005, p.176.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

⁹⁷ Mr J. Hurley, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2005, p.593.

⁹⁸ http://www.laurimarpc.ponyclubvic.org.au/default.asp?Page=2445&MenuID=About_Our_Club/c13286/0

⁹⁹ Ms N. Brown, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2005, p.605.

¹⁰⁰ Mr G. Spring, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 June 2005, p.606.

¹⁰¹ Delfin Lend Lease, *Submission number 35*, 2 May 2005, p.3.

¹⁰² Mr B. Moore, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 June 2005, p.573.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, p.577.

¹⁰⁴ Pakenham University of the 3rd Age Inc., *Submission number 60*, 9 June 2005, p.8.

¹⁰⁵ Dr J. Murphy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 May 2005, p.93.

¹⁰⁶ Ms E. Healey, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 June 2005, p.322.

¹⁰⁷ See <http://www.grants.dvc.vic.gov.au/>. The Committee noted similar work to streamline the grants system in New Zealand through the 'Grants Online' website, see <http://www.cdgo.govt.nz/>

¹⁰⁸ For example, Mr J. Ahmet, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 June 2005, p.513.

¹⁰⁹ Ms P. O'Connell, *Submission number 6*, 6 April 2005, p.4.

¹¹⁰ Ms P. O'Connell, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 May 2005, p.109.

¹¹¹ Ms P. O'Connell, *Submission number 6*, 6 April 2005, p.11.

¹¹² Mr J. Cauchi, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 May 2005, p.81.

¹¹³ Mr J. Ahmet, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 June 2005, p.513.

¹¹⁴ City of Casey, *Submission number 44*, 10 May 2005, p.5.

¹¹⁵ North East Neighbourhood House Network, *Submission number 49*, 11 May 2005, p.4.

¹¹⁶ West, S. (2004) *From Strength to STRENGTH: Initial learnings from the development and implementation of the Community Building Resource Service*, ICEPA Discussion Paper No 2.

¹¹⁷ Mr J. Ahmet, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 June 2005; City of Casey, *Submission number 44*, 10 May 2005; Ms D. Ford, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 May 2005; Ms M. Monichon, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 May 2005.

¹¹⁸ Ms D. Ford, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 May 2005, pp.210-211.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

¹²⁰ Ms J. Brown, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 June 2005, p.413.

¹²¹ City of Casey, *Submission number 44*, 19 May 2005, p.26-27.

¹²² Dr R. Farnell, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 May 2005, p.272.

¹²³ Our Community (2003) *The Community Manifesto: Valuing Australia's Community Groups*, Our Community Pty Ltd, Melbourne, pp.11, 14.

¹²⁴ Dr J. Murphy, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 May 2005, p.89.

¹²⁵ Our Community (2003) *op. cit.*

¹²⁶ See Clear Horizon: <http://www.clearhorizon.com.au/site/index.htm>. The Committee also directs readers interested in this topic to Friedman, M. (2005) *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough: How to Produce Measurable Improvements to Customers and Communities*, Trafford Publishing.

¹²⁷ Dr R. Farnell, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 May 2005, p. 274.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ Department of Premier & Cabinet (2005) *A Fairer Victoria: Creating opportunity and addressing disadvantage*, DPC, Melbourne, p.12.

CHAPTER 5: VOLUNTEERING

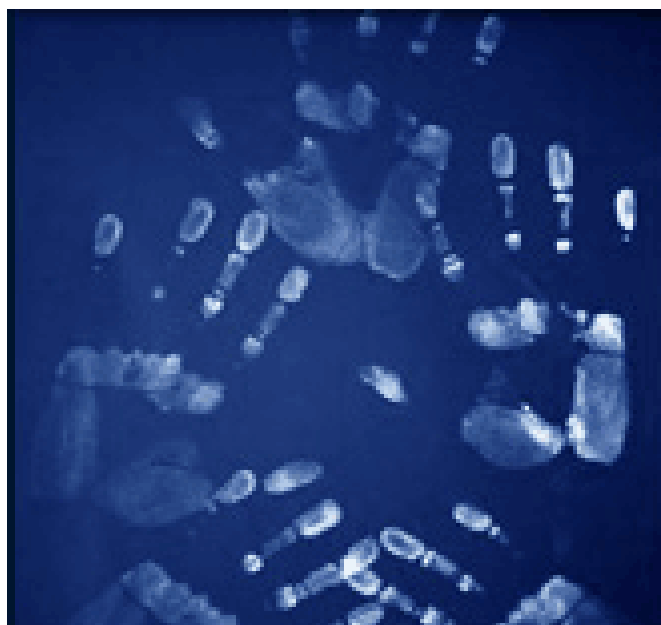


Image courtesy of Teknik Corporation

The place I spend most time at these days is the recreation reserve, which I have been chairman of since 1971. I have mowed the ground and the outskirts there for over 40 years. On that reserve we have a scout hall, tennis rooms, netball rooms, cricket and football rooms and a social room and every building on that reserve has been built by voluntary labour. There are also two or three ovals and a netball court that were built by voluntary labour ... I used to always mow the ovals after midnight, because that is when my work finished ... Sometimes when it took me longer my wife would come down, sit on the fence, toot the horn, flash the lights and say, 'I thought you might have gone to sleep.' But I can assure you that you could not go to sleep on a Fergie tractor at that hour of the morning with a wind chill factor of about minus 2..¹

The above quote by a volunteer from Officer (a small community in the Shire of Cardinia, an hour's drive south-east of Melbourne) illustrates the depth of commitment typical of many volunteers in Melbourne's outer suburbs. Generations of volunteers and voluntary organisations, like the CFA, the SES, Rotary and Lions Clubs, the Red Cross, the Scouts, the multitudes of volunteer-managed sporting clubs, faith groups and others, have made long-lasting and valuable contributions to the social life and physical infrastructure of their communities.

This chapter discusses some of the issues and challenges faced by volunteers and the organisations to which they belong. The Committee's overarching concern in this part of the Inquiry was to consider how volunteering can be further supported and encouraged in new and existing communities in the outer suburbs. Various strategies, programs and learnings from Victoria, interstate and overseas are outlined.

The first part of the chapter sets out a definition of volunteering and notes some of the key benefits of volunteering discussed in the literature. It then draws on statistics to sketch the 'state of play' for volunteering, both nationally and in Victoria. This is followed by an overview of some of the support given to volunteers and volunteer organisations. The final section highlights specific issues raised with the Committee, focusing particularly on volunteering by population groups mentioned in the Terms of Reference: young people, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, people with disabilities and older people.

What is volunteering?

While there can be any number of definitional debates,² Volunteering Australia defines *formal* volunteering as an activity which takes place through not-for-profit organisations is:

- Of benefit to the community and the volunteer
- Of the volunteers own free-will and without coercion
- For no financial payment
- In designated volunteer positions only.³

Volunteers underpin many different facets of life in Victoria. Volunteers are fighting fires, running football clubs, sitting on kindergarten committees, delivering meals and working in schools, prisons and art galleries. The economic value of all this activity in Victoria has been estimated at around \$10 billion a year.⁴ Yet the true value of volunteering goes much further. Volunteering is at the heart of social capital; it builds networks, trust and reciprocity between people and encourages cooperation in communities. Involvement in voluntary activity is also strongly linked to involvement in other forms of active citizenship, such as participation in local politics and an interest in public affairs.

Other positive effects can be found in the literature on volunteering, including:

- Happiness – studies have found that people who volunteer (and people who live in areas with a high level of volunteerism) report higher levels of wellbeing and greater satisfaction with their lives⁵
- Health – a number of studies have found both physical and mental health benefits can accrue from volunteering, leading to lower rates of mortality among volunteers⁶
- Employment – volunteering can provide training, skills development or work experience which helps the volunteer to become employed (although the literature shows the link between volunteering and subsequent employment is not as well-established or as positive as one might expect)⁷
- Crime and anti-social behaviour – areas with high levels of volunteering have been found to have lower crime rates;⁸ other studies have shown volunteering can inhibit anti-social behaviour among young people⁹
- Education – Wilson and Musick cite a US study which found students who volunteer perform better academically than other students.¹⁰

To some extent, the causal links here remain up for debate. For example, does volunteering improve health or are healthy people more likely to volunteer? On the other hand, it is undeniable most volunteers report gaining enjoyment, a sense of satisfaction and greater social interaction. These alone are important benefits for building stronger communities.

Finally, the Committee considers it important to note that *formal* volunteering is merely the tip of the iceberg; a vast amount of informal assistance occurs between family, friends and neighbours.¹¹ These acts of unpaid helping are not generally measured nor considered to be ‘volunteering’ per se by the participants, yet they are the primary form of volunteering in many communities.

Volunteering statistics

National statistics point to an increase in formal volunteering over the past decade. According to the ABS, an estimated 24 percent of adult Australians participated in formal volunteering in 1995. By 2000, this had risen to 32 percent, although the average hours worked per volunteer did not change.¹² A subsequent ABS survey in 2002 found the volunteering rate had further increased to 34 percent.¹³

More recent surveys suggest this is a continuing trend. A 2004 Newspoll survey for Volunteering Australia put the volunteering rate at 46 percent,¹⁴ while another estimated it to be 41 percent (in the year to January 2005).¹⁵ The latter survey also found volunteers gave an average of 132 hours per year (which is down from the 160 hours reported by the ABS in 2000).

In Victoria, ABS surveys in 1995 and 2000 show the volunteering rate rising from around 25 percent to around 33 percent.¹⁶

The annual *Victorian Population Health Survey* suggests the rate of volunteering is stable. In 2001, 32 percent of people volunteered for a local group. This increased to 34 percent in 2002 and 2003 before dropping to 31 percent in 2004, the most recent year for which data are available.¹⁷

A third source of data is a 2005 survey by DVC (of 800 Victorian adults) which states that 41 percent of people are volunteers. It also concludes:

- Women, older people and those in rural and regional areas tend to volunteer more often
- Most volunteers donate their time to the community and social welfare organisations (48 percent), followed by school/educational/childcare organisations (22 percent) and sport and recreational organisations (18 percent)
- 78 percent volunteered to ‘give something back’ to the community and ‘to help others’.¹⁸

Another DVC report, *Indicators of Community Strength at the Local Government Area Level in Victoria*, provides survey data on volunteering disaggregated by LGA.¹⁹ In 2004, an average of 38.7 percent of people across the Victorian LGAs answered ‘yes’ to the question ‘do you help out as a volunteer?’ and 51 percent of people reported they volunteer ‘sometimes’. Table 5.1 below shows the proportion of people in each Interface area who answered ‘yes’ (and may be thought of as more regular volunteers). Nillumbik (37.9 percent) had the highest rate of volunteering and Whittlesea had the lowest (23.3 percent). Volunteering was below the state average in all Interface (and all Melbourne metropolitan) LGAs.

Table 5.1: Volunteering in the Interface municipalities

Local Government Area	Volunteering (%)
Nillumbik	38.7
Mornington Peninsula	36.4
Cardinia	34.8
Yarra Ranges	32.2
Hume	29.1
Wyndham	27.9
Melton	27.6
Whittlesea	23.3
State Average	38.7

Source: DVC, *Indicators of community strength at the Local Government Area level in Victoria*, 2005.

The variation between the Interface municipalities shown here in Table 5.1 is worthy of comment. The ranking of each municipality mirrors, to some extent, the relative socio-economic status of the area (discussed further in Chapter 2). Volunteering rates

are lower in relatively less well-off areas (such as Whittlesea) than in more advantaged areas (such as Nillumbik). This association of area disadvantage with reduced involvement in volunteering is consistent with overseas research: a 2001 study by the Home Office in the UK found:

In terms of formal volunteering, 49% of people who lived in the areas with the lowest deprivation scores were involved, compared with 29% of those who lived in areas with the highest levels of deprivation.²⁰

Formal volunteering is lower in areas where people have poorer health, reduced access to transport, a lack of information about volunteering and fewer opportunities to volunteer. Ms Janet Taylor from the Brotherhood of St Laurence reported to the Committee:

There have to be resources both at a personal level and a community level for people to be able to say, 'Okay, I have got myself right. Now I can look to the needs of the community' ... And there has to be a certain level of freedom from ... domestic concerns apart from finance. If someone is facing domestic violence or is struggling to care for a person with a disability at home and they are not supported in that role, their life is a struggle; they do not have any time to give to the community and build strengths in the community. So there are certainly base levels of services we have to provide before we can even talk about strengthening communities; we need to free people up to engage in the community and look to others.²¹

Chanan has argued that areas which undergo major economic downturns are likely to experience a weakening of the capacity of the local community to engage in constructive collective activities. Yet it is precisely these neighbourhoods where a flourishing community is most needed and sought by governments.²²

However, this is not to suggest that relative differences in the propensity of people in the Interface areas to volunteer can be explained entirely by the socio-economic character of the individual municipalities (and in any case, it would be unwise to base solid conclusions on what are fairly limited data). There are likely to be many factors at play. The rurality of one Interface area compared to another may influence the level of volunteering: in the DVC survey discussed above, rural LGAs were found, almost uniformly, to have higher levels of volunteering than urban LGAs. Another possible factor for the rapidly growing Interface LGAs is the link between the length of time a person has lived in an area and the increased likelihood of being a volunteer.²³ According to DVC research, 25 percent of residents who have lived in their local area for less than a year volunteer, compared to 39 percent who have lived there more than 10 years. In the short term, this would seem to work against the likes of Wyndham and Melton, which both have considerable numbers of new residents arriving each day, but to the advantage of areas like Nillumbik and Yarra Ranges, which have much more stable populations.

Supporting volunteering

In a speech to the Volunteering Australia National Conference in 2000, which was the International Year of Volunteers, the President of the International Association for Volunteer Effort, Mr Kenn Allen, commented:

Volunteering is not "free." Like any other human endeavour, it requires resources. This may be for paid staff to organise and manage volunteer efforts, funds to enable people to volunteer by reimbursing transportation or meal costs, expenses for training or supporting volunteers, costs associated with their work, costs of promoting volunteering, etc. Even at the most grassroots level, financial resources can increase the effectiveness and impact of volunteers.²⁴

The Committee considers the point is well made: if volunteering is to be maintained and strengthened, it needs encouragement and practical support. The following section looks at how this is currently provided in Australia and sketches some of the key government policies and programs.

Volunteering infrastructure

The volunteering infrastructure in Australia consists of a national peak body (Volunteering Australia), seven state and territory volunteering peak bodies and an estimated 90 regional or local organisations identifying themselves as volunteer centres of one kind or another.²⁵

There are currently twenty Volunteer Resource Centres (VRCs) in Victoria.²⁶ VRCs are community-based organisations funded from federal, state and local governments and, in some cases, the private sector. They offer a broad spectrum of services, including volunteer referral and training, capacity building for voluntary organisations, information on involving and managing volunteers and general promotion of volunteering.

Of the Interface councils, only Whittlesea currently has a locally-based volunteer resourcing organisation (see box below). The Committee understands Nillumbik, Yarra Ranges and Cardinia are covered or partly covered by VRCs based in other municipalities, while Melton and Wyndham receive VRC services through a Footscray-based VRC, Volunteer West. The municipalities of Hume and Mornington Peninsula currently do not have VRCs, although the Committee heard that Mornington Peninsula may do so in the future.²⁷

Resourcing local volunteers at the Interface: the Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service

The Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service (WVRS) is an arm of Whittlesea Community Connections, a community organisation which addressed the Committee at a public hearing in June 2005.²⁸

The achievements of the WVRS in the Whittlesea community during its two years in operation demonstrate the value of a central organisation to support, organise and advocate for local volunteering. Based in Epping, the WVRS assisted more than 500 community members in 2004-05 with volunteer-related information, support, referral, placement, training and linkage into community activities and events. Training is delivered in partnership with local education and healthcare organisations and includes modules on first aid, IT and childcare for volunteers. WVRS also holds free information sessions on volunteer insurance, volunteer grants and police checks.

The WVRS recognises volunteering as beneficial for groups at risk of experiencing social exclusion. In 2004-05, more than 40 percent of clients were from CALD backgrounds, 70 percent were unemployed and 15 percent identified as having a disability. WVRS also assists newly-arrived migrants and refugees to locate volunteer roles. These groups gain from exposure to the Australian workplace culture and opportunities to meet others, while organisations benefit by making their services more accessible and relevant to the local community.²⁹

Australian Government policy and programs

The Australian Government's support for volunteering is largely directed through the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA), although other departments also administer volunteering programs. A key strategy of the portfolio is to "encourage Australians to undertake volunteering activities by providing funding to volunteer-involving organisations and the volunteering sector."³⁰

There are two major Australian Government-funded national volunteering programs:

- Under the Voluntary Work Initiative (VWI), not-for-profit organisations are approved to have volunteers referred to their organisation and to ensure all volunteers may choose to have their work count towards Centrelink activity test requirements. The Australian Government also provides support to organisations to advertise volunteer vacancies and to make roles appealing and accessible. Volunteering Australia is contracted to deliver the VWI throughout Australia.³¹
- The Volunteer Management Program (VMP) funds 26 VRCs to provide volunteer matching and referral services throughout Australia.³²

FaCSIA also funds the Volunteer Small Equipment Grants program. In 2005, grants of up to \$3,000 (totalling \$3 million nationwide) were provided to more than 2,100 organisations to "purchase equipment that contributes to making volunteering

activities easier, safer and/or more enjoyable.” FaCSIA reports that around 560 organisations from Victoria received these grants. Successful organisations from the Interface areas included the Hume University of the Third Age, the Melton Motor Sports Club Inc. and the Diamond Creek Fire Brigade (Nillumbik).³³

The FaCSIA-funded National Volunteer Skills Centre is managed by Volunteering Australia. It supports volunteer-involving organisations and volunteers to develop their skills, meet their training needs and enhance their knowledge of issues affecting volunteering.³⁴

Victorian Government policy and programs

Since the late 1990s, state governments have become more actively involved in developing policy and programs for volunteering. South Australia appointed a Minister for Volunteers in 2000 and established the Office for Volunteers in 2001. Western Australia has also had a Minister for Volunteering and an Office for Volunteering and Seniors Interests (within the Department of Community Development) since 2001.

In Victoria, DVC supports volunteering through its Volunteering & Community Enterprise strategy. In a submission to the Inquiry, DVC outlined the six elements of this strategy.³⁵

- **Local and Regional Resource Networks (LRRN)**
Delivered in partnership with MAV, a component of this project aims to assist VRCs to support volunteering. Time-limited funding is provided to VRCs as part of the LRRN’s first phase. Funding for the entire LRRN is \$9 million
- **Victorian Volunteer Small Grants**
These grants provide up to \$5,000 for organisations to encourage more people to volunteer and to develop new types of volunteering. DVC reports that these grants have a budget of \$3 million (2004/05 to 2006/07). Applications can be submitted at any time and will be assessed within two months
- **Training and skills development for managers of volunteers**
This project is funded for \$1 million between 2004/05 and 2006/07 and is directed towards improved design, delivery and coordination of training and skills development for managers of volunteers
- **Supporting leadership and change in volunteering**
According to the DVC, this project aims to broaden the range of stakeholders in dialogue about the future of volunteering in Victoria and to encourage leadership and change in volunteering. It has a budget of \$300,000 (2004/05 to 2006/07)
- **Volunteering in CALD communities**

This is a research project intended to lead to initiatives that support increased volunteering by CALD communities, especially newly-arrived migrant groups

- **Commonwealth Games Volunteering Legacy**

This program aims to sustain volunteering opportunities arising out of the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games (see box below).

Volunteers are involved in numerous programs administered by various state government agencies. In 2001, an estimated 56,000 volunteers worked in programs associated with DSE alone, with each volunteer contributing on average 230 hours annually.³⁶ Examples of prominent volunteer programs include Waterwatch (13,000 volunteers) and Coast Action/Coastcare (20,000 volunteers).³⁷

The 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne

With their colourful shirts and cheerful presence, volunteers were a highly visible and much talked-about part of the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

Around 13,500 people volunteered to work at all sporting venues, in the athletes' village and in the Games administration.

The Australian Government contributed \$19.3 million for the recruitment and training of volunteers. More than 600 training sessions were provided.

Prior to the Games, Victoria's Office of Commonwealth Games Coordination (OCGC) and the Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE) funded a pre-volunteer course (Introduction to Community and Event Volunteering), targeted at people who do not usually take part in event volunteering. The course was delivered through adult and community education providers. In the Interface municipalities, 320 places were funded for the course, out of 1,500 places funded state-wide.³⁸

The Victorian Government acknowledged the efforts of the Games volunteers with a street parade, commemorative medals and a pass for each volunteer to an Australian Football League (AFL) match.

Premier Steve Bracks commented: "Thank you to our aqua-coloured army, the volunteers, congratulations, you've done a great job. We are now planning to work with you to see how you can be involved in other key activities in our state."³⁹

Local Government

As providers of Home and Community Care (HACC) services, leisure and cultural programs and other services, local governments would struggle without their volunteers. A 2001 survey of Victorian councils found almost 14,000 volunteers were involved in council-run programs, such as Delivered Meals (meals-on-wheels),

reading to elderly residents, environmental management, youth events and cultural events.⁴⁰ Volunteers also serve on councils' advisory committees and boards.

In addition to providing volunteer opportunities, councils support volunteers (both their own and those in the local community sector) in a variety of ways, including training sessions, establishing and facilitating networks of volunteer coordinators, award nights to recognise volunteer contributions and, as noted above, some provide funding to VRCs.

The Committee is aware of a number of specific initiatives, including:

- Policy or strategy documents to guide local government activity in support of volunteering, such as Nillumbik Shire Council's *Volunteer Policy 2004/2008*
- A Volunteer Expo organised by the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council. Held for the first time in May 2005, the event attracted approximately 350 people to discuss volunteer opportunities with over 50 local not-for-profit organisations
- Promoting volunteering through council websites: the Committee was impressed by the websites of Casey and Wyndham councils. Both enable residents to easily access volunteering information from the homepage and search a database of local volunteer opportunities, for which community groups can also register their volunteer vacancies at no charge
- The City of Casey rewards the work of volunteers through the Community Volunteer Awards Program, the Casey Citizens of the Year Award and by hosting a Volunteer Committees of Management dinner.

Key issues and challenges for volunteering

The Committee was keen to understand what factors hampered participation in volunteering in the outer suburbs. A very broad range of issues were presented during the Inquiry, some relating to volunteering in general and others to achieving greater participation from specific population groups. A number of relevant issues related more to the operation of the not-for-profit sector and are dealt with in Chapter 4: Community Groups.

Public Transport

The Committee acknowledges that public transport – its accessibility, cost and safety – remains a fundamental issue for the Interface areas and one which impacts on volunteering and other forms of community participation.

The need to improve transport options in the Interface areas has been well documented. The Committee's previous report discussed the issues in some depth and made several recommendations for improving public transport and reducing car dependency in the outer suburbs.⁴¹ The Government Response supported all

recommendations and detailed a number of public transport programs underway or in preparation. Further, in the latter stages of this Inquiry, the Victorian Government released its \$10.5 billion transport and liveability statement, *Meeting Our Transport Challenges: Connecting Victorian Communities*. The statement included:

- A complete metropolitan public transport network with SmartBus routes and better local bus services to complement established train and tram networks
- A program of improvements to the train network that will fix bottlenecks and allow more services to be introduced, for both metropolitan and provincial Victoria
- A package to reduce road congestion on the Monash-West Gate freeway corridor
- More trains and better connections to public transport for provincial Victorians.⁴²

Given the rapid development in this area, and as many of the issues have been previously explored in detail by this Committee, we have chosen not to revisit public transport matters in this report.

Demographic/lifestyle/workforce changes

The Committee heard from many individuals and organisations who pointed to what might collectively be called ‘macro issues’ – demographic, lifestyle and workforce changes – as impacting on volunteering and the amount of time available to people to participate in community life more broadly. DVC stated in its submission:

... the future of volunteerism is being challenged by the patterns and pressures of modern life. Our society is more mobile, busier and less connected than in previous eras. The general aging of the volunteer population, population shifts from rural to metropolitan areas and seasonal changes to volunteer numbers provide additional challenges to organisations that are heavily reliant on the pool of active volunteers in the community.⁴³

Mr Rob Porter, a volunteer for a number of years, observed some similar changes occurring in his outer suburban community:

I think nowadays it is extremely hard to get volunteers because both mum and dad work. In our day, there was no junior football. You had no other sport to play. You went and watched it, but nowadays the kids have so many different sports to play that, if the parents have any time, one of them may be able to whiz the kids away and let them play their game, but they have no extra time to spend being on the committees and doing voluntary work. They usually have to

do their housework or other important things that have to be done for their family at the weekends, rather than come to a grounds committee or a hall committee or church working bee.⁴⁴

Factors commonly mentioned to the Committee as causing ‘time-poverty’ included the rise of dual-income families, longer working-hours, casualisation of the workforce, greater numbers of self-employed workers, increased choice of leisure activities and the increased number of people involved in caring for family members.⁴⁵

21st Century Trends in Volunteering

A recent report by nfpSynergy, a London-based consultancy dedicated to the not-for-profit sector, identified seven ‘21st century trends’ with implications, both positive and negative, for volunteering. Some are alluded to in the discussion in this chapter. Others identified by nfpSynergy are:

- Society is becoming more affluent, which means a greater desire for self-fulfilment which, in turn, can be met by volunteering
- Fragmentation in family life and increased numbers of people living alone may lead to a breakdown in connectedness and a breakdown in volunteering
- More people are becoming tertiary educated: higher levels of education tend to be associated with higher levels of giving. On the other hand, greater levels of student debt may mean students defer volunteering for a later time
- Choice is mushrooming and people are becoming more adept at managing it. As a result, they are more discriminating in their expectations of a voluntary organisation
- Time is becoming a precious commodity and leisure options are booming; volunteering faces competition from sport, entertainment, travel and other pursuits.⁴⁶

The effect of some of these factors on volunteering was recently investigated in research by Volunteering Australia.⁴⁷ The research found 60 percent of not-for-profit organisations believed the demands of paid work and forms of unpaid work (such as caring) were making it harder to attract and retain volunteers.⁴⁸ Likewise, 58 percent of volunteers had to leave or cut back their volunteering commitments because of paid work or caring responsibilities. This may be particularly true of people in new housing estates at the Interface, where many couples with children live some distance away from family members and have fewer childcare options and opportunities.

Volunteering Australia also notes some types of organisations are affected by such pressures more than others. In the 25-55 years age cohort (the cohort most likely to be in full-time work), women tend to volunteer in the education, training and youth development and community welfare fields. Men are more likely to volunteer in sport and recreation. Volunteering Australia believes organisations falling within these categories “are more likely than other volunteer organisations to have difficulty in attracting volunteers” due to increasing pressures associated with paid and unpaid work.⁴⁹

The Committee’s attention was also drawn to the difficulty of encouraging volunteering among commuter populations. For residents in the outer suburbs, long commutes to and from work make volunteering more problematic. The Yarra Ranges Shire Council told the Committee that around 70 percent of workers leave the shire everyday for work.⁵⁰ In their submission, the Macedon Ranges Shire Council noted:

A large proportion of the Macedon Ranges Shire residents live here for the rural lifestyle yet commute daily to Melbourne. The number of commuters creates challenges to building communities. Commuters are absent for many hours per day (often 12 hours plus), are tired when they return and have little time for household chores. This means they can be difficult to engage in community life.⁵¹

On this issue, Mr Andrew Port from Nillumbik Shire Council stated:

There is a big impact on the quality of life because of the time taken to travel to and from work in central Melbourne, and people have less time in Nillumbik during the day and therefore less opportunity to be involved in things ... What you find is in the areas where there are people working in the local area, they tend to be in touch with each other, engage with each other and work more cooperatively together, and then they can come to council with a more robust proposition about things than the people working outside the area, who tend to operate a bit more in isolation and are not as connected within their local community.⁵²

Commuting and its effects are discussed in the literature on social capital. Putnam⁵³ famously calculated that each additional 10 minutes in daily commuting time cuts participation in community affairs by 10 percent. Further, as commuting gets longer, people are less likely to trust each other: Leigh⁵⁴ found that an additional 10 hours of commuting per week is associated with a four to five percentage point fall in individual-level trust. If participation and trust suffers, then family life is likely to be affected too: on one estimate, nearly a third of Melbourne fathers spend more time travelling to and from work than they do in activities with their children.⁵⁵

Commuting, then, has wide consequences for community life in the outer suburbs. Clearly, strategies around, for example, activity centres, home-based businesses and

local economic development, which can create local employment and reduce the need for long commutes, are desirable for social capital reasons as much as economic and environmental sustainability. However, as those strategies take shape, some observers have argued there is a need for realism as to how much community participation can be expected of commuter populations. In this regard, the Committee notes the comments of Dr Geoffrey Woolcock of the University of Queensland, who presented on issues concerning social capital in new housing estates:

There needs to be a much [more] explicit acknowledgment of what is possible for people to be able to commit to. One of the dangers in a master planned community, where there is such an explicit emphasis on community building, is that a lot of people are caught up in their family and day-to-day life and are feeling like they are making big sacrifices in just committing to their family and working lives. They ask, 'How am I contributing to this community. Everyone says I am part of this great, growing community but I do not really feel I can be'. There needs to be a much more explicit emphasis on what is possible.⁵⁶

Dr Woolcock went on to discuss an example from the Delfin Lend Lease development of Springfield Lakes, an estate located 22 kilometres from Brisbane:⁵⁷

In Springfield Lakes there is a Springfield leisure group, which is a 60-plus group that really is the driver of a lot of activity. It has been a real learning process for them to say, 'It is okay that we are the drivers. We do not feel we have to grab all the 30 and 40-year-old people in the midst of their busy working lives and to get them kicking and screaming along to every event that we hold'. We just want to get as many of the active older people who are not working involved in the group.⁵⁸

There continues to be a level of debate in Australia about the work-life balance, as there is in other countries. The Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, has described the issue as a 'barbecue stopper' and rated it as Australia's biggest policy issue.⁵⁹ In the Committee's view, the value of volunteering and other forms of participation in community life needs to feed into this debate and should be taken into account by governments in developing policies which seek to respond to pressures affecting the work-life balance.

Police checks

A police check is one method of determining the suitability of a volunteer by checking for a criminal record. It is an important aspect of risk management for volunteer organisations and is sometimes legally required for certain types of volunteer work, for insurance policies or under certain funding agreements. DHS, for example, requires funded agencies to ensure volunteers are police-checked prior to commencing, if they are to work with specified clients or patients. Police checks

should be only one part of the volunteer screening process conducted by community organisations.

Of particular relevance is Victoria's new 'Working with Children Check', which is to be introduced from mid-2006 for screening volunteers and paid employees who work with children. The check will be free for volunteers, valid for five years and transferable for volunteers who move between organisations.⁶⁰

The process of police checking differs across jurisdictions. In Victoria, the Victoria Police will conduct a national name search (using a federal agency called CrimTrac) on consenting individuals, for the individual or the authorised voluntary organisation. CrimTrac charges \$5 for records checks on volunteers and claims to process 95 percent of requests within 10 working days.⁶¹ Police services may then add their own administrative fees; in Victoria the Police charge volunteer organisations a total discounted rate of \$13 (as at 1 July 2005) to issue a 'National Police Certificate' to the individual or organisation by post. The Victoria Police aim to complete the process within 10 working days of receipt of the application, which can only be submitted by post.⁶²

In WA, a joint initiative launched in 2003 between the Office for Seniors Interests and Volunteering and the WA Police allows pre-registered volunteer organisations to conduct most elements of the checking process with police via email. The WA Police charge an organisation \$9 for each national police check request and claim to process most requests submitted via the system in two days.⁶³ Appendix E illustrates the process of registration and police checking in WA.

In the UK, police checks ('disclosures') are processed through the Criminal Records Bureau. There are currently two levels of disclosures – enhanced and standard – with a third – basic – yet to be launched. Disclosures are free but organisations must first be registered – for a £300 fee – and the disclosures are for volunteers who intend to work in positions involving children or vulnerable people only.⁶⁴

Most participants in this Inquiry understood and supported the need for police checks. It was the cost and the length of time to obtain them which were singled out as issues requiring attention.

The Committee is aware that in most cases, the cost of a police check in Victoria is met by the organisation rather than the volunteer. For some organisations who process a large number of volunteers, this fee presents a considerable expense.⁶⁵ The Red Cross, for example, which requests thousands of such checks each year, informed the Committee that the cost of police checking volunteers was "very substantial."⁶⁶

A smaller volunteer organisation commented that the police checking process was taking a minimum of two months to complete and many potential volunteers were deterred as a result:

The length of time it takes is drastically affecting our recruitment and retention of volunteers. Many volunteers are

coming to us through the work-for-the-dole program, for example. We tend to lose these volunteers within a few weeks of the initial interview because of the length of time it takes to get started. Centrelink requires immediate start; we are unable to provide this. Most recruits are willing to wait a month for the return of the police check. However, most are just as quick to leave prior to starting if the check takes longer than that.⁶⁷

The Scout Association (Victorian Branch) raised similar concerns about possible delays for the new Working with Children Checks having the potential to put off prospective volunteers.⁶⁸ The Committee considers there is a need to remove as many barriers as possible to the recruitment of volunteers and the efficient operation of volunteer-involving organisations.

Recommendation 5.1:

The Committee recommends the Department for Victorian Communities work with Victoria Police to identify and report back on measures to substantially reduce both the cost of police checks for volunteers and the length of time for police checks to be processed.

Training

Volunteers often work in challenging and potentially dangerous situations and it is critical they are well prepared and competent to undertake their roles. In discussions with volunteer-involving organisations, the Committee observed a very strong commitment to training. Training courses ranged across diverse topics, such as food handling, first aid, grief counselling, cultural awareness and leadership. Volunteers who sit on committees and boards of management have distinct training needs – this aspect is discussed further in Chapter 4: Community Groups.

The need for volunteer training is ongoing. As the legislative environment changes, organisations must adapt or expand the training they make available and re-train volunteers. In a presentation to the Committee, Ms Andrea Florance, from the Peninsula Legal Centre, described the comprehensive induction given to new volunteers at the Centre:

We have quite a significant induction process ... At the moment, we are piloting a new training program, which consists of four two hour modules of training, where we take

them through orientation to the sector, communication skills, policies and procedures, confidentiality, occupational health and safety and a range of issues, as well as things like the national data scheme and the statistics that we are required to keep.⁶⁹

Training can benefit volunteers in many different ways. This was particularly well illustrated in evidence from Mr Joel Nathan of Can-Survive, an organisation which (among other services) operates a telephone counselling service for cancer sufferers. The service is staffed by volunteers who receive 90 hours of training. All the volunteers have experienced cancer themselves, either as patients or primary carers. Mr Nathan said:

They are not only taught all the basics of telephone counselling but we cover issues like grief and loss, palliative care, spirituality, containment, suicide — you name it, we do it. It has grown. When they graduate, we say to them, ‘But this is only the beginning, because for you to stay online and to be part of the service, you have to come to our monthly ongoing training sessions’. These are facilitated by either myself or by a person who works for us, a clinical psychologist and family therapist here in Melbourne. A lot of their own stuff gets dealt with and if they were sitting here they would say to you, ‘We probably get more out of it than the callers’.⁷⁰

Many voluntary organisations offer accredited training to volunteers, which opens up employment possibilities for people beyond the volunteer role. The CFA, which is registered as a training organisation, informed the Committee of the skills it provides to volunteers:

The obvious one is that people actually learn firefighting skills. But just listing out a few, in working with brigades and with the organisation, there are a number of skills relating to leadership, working with young people, occupational health and safety, inspection of buildings, incident control, rescue planning and so on. Quite a number of these are competency based courses, so people can actually get qualifications which they can use either in their own workplace or just in life generally.⁷¹

Some organisations train volunteers in-house; others pay for it externally or access subsidised or free training through VRCs, local government or other providers. However, as noted above, only one Interface municipality currently has a locally based VRC and given the large size and dispersed populations of the municipalities, this can result in volunteers having to travel long distances to receive services.⁷²

The Committee welcomes the Victorian Government commitment in *A Fairer Victoria*, announced in May 2005 during the course of the Inquiry, to expand

volunteer resource networks across the state, including the delivery of new resource centres and the targeting of new support services to areas not covered by existing VRCs.⁷³ The Committee considers there is a particularly strong case for these new centres and new support services, including training and recruitment resources, to be directed into the Interface municipalities. This should occur in consultation with local government and existing training providers to ensure the efficient coordination of resources and to avoid duplication.

Recommendation 5.2:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government, in implementing *A Fairer Victoria*, work closely with the Interface local governments and existing training providers to coordinate, support and expand local training opportunities for volunteers.

Corporate volunteering

Corporate volunteering (also known as workplace or employee volunteering) involves employers (public or private) supporting staff to take part in voluntary activities for not-for-profit organisations. The Committee was interested to learn about the potential for corporate volunteering to provide a partial solution to some of the barriers to volunteering discussed above. If time pressures associated with employment prevent people from participating in community life, then volunteering through the workplace would seem to be an alternative.

The popularity of corporate volunteering has risen on the back of the increased focus on corporate social responsibility, to the point that one expert predicts the workplace will overtake the churches as the largest ‘institutional feeder system’ of volunteers.⁷⁴ However, that seems some way off in Australia: according to a recent survey, only four percent of Australian businesses allow employees to take paid time-off for volunteering and 19 percent of businesses offer flexible work hours to accommodate it.⁷⁵ Typically, in corporate volunteering programs employees will volunteer in large groups for community organisations chosen by the employer (although sometimes with staff input). The survey also found that overall, 39 percent of businesses encourage their employees in some fashion to give money, time or services to not-for-profit organisations or charities.⁷⁶

There are currently many initiatives aiming to promote or facilitate corporate volunteering in Melbourne. Some take the form of brokerage services: one example is *Melbourne Cares*, an international organisation which facilitates corporate

volunteering opportunities for some of Victoria's largest companies and public sector agencies.⁷⁷

The ANZ bank provided the Committee with details of its corporate volunteering program. ANZ allows all permanent Australia-based staff one day of paid leave per year to undertake volunteering activities. Staff can volunteer for an organisation of their choice or participate in activities identified through the bank's community partners or through volunteering brokers. In 2005, 18 percent of ANZ staff participated, contributing a total of 29,000 hours of volunteer time. The Committee heard that ANZ has a 2006 target of 30 percent of staff involved in volunteering and is looking to increase staff involvement in the delivery of the bank's various financial literacy and inclusion programs.⁷⁸

In Auckland, the Committee met with Mr Iain Galloway from the Australasian insurance company, IAG. Mr Galloway discussed how IAG is developing its employee volunteering program in partnership with Volunteering Auckland. IAG offers employees one day of paid volunteer leave per year. In the first year of the program, 30 percent of employees took up the opportunity to volunteer.

However, despite the activity in this area, the Committee's investigations found something of a dearth of major Australian evaluations of corporate volunteering. This lack of 'hard evidence' is problematic, as many businesses are likely to want to be shown the advantages of supporting employees to volunteer before engaging in a corporate volunteering program, particularly a longer term commitment. Nevertheless, the literature discusses a range of benefits for all parties – employees, employers and the communities and organisations they aim to assist:

- Employees are seen to benefit through the development of skills, such as leadership, teamwork and communication skills, as well as greater job satisfaction and feelings of self-worth
- For employers, the benefits include greater brand recognition by customers, an improved corporate image, new business opportunities and better employee recruitment, attendance and retention⁷⁹
- For the community, corporate volunteering can provide skills, knowledge and technical expertise, large teams of volunteers for major tasks and free or subsidised resources.⁸⁰ As corporate volunteering has taken-off, some not-for-profit organisations have discovered they have a product which is sought-after by the business sector. Indeed, it is not at all uncommon for companies to pay for the volunteering experience.

The Committee also notes a level of concern in the community sector about certain expressions of corporate volunteering. One-off volunteer exercises or those designed solely to improve a corporate image or provide photos for an annual report, are not always welcomed by the sector. The giving of purely 'manual-labour' (tree planting is often mentioned as one of the most common expressions of corporate volunteering) can also be unhelpful, as many community groups might benefit more from receiving legal, human resources or IT assistance.⁸¹

Inclusive volunteering

Volunteering Australia's 2004 'Report Card' on the state of volunteering concluded that Australia has probably earned a 'credit' but there remains scope for improvement.⁸² The Committee strongly believes one of those areas for improvement lies in broadening the volunteer base by making it more inclusive; that is, allowing a wider group of people to participate.

The following discussion looks at four broad population groups identified in the Terms of Reference: young people, CALD communities, people with disabilities and older people.

Young people

I have been describing this as a renaissance in volunteering. The number of people who are now coming through aged 35 years and less is increasing all the time. I think the younger group that is coming through now has a good social conscience and wants to commit to helping the community. I think that is back.⁸³

By some accounts, the 'boom' area in volunteering is young people. According to ABS figures, participation by 18-24 year olds increased from 16.6 percent in 1995 to 26.8 percent in 2000.⁸⁴ Volunteering Australia's Newspoll survey in 2004 put participation by this age group even higher, at around 38 percent.⁸⁵

Young people bring an energy and enthusiasm which makes them valuable volunteers for organisations. Further, volunteering gives young people a stake in their communities and helps them to develop skills to be active citizens, empowering them to speak out about issues and giving them the drive to effect change. Volunteering also has the capacity to boost young people's learning potential by complementing their formal education experience.

There is a growing body of research on youth volunteering and numerous useful guides have now been published to assist organisations to recruit and retain young people.⁸⁶ Governments worldwide are also becoming interested; of particular note is the Russell Commission, established in May 2004 by the UK Blair Government to inquire into and develop a new national framework for 'youth action and engagement'. The Commission's March 2005 final report called for a massively increased level of youth volunteering and made 16 recommendations, including:

- A series of advertising campaigns, particularly targeting groups who are under-represented in volunteering
- A one-stop national volunteering 'portal' to provide information to young people, using the Internet, telephone, mobile messaging and digital TV

- Ensuring young people can use voluntary work in order to meet requirements for unemployment payments
- Ensuring all educational institutions have a volunteering ethos
- Giving young people a 'menu-of-opportunity', with details of the full range of opportunities available to them
- Expanding the number of volunteer opportunities on offer and careful tailoring of roles to increase the likelihood of including young people from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Greater involvement of young volunteers in the public sector (for example in schools, hospitals, parks and sports)
- A set of minimum standards around the access, involvement, development and reward of young volunteers, to be met by voluntary organisations
- Capacity building for organisations to make it easier to engage disabled young volunteers.⁸⁷

The Government's response to the report included an investment of A\$233 million to recruit an expected one million new young volunteers, with an additional A\$116 million to be sought from the private sector.

The common theme running through the research and investigation on the subject of youth volunteering is that young people today enter volunteering with specific needs and expectations and this must be catered for if organisations are to be successful in recruiting them.

A number of other broad learnings emerge. Firstly, young people want to be in the driving seat of projects that deliver demonstrable change in the world they live in.⁸⁸ They want to have a say in planning and decision-making about their volunteering.⁸⁹ They are more likely to support organisations with a clear mission and who can offer roles based around a cause or activism of some kind.⁹⁰ Young people are also keen to volunteer for roles helping other young people; the Red Cross reported to the Committee that volunteer programs such as homework clubs, breakfast clubs and juvenile justice programs are particularly successful.⁹¹

The Oaktree Foundation is Australia's only entirely youth-driven aid and development organisation, originally based in Melbourne and now with 3000 volunteers worldwide and branches across Australia, South Africa, UK and the USA. Oaktree was founded in 2003 by the 2004 Young Australian of the Year, Hugh Evans. All of Oaktree's fundraising and advocacy work, as well as the day-to-day running of the organisation, is carried out by young people under the age of 26.⁹² Oaktree's programs in Melbourne schools are aimed at encouraging young people to come up with their own ways of contributing to international development goals.

Envision is a UK organisation which helps teams of young people in schools to develop and implement their own social and environmental projects.⁹³ In 2006-07, Envision's programs will run in 80 schools in the UK. Projects supported by Envision have centred on homelessness, multiculturalism, recycling, drug awareness, green

spaces and street crime, among others. Each student team is backed by a volunteer youth educator, who commits around two hours a week during the academic year to support the students. The key to the success of Envision is giving young people the ability to choose and direct projects which interest them. In a recent paper published by the UK-based Demos, researchers Skidmore and Craig noted:

Envision has given young people a channel through which to express their (often latent) desire to make a difference to their neighbourhoods or communities in ways which are meaningful and accessible to them, and which make it more likely they will want to do so again in the future.⁹⁴

Secondly, like other age groups, young people are increasingly looking for short term volunteer opportunities (Volunteering England calls this a “pick and mix lifestyle”).⁹⁵ They are often juggling various activities, such as study, employment and sport and are more likely to be able to contribute to flexible projects without an ongoing commitment.

Thirdly, young people should be given incentives to volunteer; one of the more powerful is the opportunity to gain skills to improve employability, as Ms Georgia Cheal, from the Volunteer Alliance, told the Committee:

To obtain and keep young volunteers we need to provide them with incentives, such as free accredited training with real-life applications and real work experience, not just making coffee and the like ... For example, the ‘responsible service of food’ course is very attractive to a young person because they can then take it to a sandwich bar and get a job.⁹⁶

Finally, campaigns to recruit young people for a specific purpose are more effective than generic messages promoting volunteering as a ‘good thing’. The latter approach runs the risk of being seen as giving young people something to do to keep them out of trouble.⁹⁷ The Russell Commission’s report stresses the need to have young people involved in campaigns around youth volunteering and the delivery of volunteering information and advice, arguing that young people are extremely effective in engaging their peers, often through word of mouth.⁹⁸

The Internet and new communications technologies more broadly have obvious potential to link young people into volunteer projects. With this in mind, the Committee examined a number of Australian volunteer websites, including the non-age specific, such as *GoVolunteer*, *SEEK Volunteer* and *VolunteerSearch* and those directed solely at young people, such as the *YVolunteer* website run by Volunteering WA.⁹⁹

The Committee was particularly impressed by the website of Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA), Australia’s largest environmental volunteer organisation. A feature of CVA’s recruitment strategy is *Conservation Connect*, an easy to use online booking system.¹⁰⁰ The system allows the user to sign up for a conservation activity

at a location and date of their choice. Having selected an activity and submitted personal details, the user receives a confirmation email back from CVA within one working day. Volunteers can contribute on a one-off or ongoing basis and are able to clearly understand the time commitment expected prior to joining. The Committee understands that the *Conservation Connect* booking system is the only one of its kind in Australia. Other volunteer websites allow a user to submit an expression of interest form but not book into an activity.

CVA registers more than 5,000 volunteers each year, with the majority aged 18-30.¹⁰¹ The quick turnaround and relative immediacy of the system, plus the flexibility in choosing one-off or ongoing involvement, is well suited to young people. One UK volunteering organisation, which registered 30,000 volunteers on its website between February 2004 and February 2005, points out that web users generally have been shown to be quite fickle when searching for information on the web. Unless sites can direct them to information or volunteering opportunities within a few seconds, they are likely to go elsewhere. Young people are perhaps more likely than others to be deterred in this way.¹⁰²

Admittedly, a *Conservation Connect*-type booking system will not be appropriate for all volunteer organisations or volunteer roles. It is also important that young people are invited to volunteer in more ways than just online – for example, through school programs – and the Committee supports the development of multiple entry points for young people into volunteering. However, *Conservation Connect* illustrates broader points about, firstly, the effectiveness of offering short term volunteer roles and, secondly, the value of using technology in a creative way to put young people in touch with volunteering.

The Committee's research suggests that while efforts have been made by the Victorian Government and others to inform young people of the benefits of volunteering, many young people are unlikely to have much success with the next step of finding volunteer opportunities using most volunteering-matching databases. In fact, in the Committee's experience, they are rather more likely to be deterred by the difficulty of finding appropriate local volunteer opportunities.

Recommendation 5.3:

The Committee recommends the Office for Youth improve the *YouthCentral* website to make it easier for young people to access information on local volunteering opportunities.

CALD communities

According to DVC's *Indicators of community strength in Victoria 2004*:

- 29 percent of people who were not born in Australia volunteer, seven percentage points lower than the Australian-born population
- 27 percent of people who spoke a language other than English at home volunteer, nine percentage points lower than English speakers.¹⁰³

Research by Kerr et al. suggests Indigenous Australians are similarly underrepresented in formal volunteering.¹⁰⁴ In the United Kingdom, 44 percent of people from a minority ethnic community regularly volunteer, six percentage points lower than average.¹⁰⁵ However, volunteering statistics generally overlook the considerable amount of *informal* voluntary assistance given by people from CALD backgrounds within their own communities. This takes the form of helping others within a cultural or religious context, where participants may see their activities as a duty or norm, rather than as volunteering.

This does not mean, however, that CALD communities are uninterested in engaging with mainstream volunteer organisations. A recent Australian survey of TAFE students found a particularly high level of interest in volunteering among students for whom English was not a first language. The researchers commented: “there is potential to involve greater numbers from ethnic communities in volunteering, subject to suitable arrangements and approaches.”¹⁰⁶ In a similar vein, Volunteering Australia states that CALD communities are often looking for ways to connect with the wider community and to access skills which can lead to employment.¹⁰⁷ This was also the view expressed to the Committee by Volunteering New Zealand, which noted volunteer roles can be the first door that opens to new migrants seeking to establish themselves in society.

What factors might be preventing CALD communities from engaging in *formal* volunteering at the same rate as the broader population? Clearly, many of the barriers discussed previously in this chapter will be relevant, such as a lack of time or a lack of awareness of volunteer opportunities. Other barriers are more specific; for example, for many new migrants, volunteering is simply down the list of priorities when compared to the demands of establishing a life for themselves and their families. The Northern Migrant Resource Centre informed the Committee:

If we at the migrant resource centre try to have a campaign for them to become volunteers – and I am talking about new immigrants, not the established immigrants – unless they are unemployed or see the volunteer experience as a way for them to obtain some sort of benefit in their resume or something that gives them greater job opportunities, they are often very busy people trying to set themselves up within their families. I would like to see more opportunities on the weekends or after

hours for these people, if we want to make some of those connections.¹⁰⁸

A discussion paper commissioned by DVC, *Patterns of Volunteering in Emerging Communities*, identifies other barriers to volunteering for ethnic communities newly arrived in Victoria. Language problems were found to be particularly important in limiting involvement outside of the specific community. Others barriers included real or perceived discrimination by mainstream organisations, distrust of volunteer organisations and a lack of information about their work, traditional gender roles discouraging volunteering and a lack of compensation for out-of-pocket expenses.¹⁰⁹

The Committee heard from organisations which have had success in recruiting a more diverse pool of volunteers. Some have recognised the need to tailor their volunteer opportunities by designing volunteering opportunities for after-hours or weekends when new migrants are more likely to be able to volunteer.¹¹⁰ Other groups have struggled and still others do not actively engage with CALD communities. One organisation, while noting the potential in its local area for reaching out to CALD communities, told the Committee that the expense and unavailability of translators made the effort difficult.¹¹¹ Providing training and volunteer information in other languages is obviously important but this also incurs costs for organisations.

In a submission to the Committee, the Northern Migrant Resource Centre discussed how citizenship ceremonies might be better used to promote engagement by people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The submission pointed out that both newly-arrived and more established migrants attended these ceremonies, often with their families.

At citizenship ceremonies, there is a captured audience of hard to reach groups. Local governments could use these ceremonies to promote services, greet and welcome new citizens and have service providers and organisations provide information stalls about groups they could join. This proposed model could incorporate some themes that universities use in the orientation weeks for new students.¹¹²

The Committee sees merit in this suggestion as a practical way to improve engagement and social cohesion. Public citizenship ceremonies fulfil an important symbolic role in formally welcoming new citizens into the Australian community. The Australian Citizenship Ceremonies Code (2003) encourages local government and community groups to work together in conducting citizenship ceremonies.¹¹³ There is therefore considerable scope to use this occasion for promoting volunteering and the work of local service providers and local community groups more broadly, to a more diverse group of people. This might include the distribution of welcoming kits giving details on local services, organisations, volunteering opportunities and so on. However, the emphasis should be on face-to-face and personalised interaction with new citizens and their families.

Recommendation 5.4:

The Committee recommends the Department for Victorian Communities provide support to the Municipal Association of Victoria, the Victorian Local Governance Association, the Victorian Multicultural Commission and volunteering peak bodies, to develop a model for promoting local opportunities for volunteering and other forms of community involvement at citizenship ceremonies.

People with a disability

In the 2003 ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), one in five people in Australia (or 20 percent) had a reported disability. The rate was much the same for males (19.8 percent) and females (20.1 percent). Disability was defined as any limitation, restriction or impairment which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least six months and restricts everyday activities.¹¹⁴ In 2003, the main categories of disabling conditions were listed as physical/diverse (14.7 percent), psychiatric (2.2 percent), sensory/speech (2.1 percent) and intellectual (0.8 percent).¹¹⁵

Disabled people experience exclusion from mainstream opportunities due to environmental, attitudinal and organisational barriers, rather than due to the effects of their impairments. Volunteering can be one of those opportunities. According to Scope (Victoria), people with disabilities are generally viewed in the community as beneficiaries of care, rather than contributing community members with valuable skills and abilities which can help others. A Scope survey of a limited number of volunteer organisations and disability day services in Victoria found that while some were involving volunteers with disabilities, the numbers were small and many barriers were perceived. The most common barriers cited by organisations included a lack of skills (on the part of the volunteer), the organisation's knowledge and awareness of disability, a lack of resources to support the volunteer and a lack of physical space or issues with disability access.¹¹⁶

Like other volunteers, volunteers with disabilities want to give their time and energy to improve their community. Participating in volunteering can also aid social integration, develop employable skills and challenge negative stereotypes of disabled people.¹¹⁷

The accessibility of the built environment for people with disabilities is clearly critical to their participation in volunteering. However, as both Volunteering New Zealand and Volunteering Auckland noted to the Committee during discussions, the attitudes of organisations are also important. The Committee heard that community

organisations need to be made more aware of what people with disabilities can do as volunteers. Research from the UK has shown that once a disabled person has been turned down for voluntary work because of their impairment, they are unlikely to apply again.¹¹⁸ Many people with a disability also report a level of unconscious discrimination from organisations, where they are given unskilled or menial volunteer roles due to a perception that their disability means they could not do other tasks.¹¹⁹ With greater awareness, community organisations might be more likely to match people with roles suiting their motivation and interest, rather than their disability.

The Committee did not receive a large amount of direct Australian evidence on this topic and there appears to be a general lack of available information for organisations or potential volunteers. A small number of organisations stated that they have volunteers with disabilities. Mr Tony Fitzgerald, CEO of Outlook, a Pakenham-based organisation providing support and a range of services to disabled adults in the south-eastern region of Melbourne, addressed the Committee at a public hearing and discussed the recruitment of volunteers within his organisation.¹²⁰ Outlook seeks to fully integrate its clients within the community and also to engage the community in its work. Outlook has established a volunteer service and received a small amount of funding under the Australian Government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy to recruit volunteers from local communities, including the recruitment of people with disabilities into volunteer roles. Mr Fitzgerald advanced the view that the inclusion and participation of disabled people in all aspects of community life required significant education campaigns to change attitudes in the wider community:

You cannot have inclusion and the [positive community] values without bringing people along with you in all sorts of ways. It is like the Transport Accident Commission campaigns, it is about awareness things, consciousness-raising. People with disability are a fantastic asset to your community but at the moment, people are scared.¹²¹

The Committee was also alerted to two overseas initiatives focusing on the potential of volunteering as part of mental health recovery.

In discussions with Volunteering New Zealand, the Committee was informed of a program run by Volunteering Otago (located in Dunedin) which is targeted at people who experience mental illness and would like to do some voluntary work as part of their recovery. A coordinator works with the potential volunteer and their mental health worker or support person to find a suitable volunteer role. A three day volunteer awareness course is offered to prepare the person for the role. Ongoing support is provided by the coordinator.

In the UK, the Committee was also informed of Capital Volunteering, a new project which addresses issues of mental health and social exclusion by increasing the number and range of supported volunteering opportunities in London. The project helps existing organisations to enable people with serious mental health issues to volunteer, thereby increasing their confidence, skills, social networks and employability. Capital

Volunteering states: “it is clear from the experiences of many people who are living with and recovering from mental ill health that volunteering as part of a recovery programme can play a significant role in helping people to manage their illness and re-claim their lives.”¹²²

In keeping with its belief in the value of a broader and more inclusive volunteer base, the Committee considers there is potential for more to be done in Victoria to encourage community organisations to make themselves more inclusive of people with disabilities as volunteers. As a first step, the Committee see merit in the development of resources which are aimed at educating and changing attitudes. The Committee is aware of a useful guide recently produced for this purpose in the UK by disability organisations Scope and Leonard Cheshire, with funding from the Russell Commission.¹²³ The guide is aimed at organisations involving volunteers and has a specific focus on providing practical information and tips (covering, for example, accessibility, communication, induction and recruitment) to community organisations to engage young disabled people.

Recommendation 5.5:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government develop a comprehensive, practical guide for community organisations to involve people with disabilities as volunteers.

Older people

Older volunteers make extremely valuable social and economic contributions to their local communities. In 1995, 24 percent of Australians aged 55-64 were volunteers. The rate for those aged 65-74 was slightly lower, at 23 percent. In 2000, these rates increased to 32.5 percent and 30 percent respectively.¹²⁴ In Victoria, a 2004 survey found 36 percent of the 55-64 years old age group and 37 percent of the 65+ age group were volunteers.¹²⁵

While volunteers may be more numerous among younger age groups, it is significant that the hours volunteers contribute per week increases with age (up to the mid-seventies). This is consistent with the idea that older people have more time to volunteer.¹²⁶

There has been some debate about how the ageing of the Australian population will affect volunteer numbers and voluntary organisations. In its analysis of the impact of

ageing in Australia, the Productivity Commission predicted the age structure of the voluntary workforce will be significantly altered:

For example, in the absence of ageing the Commission projects that 25 per cent of volunteers would be aged 35-44 years compared with 20 per cent in an ageing population and 5 per cent of volunteers would be aged 75 years and over compared with 10 per cent in an ageing population.¹²⁷

The Productivity Commission concluded that organisations currently most favoured by older volunteers (those in the community/welfare and religious fields) would benefit from an ageing Australian population, while those organisations reliant on younger people (in the sport and recreation, education and youth development fields) would face volunteer shortages. Overall, the Commission projected that ageing will be the cause of only a modest increase in the overall rate of volunteering in the next 40 years. Notably, however, the Commission's calculations fixed age-specific volunteering rates at their 2000 levels and extrapolated from there. This therefore excludes possible trends in youth volunteering (discussed above) and changes in the behaviour of a healthier and more active cohort of older people. As a result, the Commission notes it may have underestimated the likely increase in the number of volunteers.¹²⁸

There are many reasons why older people volunteer; some are common to all age groups, such as making friends, helping others and feeling valued, while others are more age-specific, including the desire to give back to the community, to use skills built up over a working life and as a route to learn and explore new avenues previously blocked by the demands of their careers or jobs.¹²⁹ But according to Volunteering Australia, older people can face barriers to being more involved in volunteering:

These encompass organisational and individual issues. Organisational impediments and barriers sometimes include an ageist culture and/or a lack of appropriate support and training for older volunteers. Individual issues affecting older people's volunteering involvement can include a lack of confidence, transport, costs, health and mobility issues.¹³⁰

The Committee discussed some of these issues with representatives of New Zealand's Office for Senior Citizens (OSC), located within the Ministry of Social Development. The OSC confirmed the view previously expressed to the Committee by Volunteering New Zealand, that there appears to have been a decline in the numbers of older and retired volunteers in New Zealand. However, the OSC argued that a large part of the solution is in volunteer managers doing more to make older volunteers feel part of their organisations.

As an example, the OSC informed the Committee of work it had been involved in with the New Zealand Police. The Police Volunteers program currently has a large number of older people participating and efforts are being made to increase this, as

part of the police force's contribution to the New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy. In 2006, the New Zealand Police have a stated objective to:

Encourage older people to get actively involved in community safety and crime prevention by participation in Neighbourhood Support, community patrolling, or as a police volunteer.¹³¹

Police volunteers perform a range of duties at community constable kiosks and offices throughout New Zealand, assisting the community constable, manning the phones and attending to the reception desk when police are out on calls.¹³² The volunteers are also included in police meetings and made to feel valued and part of the team. According to the OSC, the program has been highly successful in attracting and retaining older volunteers. All volunteers are screened and have access to a supervisor they can consult with.

For many older volunteers, their volunteering can also be a link into lifelong learning.¹³³ On this issue, the Committee was addressed by Mr Ron Topp from the Pakenham University of the 3rd Age (PAKU3A). Mr Topp described the purpose of the U3A:

Fundamentally, we are educational. We are not 'bingo on bus trip' people, we are people that want to learn. Our IT classes are quite famous in the area. We are pretty good at it, and I think the thing to explain is that mature age people are not hard to teach but you need to know how to teach them. We get an awful lot of feedback from people who have been to TAFE, with all due respect, and Neighbourhood Houses and come away disappointed, mainly because they are older and they get left behind. We do not leave them behind.¹³⁴

Tutoring and support for the 130 members at PAKU3A is provided entirely by volunteers, all of whom are mature age. This keeps the course fees manageable for students on low or fixed incomes. The commitment of volunteer tutors extends from one-off classes and structured semester-long programs, through to an ongoing involvement across a number of years. At their own expense, many of the tutors undertake professional development and external courses, keeping the curriculum up to date and expanding the range on offer, as well as advancing their own learning.¹³⁵

U3As provide important opportunities for older people to volunteer, stay active, maintain connections in their local community and continue lifelong learning. Chapter 7: Lifelong Learning provides further discussion of these aspects of U3As.

The baby boomers

The baby boomers (the ABS definition is people born between 1946 and 1965)¹³⁶ will be of particular importance to the health of volunteering in the near future. There is much speculation they constitute a large pool of potential volunteers. A 2001 study

for the WA Department of the Premier and Cabinet found baby boomers do expect to be more involved in volunteering in the future but they will also have competing demands for their time.¹³⁷ Baby boomers are likely to be combining volunteering with part-time work, leisure, travel and caring responsibilities.

This change and its importance for the voluntary sector, was discussed in evidence to the Committee from representatives from ARPA Over 50s Association. In response to questions from Committee members about attitudes to retirement, ARPA President, Mr Alan Clarke, and Mr Neville Daynes, commented:

... for some baby boomers the word 'retirement' means the decline, when they are still active. They are just changing gears; they are not retiring. I think that is the feeling ... I am generalising here, of course, but the baby boomer has quite a different perception. They often work on projects that might last for six months or three years or whatever and then move onto another project, forever chopping and changing ... I am assuming that attitude will carry on into 'retirement' because we find many who now come in on a volunteer basis might work a day and then volunteer for two or three days and so they are actually still employed but they are also volunteers. I suspect a lot of that will happen¹³⁸

To respond to the changing nature of older age and retirement, not-for-profit organisations will need to offer the right volunteer opportunities and promote them effectively. Baby boomers will be looking for shorter term and more flexible roles. While a desire to help others and give something back to the community will remain key motivating factors, much of the literature indicates volunteering needs to be promoted to boomers as a personally fulfilling experience, with a greater emphasis on recognition and reward for their volunteering.

... for organisations that rely on volunteers, the challenge is to position volunteering opportunities as positive choices, as something they want to do for themselves, not just for the community.¹³⁹

One example of a strategy incorporating these lessons comes from the United States. In January 2006, the 'Get Involved' national advertising campaign was launched by the Corporation for National and Community Service, an independent US Federal Government agency. The Corporation's CEO, Mr David Eisner, noted:

Research shows that boomer volunteers demand more variety in their volunteering opportunities than other age groups. They want their service to be more meaningful, they want to see the results of that service more directly, they want to serve on a more flexible basis and they really want to be explicitly recognized for their contributions. They don't want a lot of red tape, bureaucracy or rules. Oh, and by the way, they don't

even like the word “volunteering.” And they really don’t like the word “senior.”¹⁴⁰

The multi-year campaign aims to increase the number of American baby boomers currently volunteering. According to the campaign website, Get Involved will:

- Educate boomers on the health and social benefits of volunteering, as well as the opportunities available
- Stimulate public dialogue about the meaning and purpose of life after retirement
- Encourage all sectors — not-for-profit, business and government — to take actions to support greater involvement of boomers in volunteering
- Direct interested boomers to find volunteer opportunities through a dedicated website.¹⁴¹

Recommendation 5.6:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government undertake research into Australian and overseas strategies aimed at linking baby boomers with volunteer opportunities and identify programs best suited to Victoria.

Notes

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⁴ Ironmonger, D. & Soupourmas, F. (2002) op. cit.

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- ²⁶ http://www.volunteeringvictoria.com.au/links_statenetwork.shtml
- ²⁷ Mr J. Cauchi, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 May 2005, p.94.
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- ³⁰ Department of Family & Children's Services (n.d.) *Annual Report 2004-05*, published online at <http://www.facs.gov.au/annualreport/2005/index.html>. FaCS is now the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA).
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⁵¹ Macedon Ranges Shire Council, *Submission number 52*, 16 May 2005.

⁵² Mr A. Port, *Transcript of Evidence*, 5 July 2005, p.637.

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⁵⁵ Farouque, F., 'Little joy for commuters', *The Age*, 5 May 2005.

⁵⁶ Dr G. Woolcock, *Transcript of Evidence*, 16 May 2005, p.199.

⁵⁷ Springfield Lakes is Australia's largest masterplanned community. When completed, it will have a population of around 30,000.

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⁵⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 31 2003, cited in Hudson (2005) *The case for work/life balance: closing the gap between policy and practice*, Hudson 20:20 series, p.2.

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- ⁶⁹ Ms A. Florance, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 May 2005, p.125.
- ⁷⁰ Mr J. Nathan, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 September 2005, p.723.
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- ¹³² Community constables have a specific role to establish direct communication with their communities and to involve themselves in any issue impacting on policing. This means they typically have a community development component to their duties. However, they remain full police officers, receiving the same pay. Many operate out of kiosks and other smaller station facilities, such as an office in a shopping centre. There are around 200 community constables in New Zealand (Committee secretariat communication with Inspector Morris Cheer, Office of the Commissioner, New Zealand Police, 6 June 2006.)
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CHAPTER 6: NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES



Image courtesy of the Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres, Victoria, Australia

Crucial to effective Neighbourhood Houses practice are people's commitment to their local community and shared values that emphasise empowerment, growth, learning, integrity, professionalism, diversity and inclusiveness, a sense of belonging and respect.¹

There are approximately 1,000 neighbourhood and community houses operating in Australia, of which 360 are in Victoria and 200 in metropolitan Melbourne.² In addition to the term ‘neighbourhood house’, there are a variety of other descriptions, including ‘community house’, ‘living and learning centre’, ‘neighbourhood centre’ and ‘learning centre’.³

In Victoria, Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres (NHLCs) are community-based, non-profit organisations, managed by voluntary committees and operated by part time staff and volunteers,⁴ with programs being run by the Houses and tailored to fit the needs of the local community.⁵ Approximately 95,000 Victorians make use of NHLCs each year.⁶

The Neighbourhood House movement began in the 1970s as a result of the efforts of a number of women who came together to reduce suburban isolation, establish children’s playgroups, develop educational courses and enhance their skills.⁷ Today, NHLCs provide educational, recreational, community and social programs and courses at low cost, with the aim being to “... enhance the social and economic development of communities and [be] run on principles of inclusive participation, community empowerment, life long learning and active citizenship.”⁸ They are also recognised as venues in which people build friendships and social networks across age groups, ethnic groups and other differences.⁹

NHLCs provide a wide range of activities.¹⁰ Some examples are:

- Playgroups
- English as a second language
- Managing credit for people with disabilities
- Children’s art classes
- Exercise for over 50’s
- Yoga
- Men’s health and wellbeing
- Singing
- Gardening
- Introduction to computers
- Internet and email training
- Car mechanics for women.

The sector consists of three inter-related components: the Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres Inc. (ANHLC), the Neighbourhood House Networks (which exist at the community, regional and municipal levels) and the NHLCs themselves.

The sector is supported and funded from a number of sources: DVC and DHS, the Adult Community and Further Education Board (ACFE), local councils, self generated funds, student/volunteer contributions,¹¹ philanthropic foundations and individual donations.¹²

The NHLC sector's stated aim is to improve the social, environmental, economic and cultural infrastructure in their communities. The sector has developed the following principles by which it operates:

- Community ownership
- Community participation
- Empowerment
- Access and equity
- Lifelong learning
- Inclusion
- Networking
- Advocacy
- Self help
- Social action.¹³

The value of NHLCs

In a submission to the Committee, Ms Mary Robb, representing the North East Neighbourhood House Network Inc., described the strength of NHLCs as based on their "... individual capacity to respond in innovative ways to local community needs and initiatives."¹⁴

Similar sentiments were expressed by other witnesses. For example, in a briefing to the Committee, Ms Nicole Mahony, the Director of City Communities at Hume City Council, viewed Neighbourhood Houses as the foundation in the development of community groups and informed the Committee of the recently signed memorandum of understanding between the council and local NHLCs, which aims to develop closer ties and cooperation.¹⁵

Likewise, in its submission to the Committee, the Macedon Ranges Shire Council believed NHLCs were venues which help in the development and resourcing of strong volunteer networks, stating:

It is important to provide venues in which people can meet and learn skills. Neighbourhood Houses are an essential base ... Council notes and applauds the announcement in the recently released social policy document that further resources will be dedicated to neighbourhood houses. We look forward to the detail. Similarly, preschools, schools, libraries, arts centres, leisure centres and U3A's are other examples of the importance of meeting places [in] building community.¹⁶

In a 2005 report on NHLCs, DVC investigated the ways in which participants in nine Houses in Melbourne's City of Whitehorse developed social capital through their local programs.¹⁷ The report found NHLCs have a significant impact on the social and human capital of their users and that "at their most simple they build networks

that provide people with social support, personal assistance and self confidence” through learning programs which build skills, such as in English, IT, parenting and work skills.¹⁸

The report also found NHLCs come into contact with people who would otherwise not access services or opportunities in the community. The report emphasised the ability of NHLCs to reach the most disadvantaged and socially isolated. Courses run by the Houses were important as “... many of the population groups that have limited opportunities to participate in education elsewhere because of cost or entry requirements” made use of the services.¹⁹

More importantly, “the Houses removed barriers, including cost, to participation by these groups and in some cases this resulted in these groups having a voice in decision making processes in their local area.”²⁰ The report started by taking a micro perspective and examined the reasons people initially made contact with Neighbourhood Houses. It then identified the benefits of this interaction including the personal and social support that led to enhanced self confidence and self esteem, along with the acquisition of new skills.

The second part of the report took a wider view, looking at the benefits to the community, concluding that Houses built a sense of community and acceptance of people from different backgrounds and circumstances, with people who had positive experiences from the Houses wanting to ‘give back’ to the community.²¹

In a separate report, prepared for the ANHLC by Dr Louise Humpage, from the Centre for Applied Social Research at Melbourne’s RMIT University, the NHLC sector’s community building outcomes have been summarised in the table on the following page:

Table 6.1: Summary of NHLC sector outcomes

Individual Outcomes	Community Outcomes
Social Wellbeing Emotional wellbeing Physical wellbeing	Social Building and sharing community resources Community interaction Organisational synergies, connections and partnerships Community activism Empowerment and inclusion Social cohesion
Human Capital Literacy and language New knowledge and skills Lifelong learning Command over goods and services	
Social Capital Social connections and networks Social participation Active citizenship	Economic Employment advocacy, referral and placement Innovation and business development Savings in health costs Savings in social and economic support
Economic Pathways into further education Pathways into employment Self sufficiency Income generation	Environmental Environmental sustainability Savings in environmental costs

Source: Humpage, L. (2005) *Building Victorian Communities: Outcomes of the Neighbourhood House and Learning Centre Sector*, Centre for Applied Social Research RMIT University, Melbourne, p 2.

Taking a different approach, in a 1989 article (cited in a recent paper by Rowse and Mitchell) Healy noted that ‘community centres’ were again in vogue for governments and argued they were, in part, “a cost cutting exercise, resulting in ineffective and inequitable services, which involve the exploitation of women as the care providers.”²²

Healy then argued:

Centres have been more successful in better off areas where the people can put together a funding submission, supply the

volunteers and are members of an array of community groups. Human service policies now call for more priority for disadvantaged groups but this requires extra resources, knowledge and skills. The dilemma is that while centres depend heavily upon local resources, they must also offer universally popular activities to socially acceptable groups.²³

Despite this, NHLCs continue to develop and promote courses and programs tailored to suit the needs of the local communities they serve, as evidenced to the Committee in the high and repeated demand for courses.

Programs at the community level

NHLCs offer programs catering for a wide range of clients from different backgrounds and socio-economic groups. Ms Judith Brown, representing the Cardinia Cluster of Neighbourhood Houses, informed the Committee at a public hearing that the sustainability of NHLCs relies on focusing on the needs of different groups and seeking to integrate them:

As neighbourhood houses we know that we are not sustainable if we focus on one or two high-needs groups; we work with integration rather than marginalisation. We work with the Monash Medical Centre as a group. We work with them for mental health issues. We work with the TAC [transport accident commission] to reintegrate people. We are working with disability support groups to integrate people. We have taken the points of view that we will put one or two people in a group of whatever and then, the group maintains itself and it moves on.²⁴

The Kinglake Ranges Neighbourhood House Inc. advised the Committee of programs it targets to every sector of the community, with 13,000 enrolments and 188 courses delivered each year, through the work of more than 50 volunteers, one manager and a part time office assistant. In addition, Kinglake Ranges Neighbourhood House Inc. offers a number of courses, including first aid training, general preparatory training and sporting activities. The House also provides services, such as financial counselling and tax assistance, an 'opportunity shop', second hand furniture distribution, food hampers to those in crisis, a community bus, volunteer training and referral and auspice and advocacy for local groups and individuals.²⁵

In a presentation to the Committee, Ms Cheryl Phillips, from the Kinglake Ranges Neighbourhood House Inc., noted the significant increase in courses, with 27 courses being offered in 1990, contrasted with 188 courses in 2004 and, consistent with other neighbourhood house representatives the Committee heard from, identified the urgent need for additional recurrent funding:

The Kinglake Neighbourhood House is under threat and we need to save the heart of our community. We urgently need

more recurrent funding to help us survive. Our current manager works 10 to 15 hours per week over her paid time, which is only 20 hours a week. Our community requires us to be open five days a week. That would see us offering more accredited courses, with our future linked to our local TAFE centres at Greensborough, Lilydale and Seymour, resulting in not only courses for the certificate of general adult education being run at the house but many other vocational and general preparatory courses being available to our community locally. We aspire to becoming the state government-preferred local provider for technical and further education programs which we could deliver in partnership with all our regional providers.²⁶

The Fitzroy Learning Network, in a project called 'Belonging in Australia', has recently developed a collaborative project involving Yarra City Council, The Brotherhood of St Laurence and a number of local agencies, to help integrate Sudanese and Somali women who have settled in Australia without partners but with young children, into the broader Australian community.²⁷

In September 2005, the Committee heard from Mr Ian Berner-Smith, the project co-ordinator for Men's Shed for Cranbourne, who had earlier made a written submission to the Inquiry. Mr Berner-Smith spoke about the role of Men's Sheds, which have a similar ethos to NHLCs and often work closely with them, but can be more suited to men seeking support and training in a less formal environment.

The Committee was informed there are approximately 70-80 Men's Sheds throughout Australia, each providing a different range of services including counselling, suicide prevention, anger management courses, IT, relationship and parenting skills, informal mentoring and so on.²⁸ Men's Sheds have a particular focus on men of all ages undertaking projects in the workshop (for example, metalwork, woodwork, vehicle maintenance) and often involve intergenerational interaction and support, including male role-model mentoring for single parent boys. According to Mr Berner-Smith, there is a considerable need for Men's Sheds and services addressing men's needs in particular, in the outer urban areas of Melbourne, as men are often struggling with isolation, family violence (as both victims and perpetrators) and depression. Mr Berner-Smith informed the Committee:

Family violence is but one aspect of violence in the community; men and youths' acceptance and recognition of the role played by them within the community (perpetrator, victim or bystander), and their propensity and responsibility to take preventive action to ensure that violence does not flow from generation to generation through a dysfunctional family pattern, forms the basis on which a safer community is developed.

Men's Shed's provide a safe environment, without stigma, where men and youth can work together towards these goals.²⁹

NHLCs in new communities

On the role NHLCs can play in new communities, a number of Inquiry participants informed the Committee of the value in establishing a Neighbourhood House-type model from the outset, although opinions varied on what form they should take.

In a submission to the Committee, the Shire of Melton stated that Neighbourhood Houses increase levels of community engagement and resilience. The submission saw community houses as being in the perfect position to act as a hub for new communities, although they ideally needed to be situated in areas with population catchments of approximately 16,000 people.³⁰ Similarly, in their submission, the ANHLC recommended Neighbourhood Houses should be an essential part of the development process.³¹

Delfin Lend Lease, which currently has five major urban development projects underway in Victoria, predominantly in outer suburban areas, stated in its submission to the Committee:

A key product of Delfin's success has been the establishment of Neighbourhood Centres rather than Neighbourhood Houses. This allows for the development of linked activities and infrastructure and the opportunity for shared services and therefore shared infrastructure. This again emphasises the importance of joined up government approaches in regards to funding opportunities of community infrastructure.³²

This point was reinforced by Mr Bryce Moore, Delfin's General Manager for Victoria, who told the Committee of Delfin's belief that schools acting as community hubs provide the best outcomes:

We tend to focus neighbourhood activity on schools. The community places enormous value on quality of education and access to quality education. As a property developer, we find many people make housing selection and housing location choices around access to schools and the quality of education that is available.³³

In a 2005 study focusing on older people who have moved to Delfin's master-planned community at Springfield Lakes north of Brisbane, doctoral candidate Mr Peter Walters sought to identify the needs and expectations of older people in achieving a supportive community (including the provision of amenities and services) and how this matches with the motivations of the property developer, as it attempts to create a sense of community. A number of community groups are present at Springfield Lakes, although Walters' research highlighted:

Of all the associations and clubs listed by the developer as active in Springfield Lakes, apart from children's play groups, it is the groups supported by older and retired residents, such as

women's groups, yoga, art and weight loss groups that have been the most active.³⁴

More importantly, Walters noted the importance of the developer's role in the lives of Springfield Lakes residents, with Delfin's focus on diversity of housing size and design having led to "... a diversity of residents with a diversity of motives, interest and ambitions" within the development.³⁵

During his presentation to the Committee, DVC's Director of Community Strengthening, Mr Damian Ferrie, in response to a question from the Chair, Mr Don Nardella MP, on what role DVC sees NHLCs having in the future, stated:

...when examining the assets of a community it is fundamentally important to think about all those things that exist currently. Whether they be CFA halls, community museums, Neighbourhood Houses, community facilities, churches, schools and so on, they all form an important part of the asset base in which people gather and people meet. In essence, Neighbourhood Houses form the basis of both providing avenues for people to come together; avenues, as currently used, for education and for really being a place where communities can come together. I think they form a very important fabric. As you would be aware, in many communities throughout Victoria, Neighbourhood Houses are in fact the only community facility that exists.³⁶

DVC's submission also discussed community infrastructure needs, arguing that in new communities, a range of longer term benefits will flow from clustering community infrastructure services and facilities.³⁷ In this they include education facilities for newborns to twelve year olds, precincts that adjoin libraries and learning centres and placing sport and recreation facilities alongside schools and public transport.³⁸ DVC believes Caroline Springs provides a good example of the importance of coordinated planning to create cohesive and safe communities.³⁹

In Cardinia, the Committee was advised by Ms Judith Brown from the Cardinia Cluster of Neighbourhood Houses of the role played by NHLCs in encouraging people to develop their own support and activity groups.⁴⁰ This is particularly important for new communities in which residents have not had the time to develop networks and associations, either informal or formal. Ms Brown also spoke of the role of NHLCs in encouraging and supporting new small business operators:

When I walk down the main street now it is really astonishing how many groups actually started off in our centres as just offering something and then with the talk and the support they got their confidence. Also there are lots of people who are doing simple operations: they are adding to their family income; they are working with our centres and that provides more services to the wider community.⁴¹

At a council level, Mr Don Welsh, then Chief Executive of the Cardinia Shire Council, at a public hearing in Pakenham on 9 June 2005, spoke to the Committee at some length about NHLCs and argued “there is a desperate need for financial support from the state to establish new neighbourhood houses in new communities.”⁴²

The Committee acknowledges the provisions contained in the Victorian Government’s recently released *A plan for Melbourne’s growth areas* concerning changes to development contributions. Development contributions are works-in-kind or payments towards the provision of infrastructure, made by the proponent of a new development. According to *A plan for Melbourne’s growth areas*, development contributions will contribute to the cost of the estimated \$10 billion worth of state-supported infrastructure and facilities likely to be required for future outward growth up to 2030. This includes “neighbourhood houses, libraries and major recreation facilities.”⁴³ The newly established Growth Areas Authority will provide advice on the details of contributions on each growth area depending on local needs.

Recommendation 6.1:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government work with local government and developers to ensure community centres, such as Neighbourhood Houses, are accommodated and provided for as essential infrastructure in development plans for new communities.

Funding

In the 2006/07 State Budget, \$27.8 million has been allocated to boost services provided by Neighbourhood Houses.⁴⁴ While in the 2005/06 State Budget, additional funding for NHLC of \$12.4 million over four years was allocated, comprising regular funding of \$4.4 million (over four years) as part of the Neighbourhood House Co-ordination Program (NHCP) to boost NHLC services in disadvantaged areas and \$8 million in capital funding.⁴⁵

The \$27.8 million package includes:

- \$16.5 million for an extra 2046 hours every week allowing Neighbourhood Houses to offer more courses and activities, an increase of 34 percent on the current hours
- \$10.2 million to increase the hourly rate for Neighbourhood Houses coordination to \$38 per hour
- \$943,000 for the 16 regional Neighbourhood House networks
- \$89,000 for the ANHLC.⁴⁶

The DVC provides recurrent funds through the NHCP, with funding based on three year service agreements.⁴⁷ The funding is tied to different funding targets and provided for the three sector components.⁴⁸ A total of 338 NHLCs, the ANHLC and 16 Neighbourhood House networks, currently receive funding under the NHCP. In addition, 215 Houses receive ACFE funding, administered by the Department of Education and Training, and approximately 120 Houses are registered to receive DHS funding for occasional childcare.⁴⁹

In summary, funding streams or sources are designed to cover specific functions of the sector:

- NHCP funding supports the coordination and core functioning of a House, through which a variety of programs can be developed
- ACFE funding covers programs including general education for adults, adult literacy and basic education, English as a second language and vocational education
- DHS funding supports the provision of occasional childcare
- Many local governments provide premises for NHLC and provide grants, training and support
- Other funds are gained through fees, fundraising, philanthropic trusts and grants.⁵⁰

In its May 2005 submission to the Committee, ANHLC, which has lobbied for increased funding to improve the sector's capacity to deliver programs, particularly in Melbourne's growth suburbs, stressed to the Committee the need for an immediate recurrent investment in the Neighbourhood House Coordination Program (NHCP).⁵¹

This position is consistent with that articulated in Humpage's report, which detailed two case studies of NHLCs. The first was a study of the Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre in Melbourne, while the second was the Buchan Neighbourhood House in East Gippsland. In both studies she identified inadequate funding levels and how this impacted on their community building efforts.⁵²

In addition to recognising the important contribution made by the NHLC sector, Humpage argued the sector requires funding that will result in its continued development and ongoing sustainability, which will mean accepting "... that program

delivery is unsustainable unless the costs of community development and of operating organisational infrastructure are sufficiently supported.”⁵³ Further in the report, Humpage notes the value the sector plays in contributing to building strong communities in Victoria, which, she argues, should be recognised more fully:

It is clear that each Neighbourhood House and Learning Centre within the sector is a valuable community asset that embodies essential physical infrastructure, human power and networks. Current funding levels do not, however, fully recognise that this is the case. This restricts the growth and the development of the sector and thus its ability to build and maintain the infrastructure needed to respond to local opportunities, needs, problems or emergencies in the future.⁵⁴

On this issue, Humpage believes the Victorian NHLC sector currently provides an example of best practice across Australia and while there are Neighbourhood Houses operating in South Australia and Tasmania and approximately 300 neighbourhood and community centres in New South Wales, Victoria is the only jurisdiction to have forged a close link between Adult Community Education (ACE) organisations and community building.⁵⁵

The Committee also heard further evidence of the problems with current funding arrangements for NHLCs, in particular the amount of funding and the formula used to allocate funds. For instance, Ms Robb informed the Committee that the existing funding formula is 80 percent employment based and yet despite this, “... the sector is unable in many cases to even pay award wages under that formula.”⁵⁶

A similar sentiment was expressed by Ms Amanda Worthington, the coordinator of the Rye Beach Community Centre, who appeared before the Committee in Rosebud on 10 May 2005 and whose submission noted a lack of financial support:

In the three years I have coordinated the centre, we have had no real increase in the Neighbourhood House Co-ordinator Program funding. We are funded 15 hours a week to pay for my coordination role and for this, we are expected to open 9-3.30pm each weekday. The maths does not add up! The results are a coordinator that works on an unpaid basis to meet the needs of the community. This does not strengthen our community but in fact puts pressure on it. It is less likely that our service can be sustained over the longer term without the reallocation of these dollars. We implore the government to rethink its spending.⁵⁷

Ms Worthington suggested that a funding increase to cover a minimum of 35 hours per week of coordination time, was the way to ensure the centre remained sustainable.⁵⁸

The North East Neighbourhood House Network Inc. also called for investment by all levels of government. On this issue, Ms Robb stated:

Relationships need to be established between local government and houses and centres. There needs to be recognition of the contribution made by Neighbourhood Houses to local communities [and] local government needs to establish the mechanism for having this work included in their strategic planning and budgeting.⁵⁹

The submission also recommended investment in NHLC infrastructure, personnel and operational expenditure, which is managed by the local community. In cases where NHLCs are being planned in new or emerging communities, the initial investment is managed by a patron or support fund, while funding needs to be provided by the state government, with resources, infrastructure and knowledge provided by local government.⁶⁰

Similarly, in a paper presented to the 'State of Australian Cities' National Conference in Brisbane in November 2005 on the establishment of a lifelong learning hub in the inner city Melbourne suburb of Carlton, Dr Liza Hopkin from Swinburne University noted:

The current funding model, which has been developing over the last ten to twenty years, creates competition between agencies for the same bucket of money. This makes things most difficult for small to medium sized organisations – big agencies fare better under this regime. Establishing partnerships between not for profit organisations is made more difficult by these conditions, even when they are not directly competing for the same funds.⁶¹

Having identified what she views as the problem, Hopkin then proposes a solution:

In this climate then, much more preparatory work needs to be done in order to allow agencies to work together in a collaborative way. Changes to funding models to encourage cooperation, opening up of government departmental silos and clear and open communication between all levels of government and communities will be necessary if cooperation is to come through genuine, self-established partnerships and not through imposition of a partnership model through an outside agency.⁶²

Recommendation 6.2:

The Committee welcomes the increased funding provision for Neighbourhood Houses in the 2006/07 State Budget and recommends continued consultation with the Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres to ensure funding for the sector remains adequate over time.

The role of NHLCs in neighbourhoods

In the UK, a joint 2005 publication by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Home Office, *Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter*, highlighted the importance of neighbourhoods, which can be viewed as a basis for the promotion and development of local activities which harness people's interest in local issues affecting their lives.⁶³ The report noted such activities can:

- Make a real difference to the quality and responsiveness of services that are delivered to or affect those neighbourhoods
- Increase the involvement of the community in making of decisions on the provision of those services and on the life of the neighbourhoods
- Provide opportunities for public service providers and voluntary and community groups to work together to deliver outcomes for the locality
- Build social capital, reducing isolation whilst building community capacity and cohesion.⁶⁴

Ms Jan Simmons, from Morrison House (an NHLC) in Mount Evelyn, told the Committee at its public hearing in Warburton in May 2005, of the important role played by Neighbourhood Houses and their need to be given a higher profile in the community:

I certainly see the role of not only Morrison House but the whole neighbourhood house movement, as being integral to township development and opportunities for rolling out on-the-ground government strategies. You want some on-the-ground stuff. We are on the ground. I believe we have the opportunity. We are already connected, you do not have to connect. The neighbourhood house movement has to grow into that role. It is there and it is important for us to take that on board. But, as with the schools, we have to remember that we are only part of the community, not the centre of the community. Our role is to actually facilitate and support what is going on; not to see ourselves as the centre. I felt like we had really achieved something when our local secondary school principal said to me, 'Jan, I used to think the school was the

centre of the community. Now I know it is only part of the community'. We have to remember as neighbourhood houses that we are part of the community and we need to make sure we support the community as it goes to work and we have those resources.⁶⁵

DVC has referenced research by Hibbitt et al. in the UK, which noted the importance of community houses for assisting profoundly disadvantaged residents to become socially connected.⁶⁶ Similarly, in a 2005 study of two suburbs (Corio and Norlane) in Victoria's second largest city, Geelong, researcher Ms Deborah Warr investigated the ways in which circumstances and social stigma influence the social networks of people living in socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods.⁶⁷

Warr identified both Corio and Norlane as having relatively high proportions of public housing tenants and sole parent families, along with high unemployment rates.⁶⁸ Based on survey research involving in-depth interviews with residents, ranging in age from 18-59 years, she observed:

Although many of the participants were involved in community-based activities, especially those based at neighbourhood houses or local primary schools, the social contacts that were facilitated through this involvement also tended to be among local people.⁶⁹

Warr acknowledged research by Popay et al., which found people in disadvantaged areas were more likely to experience problems with their neighbours, be more reluctant to visit them and less likely to agree that their neighbours gave them a sense of community.⁷⁰ In reference to barriers in community life, including (potentially) to people being involved in NHLCs, Warr's findings demonstrated in disadvantaged neighbourhoods:

Withdrawing from the community was a common survival strategy that was enacted for different reasons by people in the neighbourhood and for different reasons posed barriers against efforts to encourage residents to become more involved in the local community. The effects of these withdrawals from community are likely to explain some of the difficulties that were noted for getting people involved in local and community-based activities and undermined social solidarity that might be an impetus for collective action.⁷¹

While noting the Neighbourhood Renewal program has, for Corio and Norlane, provided residents with the opportunity to develop networks through various community projects, including community jobs programs,⁷² Warr's findings concluded the social stigma associated with living in a discredited neighbourhood remains significant, because local people saw limited opportunities to participate in social networks which extended outside their neighbourhood.⁷³

In addition, recent research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in the UK looked at ways in which people interact with their neighbours and how this has changed over time. The research identified neighbourliness and connections with people do remain important, although the level and depth of neighbourhood interaction has changed. The report identified the need to establish spaces in which interaction and dialogue can occur, which will encourage greater interaction amongst people living in neighbourhoods.⁷⁴

During the Committee's visit to London in November 2005, the Committee met with Professor Rosalind Edwards and the research team from the Families and Social Capital Economic and Social Research Council Group at London South Bank University. Operating as part of the university, the group's work program focuses on the inter-relationship between the dynamics of family change and processes of social capital. The Committee was advised sixty percent of students at the university are from ethnic groups other than those of English/Anglo Saxon heritage, resulting in the university being highly focused on and better integrated with, the local community. The local Southbank area has traditionally had low educational, employment and income levels and residents' aspirations have traditionally been to 'get out' of the community or cut themselves off, rather than stay in the area.⁷⁵

A submission from Monash University's Centre for Community Networking Research relayed interview results from Neighbourhood House coordinators, who spoke of the strong community bonds between the Houses and the local community.⁷⁶ A number of coordinators, however, had quite different experiences and informed the research team of the resentment and hostility occasionally experienced following attempts to establish Neighbourhood Houses in some new communities.⁷⁷ Stillman et al. believed this problem was more likely to be evident in:

... new and relatively isolated estates which lack a prior spirit of neighbourhood and cooperation due to poor planning on the part of developers and government for encouraging community cohesion where social infrastructure is virtually non-existent.⁷⁸

NHLCs and technology

In research evaluating community technology, Monash University's Mr Larry Stillman characterised Neighbourhood Houses as a "... means by which social and community capital are bonded through technology, an outcome of activity undertaken in the Houses."⁷⁹

In their submission to the Committee, Mr Stillman, Professor Don Schauder and Dr Graeme Johanson from Monash University's Centre for Community Networking Research, advised the Committee of work being undertaken by the Centre on the role of Neighbourhood Houses and the use of technology. The research surveyed the views of NHLC coordinators in Melbourne's western suburbs about their information

and technology needs, although they noted that many of the issues raised in the research are relevant to the needs of NHLCs across Victoria.⁸⁰ They noted:

Neighbourhood Houses are also an important, local and non-threatening place for informal education for people who do not 'fit' into the TAFE sector, including under-engaged young people, women moving in and out of the workforce who need new literacy and computer skills such as those offered with ACE support, or men in their 40s. Free or low cost computing and internet access in a supportive environment is critical.⁸¹

The submission also identifies the need for broadband access, stating: "it is shameful that there is no high-speed public broadband network at least available to all metro and fringe areas of Melbourne, not to mention state-wide. This is an essential part of state infrastructure in an information society."⁸² To address this issue, the Centre for Community Networking Research recommended the need for support in information management for Neighbourhood Houses and possibly centralised coordination to facilitate Neighbourhood Houses having access to technical support, training and resources, including web-site development.⁸³ Mr Stillman reinforced the point about IT when he spoke to the Committee in May 2005 and noted that "...technology underpins effective citizenship. If you cannot email, you cannot find a job now – it is as basic as that."⁸⁴ Earlier in his presentation, he noted his experience with a resident to demonstrate the wider effects of the use of technology:

An old lady in her 80s, who had never used a computer, learned to use email and it had a number of effects. She ended up making new friends because the local users group met at her house. She made new friends through the internet and she began to leave her house. She also got into a massage course and a whole number of things. It made her happy. If you think of the social savings and the cost of direct care in her not having to go to the doctor and so on through her involvement in a neighbourhood house, it is a marvellous story.⁸⁵

A similar point was made to the Committee during a public hearing in Greensborough (Nillumbik) in July 2005, in which Ms Shepherd from the Nillumbik Community Think Tank, told the Committee:

It is very interesting when you look at the way some older people use it [technology] and the way some older people will not embrace it. There is huge potential there to use it, there is no doubt and I think experts could be based in neighbourhood houses and be accessible to a range of people.⁸⁶

Recommendation 6.3:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government, in conjunction with the Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres and the Interface group of local governments, investigate options to provide information technology support for Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres.

Recommendation 6.4:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government provide broadband capacity to all metropolitan and Interface Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres, ideally as part of its roll-out of broadband to schools across the state. Where feasible, broadband should also be extended to Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres in rural or peri-urban municipalities.

Notes

- ¹ North East Neighbourhood House Network Inc., *Submission number 49*, 11 May 2005, p.8.
- ² Humpage, L. (2005) *Building Victorian Communities: Outcomes of the Neighbourhood House and Learning Centre Sector*, Centre for Applied Social Research, RMIT University, Melbourne, p.14; Network West <http://www.networkwest.net/>
- ³ Humpage, L. (2005) op. cit., p.17.
- ⁴ ANHLC, *Submission number 55*, 24 May 2005, p.1.
- ⁵ Settle, G. (2004) *Neighbourhood and Community Houses in the new century – from birth through to current life stages and looking forward to the future*, Bachelor of Applied Science (Planning) Honours Thesis, School of Social Science and Planning, RMIT University, Melbourne, p.7.
- ⁶ See <http://tinyurl.com/hu6co>
- ⁷ Merrifield, J. (2001) *Learning Citizenship: A discussion paper*, Learning from Experience Trust, London, p.13.
- ⁸ Department for Victorian Communities (Strategic Policy and Research Division) (July 2005) *Strengthening Local Communities: An overview of research examining the benefits of Neighbourhood Houses*, DVC, Melbourne, p.1.
- ⁹ Victoria University, *Submission number 40*, 3 May 2005, p.12.
- ¹⁰ See: <http://www.anhlc.asn.au/whatisnh.html>
- ¹¹ Humpage, L. (2005) op. cit., p.1.
- ¹² *ibid.*, p.17.
- ¹³ ANHLC (2003) *The Neighbourhood House and Learning Centre Sector Framework*, Melbourne, p.4.
- ¹⁴ North East Neighbourhood House Network Inc., *Submission 49*, 11 May 2005, cover letter.
- ¹⁵ Briefing to the Committee, Ms N. Mahony, City of Hume, 20 June 2005, pp.29-30.
- ¹⁶ Macedon Ranges Shire Council, *Submission number 52*, 16 May 2005, p.6.
- ¹⁷ Department for Victorian Communities (Strategic Policy and Research Division) (July 2005) op. cit., p.1.
- ¹⁸ *ibid.*
- ¹⁹ *ibid.*
- ²⁰ *ibid.*
- ²¹ *ibid.*, p.6.
- ²² Healy, J. (1989) 'The resurgence of community centres', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 24, 4, p.285, cited in Rowse, T. & Mitchell, D. (2005) 'From social issues to social policy: engaging professionals and the public', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, Autumn 2005, v40 il, 2.3.3, p.17.
- ²³ *ibid.*
- ²⁴ Ms J. Brown, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 June 2005, p.411.
- ²⁵ Kinglake Ranges Neighbourhood House Inc., *Submission number 69*, 12 October 2005, p.2.
- ²⁶ Ms C. Phillips, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 October 2005, p.815.
- ²⁷ See <http://www.pigswillfly.com.au/?cat=4> 'Belonging in Australia' a collaborative effort, posted 28 April 2006.

- ²⁸ Men's Shed for Cranbourne, *Submission number 58*, 6 June 2005, p.1.
- ²⁹ *ibid.*
- ³⁰ Shire of Melton, *Submission number 4*, 31 March 2005, p.1.
- ³¹ ANHLC, *Submission number 55*, 24 May 2005, p.2.
- ³² Delfin Lend Lease, *Submission number 35*, 2 May 2005, p.6.
- ³³ Mr B. Moore, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 June 2005, p.574.
- ³⁴ Walters, P. (2006) *Growing Old on the Suburban Fringe: Master Planned Communities and Planning for Diversity*, Changing City Structures V 12, p. 10, from paper presented at the State of Australian Cities National Conference, 2005.
- ³⁵ *ibid.*
- ³⁶ Mr D. Ferrie, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 April 2006, p.924.
- ³⁷ Department for Victorian Communities, *Submission number 78*, 18 November 2005, p.14.
- ³⁸ *ibid.*
- ³⁹ *ibid.*
- ⁴⁰ Ms J. Brown, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 June 2005, p.411.
- ⁴¹ *ibid.*
- ⁴² Mr Don Welsh, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 June 2005, p.394.
- ⁴³ Department of Sustainability and Environment (November 2005) *Fact Sheet: development contributions*, DSE, Melbourne.
- ⁴⁴ Treasurer of the State of Victoria (June 2006) *Budget Paper No. 1*, Budget 2006-07, Melbourne, p.46.
- ⁴⁵ See <http://www.doi.gov.au>
- ⁴⁶ See <http://tinyurl.com/hu6co>
- ⁴⁷ DVC took over the NHCP from DHS on 1 July 2005. See <http://www.doi.gov.au>
- ⁴⁸ Humpage, L. (2005) *op. cit.*, p.18.
- ⁴⁹ See <http://www.doi.gov.au>
- ⁵⁰ *ibid.*
- ⁵¹ ANHLC, *Submission number 55*, 24 May 2005, p.2.
- ⁵² Humpage, L. (2005) *op. cit.*, p.13.
- ⁵³ *ibid.*, p.2.
- ⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p.29.
- ⁵⁵ *ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ Ms M. Robb, *Transcript of Evidence*, 23 June 2005, p.538.
- ⁵⁷ Rye Beach Community Centre, *Submission number 45*, 10 May 2005, pp.1-2.
- ⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.2.
- ⁵⁹ North East Neighbourhood House Network Inc., *Submission number 49*, 11 May 2005, p.9.
- ⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p.1.
- ⁶¹ Hopkin, L. (2005) 'Competition and cooperation: coordinating services to establish a lifelong learning hub', Swinburne University of Technology, paper presented at the State of Australian Cities National Conference 2005, Brisbane, 30 November-2 December 2005, p.9.
- ⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ ODPM and Home Office (2005) *Citizen Engagement and Public Services*, West Yorkshire, p.9.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁵ Ms J. Simmons, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 May 2005, p.265.

⁶⁶ Hibbitt, K., Jones P. & Meegan, R. (2001) 'Tackling social exclusion: the role of social capital in urban regeneration on Merseyside – from mistrust to trust?' *European Planning Studies*, 9, 2, pp.141-161, cited in Department for Victorian Communities (Strategic Policy and Research Division) (July 2005) *op. cit.* p.13.

⁶⁷ Warr, D. (2005) 'Social networks in a 'discredited' neighbourhood', *Journal of Sociology*, September 2005, 41, 3, p.285.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p.288.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p.289.

⁷⁰ Popay, J., Thomas, W., Gareth, S. and others (2003) 'A Proper Place to Live: Health Inequalities, Agency and the Normative Dimensions of Space', *Social Science & Medicine*, 57, pp.55-69, cited in Warr, D. (2005) *op. cit.*, p.297.

⁷¹ Warr, D (2005) *op. cit.*, p.298.

⁷² *ibid.*, p.300.

⁷³ *ibid.*, p.299.

⁷⁴ Buonfino, A. & Hilder, P./Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2005) *Neighbouring in contemporary Britain: A think-piece for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee*, York, pp.4-6.

⁷⁵ OSISDC Overseas Evidence Seeking Trip, Meeting with London South Bank University ESRC Group, London, 8 November 2005, p.39.

⁷⁶ Monash University Centre for Community Networking Research, *Submission number 13*, 8 April 2005, p.5.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ Stillman, L. (2005) 'Participatory action research for electronic community networking projects', *Journal of the Community Development Society*, January 2005, 36 il, p.79.

⁸⁰ Monash University Centre for Community Networking Research, *Submission number 13*, 8 April 2005, p.3.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.4.

⁸² *ibid.*

⁸³ *ibid.*, p.6.

⁸⁴ Mr L. Stillman, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 May 2005, p.28.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ Ms F. Shepherd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 5 July 2005, p.652.

CHAPTER 7: LIFELONG LEARNING



Image courtesy of Glassblocktechnologies.com

Learning communities are neighbourhoods, villages, towns, cities and regions that use lifelong learning as an organising principle and social goal in order to promote collaboration of their civic, economic, public, voluntary and education sectors to enhance social, economic and environmental conditions on a sustainable, inclusive basis.¹

The concept of lifelong learning first emerged internationally in the early 1970s, in recognition that education and training are lifelong pursuits, continuing on, rather than ending, upon completion of formal education instruction.²

The European Commission has defined lifelong learning as “all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspectives.”³ In addition, the Commission believes lifelong learning provides for “... citizens [to] have the opportunity and ability to realise their ambitions and to participate in building a better society.”⁴

Dr Liza Hopkin from Swinburne University captures the concept in the following terms:

Lifelong learning is a policy buzzword to those charged with enabling citizens to participate in the knowledge society. As part of the strategy for enabling communities to address their own learning needs, governments at all levels are beginning to encourage a wider range of options for provision of education, breaking down some reliance on the traditional model of state provided education and training. At the same time schools are being opened up to communities, allowing for better use of community infrastructure and encouraging those who may be disengaged from learning for whatever reason to make use of available facilities and services.⁵

Hopkin has identified the array of definitions on what is meant by lifelong learning. For instance, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) ‘World Conference on Education for All’ believes basic learning needs:

... comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions and to continue learning.⁶

The European Union (EU) dedicated 1996 as the European Year of Lifelong Learning, a move which promoted international interest in the concept. In the same year, the OECD published a report titled *Lifelong Learning for All*, which argued learning:

... embraces individual and social development of all kinds and in all settings – formally, in schools, at home, at work and in the community. The approach is system-wide; it focuses on the standards of knowledge and skills needed by all; regardless of age. It emphasises the need to prepare and motivate all

children at an early age for learning over a lifetime and directs efforts to ensure that all adults, employed and unemployed, who need to retrain or upgrade their skills are provided the opportunity to do so.⁷

The OECD report identified the objectives of lifelong learning as:

- To foster personal development, including the use of time outside of work (including retirement)
- To strengthen democratic values
- To cultivate community life
- To maintain social cohesion
- To promote innovation, productivity and economic growth.⁸

Canadian educationalist Dr Ron Faris, has written extensively on lifelong learning and provides another view on what is meant by the term:

The concept of lifelong learning is based upon the recognition that learning – the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values – is a natural everyday process that occurs throughout one's life. It is driven by human curiosity and intelligence that attempts to give meaning to information in all its forms. It is both an individual activity and a social process that occurs in all of life's stages from birth to death. Most of the learning we acquire is from or with others.⁹

Faris cautions, however, on treating as synonymous, lifelong and adult education which, he argues, are "... lifelong learning's fraternal twins [and are] not identical!"¹⁰ In making the distinction, Faris believes it is *learning* that is the common denominator of both lifelong and adult education, with the former encompassing educational opportunities involving children, youth and adults, while the latter focuses on the formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities of adults.¹¹

In Victoria, the Government's *Growing Victoria Together* document places education and lifelong learning as one of its three main goals, while the Government's *Future Directions for Adult and Community Education in Victoria* identified ACE providers, including Neighbourhood Houses, as playing a pivotal role in the process of lifelong learning, as they are: "often the first point of contact for people who do not have the personal, social and vocational skills needed for the innovation economy or who have not worked or undertaken structured learning for many years."¹²

Australian education researcher, Mr Peter Kearns, in a 2005 report commissioned by Adult Learning Australia, looked at future directions for lifelong learning in Australia. He identified as a key finding from consultations and research, that lifelong learning is a poorly understood concept in Australia and as such, acts as a limit on opportunities for developing an inclusive and successful society:

Lifelong learning has not been a research priority for Australia and existing knowledge is fragmented across a range of Commonwealth and State sites and research centres without a dedicated national focal point existing.¹³

Kearns' report provided an overview of lifelong learning policies initiated by the UK, Germany, Canada, the Nordic countries and the EU, with the Nordic countries identified as the most advanced in relation to a 'learning society', followed by Canada and Germany.

Learning and community building

Learning as part of community building may include the following four core functions:

- To develop skills (from basic literacy and numeracy through to vocational and life skills). By developing people's skills, a learning community can assist in building the community's capacity to address challenges
- To grow the local economy (including an increased skills base and community capacity and more efficient business alliances)
- To foster collaboration between people and groups (such as the sharing of school infrastructure after-hours or in the development of local solutions for local problems through collaboration within government)
- To strengthen the community (individuals who engage with their communities to learn and help others learn, and organisations collaborating to facilitate learning, contribute to stronger, more capable, more aware and more sustainable communities).¹⁴

In a paper presented at the August 2005 International Conference on Engaging Communities in Brisbane, attended by Committee Members and staff, NSW researchers Ingle and Walls presented evidence on engaging communities through lifelong learning, drawing on case studies involving two rural and regional communities in NSW (Gwydir and Gunnedah) which successfully developed a lifelong learning culture.

Acknowledging work by Kilpatrick et al., Ingle and Walls argued learning communities have a number of characteristics:

- Members of a learning community share a common goal or purpose
- They are operationalised through collaboration and/or partnerships
- They respect diversity, which enhances the learning capacity of a community
- They develop the capacity or enhance the potential of members.¹⁵

At a government level, in January 2005 the British Government established Lifelong Learning UK as a separate agency to promote centres of excellence in teacher training and encourage, promote and develop lifelong learning. Its genesis was a result of the government acknowledging that an ageing population would result in higher numbers of older people seeking a wider variety of employment options, especially part-time, contract and voluntary work.¹⁶

While a greater focus on lifelong learning would assist the transition from full time to part time work, Australian researcher Mr John Cross, in an article on adult learning, takes issue with what he views as lifelong learning being overly vocationally focused, arguing:

Sadly, the vocational emphasis of adult learning policy has created a culture in which non-vocational learning and non-vocational outcomes are given little value. For example, recreational learning is dismissed by policy makers as being the frivolous indulgence of middle-class white people and as such, outside the realm of government policy.¹⁷

Cross has identified the following three strategies, developed from adult learning principles, which he believes will assist lifelong learning policy and practice and ensure it is more than vocational:

- Valuing all venues and forms of learning
- Valuing all learning outcomes
- Empowering learners and potential learners.¹⁸

Cross identified forums in which learning programs are undertaken, noting particularly community groups and clubs, such as seniors' computer associations, volunteer firefighting and environmental protection groups. He argues it is these venues where "... considerable and valuable learning takes place, especially amongst people who are turned off by formal learning environments."¹⁹

Building on the value he believes should be accorded lifelong learning, Cross then states:

People do not have an aversion to learning. Learning is a survival skill – it keeps you alive and it gets you ahead. What people dislike – what can turn them off – are the accoutrements of formal education: the paperwork, the classrooms, the assignments, the impersonal architecture, the pace, the inconvenient session time, the off-the-shelf curriculum packages, the power structures, the pressure to play an uncomfortable role, the lack of control, the feelings of inadequacy ... in other words, the trappings of structure. Such attributes are especially confronting when they do not appear to serve the learners' immediate interests. No good can come

from making the world of learning a depressing or disagreeable place.²⁰

In her submission to the Committee, Ms Shanti Wong from the Brimbank/Melton Local Learning and Employment Network Inc. (BMLLEN), argued learning results in a number of benefits, which include:

- Personal growth and expanded horizons
- Increased employability and career potential
- Broader interests and social participation
- Control over your own future.²¹

Having identified the benefits, Ms Wong advised the Committee of areas which could be targeted to help strengthen lifelong learning, namely:

- Encouraging more males to go into Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs
- Encouraging more females to take up apprenticeships
- Improving levels of engagement in education and training for homeless young people
- Developing programs which provide specific support for new refugees.²²

The Committee acknowledges some of these concerns are taken up in the Victorian Government's new training and skills strategy, *Maintaining the Advantage: Skilled Victorians*, released in February 2006. The strategy includes actions to expand pre-apprenticeship opportunities for young people and accelerate apprenticeship completions while ensuring quality training outcomes. The strategy also seeks to provide greater opportunities for adult learners to develop skills throughout their working life.²³

In his presentation to the Committee, Victoria University's Head of the Melton campus, Professor Ron Adams, highlighted the university's role in promoting lifelong learning in the wider community. He provided the Committee with some background on the launch of the Melton Learning Precinct in November 2004, noting the rationale for the precinct was to link the university with the Melton Shire Council and local provider organisations and networks, and aim to better support and facilitate learning opportunities for the Melton community.²⁴

Highlighting the value of the precinct, Professor Adams stated:

From the university's perspective, the desired outcomes of the precinct would include things like greater engagement with the Melton community, increased participation in education and training programs by the Melton community and increased level of activity and utilisation of the facilities we have out at the Melton campus.

The philosophy of the precinct is to nurture a lifelong learning culture in Melton through such means as working with the Melton community learning board, to achieve the goals of the board and implement its strategies; facilitating the provision of high quality and integrated learning and education to residents, businesses and industry at Melton; creating a sustainable lifelong learning environment in the Melton community, which we accept will require a cultural shift and will not be achieved in a short span of years; and establishing a transparent, cooperative and synergistic relationship between the joint venture parties – the university and the shire – along with schools, business and industry, local LLENs and the community in meeting community learning needs.²⁵

Professor Adams also informed the Committee of the next stages in advancing the Precinct:

One of the objectives is to do a full audit of all the businesses and employers in Melton to establish what they see as their training needs. They can articulate what their training needs are and we will try and match those up with what Victoria University and other providers can provide. At the moment, some of the larger firms are going outside Melton for their training needs. We want to see what local capacity we have here, with our mix of providers, to be able to provide some of that training, or whether we are totally missing in terms of what we are providing and what the market is demanding.²⁶

The Committee supports the efforts of educational institutions, such as Victoria University, to enhance the lifelong learning options in their locality and is especially supportive of the objectives of the Melton Learning Precinct in linking the university, the local council, education providers, residents and businesses in Melton.

The Committee also heard from the City of Hume, who briefed the Committee on a similar initiative, the Hume Global Learning Village. The project has approximately 300 member organisations, including universities, TAFE colleges, schools, Neighbourhood Houses, University of the Third Age (U3A) and sporting clubs, which are involved in close to 60 education and learning projects at a community level.²⁷

Recommendation 7.1:

The Committee recommends the Department for Victorian Communities monitor the progress of the Melton Learning Precinct and the Hume Global Learning Village, with particular focus on outcomes from the two projects in working collaboratively with the local governments and learning organisations, to improve the provision of high quality, integrated learning and education to residents, businesses and industry.

Learning networks

Institutions such as the Centre for Adult Education (CAE) in Melbourne, TAFEs, universities, private institutions and public libraries, all provide a diverse range of course options catering for different interests, lifestyles and life-stages.

The President of U3A Network Victoria Inc., Ms Jean Melzer, informed the Committee in her submission of the role and work of U3As – not-for-profit volunteer-run organisations providing intellectual, social and physical activities to mature-aged learners. The submission related the difficulties of many U3As in locating and securing affordable and permanent premises, with a majority of U3As advising the peak organisation that “... the buildings used by Senior Citizen organisations are not available to them [U3As] and that these remain unused for a substantial proportion of the time.”²⁸

A similar sentiment was relayed by Mr Ron Topp, president of the U3A Network in Pakenham, who also talked to the Committee about the work of U3As and the valuable role they play in the community. He told the Committee:

There are two excuses at U3A for not being at a class. One is if you are minding the grandkids, the other one is you have a medical appointment and they are both valid. The old darling at the bottom there is 87 next week and we are going to have a knees-up. She is doing five classes. These are the classes we are currently doing. I am sure you would appreciate that at U3A, all our tutors are volunteers. Nobody gets paid a red cent for anything they do and you can see we have a great diversity of talents there.

Our biggest problem is to get rid of students. They will not go away! Our computer classes are booked out so far ahead it is not funny. We have to make a small charge at \$4 a lesson. As you would know, these are low-income fixed-income people and there is not a lot of help available financially.²⁹

In his submission to the Committee, Mr Topp believed the group's long-term value lay in its ability to be active in:

- Establishing courses relevant to the needs and interest of U3A's members
- Introducing people of mature age to IT skills, which have resulted in a range of benefits, including enhanced personal achievement and self esteem, family contact via email and the pursuit of interests through research on the internet
- Providing activities to stimulate creativity
- Creating opportunities for physical activity
- Setting up discussion groups for intellectual stimulation
- Keeping up to date with current affairs.³⁰

However, Mr Topp also described some of the difficulties faced by his organisation being situated in the rapidly expanding area of Pakenham:

One of our challenges is the population explosion. You do not need telling that we are in a growth corridor. We have 130 members at the moment. I have had four new ones walk in this week, and it happens every week. The other interesting trend is that a lot of them are couples. They are moving out here because their kids are moving out here. Our accommodation is old. It is a dump we live in. It is cold, it is draughty. We patch it up. We need more accommodation. We have 24 classes this semester. We are going to have 28 next semester. It is like a shuffling act.³¹

Notwithstanding the important role played by Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres, the Committee believes many other educational and learning organisations have a crucial role in bringing people together and linking communities, in addition to enhancing lifelong learning opportunities. The Committee supports efforts by groups and individuals in the community, in conjunction with all levels of government, to foster the development of locally based learning organisations.

Recommendation 7.2:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government work with local governments and learning organisations, to investigate and improve the provision of suitable and affordable facilities and programs for agencies involved in lifelong learning programs, such as the University of the Third Age, which are outside the Neighbourhood House and Learning Centre sector.

Notes

¹ Dr Ron Farris, quoted in 'Learning Communities Catalyst', see: <http://www.lcc.edu.au/lcc/go/pid/10>

² Humpage, L. (2005) *Building Victorian Communities: Outcomes of the Neighbourhood House and Learning Centre Sector*, Centre for Applied Social Research, RMIT University, Melbourne, p.8.

³ Hopkin, L. (2005) 'Competition and cooperation: coordinating services to establish a lifelong learning hub', paper presented at the State of Australian Cities National Conference 2005, Brisbane, 30 November-2 December 2005, p.3.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*, p.2.

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ Faris, R. (2004) *Lifelong Learning, Social Capital and Place Management in Learning Communities and Regions: a Rubik's Cube or a Kaleidoscope?*, PASCAL Observatory, p.8, http://www.obs-pascal.com/resources/faris_2004.pdf

⁸ *ibid.*, p.9.

⁹ *ibid.*, p.17.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.18.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.19.

¹² Humpage, L. (2005) *op. cit.*, p.9.

¹³ Kearns, P. (2005) *Achieving Australia as an Inclusive Learning Society – a Report on Future Directions for Lifelong Learning in Australia*, Adult Learning Australia, Canberra, June 2005, pp.1-6.

¹⁴ 'Learning Communities Catalyst', <http://www.lcc.edu.au/lcc/go/pid/10>

¹⁵ Kilpatrick, S., Barrett, M. & Jones, T. (2003) *Defining Learning Communities*, Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, cited in Ingle, B. and Walls, P. (2005) 'Engaging Communities Through Lifelong Learning', presentation to the International Conference on Engaging Communities, Brisbane, Australia, 14-17 August 2005, pp.3-4.

¹⁶ Parliament of Victoria, Outer Suburban/Interface Services & Development Committee (June 2006) *Report of the Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee: Overseas Evidence Seeking Trip*, Parliament of Victoria, p.45.

¹⁷ Cross, J. (2005) 'Adult Learning: removing barriers, not creating them', *Fine Print*, Summer 2005, 28, 4, p.6.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.3.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.4.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p.21.

²¹ Brimbank/Melton Local Learning and Employment Network, *Submission number 5*, 6 April 2005, p.1.

²² *ibid.*, p.3.

²³ Department of Education and Training (February 2006) *Maintaining the Advantage: Skilled Victorians*, Melbourne.

²⁴ Professor R. Adams, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 June 2005, p.337.

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ *ibid.*, p.342.

²⁷ Briefing to the Committee, Mr F. Dixon, City of Hume, 20 June 2005.

²⁸ U3A Network Victoria Inc., *Submission number 10*, 8 April 2005, p.2.

²⁹ Mr R. Topp, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 June 2005, p.451.

³⁰ U3A Network Pakenham & District, *Submission number 60*, 9 June 2005, p.4.

³¹ Mr R. Topp, *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 June 2005, p.454.

CHAPTER 8: MENTORING



Image courtesy of Joseph & Nathan, Big Brothers Big Sisters (2006)

When called away to fight the Trojan War, Odysseus entrusted his infant son Telemachus to his wise friend Mentor. He asked Mentor to watch over the boy and act as guide and advisor to help him on his journey into adulthood. From this story has developed a model of learning, which has been copied and developed in many settings.¹

This chapter discusses the mentoring of young people. This focus reflects the primary concern of the bulk of the mentoring literature and the evidence received from submissions and public hearings, although overall, relatively few Inquiry participants commented on mentoring as one of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.

The chapter also deals with *formal* youth mentoring, generally carried out by mentors who are also volunteers. *Informal* mentoring is the naturally occurring support received in the course of a young person's life and provided by parents, teachers, coaches of sporting teams, more experienced peers and others. Levels of informal support for young people are thought to have declined in recent decades as a result of complex economic and global changes – in family structures, in national economies, in the nature of work for men and women and in the “falling away of the stability provided by strong communities.”²

Formal mentoring programs, then, seek to replicate some aspects of the natural support young people are missing out on.³ Formal mentoring usually has a defined purpose, often around a young person's education or employment. For example, the mentor may assist with homework or help the young person navigate through education, training and employment options. Broadly speaking, it is this purpose which differentiates mentoring from the associated term ‘befriending’. Befriending programs are more common in the UK than in Australia and are more about creating informal and supportive social relationships.⁴

The chapter begins by providing a definition of mentoring and noting some of its various forms. The second part outlines some of the literature around the outcomes of mentoring for young people. The third part sets out recent mentoring policies and programs at state and federal government level. The chapter then notes some best practice principles from the Australian context and briefly describes selected examples of mentoring programs.

What is mentoring?

Mentoring has been defined as:

The formation of a helping relationship between a younger person and an unrelated, relatively older, more experienced person who can increase the capacity of the young person to connect with positive social and economic networks to improve their life chances.⁵

However, mentoring is a very diverse field and variations on the theme, such as group mentoring and online mentoring (‘e-mentoring’) are emerging.⁶ Mentoring can take place in different settings: in the juvenile justice system, in the workplace or education system or within community organisations. School-based mentoring programs are popular as they are backed by a wider system and can provide individualised attention which a student may not otherwise receive.⁷

Mentoring need not always involve a significantly older person and a younger person; various forms of peer mentoring are also common. Researcher Dr Michael Karcher predicts that within a decade, ‘cross-age peer mentoring’ (the mentoring of a younger student by an older one) will constitute half of all mentoring in the United States and the majority of mentoring in school-based programs.⁸ In 2003, the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring organisation provided mentors for nearly 95,000 young people in US schools, of which 40,000 were cross-age peer mentoring relationships. Karcher suggests that cross-age peer mentoring develops social skills, self-understanding and cognitive abilities in both mentors and mentees and he cites evidence from a US program which found peer mentors had a bigger effect on a young person’s academic performance than college or corporate mentors.⁹

Outcomes for young people

There is considerable enthusiasm for youth mentoring in Victoria and mentoring programs currently proliferate: one witness estimated that there are dozens of new programs operating on the Mornington Peninsula alone.¹⁰ It is clear to the Committee, however, that based on the available evidence, mentoring programs should not be promoted as an unambiguous ‘good’. For a start, there is still much that is unknown, as Lesley Tobin of the Dusseldorp Skills Forum noted at a mentoring conference in 2004:

Our knowledge of the long-term impact of mentoring in Australia is even more rudimentary. We have a striking dearth of published evaluations and research and little capacity within the mentoring sector to undertake the work needed. We have few objective measures of impact beyond self-reporting and independent or controlled reports of behaviour change from an Australian perspective.¹¹

Most commentators and researchers and even those in the mentoring field, advise a degree of caution about promoting mentoring without further research and development. Karcher, in a recent interview on mentoring in the US, maintains that mentoring programs still have a long way to go:

It appears that, despite Herculean efforts and hearts of gold among program staff, most mentoring programs don’t achieve even a C+ level of success in the areas of mentor retention, participant satisfaction, match duration, and overall impact on youth social and academic functioning.¹²

All this is not to suggest mentoring is not of considerable benefit to some young people. Hartley notes that the mentoring literature discusses mentoring as having the ability to impact positively on a range of measurable behaviours, such as reduced school absenteeism, as well as broader outcomes like improved educational performance, improved relationships with family and friends, reduced likelihood of teenage pregnancy and increased feelings of self-worth.¹³ A US national study

reported by Du Bois found positive impacts for mentoring relationships in terms of high school completion, higher education enrolment, physical activity and birth control use (among others). The study also found a lack of evidence supporting an effect on some outcomes, such as drug use and depressive symptoms.¹⁴

Similarly, a 2005 interim evaluation of Australia's Mentor Marketplace-funded programs (discussed further below) found successful outcomes were being achieved in a number of areas but were strongest and most consistent in relation to firstly, increased participation in work, education, training and community life and secondly, increased self-esteem, resilience and physical and mental health.¹⁵ Hartley sums up the debate by saying that the available evidence "supports positive outcomes for young people under certain circumstances" and it is only relatively recently that research has begun to tease out what those circumstances might be.¹⁶

Some lessons might be drawn from a 2006 report of the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB), which evaluated 80 community mentoring programs involving nearly 3,000 young people who had offended or were at risk of doing so. The mentoring programs had the specific purpose of helping teenagers improve literacy, numeracy and behaviour and ultimately, to reduce offending.¹⁷

The report made a number of 'negative' findings and was met by critical media headlines: "Why mentoring problem children may be useless"¹⁸ and "Mentoring for young offenders 'an £11m failure'."¹⁹ Such headlines are, to some extent, unfair as the evaluation did observe some success in reintegrating the young people into education, training and the community. The UK Mentoring and Befriending Foundation pointed out that overall, a third of those receiving the mentoring either entered or re-entered education and/or training.²⁰

However, the report's authors also noted:

- About half the programs ended earlier than planned
- No or limited evidence for improvement in literacy, numeracy, behaviour and offending
- The mentoring programs were substantially more expensive than alternatives producing similar results, despite the use of volunteers
- Young offenders were reluctant to take part in the mentoring schemes
- More successful outcomes were achieved with younger people and those who lacked a history of offending.

The report suggests short, one-off mentoring programs are unlikely by themselves to be effective for young offenders or young people at risk of becoming offenders. Meeting the needs of troubled young people requires integrated expert services across the education, health and justice fields.²¹

In all mentoring programs, the duration and intensity of the relationship between the mentor and the young person is considered to be a critical success factor,²² as Mr

Toby Baxter from Mornington Peninsula Baptist Church Community Caring Inc., informed the Committee:

Du Bois found that several youth mentoring programs were actually damaging to the clients they engaged with. I have seen that happen in youth mentoring programs that I have run. I have had young adults come in who look good on paper – they are doing counselling courses and all the rest of it – 'Can I be a youth mentor?' I match them to a young person and six months later they say, 'I'm terribly sorry, I'm off to Thailand now for my gap year, see you later.' That is damaging to that young person. The best mentors in the community are people who are able to stay in there for the long haul. That is something we need to remember. For youth mentoring programs to be effective, it has been shown that the young person must have a mentor for 18 months.²³

Similarly, a number of Inquiry participants noted that finding mentors who could commit for an extended period was a difficult task for managers of mentoring programs.²⁴ A submission from the Committee for Werribee made the point that often the best-skilled or most suitable people to be mentors also have the least time available and are therefore unlikely to volunteer.²⁵ The submission suggested remunerating mentors or allowing them to claim taxation offset benefits as a way to encourage more people to become mentors. However, most mentors are volunteers and do not receive (nor expect) payment for what they do, other than, in some cases, the reimbursement of travel or other costs. 'Friends of the Children' in the United States is an example of one mentoring program which does pay mentors. The program focuses on extremely at-risk children. Mentors receive a wage equivalent to a teacher's starting salary and are expected to mentor for 12 years of the child's life. The program's website claims some impressive results from the Portland chapter.²⁶ The Committee was also informed of the MATES (Mentoring And Tutoring Education Scheme) program, based at the University of Auckland, which provides a payment of around A\$1700 to the mentors, who are university students. The payment helps towards the cost of university course fees for the mentor. On the other hand, the Committee examined other mentoring programs which asked for long-term commitment from their mentors without payment. The payment of mentors is an issue which will depend on the type of mentoring involved and the participants it is aimed at.

Male mentors are often seen as important for at-risk boys but the recruitment of suitable males is a further challenge for some Australian mentoring programs.²⁷ A recent study of the Whitelion mentoring program for at-risk youth discussed some of the reasons behind this and suggested recruitment strategies need to target men in a different way:

... “The panic that has swept through our communities has obviously raised worries in men that any interest they show in working with young people can be construed as having sinister connotations.” There are many men in the community who may be put off the notion of mentoring where they believe that they have to formally meet young people and go out for “coffee and chat.” However, such men may be more willing to come forward if the term “mentoring” was less prominent and emphasis was laid on passing on trade and life skills such as driving, car mechanics and carpentry. A new slant on recruitment advertising may pay dividends.²⁸

The Mentoring Partnership of New York has a campaign to address the ‘crisis’ of a lack of male mentors for African American and Latino boys and young men in the city. The campaign seeks to recruit and train 500 male mentors annually. It includes a public awareness and marketing strategy, bi-monthly ‘male recruitment rallies’ with high-profile keynote speakers and the sharing of best practices and lessons learned regarding male mentor recruitment and retention.²⁹

However, while it seems obvious many boys and young men will benefit more from being paired with male mentors, it is worth noting the literature does not reach any definite conclusions on gender-matching or whether boys do better with male rather than female mentors.³⁰ In fact, the YJB mentoring evaluation discussed above found female mentors achieved better results than male mentors, with both boys and girls, although this may be a result specific to the program in question.³¹ The Committee considers issues around gender-matching and the recruitment of more male mentors deserve further investigation in the Victorian context, perhaps in collaboration with Men’s Sheds (as these organisations provide forms of intergenerational mentoring specifically for young men and boys; see Chapter 7 for further discussion).

The Committee’s brief review of the evidence around mentoring underlines the need for mentoring programs to be promoted wisely and targeted carefully. Mentoring will not always be the most effective or the cheapest intervention. Programs need to be well planned and structured and include clear processes for selection, screening, orientation, training and support. At-risk young people are most likely to benefit from mentoring if they are not already disengaged from family and community or systems of training, education and employment. The expectations of mentoring programs directed at at-risk young people need to be realistic and programs should be integrated with other services.

Victorian Government approaches to mentoring

In October 2005, during the course of this Inquiry, the Victorian Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs, the Hon. Jacinta Allan MLA, launched *Leading the Way: The Victorian Government’s Strategic Framework on Mentoring Young People 2005-2008*. This is considered to be the first coordinated and strategic approach to

mentoring produced by an Australian government.³² The framework is intended to inform government agencies and community organisations delivering government-funded mentoring programs targeting young people aged 12 to 25 years.³³ The framework sets out three goals to be achieved by 2008:

1. A coordinated and evidence-based approach to investing in mentoring
2. An increase in young people's involvement in high quality mentoring programs
3. An increase in the participation of all community sectors in support of mentoring.

Actions and initiatives to achieve these goals include:

- Increased knowledge of best practice mentoring programs
- More information for young people about mentoring and mentoring programs
- Better collaboration and coordination within government of mentoring programs
- Targeted funding of \$2.9 million to boost youth mentoring in isolated or disadvantaged areas
- A good practice guide for mentoring programs
- Training and forums to support mentors
- Consultations with young people and young mentors
- Networks linked to volunteer resource centres
- Opportunities for government employees to volunteer as mentors.

The framework stresses a 'whole of government and community' approach, with business, community agencies, philanthropic funders, schools, volunteer networks and the union movement all identified as having a role to play.

The framework does not specifically mention the Interface areas, although it promotes mentoring as an intervention which can alleviate feelings of isolation for young people in rural and remote areas and commits the government to "targeted funding to boost youth mentoring in ... areas where young people may be isolated by social and economic status."³⁴ The Committee's consultations have raised quite clearly the importance of isolation as an issue affecting young people in the Interface. Further, while the Committee supports initiatives to link mentoring networks to volunteer resource centres (as noted above), attention will need to be paid to ensuring those Interface municipalities which are not covered by, or do not have easy access to, volunteer resource centres, are not disadvantaged.

In addition to the framework, the Victorian Government's current involvement in mentoring extends to the funding of a large number of mentoring initiatives across areas like suicide prevention, academic performance, crime prevention and career development. It has been conservatively estimated that \$1.75 million per annum is committed directly by the government for mentoring initiatives. The Committee understands these initiatives come through various departments (including DVC,

Department of Premier and Cabinet and Department of Justice) and are often funded on a short term basis.

With regard to funding, the Committee notes a finding of the recent evaluation of several mentoring programs taking part in the Australian Government's Mentor Marketplace program (discussed further below). The report questioned whether the goal of self-sustainability for programs was realistic in the 12 month to two year funding timeframes generally allocated by government.³⁵ It noted many of the evaluated programs will struggle to acquire funding from non-government sources. The evaluators recommended a minimum funding period of five years.³⁶ Likewise, the Committee believes that if mentoring is to be further promoted by the Victorian Government, programs must be given sufficient resources and time to achieve results for young people. Mentoring programs should be encouraged to build partnerships with the private sector, but the Australian evidence indicates care must be taken not to overstate the ability of programs to do this in the short term and without diverting effort away from providing quality support to young people and their mentors.

Recommendation 8.1:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government, in implementing the *Strategic Framework on Mentoring Young People*, ensure targeted funding and support is directed to youth mentoring programs in the Interface areas.

Recommendation 8.2:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government, in implementing the *Strategic Framework on Mentoring Young People*, specifically focus on providing guidelines and practical assistance for the recruitment of mentors. In doing so, particular attention should be paid to investigating issues concerning the recruitment and suitable matching of male mentors.

Australian Government approaches to mentoring

The Australian Government is involved in a number of mentoring projects through different departments.³⁷

The Local Answers grants program (administered by the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA)) has funded youth mentoring initiatives in Interface areas and around the country. For example, in June 2005 the Boys Will Be Men mentoring project received funding for 34 months to run a school mentoring program for boys (aged 10 to 17 years) in Woori Yallock and Healesville who have no consistent positive adult male contact.³⁸

The Australian Government's major involvement in youth mentoring is through the Mentor Marketplace program, also administered by FaCSIA and funded under the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy. Introduced in 2002-03, Mentor Marketplace aims to make more mentoring opportunities available by establishing new mentoring activities and assisting the growth of existing projects. According to FaCSIA:

The programme encourages the use of mentoring to improve the outcomes for young people aged 12 to 25 years, particularly those at greatest risk of disconnection from their family, community education, training and the workplace. Mentor Marketplace develops a mentoring culture in schools, business and communities, that will result in the engagement of the business and community sectors towards self-sustaining mentoring activities for young people.³⁹

More than 5,000 young people have so far been involved in the various projects.⁴⁰ The 2005-06 Federal Budget announced the continuation of the program and allocated \$12 million over four years from 1 July 2005 to fund up to twelve existing Mentor Marketplace projects and fifteen new projects from 1 January 2006.⁴¹ The target groups include young carers, young people with disabilities, Indigenous young people and young people from disadvantaged groups and localities.

Youth Mentoring Network

In early 2006, the Youth Mentoring Network was formed by a consortium of four major non-government organisations involved in youth mentoring: the Smith Family, Dusseldorp Skills Forum, Job Futures and Big Brothers Big Sisters, with support from FaCSIA. The Network aims to work with youth mentoring organisations and practitioners to foster the growth and development of high quality mentoring programs for young people by providing a national base of collaboration, support, guidance and expertise. The Youth Mentoring Network website will provide practitioners with access to current resources and research and will be a central point for mentoring organisations, mentors and mentees seeking the latest information, contacts and advice available for their local area.⁴²

Mentoring best practice

The Committee anticipates that the Youth Mentoring Network will be a positive move towards establishing and reinforcing best practice for youth mentoring programs in Australia. The Committee also welcomes the Victorian Government's emphasis on researching best practice in mentoring and specifically, the commitment to develop a 'Mentoring Good Practice Guide'. The Guide will detail evidence-based guidelines for program design and risk management, evaluation and other areas critical for best practice mentoring of young people.⁴³ This is an area currently needing development, as Ms Georgie Ferrari from YACVic told the Committee:

There are not very many models of good practice or best practice around mentoring. There are not any guidelines that we are aware of around it. There is very little awareness or evidence of where it has come from as being a good idea. I know that the Bracks government is fully supportive of investing in it further and we are supportive of that investment as long as it does involve an evidence base, an evaluation and the development of best practice models around it.⁴⁴

The Committee was alerted to an initiative of the Home Office in the UK. To support the spread of good practice in mentoring, the Home Office has established the 'GoldStar' program. Projects selected to be 'GoldStar' are exemplars of good practice in recruiting, retaining and managing mentors from groups at risk of social exclusion. Selected projects receive a grant, a third of which is to be spent on sharing their expertise with other voluntary organisations (through supplying resources, disseminating good practice at events or delivering training) with the remaining two-thirds to be spent on the projects themselves.⁴⁵

Recommendation 8.3:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government establish a 'GoldStar'- type program recognising organisations with good practice mentoring models. Grants should be made available to assist these organisations to share their expertise.

Two Australian examples of benchmarks and best practice principles are set out below.

Mentoring Australia: Benchmarks for Effective and Responsible Mentoring Programs

Mentoring Australia, an association of mentors, educators and researchers, has developed a set of benchmarks for establishing and managing effective mentoring programs. According to Mentoring Australia, a responsible mentoring program requires:

- A well-defined mission statement and established operating principles
- Regular, consistent contact between mentor and mentee
- Establishment under the auspices of a recognised organisation
- Paid or volunteer staff with appropriate skills
- Written role statements for all staff and volunteer positions
- Adherence to equal employment opportunity requirements
- Inclusiveness in relation to ethnicity, culture, socio-economic background, gender and sexuality, as appropriate to the program
- Adequate ongoing financial and in-kind resources
- Written administrative and program procedures
- Documented criteria which define eligibility for participation in the program
- Program evaluation and ongoing assessment
- A program plan that has input from stakeholders
- Risk management and confidentiality policies
- Use of generally accepted accounting practices
- A rationale for staffing arrangements based on the needs of all parties.⁴⁶

Mentor Marketplace Good Practice Principles

A 2005 evaluation of Mentor Marketplace suggested a set of six ‘Good Practice Principles’ for all Mentor Marketplace projects. While the authors do not claim the principles to be necessarily exhaustive, they have been informed by key sources of literature and by the ‘national benchmarks’ established by Mentoring Australia (cited above).

These six principles are:

- Youth mentoring projects should be integrated rather than stand-alone, that is, linked into a range of services provided by the auspice organisation in related fields
- Youth mentoring projects should have strong, clearly-defined and documented structures and policies in place with regard to the thorough screening of mentors, matching of mentors and mentees, training of mentors and ending the mentoring relationship
- The nature, duration and role of the mentoring relationship should be made clear to all parties involved (project staff, mentors, mentees and parents, where appropriate) at the beginning of the mentoring relationship and on an ongoing basis as required

- Mentoring initiatives should, as a guiding principle, seek to empower the young people who are being mentored. The goal of empowerment of young people should inform all aspects of project implementation
- Mentoring projects should establish strong inter-agency networks with organisations working in related fields
- Mentoring projects should be tailored to meet the needs of the target group. Project tailoring should consider all elements of project design, such as selection, training and monitoring of mentors, the aims of the project and the nature of monitoring activities.⁴⁷

Mentoring in action

As noted above, there are many mentoring programs currently operating around Victoria. The Committee also visited a number of mentoring organisations in New Zealand and was very grateful to receive assistance in its investigations from the Youth Mentoring Trust in that country.⁴⁸ The following section briefly outlines some of the many examples mentioned to the Committee.⁴⁹

Big Brothers Big Sisters

Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) Melbourne was established in 1982 and claims to be the oldest mentoring program in Victoria. It is based on similar programs elsewhere in Australia and the United States, seeking to provide isolated or disadvantaged young people aged 7 to 17 with a caring adult mentor. BBBS has in-depth screening, training and ongoing support processes for mentors.

Young people are referred to the program through schools and community agencies. Mentors are expected to devote about four to six hours each week to their matched young person for more than 12 months, although some relationships last for longer.⁵⁰

BBBS is developing an innovative approach to training mentors. With support from a corporate e-learning specialist and a philanthropic funder, BBBS has successfully trialled an online training program which will replace some (but not all) of the training mentors are required to receive. BBBS notes that many mentors work full time and cannot attend training sessions in office hours. Prior to the introduction of the online training course, volunteer mentors who missed a session waited three months for the next scheduled training session. As a result, the organisation was losing some carefully screened, keen mentors. BBBS considers the new system has the potential to not only reduce this attrition but also improve the quality of the mentors' training and assessment.⁵¹

Whitelion

Whitelion's one2one mentoring program provides mentors for young people in the juvenile justice system and those who are leaving it. It also caters for young people on community based orders and leaving out-of-home care.

Mentors commit to spending at least three hours per fortnight with their mentees for at least six months. The program has around 160 volunteer mentors sourced through businesses, universities and community groups. Potential mentors undergo training, police and reference checks, interviews and a panel selection process. Training covers topics like mentoring skills, ethical conduct, drug and alcohol issues and an overview of the juvenile justice system. Mentors also receive ongoing professional development training through a mentors network and access to an online mentoring community.⁵²

A 2006 longitudinal study of Whitelion's mentoring program found that approximately 50 percent of participants spoke in glowing terms of their relationships with their mentor and considered it to have had a significant positive effect on their lives. The remaining 50 percent either gained some short term benefit or were ambivalent about their involvement in the program. There were no negative findings. The study recommended Whitelion continue to offer mentoring as part of an individually tailored case plan, rather than as a stand-alone intervention.⁵³

Plan-It Youth Program

Plan-It Youth Mentoring is a tightly structured program now operating in a number of schools across Australia and intended for young people at risk of leaving school early. The program is twelve months in duration. Mentors are trained at TAFE and then meet weekly with their mentees for about one and a half hours over a three month period, with further support for an additional six months. There is a focus on giving students a realistic picture of their options and helping them to plan their exit from school with a positive destination in mind. Results of one program from 2002 showed 80 percent of participating students have either stayed at school, become employed or enrolled in vocational education and training.⁵⁴

The original Plan-It Youth program was started on the NSW Central Coast and had a focus on recruiting retirees and semi-retirees to act as mentors. One of the benefits of this was the development of greater intergenerational understanding and communication.

In their submission to the Committee, the Ministerial Advisory Council of Senior Victorians saw a need for "thoughtful and interesting programs in which people of various generations interact with each other."⁵⁵ This issue was also taken up during the Committee's discussions in London with Mr Kevin Harris, from the Local Level organisation. Mr Harris stated that some communities lack cohesion because of an absence of intergenerational interaction. According to Mr Harris, social problems can

arise from young people growing up without the skills to get along with older people.⁵⁶

Vision Australia's Peer Program

Vision Australia is Australia's largest provider of services to people who are blind or vision impaired. Introduced in 1990, Vision Australia's Peer Program is a form of mentoring in which trained peer workers support others (including young people) who also have vision loss. The peer workers are able to provide empathy based on first-hand experience of what it is like to come to terms with vision loss and they act as positive role models for others to show it is possible to live with confidence and personal growth. According to Vision Australia, over 100 peer workers assist clients and staff participating in Vision Australia's various programs and support services.⁵⁷

The Multicultural Youth Mentoring Project

In 2006, the Melbourne-based Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) established the Multicultural Youth Mentoring Project. The project aims to assist culturally and linguistically diverse young people aged 16 to 21 to become stronger advocates in their communities for their own needs, with government, peers and the community. Mentors help the mentees to achieve goals they have identified. Mentors are recruited from a range of ages and professional, cultural and religious backgrounds and expected to meet fortnightly with their mentees. The CMYI provides support in the form of monthly group peer support meetings for the mentee and training and debriefing for the mentor.⁵⁸

MATES (New Zealand)

The MATES program is based at the University of Auckland and matches university students with senior secondary school students. The senior school students are from low to mid-decile schools and are identified as having the potential to succeed in tertiary education. The majority are also from Pacific Island or Maori backgrounds but the program is not ethnically based. The mentors and the mentees are required to meet for two to three hours at least one afternoon per week. Most of the mentoring takes place on school grounds and is generally one-to-one, although some mentees prefer to be mentored in groups. As noted above, the mentors receive a small payment which can help towards their university fees.

In discussions with the MATES program managers in Auckland, the Committee heard that the program seeks to build the mentee's confidence in their ability to succeed in tertiary education. However, the mentoring also has an emphasis on fun activities and tries to avoid simply being an extension of a student's schoolwork. In 2006, MATES is operating in 10 secondary schools across Auckland with 120 mentors and 120 secondary students.⁵⁹

Future Leaders (New Zealand)

Future Leaders is an innovative mentoring initiative of YWCA Auckland.⁶⁰ Young women enter the program at Year 10 and usually remain with it for four years (New Zealand secondary schools finish at Year 13), although some may go to five years. The program is aimed at young women who are neither at-risk nor high achievers or leaders. Instead, it focuses on those who are identified as having the potential to succeed if given more opportunities and one-on-one support. YWCA Auckland is of the view that youth mentoring programs are generally more successful if they start when the young person is around 14 years old. This means the young person is receiving the benefits of mentoring before they make choices around staying in school or their pathway to university.⁶¹

Young women apply to join the program directly or are nominated by their school. If selected, they and their parents sign a contract agreeing to what is expected of them. They then participate in an activity day with a group of mentors and are generally given the final say in who they would like their mentor to be.

The mentors are mainly recruited through word-of-mouth but the YWCA also directly approaches New Zealand companies with a high proportion of women and recruits through the women's events and functions it holds. The mentors undergo a screening process including reference checks and police checks and are given a full day of training, which is tailored to the needs of the mentee and may include a cultural sensitivity component. Over the course of the mentoring relationship, the mentor can receive ongoing support and training through the mentor coordinator. The mentor also attends support meetings on a regular basis. These meetings are seen as a good opportunity for the women to network with likeminded women.

Mentors are required to visit their mentees once a month (at minimum) and to email, text message or phone at least once a fortnight. They submit a monthly report online about the activities and communication they have had with their mentee over the previous month. The mentees also submit a questionnaire every six months and further monitoring is carried out by the mentoring coordinator who visits each mentee at their school.

The YWCA places an emphasis on ensuring its mentors are well supported and recognised for their efforts. The mentors receive a certificate for their training and are able to attend functions, mentor dinners and celebrations. The YWCA informed the Committee that retaining mentors had not been an issue to date, despite the lengthy commitment expected of them.⁶²

According to the program managers, evaluation results of the program so far have been extremely positive. In 2006, YWCA Auckland anticipates around 90 young women will be involved in Future Leaders from nine schools in the Auckland area. The program is also expected to branch out into the Far North region, an area with some of New Zealand's highest levels of unemployment and social disadvantage.⁶³

Notes

- ¹ Akpeki, T. & Brown, A. for NCVO (n.d.) *Enhancing Trusteeship Through Mentoring*, NCVO, London, p.1.
- ² Hartley, R. (2004) *Young people and mentoring: towards a national strategy*, The Smith Family, Sydney, p.10.
- ³ *ibid.*
- ⁴ Befriending should be distinguished from friendship. A friendship is a private, mutual relationship. Befriending is a service initiated, supported and monitored by a voluntary or statutory agency. See http://www.mandbf.org.uk/mentoring_and_befriending/26. There have been calls for large-scale trials of befriending schemes in Australia, following research showing older people with friendship networks live longer. See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/4094632.stm>
- ⁵ Department for Victorian Communities (Office for Youth) (2005) *Leading the Way: The Victorian Government's Strategic Framework on Mentoring Young People 2005-2008*, Melbourne, p.6.
- ⁶ E-mentoring may overcome some of the challenges associated with face-to-face mentoring, especially the time commitments that deter many adults from 'traditional' mentoring programs. Young people are also likely to be comfortable using technology as part of the relationship.
See http://www.mentoring.org/program_staff/index.php?cid=60
- ⁷ Hartley, R. (2004) *op. cit.*, p.16.
- ⁸ Garringer, M. (2005) 'Mentoring's Research Base Takes a Big Step Forward: An Interview with David DuBois and Michael Karcher', *National Mentoring Center Bulletin*, 2 (4), p.9.
- ⁹ *ibid.*, pp.9-10.
- ¹⁰ Ms P. O'Connell, *Transcripts of Evidence*, 10 May 2005, p.110.
- ¹¹ Tobin, L. (2004) 'Plenary Address to the Big Brothers Big Sisters National Conference 2004', Melbourne. See <http://dsf.org.au/mentor/index.htm>.
- ¹² Garringer, M. (2005) *op. cit.*, p.7.
- ¹³ Hartley, R. (2004) *op. cit.*, p.15.
- ¹⁴ DuBois, D. (2005) 'Mentoring Our Youth: A Snapshot of Recent Research Findings', presentation for the 2005 Maryland Mentoring Conference, College Park, MD, October 20, 2005, www.marylandmentors.org/mentorMD/MDconf05_dubois.ppt
- ¹⁵ Wilczynski, A., Ross, S., Schwartzkoff, J., Rintoul, D. & Reed-Gilbert, K. (2004) *Evaluation of the Mentor Marketplace Program*, report prepared by Urbis Keys Young for the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra, p.52.
- ¹⁶ Hartley, R. (2004) *op. cit.*, p.15.
- ¹⁷ St James-Roberts, I., Greenlaw, G., Simon, A. & Hurry, J. (2006) *Mentoring schemes 2002-2004: A summary of the national evaluation of Youth Justice Board mentoring projects, 2001 to 2004*, report for the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, London.
- ¹⁸ Hill, A. (2006) 'Why mentoring problem children may be useless', *The Observer*, 29 January 2006.
- ¹⁹ Ford, R. (2006) 'Mentoring for young offenders 'an £11m failure'', *Times Online*, 6 February 2006, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/printFriendly/0,,1-2-2027185-2,00.html>
- ²⁰ See http://www.mandbf.org.uk/news_and_events/22

- ²¹ St James-Roberts, I., Greenlaw, G., Simon, A. & Hurry, J. (2006) op. cit.
- ²² DuBois, D. (2005) op. cit.
- ²³ Mr T. Baxter, *Transcripts of Evidence*, 10 May 2005, p.103.
- ²⁴ For example, Ms D. Ford, *Transcripts of Evidence*, 23 May 2005, p.215.
- ²⁵ Committee for Werribee Inc., *Submission number 22*, 13 April 2005, pp.2-3.
- ²⁶ <http://www.friendsofthechildren.com/successes.html>
- ²⁷ Wilczynski, A., Ross, S., Schwartzkoff, J., Rintoul, D. & Reed-Gilbert, K. (2004) op. cit., p.22.
- ²⁸ Lemmon, A. (2006) *Building Bridges – Working with “at risk” young people with alcohol, inhalant and other drug problems: A longitudinal study into the effectiveness of the Whitelion mentoring and employment programs. Stage 2*, Charles Sturt University, p.55.
- ²⁹ Mentoring Partnership of New York, Male Mentoring Project.
See http://www.mentoring.org/newyork/news/male_mentoring_project.php
- ³⁰ Gender is likely to be a primary consideration when matching a mentor with a young person, often for safety reasons. Other considerations in the matching process might include career interests, ethnicity, similar schedules and shared background. For discussion on this point see MacCallum, J. & Beltman, S. (1999) *International Year of Older Persons Mentoring Research Project*, commissioned by Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, p.111; and Wilczynski, A., Ross, S., Schwartzkoff, J., Rintoul, D. & Reed-Gilbert, K. (2004) op. cit. pp.28-30.
- ³¹ St James-Roberts, I., Greenlaw, G., Simon, A. & Hurry, J. (2006) op. cit.
- ³² Department for Victorian Communities (Office for Youth) (2005) op. cit., p.9.
- ³³ *ibid.*, p.8.
- ³⁴ *ibid.*, p.13.
- ³⁵ Wilczynski, A., Ross, S., Schwartzkoff, J., Rintoul, D. & Reed-Gilbert, K. (2004) op. cit., p.62.
- ³⁶ *ibid.*, p.v.
- ³⁷ For discussion of federally funded programs see Hartley, R. (2004) op. cit., p.24.
- ³⁸ Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (2005) *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2004-2008: Round Two Funding – Approved Projects – Victoria*.
See http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/sfsc-lap_r2_vic_description.htm#4
The ‘Boys Will Be Men’ project is a partnership between Anglicare, the Shire of Yarra Ranges, local schools and the Schools Focus Youth Service.
- ³⁹ Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Mentor Marketplace*. See http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/content/mentor_marketplace.htm
- ⁴⁰ Cobb, J. (Minister for Community Services) (2006) *Mentoring Australia’s youth*, media release, Parliament House, Canberra, 9 March 2006.
- ⁴¹ Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Mentor Marketplace*, op. cit.
- ⁴² Cobb, J. (Minister for Community Services) op. cit.
- ⁴³ Department for Victorian Communities (Office for Youth) (2005) op. cit., p.13.
- ⁴⁴ Ms G. Ferrari, *Transcripts of Evidence*, 2 May 2005, pp.15-16.
- ⁴⁵ See <http://communities.homeoffice.gov.uk/activecomms/encourag-vol-and-charit-giv/goldstar/>

⁴⁶ Mentoring Australia (2000) *Mentoring: Benchmarks for Effective and Responsible Mentoring Programs*, <http://www.dsf.org.au/mentor/benchmark.htm>

⁴⁷ Wilczynski, A., Ross, S., Schwartzkoff, J., Rintoul, D. & Reed-Gilbert, K. (2004) op. cit., pp.iv-v.

⁴⁸ The Youth Mentoring Trust (New Zealand): <http://www.youthmentoring.org.nz/index.cfm>

⁴⁹ For a regularly updated online compendium of mentoring programs and organisations worldwide, see: <http://www.mentors.ca/mentorprograms.html>

⁵⁰ Hartley, R. (2004) op. cit., p.44; also Big Brothers Big Sisters Melbourne Inc. (n.d.) *Volunteer Information Brochure*, <http://www.bbbs.org.au/cgi-bin/bbbs.pl?page=19&type=view>

⁵¹ BBBS Melbourne (n.d) *Improved Training Outcomes for Volunteers*, <http://www.bbbs.org.au/uploads/BBBS%20Talent2%20Project%20-%20Annual%20Report.doc>

⁵² See <http://www.whitelion.asn.au/index.php?sectionID=3711&pageID=3721>

⁵³ Lemmon, A. (2006) op. cit., p.60.

⁵⁴ Bean, D. (2002) *Wise Heads on Young Shoulders: Plan-It Youth Mentoring Youth Connections*, NSW Active Retirees and Mentors Inc. Central Coast Branch, p.4.

⁵⁵ Ministerial Advisory Council of Senior Victorians, *Submission number 42*, 5 May 2005, p.7.

⁵⁶ Parliament of Victoria, Outer Suburban/Interface Services & Development Committee (2006) *Report on Overseas Evidence Seeking Trip: 28 October-11 November 2005*, Parliament of Victoria, Melbourne.

⁵⁷ Vision Australia Foundation, *Submission number 17*, 8 April 2005, pp.11-12.

⁵⁸ See <http://www.cmyi.net.au/Mentoring>

⁵⁹ Briefing to the Committee, Ms Tanya Heti, MATES mentoring, Auckland, 9 May 2006.

⁶⁰ See www.futureleaders.org.nz

⁶¹ Briefing to the Committee, Ms Adele Lendich, YWCA Auckland, 8 May 2006.

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ *ibid.*

CHAPTER 9: PARTNERSHIPS



Image courtesy of The Selection Partnership, UK

... partnership with all groups is the key to understanding and acting on those dynamics which enable residents to enjoy a secure and quality lifestyle, participate in cultural and economic opportunities and be part of a vibrant, active and diverse community. In order to support this process, various funding bodies need to take into account that building partnership requires time and effort and this needs to be recognised and built into the funding of community work, if sustainable outcomes are to be achieved.¹

There is an extensive theoretical and empirical literature in the area of partnerships.² The literature includes discussion of efforts to quantify what constitutes a successful or effective partnership, issues of partnerships and governance, ways of building capacity through collaboration, ‘best practice’ partnerships with the community and voluntary sectors and business, the role of partnerships in community regeneration and alleviating social exclusion and the more high profile models of public-private partnerships (such as the CityLink infrastructure project in Melbourne).³

However, this chapter focuses on ‘community partnerships’ and will outline a number of examples of partnerships that have been entered into between governments (at all levels), business and the community sector, including instances where partnerships could have been improved and cases of successful partnership arrangements.

One definition of community-based partnerships is they are “a continuum of relationships that foster the sharing of resources, responsibility and accountability in undertaking activities within a community.”⁴ At the next level, partnerships with community agencies can be seen as those which “...identify genuine needs, provide mentorship and contribute assets towards completing a project” and “in a successful partnership, both sides will give to and benefit from the project.”⁵

Partnerships: an evolving relationship?

In many western nations, Australia included, there has been an increasing trend towards governments working in partnership with non-government agencies and the community.

In a paper on partnerships and collaborative advantage, prepared for the Melbourne University-hosted Governments and Communities in Partnerships conference, scheduled for 25-27 September 2006, the Director of the University’s Centre for Public Policy, Professor Mark Considine, noted OECD research from the early 1990s, which focussed on bringing groups together to, not altogether successfully, address unemployment issues.

Professor Considine believed these efforts demonstrated “how easily programs and initiatives can fail if different public and private interests do not achieve sustained forms of cooperation. As a result, we are now seeing a new emphasis being placed upon ways to make such projects more resilient.”⁶ Considine identified three current forms of government-motivated collaboration, which seek to enhance partnership arrangements:

- Place-based partnerships for economic and social development
- Interagency collaborations to achieve integrated action with a defined client population
- Joint action strategies in which public and private actors attempt to respond to community problems.⁷

In a separate approach, Dr John Murphy from Mornington Peninsula Community Connections and Mr Joe Cauchi, from the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, in a paper evaluating current approaches to community building, posed the following ‘work in progress’ framework:

- The pivotal involvement of local residents in project ownership, design and management
- Cooperation and collaboration between community groups, including with government
- Facilitation and support by government, rather than leadership or control
- Sustainable social, economic and environmental benefits.⁸

During his presentation to the committee, Professor David Adams from DVC informed the Committee of the value government placed on partnerships:

The importance of partnership is growing. It is not just a government issue or a community issue or a business issue: it is about how governments, business and communities work together differently. That in itself is a public policy challenge.⁹

In its submission to the Committee, DVC identified the role of schools acting as community facilities, which was outlined in the Victorian Government’s *A Fairer Victoria* (AFV) document. AFV builds on the Government’s commitment to encourage schools to enter into partnerships with local government and community groups, in order that school facilities can be used by the local community.

On this issue, Dr Liza Hopkin from Swinburne University has examined the development of the Carlton Community Lifelong Learning Hub in Melbourne. The hub was established at the Carlton Primary School in late 2004, with the backing of the Melbourne City Council. The aim of the project was to establish a centre to enhance the learning options for Carlton residents, especially those living in the high rise public housing estates. However, despite the good intentions, Hopkin notes:

It very quickly became clear that some of the community organisations were reluctant to contribute to a new and innovative approach towards service delivery and integration and moreover, were concerned about the effects of change on the status quo.¹⁰

Despite this setback, Hopkin notes Melbourne City Council and the Carlton Primary School, as the funding and auspicing bodies, adopted a new governance structure, which resulted in membership changes to the groups being part of the hub. In identifying what went wrong with the initial phase of the partnership project, Hopkin believed a number of community groups who expressed their support for the hub in principle “... were at best passive observers of the process and at worst, actively resistant to the idea of a hub.”¹¹

Hopkin was explicit in suggesting:

The policy rhetoric of government and community partnerships, place management and coordination of services is in place but the groundwork has not been done to allow the connections to be easily made. Attempting to create a coordinated hub of services for a disadvantaged community [in the Carlton housing estates] by bringing together a number of existing small services and agencies in this case hit a number of hurdles. It is not enough for governments, including local governments, to change the way they say they are going to do business. It is important to recognise the conditions on the ground in which there is something of a siege mentality and victim mentality of NGOs ... changing the way government does business also requires non-governmental organisations to change the way they do business, both with the government and with each other.¹²

Hopkin has written that, although government and non-governmental agencies are increasingly pursuing partnership arrangements, the funding provisions for welfare services have become rationalised, with planning for services now more centralised and service delivery purchasing and competitive tendering on the rise. This has resulted in "...an even larger number of for-profit and not-for-profit organisations competing against each other for a shrinking pot of money to fund their core activities."¹³

In a presentation at a DVC-hosted seminar in August 2005, Dr Rose Melville, Director of the Social Policy Unit at the University of Queensland, quoted Professor Marilyn Taylor who, in assessing the potential of partnerships between local government and the voluntary sector, stated:

Effective partnership is not easy. It requires clear allocation of responsibility within partner organisations, with resources, time and incentive structures for partnership working. Partners need to be prepared to change their cultures and ways of operating to accommodate voluntary sector, community and user participants.¹⁴

Professor Taylor believes:

... Governments and especially local authorities, find it exceptionally difficult to work in an equal and consultative manner with individuals, community members and voluntary sector agencies. They will not share power, resources, knowledge and skills in a way that enables the outsider groups to make a significant influence on policy or decision making.¹⁵

As a potential countermeasure, Taylor believes central governments have "an important role in driving change but must allow the flexibility for partnerships to

reflect local circumstances and resources. It is essential that non-elected government bodies are encouraged and equipped to work in partnership.”¹⁶

In a presentation to the International Conference on Engaging Communities, held in Brisbane in August 2005, Ms Louise Lee from Massey University in New Zealand spoke about community–business engagement and explored some of the issues faced by small community groups as they seek to develop local level partnerships with business. In her conference paper, based on survey research with community groups in Auckland, Ms Lee highlights that “significant differences are apparent in the ways people from community groups and local business interpret their respective organisational interests.”¹⁷

The research findings indicate the models of community-business partnerships largely reflect the experiences and interests of large corporations, rather than the more appropriate small to medium sized enterprises and that “perspectives on social responsibility and community involvement activities for small business, which represent the majority of business enterprises in most economies, have been largely overlooked.”¹⁸

Lee recommends that a key enabler for enhanced collaboration would be the initiation and maintenance of networks between the business, government and community sectors, although “... we also need to recognise the extensive time, energy and resources that are required to establish and foster multiple relationships – efforts to engage with business can be an added drain for community organisations already facing conditions of resource poverty.”¹⁹

Smaller community organisations can also struggle to access the benefits of working in partnership with business. By one estimate, only 18 percent of entirely volunteer-run community organisations in Australia have established some form of partnership with business, compared to two-thirds of community organisations with over 100 paid employees.²⁰ In this regard, Dr John Murphy, from Mornington Peninsula Community Connections, informed the Committee that businesses seeking to form partnerships with community groups generally targeted the larger and higher-profile groups:

Employee volunteering is becoming increasingly popular. Of course, there are a number of business organisations, particularly the bigger ones, who have jumped on the bandwagon, mainly for marketing reasons. They see it as a good way to market their brand and market themselves as good corporate citizens. While on the one hand community groups can benefit from that, my experience has been that big business organisations that are mainly interested in marketing, will only choose to support community causes and community groups which would be a good marketing vehicle, so they will not support the little-known neighbourhood group that is doing great work in their locality but has no profile and there is

nothing to be gained from handing over a giant cheque to some little group that is barely known outside their own neighbourhood. I think that is an issue that needs to be addressed.²¹

The Committee acknowledges the desirability of smaller community groups receiving the benefits of partnerships and notes many are looking for assistance to make links with business. The Committee is aware of a large and expanding range of research papers, practical guides, checklists and case studies on offer through the Our Community organisation, the communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au website, the Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership website and elsewhere.

Successful partnerships

Professor Taylor comments on instances where partnerships have proved successful, stating:

... the most effective partnerships have been those where there has been a long tradition of local organising. This gives people the skills, experience, confidence and infrastructure to engage on their own terms and to gear up to new opportunities.²²

The Victorian Minister for Local Government, Hon. Candy Broad MLC, in a public presentation on 3 March 2006, stated the Victorian Government's position on developing partnerships. The Minister noted three requirements for successful partnerships:

- A culture change that understands the benefits of working in partnership with others to improve service delivery
- The creation of coherent and comprehensive local planning processes – planning that can be linked to resource allocation and decisions
- Creation of an effective coordination structure.²³

In a study published in November 2004, Ms Sue West, in conjunction with Professor John Wiseman and Ms Santina Bertone from Victoria University's Institute for Community Engagement and Policy Alternatives, brought together some initial observations about Victoria's community strengthening strategy, based on interviews with Community Building Resource Service (CBRS) participants and managers with experience in community building programs. The CBRS was established in September 2003 as part of the Victorian Government's community building initiative and completed in 2006 (see Chapter 3 for further discussion of the CBRS).²⁴

The interviewees identified issues involving partnerships as the greatest barrier to successful community strengthening, with six issues emerging:

- Questions of who is in and who is not in the partnership
- Relationships between partners
- Skills for engaging partners
- Having a shared agenda among partners
- The ability of partners to deliver on local level plans
- The challenge for governments in moving from contract manager to partner.²⁵

The interviewees also identified the following as the main factors contributing to successful partnerships:

- Having consistency of stakeholder participation and personnel
- Having ‘champions’ within each stakeholder group that understands and are committed to community strengthening
- The inclusion of short term ‘wins’, although there were mixed views about this, with some participants believing quick wins were critical to demonstrating success and to achieving ‘buy in’ by communities, while others believed quick wins contributed to cynicism in the community.²⁶

The authors of the report identified three opportunities for enhancing partnerships:

- In relation to communities developing partnerships with government, it would be timely to consider models of partnership which involve the active participation of local people and involve government as partner rather than contract manager. What does it mean for government to be a partner? What would a partnership agreement with government look like? How can partnership agreements build in accountability mechanisms that don’t stifle creativity and innovation? What is the longevity of partnerships? Should partnerships be sustained: when and why?
- In relation to resources and skills necessary for effective partnership, what skills and resources do community leaders need to be able to participate equitably in partnerships? Do other participants, such as public servants, need new skills and capabilities for working in partnership too?
- Potential new partners must be engaged. Two potential partners considered underutilised were existing community service organisations and the private sector.²⁷

Partnerships in Victoria: Victorian Government

Partnerships play a central role as one of the principles advanced in *A Fairer Victoria*, with the document noting the role of partnerships in developing cross sectoral approaches between government and the corporate sector, based on a joint approach to social responsibility.²⁸

The DVC informed the Committee of various programs being advanced, including the following:

- DVC and DSE entered into a partnership with the Shires of Baw Baw, Hepburn, Macedon Ranges, Mitchell, Murrindindi and Moorabool, to deliver six projects to improve Council planning capacity
- Community Learning Partnerships – Department of Education and Training (DET) initiative that seeks to encourage individuals, organisations and communities to learn new skills and pool resources and expertise to try and resolve issues or needs in the local community
- Best Start – a whole-of-government project auspiced by DHS and DET. Based on the UK Government’s program of the same name launched in December 2004,²⁹ the project consists of 14 programs which seek to improve the health, development, learning and wellbeing of young children aged 0-8 years.³⁰ It also aims to support vulnerable and isolated parents of young children, with parent representatives engaged to provide services, along with state and local government and community service providers.
- Partnerships in Practice – this project aims to develop strong partnerships between DHS (in partnership with the MAV), local government, other government agencies, business and the community, in order to make it easier to work with government
- Primary Care Partnership Strategy – launched in April 2002, the Strategy assists the establishment of local partnership proposals for agencies providing primary health care
- Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) – LLENs, established by the Victorian Government in 2001, assist local stakeholders to work collaboratively to improve the education, training and employment outcomes for at-risk 15-19 year olds. During 2004, LLENs facilitated the establishment of 389 partnerships statewide, of which 116 involved the private sector and had an impact on the outcomes of 13,570 young people, of whom 2,674 were from the most at-risk groups, including young parents and homeless youth.³¹

However, on the issue of LLENs, Seddon et al. have questioned whether LLENs are wholly successful, arguing that given their emphasis on community building and initiative brokering, they “face a serious challenge in demonstrating their specific contributions to outcomes for young people.”³² The authors state:

LLEN work entails individualised and opportunistic networking which prioritises personal qualities over systemic organisational processes. Such ways of working are applauded in the name of flexibility and responsiveness but initiatives are fragile unless they get taken up by more established agencies. There is no back up for LLEN work.

If an initiative falls over or if individuals meet an obstacle, the people just move on to new sites. There is a disjuncture between the warm rhetoric of supporting young people and

making a difference and the actual impact of these initiatives which advance targeted and individualised strategies to support learning and address the risk posed by young people who do not fit the usual patterns of education and training.³³

Partnerships in Victoria: local government

The City of Casey's submission recommended partnerships and collective action be further encouraged, stating:

Past experience with partnerships indicates that despite difficulties with competing priorities based on individual agency mandates and difficulties with project management, reporting and branding, pursuing joint ventures with other organisations has had positive benefits for partners in terms of a greater awareness of community needs. Partnership has meant a better coordination of resources and responsibilities to help the community achieve their goals. Partnership certainly offers more flexibility when objectives and outputs are coordinated, although not obtaining funding when more than one party has been involved in project presentation has had a negative impact on some working relationships and partnerships.³⁴

Similarly, the committee heard from Mr Andrew Bennett from the River Valley Church during its hearing in Warburton on 30 May 2005. On the issue of the value of partnerships, Mr Bennett informed the Committee:

We have learnt that partnerships are very powerful tools to avoid duplication. They are resource-efficient and they build stronger sustainable community but we have learned that they take time and effort to achieve ... They take a lot of patience; they take a lot of savvy, and very few workers have the time available to build those partnerships. But those who have been able to build partnerships have noticed a real difference in terms of what we have been able to achieve. Long-term local leadership – perhaps coordination is another word we can use here.³⁵

Some witnesses described difficulties in partnering with councils. For example, Ms Brennan and Ms Burke from the Upper Yarra Community House outlined their concerns to the Committee at a hearing on 27 June 2005. They argued the local council was selective in the groups it assisted, which was having a negative impact on the services the Upper Yarra Community House was able to provide to the local community. Ms Brennan told the Committee:

We believe that the capacity of local government is questionable to accurately identify and interpret local needs, particularly in disadvantaged communities and to consequently develop sustainable and effective partnerships and strategies to meet those needs.³⁶

Ms Brennan told the Committee that while community organisations were able to form partnerships with others, a lack of support from local government provided a serious impediment:

We form our partnerships with the local secondary college, we get funds to deliver these programs. We know how to do it. The brick wall that you hit, in our experience, is local government.³⁷

However, other witnesses experienced the relationship with their local council differently. For instance, Dr Ross Farnell from the Burrinja Community Cultural Centre, told the Committee at Warburton on 30 May 2005, in response to a question from then Committee member Mr Adem Somyurek MLC concerning whether Burrinja was unique:

It is in a fairly unique situation in terms of, I guess, its partnership with local government – with the Shire here – and that support. The fact that it is working across all of the arts so it is housing a major Aboriginal collection but that collection has been gifted to the Shire of Yarra Ranges; we are curating it on their behalf and we exhibit and promote it on their behalf. So there are some fabulous partnerships that have been set up and they are probably fairly unique. The fact too is that we are doing performing arts – workshops, business incubators, running a cafe and a restaurant and running all these other things – and I have not yet come across a model that looks too similar to ours.³⁸

At a public hearing in Greensborough on 5 July 2005, Ms Linda Freake, manager of the YMCA in Nillumbik, speaking on behalf of the Victorian YMCA, reflected on the relationship with the Nillumbik Shire Council, which, she said was very productive. Ms Freake believed this was due to the quality and diversity of the programs on offer:

We have enjoyed a very amicable partnership with the Nillumbik Shire Council to date. We have been in partnership for approximately eight years. I will be so bold as to say that it is probably one of the most amicable local government partnerships that the Victorian YMCA shares.³⁹

Providing a local government perspective, earlier in the hearing the Committee was addressed by Mr Port, manager economic development and major projects at the council, who explained the way the council initiates partnerships with business:

... Council encourages local business development in Nillumbik by working with local business groups and networks to prepare and implement business and marketing plans. We offer information and a range of business seminars and workshops to small business, and we work in partnership with local and regional agencies on strategic and infrastructure projects to support retail tourism and agricultural activities.⁴⁰

Later in his presentation, Mr Port said:

As far as engagement with the community goes, the key points I would like you to take away are that we are trying to build real partnerships rather than just acknowledging the existence of business groups out there. We are trying to work very cooperatively with them. With the Nillumbik Tourism Association, in particular, we have formalised agreements that are clear on the outcomes that are to be achieved and the accountability for those.⁴¹

Australian Government partnerships

A submission from the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), highlighted its Living in Harmony initiative, which was launched in August 1998 and is the Australian Government's anti-racism campaign.⁴² The initiative has three components: community grants, partnerships and a public information strategy. Almost 50 partnerships have been established under the initiative, including:

- Religion, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion in Contemporary Australia – a partnership with the Australian Multicultural Foundation
- Mosaic Fund – a partnership with the Australasian Police Multicultural Advisory Bureau, to promote improved relations between police services and Australia's diverse society
- Families and the Law – the Family Court of Australia 'Working Together With New and Emerging Communities': a project to encourage communities who may be reluctant to engage with Australia's legal institutions to develop a sense of trust in the law and its application.⁴³

According to the department, successful partnerships established under the Living in Harmony program are those which seek to:

- Develop strategic national relationships
- Support inclusive platforms that include, where possible, a range of community, business and government organisations
- Play a catalyst role
- Engage, educate and promote the messages of Living in Harmony.⁴⁴

In addition, the Australian Government has developed the Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships (CBPs). Awards have been won by partnerships between Cisco and the Smith Family and between the Hume Global Learning Centre and *The Age*.

In addition, businesses such as Microsoft Australia have entered into partnership arrangements with the Smith Family, the Inspire Foundation, Workventures, Yarnteen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation and Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association, to provide more than \$40 million over five years to build a network of community technology learning centres (CTLCs) throughout Australia. Currently, approximately 100 CTLCs are in operation.⁴⁵

The Australian Government has also funded the Our Community organisation, in conjunction with the MAV and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, to develop and manage a National Community and Business Partnerships Brokerage Service. The service is designed for community groups and businesses, especially medium sized organisations, which want to form community-business partnerships.⁴⁶

In the area of business assistance, the Australian Government's Small Business Incubator Program (SBIP) provided funding to organisations to assist with the infrastructural and establishment costs of new small business incubators. The program ended on 25 November 2005 and was replaced by the Building Entrepreneurship in Small Business Program (BESB), which provides merit based grants to improve Australia's small business operating skills.⁴⁷

Examples of partnerships

The following selected partnerships are examples brought to the Committee's attention of what constitutes successful partnership arrangements.

Langwarrin Partnership Initiative

The DVC submission informed the Committee of the Langwarrin Partnership Initiative, developed between 2001 and 2004. The Langwarrin partnership involved (informally) BP Australia, Frankston City Council, Frankston Police, Elizabeth Murdoch College, Gateway Shopping Centre and Crime Prevention Victoria. Langwarrin is located in the outer southeast of Melbourne and has experienced twenty years of continuous growth, although there is a lack of public transport, community facilities and services.⁴⁸

The partnership focused on five objectives:

- Increased participation by local young people in programs and local facilities and activities
- Increased educational and local learning opportunities
- Increased local services and entertainment facilities
- Addressing safety concerns
- Pursuing new partnership opportunities.⁴⁹

DVC reported to the Committee on key learnings from an evaluation of the first stage of the partnership, which included:

- The need for collaboration, not confrontation
- Involvement of government representatives
- Building connections between local businesses and the community
- Recognising what business has to contribute to community development
- Involving local schools
- Getting young residents involved in designing solutions.⁵⁰

Darebin Family Violence Working Group

In 2002, the Darebin City Council, in the Melbourne suburb of Preston, initiated a partnership involving groups providing family violence services in Darebin.⁵¹ The Darebin Family Violence Working Group entered into a collaborative arrangement with the following groups and agencies in order to develop strategies to reduce family violence:

- Aboriginal/ Torres Strait Islander community
- Centrelink⁵²
- Darebin City Council
- Darebin Community Health
- Darebin Domestic Violence Network
- Darebin Ethnic Communities Council
- DET and DHS
- A local welfare agency
- Northern Family Violence Prevention Network
- Victoria Police
- Women's refuges.

The Chair of the working group, council officer Ms Monica Merkes, in an article on the partnership, undertook an assessment of the program during November and December 2003 and reported that the work of the group has resulted in people being more informed, with enhanced communication and collaboration, greater clarity about the roles of other professionals, improved referral processes and a decrease in the incidence of recidivist family violence incidents attended by police.⁵³

Merkes commented on the importance of local government taking a lead role and coordinating, facilitating and supporting the process. Merkes argued the partnership was successful as it shares a joint vision, focuses on one issue (family violence), shares resources, has a facilitative approach and its decision-making is based on consensus:

Characteristics of this partnership include open and frequent communication, formal and informal relationships, inclusiveness and multiple layers of participation. It takes time to develop trust and work together well. Consequently, resources were required to develop the partnership as well as the commitment by individuals and organisations to sustain it.⁵⁴

Darebin Community Building Project

DVC's submission described the Darebin Community Building Project (DCBP), which was one of 10 place-based projects developed in 2002 to assist government and communities learn more about the community strengthening process. The Project received \$500,000 in funding over three years.⁵⁵ From consultations, the community identified five key issues:

- Community safety, including safer streets, family violence and improved relationships between the indigenous community and local police
- Limited access to public transport on Sundays and a lack of late night services
- Housing, including the need for improved maintenance and access to affordable housing
- Greater opportunities for young people to participate in community life
- The need for improved community connectedness and support.⁵⁶

The DVC submission noted the DCBP provided significant knowledge about working in partnerships with community agencies and state and local governments. An evaluation in 2004 found:

- Developing cross-sector partnerships is a complex task
- Building relationships and partnerships between stakeholders takes time, skill and commitment
- Local council support, with involvement, assistance and contributions through existing or new council-based services and programs, is instrumental in determining whether partnerships prove successful.⁵⁷

Pelican Pantry Training Cafe

The Pelican Pantry operates as a high quality, affordable cafe business, with a key focus on providing training and employment opportunities for local people. As at July

2006, 17 young people are undertaking various training programs. Pelican Pantry is a community building initiative of the Mornington Peninsula Shire, supported by the Frankston Mornington Peninsula LLEN as well as 18 secondary colleges and 19 local education, employment and training organisations. Trainees may come from a wide range of programs including Vocational Education and Training in Schools, Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning, Work Experience, School Based New Apprenticeships, Community Development Employment Program, Work for the Dole Program or the Community Jobs Program.⁵⁸

Mr Joe Cauchi from the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council promoted the value of the partnership arrangements when he told the Committee:

Pelican Pantry is a commercial cafe linked with the aquatic centre at Hastings. They are some of the ways it was developed: an amazing partnership in the community; 68 different partners linking together welfare, job networks and schools and the Frankston-Mornington Peninsula LLENs. Its attempt was to tackle poor school completion rates. It acknowledged the tourist and hospitality industry on the peninsula. The idea was to provide accredited hands-on training in a real business and to assist young kids and some older people in transition from school to work or from unemployment to work. It provides real, usable skills, develops confidence and provides experience and provides ready-made employees to our peninsula businesses, addressing both the social and economic aspects of the community.⁵⁹

Play On

Play On was developed by the Rotary Club of Hastings, in conjunction with the LLEN. Its aim is to encourage disadvantaged local young people to participate in sports.⁶⁰

Dream Team

A business/community partnership, the 'Dream Team' is an initiative of Telstra Countrywide Mornington Peninsula and the local LLEN and aims to strengthen the capacity of the community to deal with the issue of youth unemployment. It partners local business leaders with schools, as an adjunct to careers education and vocational education and training programs.⁶¹

Western Chances

The Committee heard from Ms Helen Worlidge from Western Chances, an organisation established to assist talented young people in the west of Melbourne who come from a socially disadvantaged background. Ms Worlidge advised the Committee at a hearing in September 2005 that the strength of the organisation was in the development of partnerships with companies, groups and individuals who share the same values as Western Chances. Ms Worlidge also told the Committee:

Our vision is to see Melbourne's west working together as a vibrant and proud community. Our purpose is that Western Chances assists young people in the western suburbs to realise their potential through the provision of scholarships. We create social, cultural and educational opportunities for talented and self-motivated young people where our resources and support make a difference. It is a very positive model. Western Chances partnerships and programs support the development of the west as a community, improving skills, building pride and enhancing employment opportunities. Our scholarships go from primary school to 25 years of age and our overall aim is to bring out the best in the west.⁶²

WellCONNECTED

The WellCONNECTED project was trialled in 2005 as a partnership between the Victorian Government, the Royal Children's Education Institute and Telstra Countrywide. The project sought to examine the benefits of providing laptops at home to improve the educational and social outcomes of young people who experience periods of absence from school due to chronic illness. The Victorian Government has been involved in further discussions with philanthropic and ICT companies to develop options to assist disadvantaged groups in the community to better access technology.⁶³

ANZ Banking Group

On the issue of corporate-sponsored programs, the Committee heard from representatives from the ANZ Banking Group, at a public hearing on 3 April 2006. ANZ's manager of community development, Ms Michelle Commandeur, and the group's manager of public policy, Mr Michael Vasta, outlined the various community programs and partnerships the bank is involved. One example, Saver plus, is a matched savings and financial literacy program aimed at low income families. The program is run in conjunction with charitable organisations Berry Street Victoria, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, the Benevolent Society and the Smith Family.

In addition, ANZ has entered into a partnership arrangement with DVC, who are contributing \$1.35 million towards the program.⁶⁴ Mr Vasta also spoke about various other programs, including the financial literacy program (Money Minded), a money management skills and savings program designed to assist communities to build financial literacy, budgeting and savings skills (Money Business) and a partnership with the Aboriginal Employment Strategy in which Year 11 and 12 students are taken on as ANZ branch trainees in north western NSW (full time during school holidays and part time during the school term), with the ANZ looking to expand the program in the future.⁶⁵

Ms Commandeur also informed the Committee of the way the bank would like to see the partnerships evolve:

...we are aiming for capacity building and sustainability of these programs in the community. What we are looking for every year is to improve the efficiency of the programs, to enable us to reach as many people as we can and to enable the programs to stand on their own after a time, delivered by community organisations, not necessarily in partnership with ANZ but they will stand alone and have a life beyond the partnerships that we have established to bring the programs into being.⁶⁶

Overseas partnership arrangements

While in Vancouver, the Committee heard from Ms Cheeying Ho, Executive Director of SmartGrowth British Columbia. The organisation is involved in a number of collaborative arrangements, including Smart Growth on the Ground (SGOG), which is an initiative with the Design Centre for Sustainability at the University of British Columbia and the Real Estate Institute of British Columbia. The aim of SGOG is for citizens and elected representatives to work together to build more sustainable neighbourhoods.⁶⁷

From the UK, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) provides another example of a successful partnership approach, this time at the central government level. The NCVO's role is to work on behalf of the voluntary and community sector as a lobbying organisation to government, the Charity Commission, the European Union and other bodies.

In London, Committee Members heard from Mr Mark Blake, project manager at The Compact secretariat. The Compact is an agreement (originally signed in November 1998 between the Government and the voluntary and community sector, through the NCVO) with the stated aim of improving the relationship between the two sectors for mutual advantage and enhanced partnership arrangements.⁶⁸

The Compact consists of five Codes of Good Practice and the documents act as a legal agreement, with clear points outlining both government commitments and undertakings by the voluntary and community sector. The five Compact Codes of Good Practice are:

- Funding and Procurement
- Consultation and Policy Appraisal
- Black and Minority Ethnic Groups
- Volunteering
- Community Groups.⁶⁹

Also in London, the Committee met with officials from the Home Office. Mr Charles Woodd, Head of the Implementation Team at the Civil Renewal Unit, described the UK Government's *Together We Can* action plan, which involves collaboration between twelve government departments. The stated objective of *Together We Can* is to encourage citizens and public bodies to work together for a better life. Launched on the 28 June 2005, the plan is divided into four strands:

- Citizens and democracy
- Health and sustainability
- Regeneration and cohesion
- Safety and justice.⁷⁰

Mr Woodd spoke at some length on 'Together We Can', which he believed was also about building capacity to enable people to take advantage of opportunities, which can be separated into two strands:

- The public becoming more engaged
- Civil servants being reorientated to better engage with the public.⁷¹

Following Mr Woodd's presentation, the Committee heard from Mr Atul Patel, Deputy Head of the Cohesion and Faiths Unit at the Home Office. Mr Patel spoke on issues of race relations and faith and described a number of partnerships to improve tolerance and acceptance, in particular a UK-wide 'road show' involving popular and influential Muslim scholars, which aims to send positive messages to younger people.⁷² The program was developed in response to the London Underground attacks of 7 July 2005.

The Committee believes there is considerable scope for the Victorian Government, particularly DVC, to encourage all departments to look for ways of providing services and community programs through genuine partnership arrangements with local communities.

Recommendation 9.1:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government develop and promote guidelines, protocols and tools to assist Government agencies to form partnerships with local government, communities and other stakeholders.

Recommendation 9.2:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government work with local government, the Australian Government, business representatives and community groups to ensure small to medium sized enterprises are encouraged to enter into partnership arrangements of benefit to their local community.

Notes

¹ City of Casey, *Submission number 44*, 19 May, p.36.

² For example, see: Maurrasse, D. (ed.) (2004) *A Future for Everyone: Innovative Social Responsibility and Community Partnerships*, Routledge, New York; Epstein, J. et al. (2002) *School, Family and community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*, Corwin Press, California; Lazar, J. (ed.) (2002) *Managing it – Community Partnerships in the 21st Century*, Idea Group Publishing, Hershey, Pasadena; Geddes, M. (2005) *Making Public Private Partnerships Work: Building Relationships and Understanding Cultures*, Gower, Hants, England; Vaillancourt Rosenau, P. (ed.) (2000) *Public-Private Policy Partnerships*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

³ Public-private partnerships have been described as an increasingly popular supplement to traditional public sector funding models for delivering public infrastructure and related services by sourcing private finance to fund public infrastructure, with capital and project risks transferred to private operators. For discussion, see Hodge, G. (December 2004) 'The risky business of public-private partnerships', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 63(4), pp.37-49.

⁴ See http://mapp.naccho.org/MAPP_Glossary.asp

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Service_learning

⁶ Considine, M. (December 2005) *Partnerships and Collaborative Advantage: Some Reflections on the new forms of Network Governance*, The Centre for Public Policy, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, p.15.

⁷ *ibid.*, p.14.

⁸ Mornington Peninsula Shire Council. *Submission number 53*, 17 May 2005, attachment: Murphy, J. & Cauchi, J. (2004) 'What's Wrong With Community Building – It's Much Worse Than We Thought', paper presented to the Community Development, Human Rights and the Grassroots Conference, 14-18 April 2004, Melbourne, p.20.

⁹ Prof. D. Adams, *Transcript of Evidence*, Melbourne, 3 April 2006, p.912.

¹⁰ Hopkin, L. (2005) 'Competition and cooperation: coordinating services to establish a lifelong learning hub', Swinburne University, paper presented at the State of Australian Cities National Conference, Brisbane, 30 November-2 December 2005, p.6.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.7.

¹² *ibid.*, pp.8-9.

¹³ *ibid.*, p.1.

¹⁴ Melville, R., 'A Marriage of Equals? Trust, Power and Partnerships', presentation to the Department for Victorian Communities Government and Society Seminar Series, 30 August 2005.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

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- ²⁵ West, S. (November 2004) *From Strength To STRENGTH: initial learnings from the development and implementation of the Community Building Resource Service*, Victoria University, Institute for Community Engagement and Policy Alternatives, Discussion Paper No. 2, p.16.
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- ²⁸ Department for Victorian Communities. *Submission number 78*, 18 November 2005, p.64.
- ²⁹ See http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/426/F1/pbr04childcare_480upd050105.pdf
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- ³¹ Department for Victorian Communities, *Submission number 78*, 18 November 2005, pp.67-71.
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- ³³ *ibid.*, pp.44-45.
- ³⁴ City of Casey, *Submission number 44*, 19 May 2005, p.4.
- ³⁵ Mr A. Bennett, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 May 2005, p.303.
- ³⁶ Ms S. Brennan, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 June 2005, p.580.
- ³⁷ *ibid.*, p.585
- ³⁸ Dr R. Farnell, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 May 2005, p.274.
- ³⁹ Ms L. Freake, *Transcript of Evidence*, 5 July 2005, p.670.
- ⁴⁰ Mr A Port, *Transcript of Evidence*, 5 July 2005, p.634.
- ⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.637.
- ⁴² The department is now the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA).
- ⁴³ Australian Government Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, *Submission number 16*, 8 April 2005, pp.7-9.
- ⁴⁴ See <http://www.harmony.gov.au/partnerships/index.htm>
- ⁴⁵ See http://www.smithfamily.com.au/documents/cl_up_WWD_B924F.pdf
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⁵⁷ *ibid.*

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⁵⁹ Mr J. Cauchi, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 May 2005, p.78.

⁶⁰ Frankston Mornington Peninsula Local Learning and Employment Network, *Submission number 6*, 6 April 2005, pp.1-2.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p.2.

⁶² Ms H. Worlidge, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 September 2005, p.703.

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Mr M. Vasta, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 April 2006, p.899.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p.903.

⁶⁶ Ms M. Commandeur, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 April 2006, p.900.

⁶⁷ Parliament of Victoria, Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee (2006) *Overseas Evidence Seeking Trip, October-November 2005*, pp.10-11.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, pp.23-24.

⁶⁹ See <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/compactadvocacy/>

⁷⁰ See <http://civilrenewal.communities.gov.uk/civil/together-we-can/>

⁷¹ Parliament of Victoria, Outer Suburban/Interface Services and Development Committee (2006) *Overseas Evidence Seeking trip, October-November 2005*, p.41.

⁷² *ibid.*, p.42.

CHAPTER 10: COMMUNITY COHESION IN PERI-URBAN AREAS



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The peri-urban seems to be characterised by flux: rapid changes in land-use, built forms, economic activities; mismatches between administrative structures and territory; influxes of new populations; conflicts between new and existing landholders; and visually, somewhere that seems disjunctive, that jars with longstanding preconceptions of the distinctiveness of places, as either fundamentally rural or urban.¹

As suggested in the introductory quote, the urban fringe (or the peri-urban) is a hybrid zone of mixed and rapidly changing land uses. It is increasingly made up of populations with diverse values and expectations. Large urban housing estates, ‘rural residential living’ (large lot residential subdivisions) and small farms intermingle with agriculture, other industry, catchments, rural communities and townships.

Terms of Reference 11 directs the Committee to “investigate the implications of building new outer urban communities on community cohesion in nearby rural communities, particularly during the transition period from rural to urban.”

Evidence submitted to the Committee relating to this Terms of Reference centred mainly on the implications of three broad types of transition in land use: new urban development adjacent to older urban areas, urbanisation in more rural settings and subdivisions for small farms and rural residential living. The social cohesion implications of these changes are discussed in the following chapter and the Committee has made a number of recommendations based on the evidence provided.

However, for several reasons, the Committee considers this is a topic demanding further monitoring and investigation by government. It was clear from the Committee’s discussions with stakeholders that the concerns engendered by rapid urban growth in Interface and peri-urban areas are of vital interest to the communities affected. They also depend on an array of complex and interrelated issues which go to fundamental policy decisions for government about agriculture, urban planning, environmental sustainability and local economic development, to name a few.

The Committee’s investigation of this topic included visits to all Interface councils, the town of Kinglake and the Shire of Baw Baw, plus submissions from interested parties in other councils (such as the Shire of Moorabool) and regional centres. Nevertheless, the Committee believes there is an opportunity for a focused investigation taking a broader geographical scope than permitted by this Inquiry’s Terms of Reference.

Growth in the Interface and nearby councils

In 2002, the Victorian Government introduced an interim urban growth boundary to help manage Melbourne’s outward residential growth. The boundary defines where urban development can and cannot occur and seeks to protect Melbourne’s open spaces, farming, conservation and recreation areas. In December 2005, the Government released *A Plan for Melbourne’s Growth Areas*, which included changes to the urban growth boundary to release more land for future housing and employment growth for at least the next 25 years. Five growth areas are identified: Casey-Cardinia, Hume, Melton-Caroline Springs, Whittlesea and Wyndham.

Table 10.1 gives ABS statistics showing estimated annual population growth rates at June 2005 for Interface (marked 'I') and nearby LGAs.

Table 10.1: Population growth

LGA	2004-05 % change in resident population	State rank – fastest growth
Wyndham (I)	7.3	1
Melton (I)	6.9	2
Cardinia (I)	4.9	4
Golden Plains	3.7	6
Bass Coast	3.4	8
Mitchell	3.3	9
Hume (I)	2.8	11
Moorabool	2.4	12
Macedon Ranges	2.3	13
Baw Baw	2.1	14
Murrindindi	1.4	24
Greater Geelong	1.3	27
Nillumbik (I)	0.9	33
Yarra Ranges (I)	0.3	34
Mornington Peninsula (I)	0.8	35

Source: ABS, Regional Population Growth 2004-05, Cat. 3218.0. Note: (I) = Interface

Table 10.1 shows that some LGAs outside the metropolitan area have witnessed relatively high growth rates, with increasing pressure on rural land and townships.² A number of witnesses described this as a 'leapfrogging' of urban development into rural settings.³ For instance, at a public hearing in Kinglake (in the southern part of the Shire of Murrindindi), the Committee was addressed by Mr Chad Griffiths, who commented on growth in Kinglake and surrounding areas:

The other thing that I think we have seen recently and not just within the Kinglake area but within all similar areas across that next ring of outer Melbourne – the Mitchells, the Macedons and the like – is a leapfrogging of development – that is, leapfrogging the Interface councils and move into the next ring out. We have seen that through the Mitchell shire being the fastest growing rural shire, I think, in Victoria in 2003; it has seen just massive amounts of growth. We have seen that here in Kinglake as well.⁴

The effects of growth

Comments to the Committee from Mr Stephen Chapple of Baw Baw Shire Council, outline the challenge for government and communities in these growing peri-urban areas:

We obviously need to have appropriate development to become a prosperous community; we need investment; we need jobs; we need those sorts of things and at the same time, we also want to try to preserve the very reason that people come here.⁵

On the one hand, population growth can introduce new ideas and skills, stimulate economic activity and employment, increase the viability and vitality of local schools, regional services and community organisations, and allow more effective use of community infrastructure.⁶

However, several Inquiry participants also noted that the ‘leapfrogging’ of development into rural councils typically brought with it environmental and infrastructure challenges, including the provision of water, sewerage services, loss of biodiversity and increased traffic volumes, particularly if development is scattered and poorly planned. Scattered development patterns also require more roads and increase the cost of delivering police and fire protection.

The subdivision of rural farming land for urban development or rural residential living is a vexed issue among the farming sector. In some cases, farmers are faced with declining incomes and little interest from their children to continue farming. This creates incentives to take advantage of high land prices by selling or subdividing their landholdings for new developments. They then either move to another farm further away from urban growth or simply sell up and retire.

The City of Casey’s submission pointed to a number of implications caused by this process. The increase in land values can drive up rateable values (and therefore rates), lowering the return on investment earned by farmers. This then becomes a barrier to entry for new farmers, especially young people seeking to stay in the area or move back from the city. One newspaper report suggests farmers wanting to expand their holdings are “out-bid on the property market by tree-changers, cashed up with equity in expensive Melbourne homes.”⁷ In addition, investment in necessary land maintenance can be deferred by owners in anticipation of receiving high prices or a future re-zoning of the land.

Higher land and house prices in urban fringe and nearby areas can also lead socio-economic polarisation or to low-income earners finding themselves priced out of the local property market. At a public hearing in Kinglake, Ms Anne Leadbeater from the Kinglake Action Network and Development Organisation (KANDO), described to the Committee the changing social context observed in the Kinglake area:

In the past, Kinglake had a history of attracting families who were in some type of life change – they had either had a

divorce, they were separated so they were moving to Kinglake for cheaper housing or perhaps they were coming up here to start their families. Historically, we had a high representation of families, who were influx, as it were, and individuals. We had a higher-than-average sole parent and blended family population. I think that might still be represented in our demographic. In recent times, there has been a change in the make-up of the community and a number of factors have contributed to that. One has been just the general rise in land prices and house prices and the advent of the police station.

A number of cultural factors has changed perhaps the feel of the community to some extent. Families are moving from all over. We have families settling up here from Berwick and Coburg and all sorts of places, particularly in the new subdivisions occurring in this township.⁸

Tree change/sea change

The difficulty of managing rapid growth in rural or environmentally sensitive areas is not merely a Victorian concern but rather one confronting many local governments on the coast and on the fringes of large cities around Australia. The National Sea Change Taskforce was established in 2004 by CEOs of 27 councils seeking to address the challenge of rapid growth in coastal areas. The Taskforce now has more than 60 participating councils, including the Victorian municipalities of Bass Coast, Colac Otway, East Gippsland, Glenelg, Greater Geelong, Moyne, South Gippsland, Surf Coast and Wellington.

According to the Taskforce, the sea change movement to the coast is expected to continue for the next 10 to 15 years, driven in part by the retirement of the 'baby boomer' generation, the rapid increase in house prices in capital cities and a desire by many to seek a better lifestyle away from the cities.⁹

A major January 2006 Taskforce report discussed the implications of sea change across the themes of governance, economy and tourism, infrastructure, environment and community wellbeing.¹⁰ A range of recommendations and best practice strategies for each of these were noted. While all are of interest, of particular relevance here is the discussion of the key social and community planning challenges in high growth coastal and amenity areas.

The report notes that maintaining a sense of community and social wellbeing during a time of significant population change is one the key challenges associated with the sea change phenomenon. Even slight population increases can have a much greater impact on population size and characteristics than in a metropolitan setting. Communities report losing a sense of community or connection to social networks, as the new residents take time to settle in and participate in social life. This is exacerbated by the high proportion of new residents who ultimately find they are

unable to establish meaningful social (or economic) connections and thus move on – research from the Gold Coast found the proportion of those who return to their original destination or move to a new one could be as high as 30 percent.¹¹ Similarly, high turnover contributing to a loss of community cohesion has been documented in CSIRO research with residents in the Augusta-Margaret River region of Western Australia.¹²

In addition, the Taskforce report argues that the disruption felt by existing residents is increased and their values threatened when new residential, tourism and commercial developments are of a scale and appearance radically out of step with local vernacular design. The report also notes the risk of socio-economic polarisation between wealthier newcomers from the city, longer standing residents and lower income earners.¹³

Social/cultural conflicts

The loss of a sense of place is one of the most serious threats to rural areas.¹⁴ A sense of place can be found in the distinctive features of an area's physical landscape, population characteristics, economy, arts and cultural heritage. It can also be based upon the relationships and networks between people who live and work in that community. The sense of belonging to place is an essential part of building and holding communities together.¹⁵

Fringe development can affect the sense of place by making a community's boundaries increasingly harder to define. Newcomers are likely to have different ideas and expectations for the way a community should evolve and long-time residents often experience this as destabilising to their own ideas of place and community.

Academic Ms Daniela Stehlik, Director of the ALCOA Centre for Stronger Communities based at Curtin University in Perth, has written on community and change in urban fringe and rural areas. Stehlik notes the risk of new residents with unrealistic expectations altering the lifestyle attributes which drew them to the area in the first place. Reflecting on peri-urban developments, Stehlik writes:

Recent experience from Centre research shows that people are seeking 'place', yet by arriving and demanding the services they once enjoyed in the city, they are in danger of changing the very thing that they sought. Smaller rural environments with stable populations are perhaps not equipped to deal with rapid increases in new residents. A tension between the 'old timers' and the 'newcomers' is often one result. 'Why do they come here?' is asked, 'why don't they go back where they came from?' As a result, place quickly becomes a site of struggle for power.¹⁶

According to several submissions, incoming populations often anticipate access to metropolitan levels of services and amenity.¹⁷ When these expectations are not fulfilled, the result can be frustration with local councils and, for the councils themselves, a difficult juggling act of managing increasing demands for services and diverse priorities in the community.

Baw Baw Shire, to the east of the city, is experiencing rapid growth as Melburnians look beyond the green belt surrounding the city for alternative places to live. For example, the towns of Drouin and Warragul are growing at four to five percent per year.¹⁸ The council notes a proportion of people coming to the area are ‘tree changers’, the inland version of the sea change phenomenon. At a public hearing in October 2005, Mr Stephen Chapple, Director of Community Development Services at the Shire, discussed his view of the changing expectations within communities in the area and the challenges for local government:

I have found in my experience of two years that our rural communities are very self-sufficient. They are not asking for a lot. They are looking for some advocacy and planning support and some limited resources but they are very resilient. They like to do things themselves without too much intervention or too much support but where we can offer support, we do. In our larger towns, for example, Drouin and Warragul particularly, the profile is changing. There are more non-local people moving into town and they have a different set of expectations than maybe what the former people used to have maybe even as recently as five or 10 years ago.

You can say unequivocally that those expectations are rising. Certainly they are coming from communities in Melbourne – maybe the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne – where they have been able to be in receipt of a whole range of services and they come here and expect that that similar level of access to services will be provided. It is fair enough to say that our council is probably grappling with that very issue, particularly with some of our infrastructure, which is ageing significantly. It is going to cost a lot of money long term for our community to not just repair or upgrade those facilities but probably to replace them. We have a whole series of different expectations from across the community, which is a constant juggling act.¹⁹

Macedon Ranges Shire Council, to the north-west of the city, is somewhat similar in having experienced rapid development in recent years. The Council’s submission described how unrealistic expectations of rural living among city dwellers sometimes led to difficulties:

Many who ‘immigrate’ into the Shire from metropolitan areas do so with the expectation that similar facilities and services are available to this Shire. Few research what is available and

so are often disappointed and sometimes angry when their expectations are not met.²⁰

The submission noted new residents often report feeling isolated due to the reduced access to facilities, services and transport. Many also experience financial stress from increased transport costs incurred in accessing social services, education or employment. The higher costs of heating and telephone bills (with STD calls) are also rarely anticipated by new residents. As a result, many feel disengaged from community life and some choose to move back to Melbourne.²¹

From the perspective of long-standing residents, the desire of newcomers to replicate aspects of urban living carries concerns about environmental impacts, such as a loss of bushland to urban development and the conservation of plants and animals. This is particularly germane when the natural environment is important for tourism and provides the distinctive identity of the area. The President of the Macedon Ranges Residents Association, Ms Christine Pruneau, informed the Committee how her community experienced a loss of local identity and belonging as the population increased and brought with it new sets of values in conflict with existing ways of life. Ms Pruneau stated:

What do people in non-urban areas value? People often live away from capital cities and suburbs because they want to live differently. The things that are important to these people include personal space, privacy, feeling safe, belonging, a sense of place and ownership, being known, being valued, being part of community decisions, a rural or more relaxed ambience, rural surrounds, heritage and environmental features. These values touch something deep inside. People travel hours every day or put up with fewer services because they feel the benefits of where they live well outweigh any dis-benefits.²²

Ms Pruneau also informed the Committee:

People want to live in Macedon Ranges because they want the rural lifestyle. They know they like it but bring with them metropolitan values. They do not understand what makes that lifestyle tick or what the existing community values. If too many new people come too quickly, their values begin to dominate and erode the very things they come here for. Instead of the place changing people, people begin to change the place. Most developers, and often councils, are seen to not care. Duplicating suburban values is easier and cheaper than respecting and preserving rural ones.²³

Volunteering and community cohesion

Volunteering is often taken as a proxy ‘measure’ of social cohesion or social capital (see Chapter 5 of this report for further discussion on volunteering). The effects of rapid population growth on volunteering and volunteer-run organisations is therefore of interest in attempting to understand impacts on social cohesion.

While the literature on this is limited, the Committee observed signs of a ‘spillover effect’ on volunteering from rapid population growth in some locations. On the one hand, a growing community puts greater strain on the services of voluntary organisations: in submissions to the Inquiry, the CFA and the SES, among others, were particularly aware of how Melbourne’s growth affected their workload.²⁴ On the other hand, one might expect the increased workload to be at least partially counterbalanced by a wider pool of potential volunteer labour from which community organisations might draw.

However, rapid population growth may in fact have a dampening effect on volunteering (or at least, some types of volunteering). Community groups in Interface and nearby rural areas may find it harder to both recruit *and* retain volunteers as their community expands. This problem was illustrated in the comments of one volunteer to the Committee:

I want to tell you a little story about a volunteer who has passed on now ... He told me that he was very involved in Narre Warren. His name was Pat Sweeney and the Sweeney Reserve at Narre Warren is from his family. He said that when there was a population of 30 in Narre Warren it was quite easy to get 20 or 30 people at a function, at a hall committee meeting or a grounds committee meeting. But he said, ‘since our population has increased to about 5,000, we haven’t had a quorum at one of those meetings for the last five years.’ This is probably starting to happen in our area.²⁵

Similar observations are made in recent research on volunteering in rural fire brigades on the fringes of capital cities and large regional centres. Brigades in these areas report decreases in membership coinciding with dramatic increases in community size. The reasons why this might occur are not clear cut. The research speculates that previously close-knit rural communities experience “a sense of social dislocation caused by the sudden influx of new residents.”²⁶ Individuals in small rural communities typically have a strong sense of responsibility and obligation – the feeling is ‘if I don’t do it, no-one else will’ – and the emergence of a larger population may diffuse this. Alternatively, another explanation may be simply that existing volunteers ‘burnout’ under the weight of increased demand for their volunteer labour.

Urban developments adjacent to agricultural land

As noted above, urban fringe areas are frequently locations of rapid change and fluctuating, difficult conflicts about land use. One aspect of this is found in the siting of urban development next to agricultural areas, which can have adverse effects for both urban dwellers and farming businesses.

The submission from the City of Casey pointed to a number of concerns arising from new developments in rural areas which are likely to impact on community cohesion, including:

- Increased vandalism to farm properties
- Noise pollution
- Odours associated with farming activities
- Irrigation and water pumps
- Dust
- Chemical pest-control sprays causing allergic reactions.²⁷

This issue was also raised in discussions with Mr Neil O'Connor from Dennis Family Homes, a major land developer in Victoria. Responding to a question from the Chair, Mr Don Nardella MP, Mr O'Connor stated:

The biggest issue, I suppose, is one of rubbish creation, kids going into the land and people dumping rubbish. It is that sort of vandalism-type work that is the biggest issue. There are issues about ploughing and other agricultural issues — the effect of dust and so forth on residents.²⁸

Other factors identified in submissions include dogs from nearby urban and residential zones becoming a menace to livestock (in some districts, this problem has made grazing uneconomical), and the risk of weeds increasing as residents bring in exotic plants for their gardens.²⁹

According to the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF), as subdivision development pushes into traditional farming land, impacts associated with normal farming practices (smells from livestock and fertilisers, noise from frost fans, lights, weed and vermin control) become the subject of a range of regulations due to neighbour complaints.³⁰ This can limit the adoption of new farming technology and hamper farmers' ability to operate commercially. According to the VFF, councils need to provide more assistance to farmers operating in this context:

As Interface councils become increasingly urbanised, and given the inherent conflicts between farming and residential living, it seems to become more difficult for councils to provide genuine support for agriculture. Agriculture tends to suffer with increasing levels of regulation on practices and higher levels of rating, which do not reflect the returns from the industry, particularly in broadacre areas.³¹

These issues are not confined to agricultural industries. Peri-urban areas are also home to extractive industry operations supplying materials for roads, bridges and buildings. As transport costs are a major component of the cost of using this resource, a large number of sand and stone quarries are located in or near urban areas around Melbourne. Quarries can be dusty, noisy and involve heavy vehicle traffic, all of which impact on neighbouring residents.³²

Poultry production (including free-range egg and chicken meat ‘broiler’ farms) is another example of an industry traditionally located close to customer markets in the urban fringe areas but now often in the path of urban expansion and the increasing demand for rural residential living. Land use conflict involving poultry farms was examined in a report published by the Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation in 2001.³³ The report found economic pressures are forcing farms to become larger in order to stay in business. It also noted that Australian poultry industries have undergone rapid intensification since the 1960s which, while leading to improved productivity and lower consumer prices, may negatively impact on neighbouring property owners and the environment. Poultry farmers in areas bordering Perth and Sydney (the locations studied in the report) perceive increasing levels of conflict with encroaching urban areas and rural residential development. Tougher conditions have been placed on approvals to develop farms, such as night time curfews and larger shed setbacks from property boundaries. Relocation of farms further into the rural fringe is also sometimes fiercely resisted by local communities in those areas.

According to the report, the use of buffer zones around farms to distance them from urban communities was partly supported, although this reduces the ability of existing enterprises to remain competitive by increasing their size and, as on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria, it is likely that some enterprises will become unviable.³⁴

The report makes several suggestions to reduce the potential for land use conflict, including:

- Farmers providing full and accurate information on environmental impact statements, where these are required for expanding operations
- Proactive action by farmers to solve environmental problems which may impact on nearby residents
- Dealing openly with neighbours, perhaps by conducting a farm tour to explain attempts to limit externalities and notifying them of significant events, such as the removal of birds and litter
- Industry associations assisting farmers to establish closer links with local communities, perhaps by promoting the economic importance of the industry to the local community and using door sales or other promotions to ensure people associate local farms with local produce
- Local governments need to provide and enforce clear conditions on farm construction approvals, including the need for vegetative barriers, landscaping and signs indicating the presence of a farm and associated externalities

- Where residential development is proposed near poultry farms, local government should consider the potential for land use conflict, informing potential buyers by placing notifications on property titles, carefully positioning open space requirements and assessing the design and siting of new dwellings and surrounding landscaping.³⁵

The Committee was informed that the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has a number of initiatives to manage land use conflict issues, ranging from information on rural living for new entrants to more comprehensive advice on land management. An example is the *Living Together in Rural Victoria* program. Developed in partnership with other departments and the MAV, activities conducted under this initiative include:

- Amendments to section 32 of the *Sale of Land Act 1962* so vendor statements warn a property may be located in an area where commercial agricultural activities may affect enjoyment of the property
- Information kits (available online) to help people understand what to expect when they move to the country and to make more informed pre-purchase decisions
- Establishing the Rural Dispute Settlement Centre (in the Department of Justice) to mediate disputes between neighbours in rural and regional Victoria, particularly disputes arising from the effects of farming, land use planning and other rural land management issues.³⁶

The Committee was also informed of DPI's Environmental Management Systems (EMSs), developed for meat, dairy, grains, viticultural and horticultural industries. According to the Victorian Government submission, EMSs are proving to be an effective tool to help manage land use in regions characterised by increasingly diverse populations, by providing assurances that appropriate land management practices are adopted.³⁷

The Committee was also made aware of a landmark two year study (due for completion in December 2006) on changes in agricultural and lifestyle land uses, rural water use and land management in the peri-urban areas of Melbourne and Brisbane. The study – *Change & continuity in peri-urban Australia* – is funded by Land and Water Australia (an Australian Government agency) and conducted by researchers at RMIT and Griffith universities.³⁸

Hobby farms/rural blocks

Almost 16.6 million hectares of Australian land is managed by 'sub-commercial farmers', who typically derive the majority of their income from non-farming activities. These small and lifestyle-oriented landowners manage a significant quantity of relatively high value and potentially highly productive land.³⁹

The increasing numbers of people buying small farms or living on rural blocks creates a range of issues for all levels of government, not least in the provision of services and infrastructure across a wider area. A submission from Hume City Council stated:

There is a need to recognise the number of people that choose the ‘tree change’ lifestyle seeking larger allotments and rural settings. This has a direct impact on the delivery of services to such spread out townships and residential properties.⁴⁰

Of concern to the farming sector is some new residents and absentee landholders may not be aware of their responsibilities. For example, a failure to appropriately control weeds or attend to the welfare of animals can impact on the productivity of neighbouring farming operations. Inappropriate chemical use may create public health concerns. These issues could put at risk the ‘clean and green’ image of Victoria’s primary producers and their ability to access international markets.⁴¹ Further, there is considerable potential for farm accidents to occur with residents who are inexperienced in using machinery and chemicals and handling livestock.⁴²

Research in this area highlights the difficulties for many small landowners in accessing land management advice. Off-farm commitments mean they often have limited time to become involved in traditional agricultural extension programs.⁴³ There is also a great diversity of landholders (and interests) in this group. One survey of local government officers in peri-urban locations asked them to describe the small landholders they work with. Responses included: “absentee professionals, trail bike riders, professionals with family connections to the land, hobby vineyards, subsistence farming, greenies, Landcare enthusiasts and buyers of cheap land and a young single mum.”⁴⁴

The Committee is aware of a large number of tailored programs around Australia aimed at assisting small farmers and owners of lifestyle blocks to manage their land in a safe and environmentally responsible manner. One example is ‘Heavenly Hectares’ – a Western Australian program targeting the 40,000 hobby farmers in the south-west of the state. Heavenly Hectares has run since 1992 and provides free field days, workshops and low-cost one day property management courses. The program is seen as successful because it has focused on the immediate needs of (largely novice) small landholders, such as pastures, stock keeping, weed, pest and disease management, fire safety and water conservation.⁴⁵

New and established communities

New urban communities, whether sited within the growth corridor or beyond it in more rural areas, have the potential to create social divides and resentment within the surrounding community if the process is not well managed. Issues of equitable treatment in terms of funding for new infrastructure and services are frequently raised by residents in more established communities. Another concern for existing residents

is urban developments which seek to isolate themselves by locating at a distance to a town centre or by walls or gates.

A submission from Acheron Valley Watch Inc., a community organisation in the Shire of Murrindindi (north east of Melbourne), informed the Committee of its views on the social impacts of large-scale residential developments in rural areas:

They are very often walled, creating a sense of exclusivity with an infrastructure presented in the form of a resort rather than a community and driven by profit rather than social need. Their location is not chosen next to existing communities but rather isolated, outside the boundaries of existing townships, requiring the use of motorized vehicles to access even basic needs. In reverse, the outside community rarely accesses these artificial environments and there is a lack of cohesion into the surrounding social landscape.⁴⁶

Mr Don Welsh, then CEO of Cardinia Shire Council, put the view to the Committee at a public hearing in June 2005, that developers create divisions and competitiveness in the community by marketing estates in a certain way and encouraging new residents to view themselves as separate from the surrounding area. Mr Welsh noted:

In our growth corridor, council has a number of new estates being built. We have six major projects at the moment but within 18 months there will be 19 major estates within our growth corridor. A barrier that we see to community building and community engagement is the approach taken by the developers. They market their estates only. They do not market the community in which they are developing their estate. They do not market the principles of the council's structure plan that their estate is simply an element of. They encourage the new residents to align themselves with that estate and consequently, a sense of competitiveness between them and their neighbours. We see that as a major barrier in people first settling in to a community as to their sense of place.⁴⁷

The Pakenham (Cardinia)-based Big House Communities organisation has researched the views of residents in the area and supports the council's perception of a divide opening up between the existing suburban/township areas and the new estates. The report describes the sense of resentment which longer term residents feel as the new estates begin to develop with new infrastructure and facilities:

There is a danger that an "us and them" mentality will develop within the community. This is manifesting itself predominantly between members of the old township community and the residents of the new estates. Due to a lack of integration between the housing estates and the existing

centre of the community, there is the possibility that the estates, particularly Lakeside, will become ghettos separated from the broader Pakenham community. There is also a divide around issues pertaining to the perceived attention given to the new estates by the shire council and that given to established areas of Pakenham. The evidence drawn upon for this is the money spent on the cultural centre, the shifting of sporting and community facilities to Lakeside and the public arts project about to be started at Lakeside versus the dowdy appearance of the Main Street shopping precinct ... As Pakenham and surrounding Cardinia Shire grows rapidly, a key question for the council in many areas of its work is: how do you divide resources effectively between the need to develop the new whilst rejuvenating the old? It becomes a question of equity.⁴⁸

A submission from Delfin Lend Lease Corporation, a land and estate developer, also raised the issue of equity between the new and older communities, albeit from a different perspective. According to the submission, the existing community has the weight of numbers to “hold funding in the more established area” and the new community is often disadvantaged through a lag in the provision of services commensurate to its growth. “This results in an imbalance between the locations where revenue is collected and spent – usually to the detriment of the developing community.”⁴⁹

At a public hearing in Cardinia, Mr Andre Van Eymeren, from Big House Communities, expanded on the social effects of rapid development in the Casey-Cardinia growth corridor, noting particularly the difficulties of engaging with a new population which is often commuting outside the area:

With massive growth, 80 families a week moving into the Casey-Cardinia growth corridor – the majority of them now are coming into Cardinia – the community rift has never been more apparent. With the broader Pakenham community, particularly coming from the township, there is a mentality of the 'us' and 'them'. It is almost like it is polarising. That is what the feel is on the ground: that there is an existing Pakenham community that has been here forever and a day and there are new communities forming around the edges. It is really a hand in the head type of thing. How do we connect? How do we integrate? For some, there is the desire not to do that. For many who are coming from the housing estates, a lot of their life is focused back up the highway; 60 per cent leave the shire every day to go to work. That means that often spending is up the highway, family relationships are up the highway. How do people integrate and have a sense of belonging that this is home for them? We know that sociologically, it is very important to be able to say, ‘I have a home. I have a root. I have a place,’

and we are finding that the kids are missing out on that type of experience, as well as others.⁵⁰

The Committee is aware most housing developments are marketed to some extent on their exclusivity or distinctiveness and this is reinforced through physical barriers or other constructs (walls, landscaping, entrance markers, signage) which create a perception (at least) that the estate is separate from its surroundings. ‘Gated communities’ go further and prevent access to the site by non-residents. Some authors see cause for concern in such developments. In a paper submitted to the Inquiry, Professor Brendan Gleeson from the Urban Research Program at Queensland’s Griffith University, argued that to create civic-minded and outward-looking communities there is a need for the protection of the public realm in all new developments:

Urban development premised on the exclusive use of private or communal realms will produce delinquent communities: unbalanced or exclusionary entities that cannot assume a constructive place in their wider social context and which are unlikely to nurture the civic values that are the substrate of liberal democratic society.⁵¹

Gleeson goes on to discuss the potential danger of building enclave-like urban developments in Interface areas:

If the urban community dissolves into a balkanized landscape of inward looking communities, urban leaders will find it very difficult to manage the cities that are constituted by such changes. Heightened communal insularity and fiscal opting out at the local scale are likely to make the task of sound urban management very difficult.⁵²

Genuinely gated communities remain relatively uncommon in Victoria.⁵³ The Committee’s previous report related comments from local governments, developers and other stakeholders who all took a generally unfavourable attitude towards gated communities. It further noted that the evidence for lower crime rates, improved safety and an enhanced sense of community within gated communities is somewhat doubtful.⁵⁴ Research into pedestrian behaviour of residents in gated communities has also found that a lack of permeability in the estate – entrances and exits, bike paths and footpaths – can mean long car journeys for residents seeking to undertake simple tasks and effectively ‘wipe out’ all movement by foot.⁵⁵

The Committee further heard that some local governments negotiate with developers to commit substantial investment into existing/nearby towns and infrastructure as the new communities grow, thereby easing some of the strain on services and (potentially) the resentment felt by existing residents. Melton Shire Council informed the Committee of the example of Eynesbury, a new community being built eight kilometres south of the township of Melton. While acknowledging that Eynesbury will mainly attract second, third or fourth homebuyers and will have a sense of

‘exclusivity’ by virtue of its isolation and pricing, the council noted the developer will also contribute to infrastructure within the existing Melton township:

We have also negotiated with the developer for a monetary contribution towards regional infrastructure in the township. With a threshold of 3,000 households you would never achieve regional infrastructure such as a youth facility, aged care facilities or a library. They would never get access to those types of facilities, so obviously they will be using the facilities in the Melton township. We have successfully negotiated a monetary contribution from the developer to give to council to put money into building those regional infrastructure facilities in town ... The other thing that we have also negotiated is to get some money towards improving the local road network connecting Eynesbury to the Melton township.

They are the sorts of regional infrastructure items we will be spending the development contribution on – things like improving our civic centre, building a youth facility, the Waves recreation facility, the Melton library, the High Street redevelopment because it is so important and a performing arts centre. That is what we consider to be regional infrastructure from a municipal level. Over the course of the development, council will receive around \$1,000 per allotment, so it will equate to about \$3 million towards regional infrastructure.⁵⁶

There was also agreement among several stakeholders, that the ability of local governments and developers to achieve the best outcomes for the local community was enhanced where developments were of a large scale and developers made a long-term commitment. The City of Casey submission put the view that larger-scale developments offer the opportunity for developers to partner with local government for a longer-term approach to community development and community cohesion. The submission noted this opportunity will soon be lost when only smaller parcels of land are left for development.⁵⁷

In his paper, Professor Gleeson also argued for the need to move away from “the ad hoc incrementalism” that has marked Australian urban development for decades, in order to build stronger and more cohesive communities:

To achieve the economies and the physical capacity needed to support social balance, we need to consider moving to larger not smaller releases of new land for urban development. Constant – not to say, chronic – ‘spot and slice’ development at the fringe would give way to staged developments of new towns, with an emphasis on employment self-containment and autonomous provision and management of urban services.⁵⁸

The Committee received further evidence on this point from Mr Don Welsh (then CEO of Cardinia Shire Council), who stated:

Of course, developers generally operate in about a five-year period. That is what we have found in Cardinia. There may be other municipalities where the estates are larger, but you will find that Cardinia itself generally has estates in the order of 500 to 1,000 lots. That is because of the richness of the soil and the fact that we do not have a lot of large titles. Therefore, our developers are short-to medium-term operators versus some other municipalities where you might see a developer present for 13 to 20 years. That means that they do not have a long-term commitment to the community.⁵⁹

Mr Welsh went on to state:

One of the ways that council has tried to address the issue of the focus of new developers is that we have required the developers of estates that are of 500 lots or greater, to prepare community development plans to answer those questions as to what schools people will go to, how they will have an opportunity to engage in recreational activities and so forth. That is an initiative taken by council over the last 12 months.⁶⁰

Rebuilding community cohesion

The Committee notes the view expressed by several Inquiry participants, including some local governments themselves, that peri-urban local governments do not always have the resources and/or expertise to deal appropriately with the complex or large-scale urban development projects increasingly being put in front of them. As a result, the Committee was informed that levels of public involvement in the decisions made can be inadequate.⁶¹ Individuals can be unsure of how to become involved in the process, as a witness at a public hearing stated:

Although there are provisions for communities to give their opinions when there is any development, a lot of people do not understand the process and do not know how to come forward, so a lot of planning was done and we did not seize the opportunity to be heard.⁶²

The Committee finds the task of managing the social implications of transition from rural to urban requires a greater commitment to dialogue and collaboration with communities in the planning of how areas are to develop. The move by local governments towards the development of community plans is an important element in this. The Committee also considers that ‘individualised’ and targeted assistance from a community development worker can be valuable to assist communities in peri-urban areas manage the effects of urban growth. At a public meeting in Warragul, the

Committee was informed of funding provided through DVC for a community development officer to work with the growing community of Trafalgar (in the Shire of Baw Baw). Trafalgar expects to grow by around 600 houses in the next two years. The DVC-funded officer is assisting the Trafalgar Community Development Association to implement a strategic plan developed for the town.⁶³

However, there needs to be ongoing efforts to ensure local residents are given the opportunity to be involved in genuine consultation, discussion and decision-making about the physical development and design of new urban communities. Ideally, developers should move towards the type of attitude foreshadowed in the following quote (reported in the *Australian Financial Review* of 6-8 January 2006) by a representative of development company Pacific Urban:

... if the developer buys, say 200 hectares on the urban fringe of a city, I think in future he's going to turn up at the first council meeting with just a blank sheet of paper and look and listen and interview councillors and owners, and then go to the community and find out what they want before he even puts pen to paper. I think that's the way forward because if the development industry doesn't do that on the way forward, our projects are just going to be held up for years and years in the system ... I think the community wants to become more involved.⁶⁴

Urban planning and design frameworks need to specifically protect the unique attributes of place by, for example, undertaking studies of 'sacred places' to identify areas of specific importance to residents and establishing a 'design review board' to facilitate community and expert input into decisions about new developments. It is also desirable for developers to ensure the permeability of estates to nearby residents and to blend the edges of developments as much as possible with the character of the surrounding area, while trying to retain identifiers for a sense of place in the new community.

The Committee further considers the Victorian Government's new Growth Area Authority (GAA) could have a valuable role in monitoring the effect of land release and urban growth on social cohesion in rural communities within or adjacent to the growth corridors. As established in Victoria's *Planning and Environment (Growth Areas Authority) Act 2006*, the objectives of the GAA are:

- (a) to ensure that development in growth areas occurs in a coordinated and timely manner
- (b) to ensure that infrastructure, services and facilities are provided in growth areas in a coordinated and timely manner
- (c) to promote sustainable development of land in growth areas
- (d) to promote housing diversity and affordability in growth areas

- (e) to promote employment opportunities in growth areas
- (f) to ensure that land is provided for commercial and industrial purposes in growth areas in a coordinated and timely manner
- (g) to foster the development of communities in growth areas.

Recommendation 10.1:

The Committee recommends local governments in peri-urban and rural areas apply a triple bottom line assessment process to large-scale urban developments, with specific regard to the likely impact on community cohesion in the local area. In doing so, local government and developers should seek to provide greater opportunity for public input in the siting and design of new communities.

Recommendation 10.2:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government ensure resources are provided to assist all peri-urban and rural local governments experiencing rapid growth to undertake enhanced community engagement around the development and planning of new urban communities.

Recommendation 10.3:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government establish a role, in conjunction with relevant peri-urban local governments, for the Growth Area Authority to monitor and report on the impact of urban growth on community cohesion in nearby peri-urban and rural areas.

More generally, the Committee finds local governments experiencing rapid population growth in both Interface and nearby rural areas need to prioritise building social connections and community cohesion. Strategic planning should have a focus on integrating new residents within the larger identity of the existing community. It

should also seek to identify, monitor and manage the impact of change on existing communities, particularly on those population groups most likely to be adversely affected.

State government agencies should also look for opportunities to deliver support to rapidly growing areas in ways which build cohesion. Jackson and McDonald suggest that major social infrastructure investment in peri-urban areas, such as a new or expanded school, should be thought of as a vehicle for community strengthening. Long-established families can work with incoming people to build something belonging to them all. If done sensitively and in partnership with local governments and their communities, such state-level interventions “could turn a potentially difficult socially transformative process into one of community building and strengthening.”⁶⁵

The Committee also believes local governments in the ‘tree change’ areas surrounding Melbourne could benefit from learning exchanges with sea change municipalities in Victoria (such as Surf Coast Shire) and around Australia (such as the municipalities of Augusta-Margaret River, Caloundra and Byron Bay).

Several strategies to build social cohesion in areas experiencing rapid growth are suggested in the report of the Sea Change Taskforce, including:

- Undertaking research to understand the needs of new residents and their settlement experiences and to monitor their assimilation with the wider community. Research to monitor the effects on the social trust of longer term residents may also be required
- Information packages and programs to help new residents settle into the community, such as a welcoming committee or ‘community welcome worker’. (The Committee notes this latter role is used successfully by developer Stockland at its Pine Rivers development north of Brisbane)
- Bringing existing residents together by holding community events such as clean up days or gardening competitions within or in close proximity to newly developed areas
- Recruiting new and older residents in volunteer activities – such as environmental groups, residential committees and business advisory/mentoring services
- Strengthening Indigenous community wellbeing by formally committing to recognise a broad understanding of Indigenous heritage; celebrate ceremonies and events; involve Aboriginal people in civic events; and assist and promote employment opportunities for Aboriginal people
- Where possible, ensuring physical strategies link new developments with existing urban areas – by encouraging appropriate infill development; designing and locating infrastructure to service existing and new populations; encouraging permeability of new settlements and discouraging enclosure (such as gated housing estates); and prioritising pedestrian, cycle and public transport access between new and existing urban areas.⁶⁶

A 2003 paper by Plowman et al. entitled *Innovation in Rural Queensland: Why some towns thrive while others languish*, examined the factors driving the more innovative rural towns. According to this research, innovative, optimistic and thriving towns are typically more welcoming of new arrivals. It recommends communities and local governments should encourage any action that makes newcomers feel needed and welcome:

In Australia in the 1950s, communities were invited to set up 'Good Citizen Councils' to welcome and support immigrants. The same concept might be explored with respect to treatment of new arrivals in rural communities. People that are made to feel welcome and included are more willing to invest and to invest earlier.⁶⁷

In this regard, the Macedon Ranges Shire submission informed the Committee of the Lancefield Together Project which developed kits for distribution to new residents containing information on local services and issues. However, as the submission notes, even more important than the content of the kits was that they provided a reason for established residents to visit new residents and foster a personal connection to create a sense of welcoming.⁶⁸

The Committee also heard that sporting clubs in the high growth Interface areas and nearby rural areas can be beneficial in creating social interactions and networks. Establishing sporting facilities early in the construction of a new community provides an opportunity for external linkages to occur. For example, Mr Walsh told the Committee:

One of the important things for us in terms of community engagement and involvement is that we see sport-based networking as critical. That provides cohesion between the rural clubs and the growth corridor ... What we have seen is a breakdown of that sporting network and, in the case of a number of sports, the growth corridor towns have been separated from the smaller rural townships. It is important to provide recreational facilities early, so that as you build a new community, you have the underlying facilities to create the club that interacts with the outlying areas. That is very important.⁶⁹

Additionally, farmers' markets in expanding Interface areas serve a number of useful purposes.⁷⁰ Research shows that as well as providing an economic boost for farmers (annual sales from farmers' markets around Australia are estimated at \$40 million),⁷¹ they provide a wider economic benefit as more money is spent in the local community, providing a multiplier effect. Money stays locally as it is spent on wages for local people or in buying local produce.⁷² In a number of countries, there is growing interest in the re-emergence of localised food systems that feature short supply chains (local procurement and sale) and place-specific foods. This trend is seen as a strategy for helping farmers and regions capture value by reducing the

number of intermediaries through which food passes between producer and consumer – in other words, short food chains as a catalyst for local economic growth.⁷³

Farmers' markets in the Interface areas are also important in bringing rural and newer populations together, helping urban residents to be more aware (and ideally more supportive) of local agricultural issues and encouraging a sense of place that is more grounded in the wider area. Farmers' markets also provide a venue for local fundraising and promotion of community organisations, such as the CFA, Scouts and sporting clubs.

The Australian Farmers' Market Association has described the economic, social and health benefits of farmers' markets as:

- Support of sustainable agricultural practices
- Food and nutrition education
- Promotion of fresh produce consumption
- Revitalisation of town and public space
- Regeneration of community spirit
- Rural/urban linkages
- Facilitation of community-based food security programs.⁷⁴

The successful Cardinia Ranges Farmers' Market is held monthly at the Pakenham racecourse and provides a chance for the rural community and newer communities in the growth corridor to meet and interact.⁷⁵

Recommendation 10.4:

The Committee recommends the Victorian Government consider providing assistance, such as guidelines and small grants, to encourage the establishment of farmers' markets in the Interface areas.

Notes

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⁵ Mr S. Chapple, *Transcript of Evidence*, 14 October 2005, p.847.

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⁸ Ms A. Leadbeater, *Transcript of Evidence*, 12 October 2005, p.758.

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²⁰ Macedon Ranges Shire Council, *Submission number 52*, 16 May 2005, p.8.

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²² Ms C. Pruneau, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 September 2005, p.745.

²³ *ibid.*, p.746.

²⁴ CFA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 June 2005; Ms D Warren, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 June 2005.

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- ³⁰ Edwards, P. (2006) 'Tree change hits stressed city folk', *The Age*, 30 April 2006, Domain, pp.4-5.
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APPENDIX A LIST OF SUBMISSIONS

No.	Date of Submission	Name	Affiliation
1	07.02.2005	Mr Ron Brons	<i>Citizen</i>
2	09.02.2005	Mr George Wright	<i>Citizen</i>
3	23.03.2005	Mr Nick Pastalatzis	<i>Citizen</i>
4	31.03.2005	Mr Tony Ball	<i>Manager-Family Youth Social Development & Housing, Shire of Melton</i>
5	06.04.2005	Ms Shanti Wong	<i>Executive Officer, Brimbank Melton Local Learning & Employment Network</i>
6	06.04.2005	Ms Pat O'Connell	<i>Executive Officer, Frankston Mornington Peninsula Local Learning & Employment Network</i>
7	06.04.2005	Mr Tom Greenwood	<i>Research & Development Consultant, Australian Red Cross</i>
8	07.04.2005	Mr Peter Farrell	<i>Victorian Development Manager, Dennis Family Corporation</i>
9	07.04.2005	Mr Brian Beveridge	<i>Chief Executive Officer, Djerriwarrh Employment & Education Services</i>
10	08.04.2005	Ms Jean Melzer OAM	<i>President, U3A Network - Victoria Inc</i>
11	08.04.2005	Ms Sandra de Wolf	<i>Chief Executive Officer, Berry Street Victoria</i>
12	08.04.2005	Mr Tony Nicholson	<i>Executive Director, Brotherhood of St. Laurence</i>
13	08.04.2005	Mr Larry Stillman	<i>Research Fellow, Monash University – Centre for Community Networking Research</i>
14	08.04.2005	Dr John Toumbourou	<i>Associate Professor, Department of Paediatrics University of Melbourne – Centre for Adolescent Health</i>
15	08.04.2005	Ms Georgia Cheal	<i>Volunteer Alliance Co-ordinator, Volunteer Alliance</i>

No.	Date of Submission	Name	Affiliation
16	08.04.2005	Dr Thu Nguyen-Hoan PSM	<i>Assistant Secretary Multicultural Affairs Branch, Department of Immigration & Multicultural & Indigenous Affairs</i>
17	08.04.2005	Ms Colleen Thom	<i>Programme Manager - Volunteer Services, RBS.RVIB.VAF Ltd</i>
18	08.04.2005	Mr Craig Marshall	<i>Ballarat City Council</i>
19	08.04.2005	Ms Georgie Ferrari	<i>Executive Officer, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria Inc.</i>
20	08.04.2005	Ms Stephanie Lagos	<i>Chief Executive Officer, Northern Migrant Resource Centre</i>
21	11.04.2005	Mr Neil Bibby AFSM	<i>Chief Executive Officer, Country Fire Authority</i>
22	13.04.2005	Mr John Nicol	<i>Chairman, Committee for Werribee Inc</i>
23	18.04.2005	Professor Brendan Gleeson	<i>Professor of Urban Management & Policy, Director-Urban Research Program, Griffith University</i>
24	20.04.2005	Mr Alston Park OAM	<i>Chief Commissioner, Scouts Australia–Victorian Branch</i>
25	20.04.2005	Ms Margaret Rutherford	<i>Executive Officer, Migrant Resource Centre North-West Region Inc</i>
26	21.04.2005	Mr Martin Butterworth	<i>Managing Director, Space Syntax</i>
27	29.04.2005	Ms Rita Seethaler	<i>Chair Person, Acheron Valley Watch Inc</i>
28	29.04.2005	Mr Andrew Rowe	<i>Chief Executive, Victorian Local Governance Association</i>
29	29.04.2005	Mr Richard Strates	<i>Planning & Development Manager, Mitchell Shire Council</i>
30	29.04.2005	Cr David Hodgett	<i>Mayor, Shire of Yarra Ranges</i>

No.	Date of Submission	Name	Affiliation
31	02.05.2005	Mr Don Sharples	<i>Interface Councils Secretariat, Interface Councils</i>
32	02.05.2005	Mr Don Sharples	<i>Regional Cities Victoria Secretariat, Regional Cities Victoria</i>
33	02.05.2005	Professor John Catford	<i>Dean Faculty of Health & Behavioural Sciences, Deakin University</i>
34	02.05.2005	Mr Bruce Watson	<i>Executive Officer, Brimbank Melton Primary Care Partnership</i>
35	02.05.2005	Mr Bryce Moore	<i>General Manager – Victoria, Lend Lease Communities</i>
36	02.05.2005	Mr Douglas Walter	<i>Citizen</i>
37	03.05.2005	Ms Michelle Green	<i>Chief Executive Officer, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria</i>
38	03.05.2005	Ms Melissa Affentoulis	<i>Chief Executive Officer, Women's Health West</i>
39	03.05.2005	Mr Paul Weller	<i>President, Victorian Farmers Federation</i>
40	03.05.2005	Professor John Wiseman	<i>Acting Director – ICEPA, Victoria University</i>
41	03.05.2005	Mr Bernd Bartl	<i>Disability Support and Housing Alliance</i>
42	05.05.2005	Ms Janet Wood	<i>Chairperson, Ministerial Advisory Council of Senior Victorians</i>
43	06.05.2005	Ms Jacinta Cashen	<i>President, Victorian Council of School Organisations</i>
44	10.05.2005	Mr Halvard Dalheim	<i>Manager Strategic Development, Casey City Council</i>
45	10.05.2005	Ms Amanda Worthington	<i>Co-ordinator Rye Beach Community Centre</i>
46	10.05.2005	Mr Joe Cauchi	<i>Director of Sustainable Communities, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council</i>

No.	Date of Submission	Name	Affiliation
47	10.05.2005	Mr Toby Baxter	<i>Co-ordinator, Mornington Baptist Church Community Caring Inc.</i>
48	10.05.2005	Ms Sue Hendy	<i>Executive Director Council on the Ageing (Victoria) Inc.</i>
49	11.05.2005	Ms Mary Robb	<i>North East Networker North East Neighbourhood House Network Inc.</i>
50	13.05.2005	Mr Bruce Free	<i>Corporate Affairs Manager Tas, Telstra Country Wide</i>
51	13.05.2005	Ms Sue Cook	<i>President, Templestowe Pony Club</i>
52	16.05.2005	Ms Anne McLennan	<i>Director, Community Services Macedon Ranges Shire Council</i>
53	17.05.2005	Dr John Murphy Mr Joe Cauchi	<i>Mornington Peninsula Community Connections</i>
54	18.05.2005	Dr Helen Szoke	<i>Chief Conciliator/Chief Executive Officer, Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria</i>
55	24.05.2005	Ms Merial Clark	<i>Executive Officer, Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres</i>
56	27.05.2005	Mr Darrell Treloar	<i>Chief Executive Officer, Hume City Council</i>
57	31.05.2005	Mr Bernie Cronin	<i>Director Wyndham Services, Wyndham City Council</i>
58	06.06.2005	Mr Ian Berner-Smith	<i>Project Co-ordinator Men's Shed for Cranbourne</i>
59	07.06.2005	Mr Bernie Millane	<i>Co-Chair, Reconciliation Victoria</i>
60	09.06.2005	Mr Ron Topp	<i>President, Pakenham University of the Third Age Inc.</i>
61	9 June 2005	Mr Don Welsh	<i>Chief Executive Officer, Cardinia Shire Council</i>
62	9 June 2005	Ms Maureen Bond	<i>Secretary, Healesville Environment Watch Inc.</i>

No.	Date of Submission	Name	Affiliation
63	18 July 2005	Ms Jeanette McRae	<i>Chairperson, Community 3777</i>
64	12.10.2005	Mr Edward Gill	<i>Principal, Middle Kinglake Primary School</i>
65	12.10.2005	Ms Lynn King	<i>President, Kinglake Ranges Tennis Club</i>
66	12.10.2005	Cr Lynette Gunter	<i>Resident of Flowerdale</i>
67	12.10.2005	Mr Roger Cook	<i>Resident of Kinglake West</i>
68	12.10.2005	Mrs Suzanne Hyde Ms Cheryl Phillips	<i>Friends of Bollygum Park Inc.</i>
69	12.10.2005	Ms Gail Atkins	<i>Manager, Kinglake Ranges Neighbourhood House Inc.</i>
70	12.10.2005	Sergeant Jon Ellks	<i>Kinglake Police Station</i>
71	12.10.2005	Ms Mulan Sinclair	<i>Job Search Trainer</i>
72	12.10.2005	Ms Joanne Miller	<i>Principal, Kinglake Primary School</i>
73	12.10.2005	Mr Lindsay Brownell	<i>Vice-President Kinglake Action Network & Development Organisation</i>
74	12.10.2005	Ms Barbara Grove	<i>Class Teacher, Toolangi Primary School</i>
75	12.10.2005	Ms Vicki Ruhr	<i>Secretary, Kinglake Action Network & Development Organisation</i>
76	12.10.2005	Ms Anne Leadbeater	<i>Co-ordinator, Kinglake Child Care Centre</i>
77	16.11.2005	Mr David Munro	<i>Manager, Good Shepherd, Mornington Peninsula Family Violence Collaborative Service System Group</i>
78	18.11.2005	Mr John Thwaites MP	<i>Minister for Victorian Communities Department for Victorian Communities</i>

APPENDIX B LIST OF WITNESSES

No.	Date	Witness Name	Position
	02.05.05	Public Hearing	Melbourne
1		Mr A. Rowe	Chief Executive, Victorian Local Governance Association
2		Ms C. Murrell	Policy Advisor, Victorian Local Governance Association
3		Ms J. Rose	Policy Officer, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria
4		Ms G. Ferrari	Chief Executive Officer, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria
5		Dr J. Stanley	Research & Policy Project Officer, Brotherhood of St. Laurence
6		Ms. C. Eadie	Social Policy Student, Brotherhood of St. Laurence
7		Mr L. Stillman	Research Fellow, Centre for Community Networking Research, Monash University
8		Prof. D. Schauder	Chair, Centre for Community Networking Research, Monash University
	09.05.05	Public Hearing	Melbourne
9		Ms J. Cashen	President, Victorian Council of School Organisations
10		Ms K. O'Reilly	Chief Executive Officer, Volunteer Alliance, Ashburton Support Services
11		Ms G. Cheal	Acting Co-ordinator, Volunteer Alliance, Ashburton Support Services
12		Cr A. McCamish	Mayor, City of Greater Shepparton, Regional Cities Victoria
13		Mr D. Wapling	Community Services Officer, City of Greater Shepparton
14		Mr D. Sharples	Secretary, Regional Cities Victoria
15		Ms S. Lagos	Chief Executive Officer, Northern Migrant Resource Centre
	10.05.05	Public Forum	Hosted by: Mornington Peninsula Shire Council
16		Mr J. Cauchi	Director of Sustainable Communities, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council
17		Dr J. Murphy	Community Connections, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council
18		Mr T. Baxter	Mornington Peninsula Baptist Church Community Caring Inc
19		Ms P. O'Connell	Executive Officer, Frankston-Mornington Peninsula LLEN
20		Ms T. Trueman	Manager, Sorrento Community Centre

No.	Date	Witness Name	Position
	10.05.05	Public Forum	Hosted by: Mornington Peninsula Shire Council cont'd.
21		Ms J. Galloway	Acting Chief Executive Officer, Peninsula Community Legal Centre
22		Ms A. Florance	Volunteer & Education Manager, Peninsula Community Legal Centre
23		Ms A. Worthington	Co-ordinator, Rye Beach Community Centre
24		Ms L. Clancy	Rye Beach Community Centre
25		Ms M.E. Williams	Wongabeena Association
26		Ms D.P. Johnstone	Wongabeena Association
27		Ms J. Clarke	Resident, Mornington Peninsula
	16.05.05	Public Forum	Hosted by: Moorabool Shire Council
28		Mr R. Dobrzynski	Chief Executive Officer, Moorabool Shire Council
29		Cr. M. Tudball	Councillor, Moorabool Shire Council
30		Mr N. O'Connor	General Manager, Development, Dennis Family Corporation
31		Ms F. Brewster	Group Manager, Community & Support Services, Australian Red Cross, Victoria
32		Mr T. Greenwood	Research & Development Consultant, Australian Red Cross, Victoria
33		Dr G. Woolcock	Boilerhouse Community Service and Research Centre, University of Queensland
	23.05.05	Public Hearing	Melbourne
34		Mr M. DeSanta-Ana	Manager, Program Development, Research & Evaluation, Berry Street Victoria
35		Ms D. Ford	Manager, Hume Community Programs, Berry Street Victoria
36		Professor J. Catford	Dean, Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences, Deakin University
37		Ms J. Palermo	Research Fellow, Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences, Deakin University
38		Mr A. Park OAM	Chief Commissioner, Scouts Australia – Victoria Branch
39		Mr A. Walsh	Project Commissioner, Scouts Australia – Victoria Branch
40		Mr B. Bartl	Disability Support and Housing Alliance
41		Ms R. West	Disability Support and Housing Alliance
	30.05.05	Public Forum	Hosted by: Shire of Yarra Ranges
42		Cr D. Hodgett	Mayor, Shire of Yarra Ranges
43		Ms A. Cran	Director, Social and Economic Development, Shire of Yarra Ranges

No.	Date	Witness Name	Position
	30.05.05	Public Forum	Hosted by: Shire of Yarra Ranges cont'd.
44		Mr C. Dupé	Manager, Economic, Cultural and Community Development, Shire of Yarra Ranges
45		Mr M. Doubleday	Manager, Social, Recreation and Youth Development, Shire of Yarra Ranges
46		Mr S. Holloway	Manager, Sustainable Communities, Shire of Yarra Ranges
47		Ms J. Simmons	Chief Executive Officer, Morrison House
48		Dr. R. Farnell	Executive Officer, Burrinja Community Cultural Centre
49		Mr M. Fidler	Executive Officer, Youth Services, Shire of Yarra Ranges
50		Mr M. Connell	Comedian and Member, Young Leaders Program, Shire of Yarra Ranges
51		Ms M. Gebbing	Youth Trainee and Member, Young Leaders Program, Shire of Yarra Ranges
52		Ms T. Anderson	Member, Paying Attention to Self Program, Shire of Yarra Ranges
53		Ms J. Alley	Member, Paying Attention to Self Program, Shire of Yarra Ranges
54		Ms D. Ellis	Midwife, Upper Yarra Community House and Facilitator, Shire of Yarra Ranges, Core of Life Program
55		Ms R. Woods	Executive Officer, Township Development, Shire of Yarra Ranges
56		Mr R. Manson	Past President, Lilydale Chamber of Commerce, Alumni, Vista Leadership Program
57		Mr A. Bennett	Pastor, Rivervalley Church
58		Ms A. Monichon	Community Facilitator, Yarra Ranges Best Start Program
	01.06.05	Briefing	Hosted by: Wyndham City Council
59		Cr C. Manson	Wyndham City Council
60		Mr I. Robins	Chief Executive Officer, Wyndham City Council
61		Mr B. Berry	Manager, Social Development, Wyndham City Council
62		Mr N. Arnold	Chair, Quantin Binnah Community Centre
63		Mr P.J. Maynard	Chair, Iramoo Community Centre
64		Mr B. Fox	Western Region Environment Centre
65		Mr H. Van Moorst	Western Region Environment Centre
66		Ms L. McLean	Wyndham Action Planners

No.	Witness Name	Position
01.06.05	Briefing	Hosted by: Wyndham City Council cont'd.
67	Mr K. McDonald	President, Board of Directors, Wyndham Lodge Community Aged Care
68	Mrs B. Arch	Director, Wyndham Lodge Community Aged Care
69	Mr T. O'Bryan	ISIS Primary Care Health Service
70	Mr T. Mohan	Youth Task Force
71	Mr C. Becker	Youth Planning Officer, Wyndham City Council
72	Mr B. Harvey	Wyndham Industrial Liaison and Development Committee
08.06.05	Public Forum	Hosted by: Melton Shire Council
73	Cr S. Ramsey	Mayor, Melton Shire Council
74	Mr A. Ball	Manager, Family, Youth Social Development and Housing, Melton Shire Council
75	Ms E. Healey	General Manager, Community Services, Melton Shire Council
76	Ms P. Newton	Manager, Aged and Disability Services, Melton Shire Council
77	Mr L. Shannon	General Manager, Planning and Development, Melton Shire Council
78	Ms S. Becker	Manager, Planning, Melton Shire Council
79	Prof. R. Adams	Head of Campus, Victoria University Melton Campus
80	Dr K. White	Senior Project Officer, Institute for Community Engagement and Policy Alternatives, Victoria University
81	Ms S. Wong	Executive Officer, Brimbank-Melton Local Learning and Employment Network
82	Ms J. Gregurke	Director Primary Care Services, Brimbank-Melton Primary Care Partnerships
83	Mr B. Watson	Brimbank-Melton Primary Care Partnerships
84	Ms D. Morris	Manager, Combined Churches Caring Melton
85	Mr L. de Man	Area Manager, Country Fire Authority
86	Mr J. Deering	Operations Manager, Country Fire Authority
87	Mr J. Fox	Manager, Community Safety, Country Fire Authority
88	Ms D. Warren	Deputy Controller Operations, State Emergency Service

No.	Date	Witness Name	Position
09.06.05 Public Forum Hosted by: Cardinia Shire Council			
89		Mr D.S. Welsh	Chief Executive Officer, Cardinia Shire Council
90		Ms J.L. Brown	Cardinia Cluster of Neighbourhood Houses
91		Mr A. Van Eymeren	Big House Communities
92		Mr R.G. Porter	Officer Recreation Reserve
93		Mr T. Fitzgerald	Chief Executive Officer, Outlook Inc.
94		Ms G. Avar	President, Emerald Evergreens Senior Citizens Club
95		Mr R.H. Topp	President, U3A Network Pakenham
96		Ms C. Hampton	President, Upper Beaconsfield Kindergarten
97		Ms M. Aveling	Manager, Cardinia Family Day Care
98		Ms J. Mathieson	Director, Cardinia Combined Churches Caring
99		Ms L. Squires	Secretary, Pakenham Rotary Club
100		Mr H. Robbins	Group Manager, YMCA
20.06.05 Briefing Hosted by: Hume City Council			
101		Cr K. Sheahan	Mayor, Hume City Council
102		Mr D. Treloar	Chief Executive Officer, Hume City Council
103		Mr F. Dixon	Executive Director, Hume City Council
104		Ms N. Mahony	Director, City Communities, Hume City Council
105		Mr M. Sullivan	Chief Executive Officer, Dianella Community Health
106		Ms E. Buckley	Manager, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Craigieburn
107		Mr C. McDonnell	Chief Executive Officer, Orana Family Services
108		Mr P. Conrick	Chief Executive Officer, Broadmeadows Uniting Care
23.06.05 Public Forum Hosted by: Whittlesea City Council			
109		Cr S. Alessi	Mayor, Whittlesea City Council
110		Mr D. Turnbull	Director, Planning and Development, Whittlesea City Council
111		Ms R. Spielman	Director, Community Services, Whittlesea City Council
112		Cr C. Hayes	Whittlesea City Council
113		Mr J. Rawlings	Manager, Sustainable Planning, Whittlesea City Council
114		Mr J. Ahmet	Manager, Whittlesea Community Connections

No.	Date	Witness Name	Position
23.06.05 Public Forum			Hosted by: Whittlesea City Council cont'd.
115		Ms N. Staub	Executive Director, Link Community Transport
116		Mr M. Bosch	Acting Manager, Anglicare Plenty Valley
117		Ms S. Avramopoulos	Senior Manager, Youth and Family Services, Kildonan Child and Family Services
118		Ms S. Lagos	Chief Executive Officer, Northern Migrant Resource Centre
119		Ms S. Tsopanas	Manager, Neami Whittlesea
120		Mr J. Cassar	Neami Whittlesea
121		Ms M. Robb	Networker, North East Neighbourhood House Network
122		Mr M. Lee	Manager, Plenty Valley Community Health Service
123		Mr M. Post	Manager, Plenty Valley Community Health Service
124		Mr H. Bryce	Executive Administration, Northern Hospital
27.06.05 Public Hearing			Melbourne
125		Mr B. Beveridge	Chief Executive Officer, Djerriwarrh Employment and Education Services
126		Mr M. Butterworth	Managing Director, Space Syntax
127		Mr B. Moore	General Manager, Lend Lease Communities, Victoria
128		Ms S. Brennan	Chief Executive Officer, Upper Yarra Community House
129		Ms M. Burke	Manager, Upper Yarra Community House
30.06.05 Public Hearing			Melbourne
130		Mr J. Hurley	Acting President, Pony Club Association Victoria
131		Mr A. Clarke	President, ARPA Over 50s Association Ltd
132		Mr N. Daynes	ARPA Over 50s Association Ltd
133		Ms N. Brown	Director, Community Safety, Country Fire Authority, Sub 21
134		Mr G. Spring	Strategic Planning and Area Coordination, Country Fire Authority, Sub 21
135		Dr. J. Toumbourou	Associate Professor, Centre for Adolescent Health, University of Melbourne
05.07.05 Public Forum			Hosted by: Nillumbik Shire Council
136		Cr G. Johnson	Mayor, Nillumbik Shire Council

No.	Date	Witness Name	Position
	05.07.05	Public Forum	Hosted by: Nillumbik Shire Council cont'd
137		Mr B. Forrest	Chief Executive Officer, Nillumbik Shire Council
138		Ms M. Abbey	Acting Group Manager, Environment and Planning Services, Nillumbik Shire Council
139		Mr A. Port	Manager Economic Development and Major Projects, Nillumbik Shire Council
140		Cr W. Penrose	Nillumbik Shire Council
141		Mr A. Cully	Manager Social and Cultural Development, Nillumbik Shire Council
142		Ms F. Shepherd	Nillumbik Community Think Tank
143		Mr J. Huf	Nillumbik Landcare Network
144		Ms M. Abbey	Acting Group Manager, Environment and Planning Services, Nillumbik Shire Council
145		Ms K. Hawkins	Volunteer, Christmas Hills Country Fire Authority
146		Ms L. Freake	Manager, YMCA Nillumbik
147		Ms C. Mackenzie	Chief Executive Officer, Yarra Plenty Regional Library
148		Mr J. Besley	Chairperson, Living & Learning Nillumbik
149		Ms J. Baker	Coordinator, Living & Learning Nillumbik
150		Ms A. Murphy	Chief Executive Officer, Nillumbik Community Health Service
	12.09.05	Public Hearing	Melbourne
151		Mr I. Berner-Smith	Project Coordinator, Men's Shed for Cranbourne
152		Ms H. Worlidge	Executive Officer, Western Chances
153		Ms K. Jolly	Director of Physical Activity, VicHealth
	30.09.05	Public Hearing	Melbourne
154		Mr J. Nathan	Founder, Can-Survive
155		Mr R. Straw	Executive Director, Multimedia Victoria
156		Ms N. O'Loughlin	Director, Industry and Community Development, Multimedia Victoria
157		Mr M. Dummett	Manager Broadband Policy, Multimedia Victoria
158		Mr P.K. Dorling	Executive Director, Committee for Geelong
159		Ms C. Pruneau	Secretary, Macedon Ranges Residents Association

No.	Date	Witness Name	Position
30.09.05 Public Hearing Melbourne cont'd.			
160		Ms L. Whitefield	Committee Member, Macedon Ranges Residents Association
12.10..05 Public Forum Hosted by: Kinglake Action Network Development Organisation			
161		Mrs B. Wheeler	Resident Kinglake
162		Mrs A. Leadbeater	Resident, Kinglake
163		Mrs S. Hyde	Resident, Kinglake
164		Mr E. Gill	Middle Kinglake Primary School
165		Ms K. Cherry	Middle Kinglake Primary School
166		Mr C. French	Resident, Kinglake
167		Mrs N. Styles	Resident, Kinglake
168		Ms T. Hardidge	Resident, Kinglake
169		Mr D. Taylor	Resident, Kinglake
170		Ms L. Bentley	Hospital in the Home Program, Austin Hospital
171		Mrs S. Sibernaler	Hospital in the Home Program, Austin Hospital
172		Mrs V. Ruhr	Secretary, Kingslake Action Network Development Organisation
173		Mr R. Buchanan	Resident, Kinglake
174		Ms M. French	Kinglake Basketball
175		Mr S. Wood	Outdoor Adventure Camp, Kinglake
176		Mrs L. King	President, Kinglake Ranges Tennis Club
177		Mr S. Szetey	Resident, Kinglake
178		Mr P. Szepe	Kinross Farm, Kinglake West
179		Mrs J. Beales	Resident, Kinglake
180		Cr L. Gunter	Resident, Flowerdale
181		Ms C. Phillips	Kingslake Ranges Neighbourhood House
182		Mr C. Morris	Post graduate student RMIT
183		Mr R. Cook	President, Kinglake Landcare Group
184		Mr C. Griffiths	Resident, Kinglake
185		Mrs R. Guerin	President, Kingslake Action Network Development Organisation
14.10.05 Public Forum Hosted by: Baw Baw Shire Council			
186		Mr S. Chapple	Director, Community Development Services, Baw Baw Shire Council
187		Ms J. Ayre	Manager Business, Events, Culture & Tourism, Baw Baw Shire Council
188		Ms K. Irwin	Sport and Recreation Manager, Baw Baw Shire Council
189		Ms L. Smith	Community Development Officer, Baw Baw Shire Council

No.	Date	Witness Name	Position
14.10..05 Public Forum			Hosted by: Baw Baw Shire Council cont'd.
190		Ms K. Warren	Artist
191		Ms F. Beckley	Trafalgar Community Development Association
192		Mr J. Ernst	Community Development Officer Baw Baw Shire Council
193		Ms H. Losic-Smith	Hill End Community Study Group
194		Mr I. McLean	Hill End Community Study Group
195		Mrs B. Harding	Hill End Community Study Group
196		Mr M. Cockerell	Chief Executive Officer Gippsland Field Days
197		Mr A. Rizzetti	Co-owner-Operator Durante Restaurant
28.10.05 Study Tour			Los Angeles, United States of America
198		Mr G. Nelson	General Manager, Department of Neighbourhood Empowerment, City of Los Angeles
31.10.05 Study Tour			Vancouver, Canada
199		Cr E. Woodsworth	Deputy Mayor, City of Vancouver (Oct 2005)
200		Ms W. Au	Manager, Special Projects, Office of the City Manager, City of Vancouver
1.11.05 Study Tour			Vancouver, Canada
201		Prof. R. Matthews & Research Group	Professor of Sociology, Departments of Anthropology and Sociology, University of British Columbia
202		Dr B. Milne	Land Claims Negotiator, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
203		Dr N. Young	Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Ottawa
204		Mr J. Page	Doctoral Student in Sociology, The University of British Columbia.
205		Dr D. Pavlich	Vice President, External & Legal Affairs, University of British Columbia
206		Ms C. Ho	Executive Director, SmartGrowth British Columbia
3.11.05 Study Tour			New York, United States of America
207		Dr M.A. Khan	Chief, Socio-Economic Governance & Management Branch Division for Public Administration & Development Management, Department of Economic & Social Affairs (UN-DESA), United Nations

No.	Date	Witness Name	Position
	3.11.05	Study Tour	New York, United States of America
208		Dr A. Tikhomirov	Chief, Transition Economies Unit, Socio-economic Governance & Management Branch, Division for Public Administration & Development Management, Department of Economic & Social Affairs (UN-DESA), United Nations
209		Mr B. Huber	Chief, Generational Issues & Integration Section, Division for Social Policy & Integration, Department of Economic & Social Affairs (UN-DESA), United Nations
210		Mr T. Schindlmayr	Associate Social Affairs Officer, Division for Social Policy & Development, Department of Economic & Social Affairs (UN-DESA), United Nations
211		Dr K. Wekwete	Director, Local Development, Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), United Nations
	4.11.05	Study Tour	New York, United States of America
212		Mr P.H. Kostmeyer	President, Citizens for New York City
213		Ms D. Boatright	Assistant Commissioner, Executive Department, Division of Housing & Community Renewal, New York State
	7.11.05	Study Tour	London, United Kingdom
214		Mr M. Blake	Project Manager, The Compact Secretariat, National Council for Voluntary Organisations
215		Mr J. Hugh	Compact Advocacy Officer, The Compact Secretariat, National Council for Voluntary Organisations
216		Mr O. Awoyungbo	Compact Advocacy Administrator, The Compact Secretariat, National Council for Voluntary Organisations
217		Mr C. Spence	Chief Executive, Volunteering England
218		Dr J. Davis-Smith	Deputy Chief Executive, Volunteering England
219		Ms B. Pearson	Director of Neighbourhood Renewal & Community Team, Government Office for London (GOL)
220		Mr M. Desborough	Head of Neighbourhood Renewal & Community Participation, GOL
221		Ms L. Greensill	Head of Voluntary & Community Sector Team, GOL
222		Ms L. Hargreaves	Thames Gateway Division, GOL

No.	Date	Witness Name	Position
	7.11.05	Study Tour	London, United Kingdom cont'd.
223		Mr T. Levitt MP	Chair, Community Development Foundation
224		Ms A. Seabrooke	Acting Chief Executive, Community Development Foundation
225		Mr G. Chanan	Research Manager, Community Development Foundation
	8.11.05	Study Tour	London, United Kingdom
226		Mr T. Wilson	Manager, Economy and Labour Market Division, Department for Works and Pensions
227		Ms A. Stephens	Analyst, Economy and Labour Market Division, Department for Works and Pensions
228		Ms L. Cooper	Analyst, Economy and Labour Market Division, Department for Works and Pensions
229		Mr K. Harris	Consultant, Local Level
230		Mr D. Wilcox	Consultant, Partnerships Online
231		Ms B. Carter	Community Development Consultant, Partners in Change
232		Mr B. Lee	Consultant, Shared Intelligence
233		Mr D. Buckingham	Agent General for Victoria, Government of Victoria, Australia
234		Lord R. Best OBE	Director, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
235		Mr D. Utting	Associate Director of Public Affairs, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
236		Mr A. Barnett	Director of Policy Development and Communications, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
237		Mr J. Low	Neighbourhood Programme Coordinator, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
238		Prof. R. Edwards	Director, Families & Social Capital, Economic & Social Research Council Group, London South Bank University (LSBU)
239		Prof. H. Goulbourne	Families & Social Capital, Economic & Social Research Council Group, LSBU
240		Prof. C. Callender	Families & Social Capital, Economic & Social Research Council Group, LSBU
241		Prof. I. Bruegel	Families & Social Capital, Economic & Social Research Council Group, LSBU
242		Prof. J. Holland	Families & Social Capital, Economic & Social Research Council Group, LSBU

No.	Date	Witness Name	Position
	8.11.05	Study Tour	London, United Kingdom cont'd.
243		Prof. J. Weeks	Families & Social Capital, Economic & Social Research Council Group, LSBU
244		Prof. M. Held	Families & Social Capital, Economic & Social Research Council Group, LSBU
245		Ms J. Williams	Families & Social Capital, Economic & Social Research Council Group, LSBU
	9.11.05	Study Tour	London, United Kingdom
246		Mr I. Johnson	Head of Democratic Engagement Branch, Department for Constitutional Affairs
247		Mr C. Woodd	Head of Implementation Team, Civil Renewal Unit, The Home Office
248		Mr V. McLaren	Head of Volunteering, Civil Renewal Unit, The Home Office
249		Mr A. Patel	Deputy Head, Cohesion and Faiths Unit, The Home Office
250		Ms V. Woodward	Co-ordinator Active Learning for Active Citizenship Project (ALAC), Civil Renewal Unit, The Home Office
251		Mr D. Higgins	Chief Executive, English Partnerships
252		Mr P. Ramsden	Standards and Qualifications Officer, Lifelong Learning UK
253		Ms S. Woods	Standards and Qualifications Officer, Lifelong Learning UK
	10.11.05	Study Tour	Rome, Italy
254		Mr F. Caparelli	Former Director-General of Transport, Italian Government
255		Mr G. Botelli	Community Services Worker
	11.11.05	Study Tour	Rome, Italy
256		Prof. A. Celant	President, Economics Faculty, University of Rome, La Sapienza
257		Dr C. Ceechi	Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Economics, University of Rome
258		Prof. L. Caravale	Vice President and Head of Society, Societa' Dante Alighieri (Society for the diffusion of Italian language and culture)
	3.04.06	Public Hearing	Melbourne
259		Ms A. Bowles	Peninsula Community Health Services
260		Ms A. Palmer	Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service
261		Ms J. Donaldson	Windemere Child & Family Service
262		Ms M. Commandeur	Manager, Community Development, ANZ
263		Mr M. J. Vasta	Manager Public Policy, Government & Regulatory Affairs, ANZ

No.	Date	Witness Name	Position
3.04.06		Public Hearing	Melbourne cont'd.
264		Prof. D. Adams	Executive Director, Strategic Policy and Research Division, Department for Victorian Communities
265		Mr D. Ferrie	Director, Community Strengthening, Department for Victorian Communities
8.05.06		Study Tour	Auckland, New Zealand
266		Ms A. Lendich	Community Programmes Manager, YWCA
267		Ms C. Martin	Regional Manager, Volunteering Auckland
268		Mr. S. Green	Volunteering Auckland
269		Ms M. van Straaten	Volunteering Auckland
270		Mr I. Galloway	Insurance Australia Group (NZ) Ltd
271		Ms R. Brown	Chief Executive, Sustainable Business Network
9.05.06		Study Tour	Auckland, New Zealand
272		Ms J. Collins	Community Development Manger, Auckland City Council
273		Cr. Dr. C. Casey	Councillor for Eden & Albert Wards, Auckland City Council
274		Ms T. Fava	Auckland City Council
275		Mr D. Coltman	Group Manager, Partnerships & Community Programmes, Auckland Regional Council
276		Ms L. Mason	General Manager, Programmes & Partnerships, Auckland Regional Council
277		Mr J. Freeland	Kaiarahi, Auckland Regional Council
278		Ms K. Hill	Maori Planner, Auckland Regional Council
279		Ms T. Compain	Maori Planner, Auckland Regional Council
280		Ms C. Klouwens	Team Leader, Community Programmes, Auckland Regional Council
281		Ms G. Tupou	Diverse Communities Engagement Advisor, Auckland Regional Council
282		Dr G. Dickson	Head of Research, Division of Sport & Recreation, Auckland University of Technology
283		Professor S. Milne	Professor of Tourism, School of Hospitality & Tourism, Auckland University of Technology
284		Ms A. Dunphy	Secretary, Youth Mentoring Trust
285		Ms T. Heti	Project Leader, Mentoring & Tutoring Project, Schools Partnerships Office, Auckland University

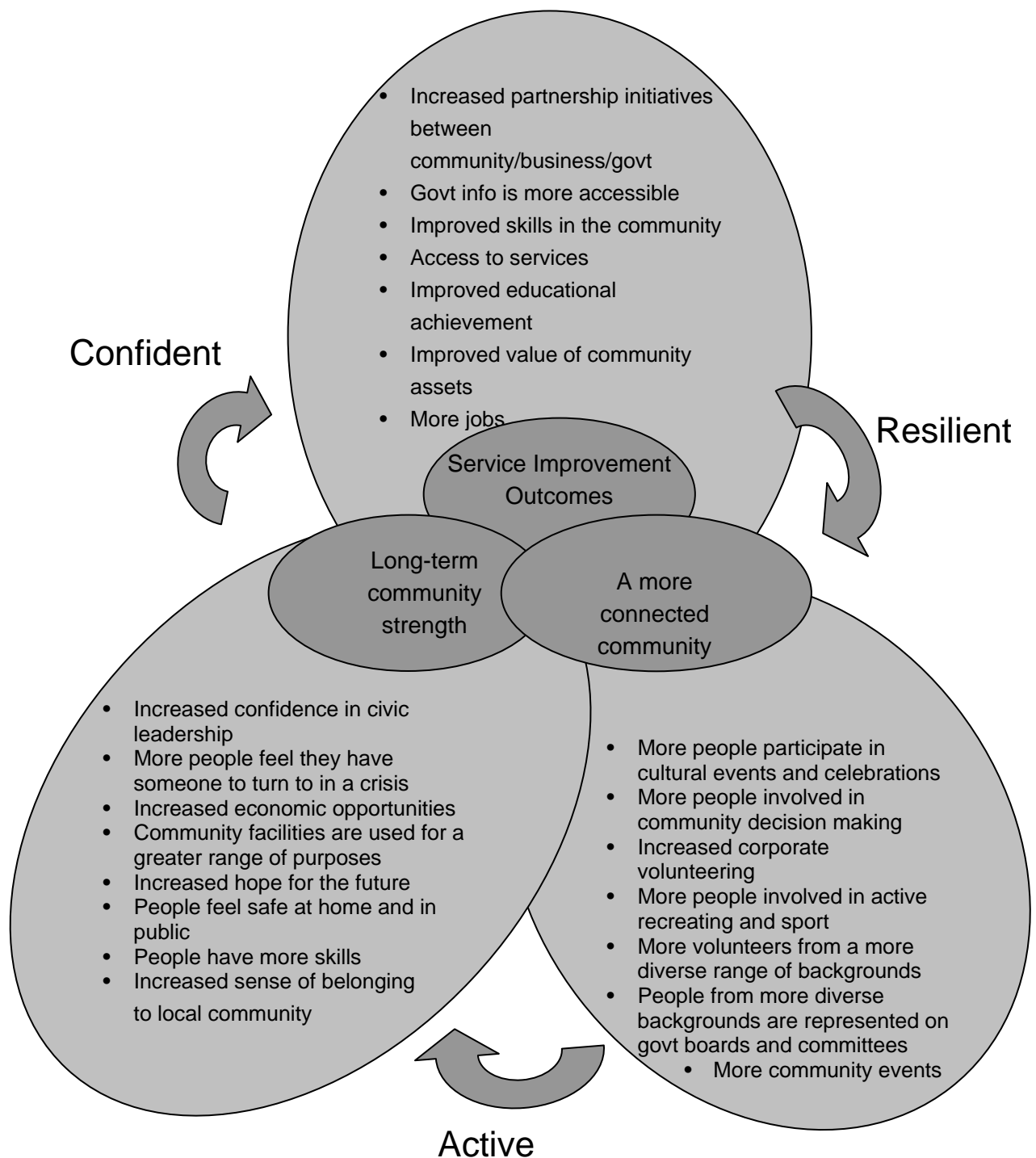
No.	Date	Witness Name	Position
	9.05.06	Study Tour	Auckland, New Zealand cont'd.
286		Mr S. Williams	Youth Mentoring Trust, Maori Mentoring Programme, West Auckland, Auckland University.
287		Ms R. Afeaki-Malfieo	Affirming Works, Youth Mentoring Trust, Auckland University.
288		Ms M. Sapolu	Programme Manager, Affirming Works, Youth Mentoring Trust, Auckland University.
289		Ms L. Max	Chief Executive Officer, Pacific Foundation, Youth Mentoring Trust
	10.05.06	Study Tour	Wellington, New Zealand
290		Mr T. Burns	Executive Director, Volunteering New Zealand
291		Mr S. Huggard	Deputy Chair, Volunteering New Zealand
292		Ms P. Harper	Regional Manager, Volunteering Wellington
293		Hon. D. Cunliffe MP	Minister of Communications and Information Technology, New Zealand
294		Mr G. Poole	Chief Executive Officer, Wellington City Council
295		Ms W. Walker	Director, Community & Treaty Relations, Wellington City Council
296		Mr M. Webster	City Secretary, Wellington City Council
	11.05.06	Study Tour	Wellington, New Zealand
297		Ms A. Carter	Deputy Secretary, Local Government & Community Branch, Department of Internal Affairs
298		Ms S. Rathgen	Department of Internal Affairs
299		Ms S. Hill	Department of Internal Affairs
300		Ms J. Joslin	Department of Internal Affairs
301		Dr. A. Taylor	General Manager, Ministry of Youth Development, Ministry of Social Development
302		Ms McMillan	Ministry of Youth Development
303		Mr Patel	Ministry of Youth Development
304		Dr. J. Scown	Director, Office for Disability Issues, Ministry of Social Development
305		Ms J. Small	Analyst, Office of Disability Issues, Ministry of Social Development
306		Mr P. Dickey	Analyst, Office of Disability Issues, Ministry of Social Development
307		Mr R. Wood	Deputy Chief Executive, Family & Community Services, Ministry of Social Development

No.	Date	Witness Name	Position
	11.05.06	Study Tour	Wellington, New Zealand cont'd.
308		Ms G. Beyer MP	Chair, Social Services Select Committee, New Zealand
309		Mr E. Bowen	Chief Executive, Local Government, New Zealand
310		Mr M. Reid	Manager Governance, Local Government
311		Ms V. Owen	Policy Analyst, Governance, Social & Cultural Wellbeing, Local Government New Zealand
	12.05.06	Study Tour	Wellington, New Zealand
312		Ms N. Lavery	Director – Office for Senior Citizens, Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand
313		Mr K. Hand	Deputy Director, International Relations, Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand

APPENDIX C CONFERENCES & SEMINARS

No.	Date	Title	Details
1	10.05.05	Community Trust and Social Capital: Barometer or Band-aid?	Government and Society Seminar organised by the Department for Victorian Communities, held in Melbourne
2	18.05.05	Government & Communities in Partnership: the next steps	Symposium organised by The Centre for Public Policy and the Brotherhood of St. Laurence, held in Melbourne
3	6-7.06.05	Communities in Control	Conference organised by Our Community, held in Melbourne
4	18.07.05	Understanding Social Capital – a New Rural Economy Perspective	Forum organised by Centre of Public Policy, held in Melbourne
5	14-17.08.05	International Conference on Engaging Communities	An initiative of the United Nations and the Queensland Government, held in Brisbane
6	18.08.05	Building Community & Rapid Urban Growth	Symposium organised by the Faculty of Social & Behavioural Sciences, The University of Queensland, held in Brisbane
7	30.08.05	A Marriage of Equals?: Trust, Power and Partnerships	Government and Society Seminar organised by the Department for Victorian Communities, held in Melbourne
8	6.09.05	Social Connectedness and Communities Symposium	Centre for Public Policy, Melbourne University, Melbourne
9	20.10.05	Longing to Belong: The Spirit of Community	Government and Society Seminar organised by the Department for Victorian Communities, held in Melbourne
10	28.02.06	Community Strengthening: People, Places, Paradigms	Government and Society Seminar organised by the Department for Victorian Communities, held in Melbourne
11	13.04.06	Distrustful, Disengaged or Disenchanted? Community Engagement and the Hard to Reach	Government and Society Seminar organised by the Department for Victorian Communities, held in Melbourne

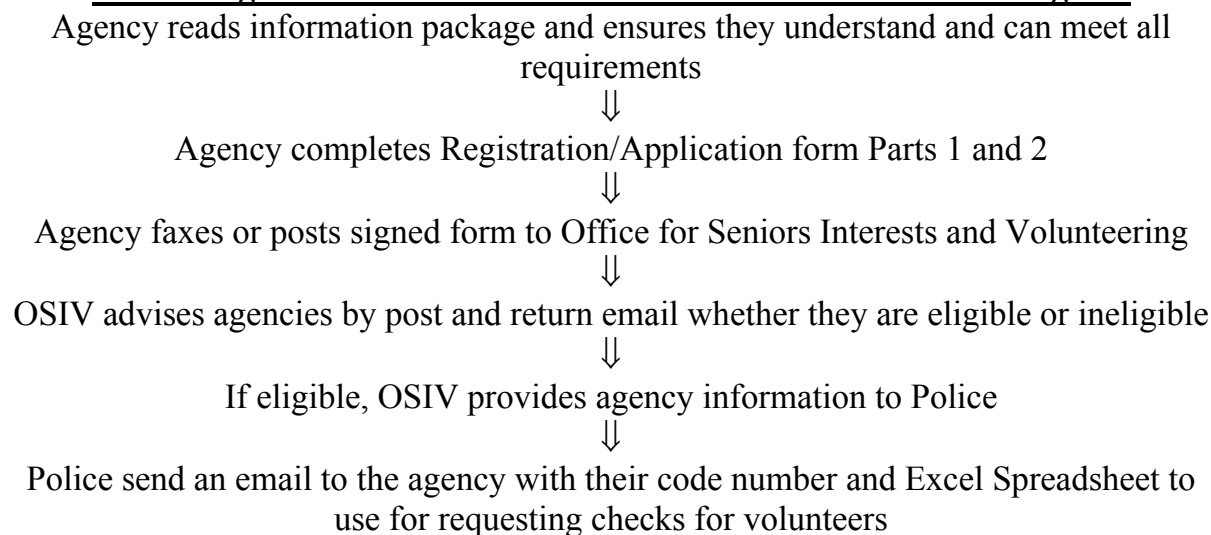
APPENDIX D DVC OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK



Source: Submission 78A: Department for Victorian Communities 25 May 2005

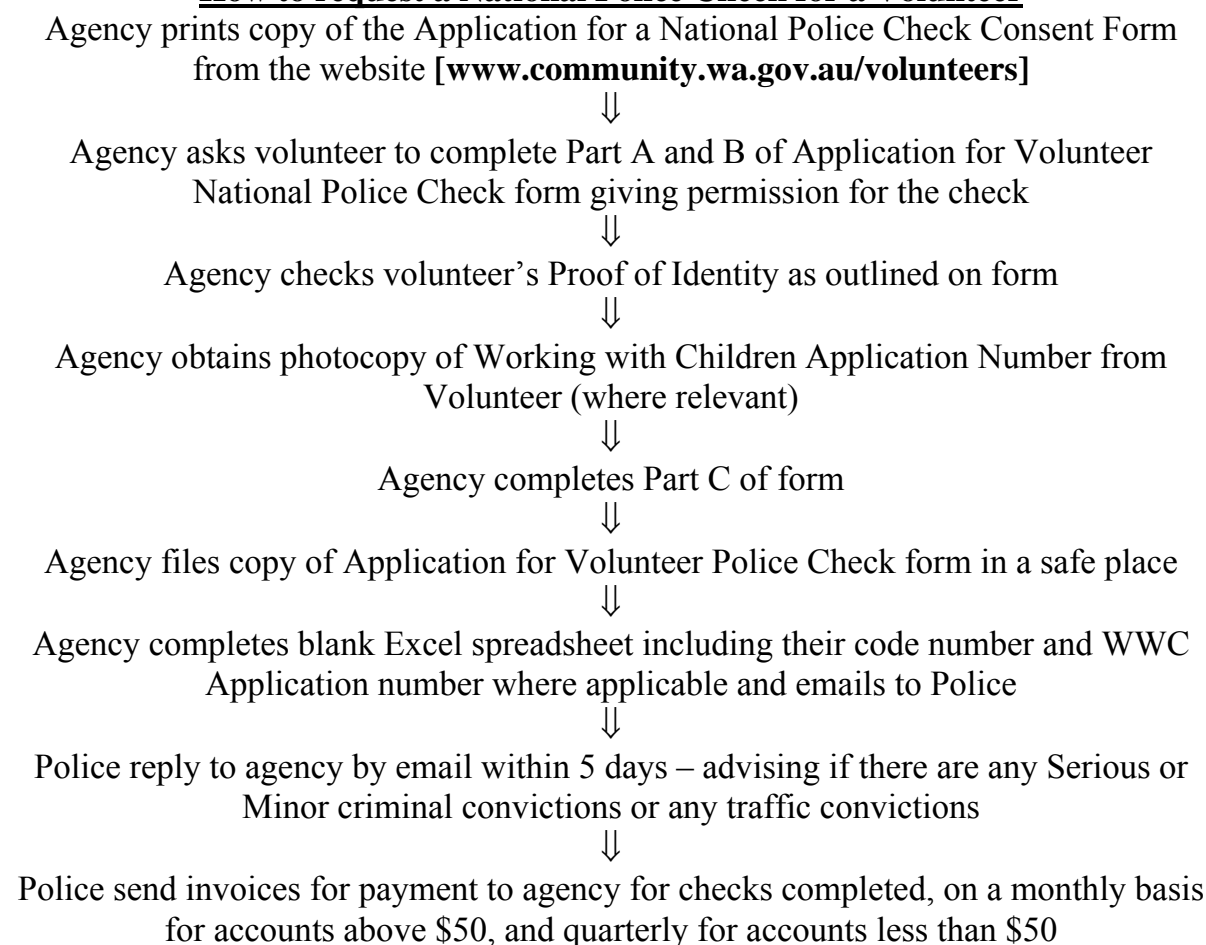
APPENDIX E WESTERN AUSTRALIA NATIONAL POLICE CHECK SYSTEM

How to register for the National Police Check for Volunteers Program



REGISTRATION PROCESS IS COMPLETE

How to request a National Police Check for a Volunteer



Source: www.community.wa.gov.au

APPENDIX F COMMUNITY STRENGTH INDICATORS

Indicators of community strength across Victorian LGA's - data table (%per LGA)

	State Average	Cardinia	Hume	Melton	Morn Peninsula	Nillumbik	Whittlesea	Wyndham	Yarra Ranges
Can get help from friends, family or neighbours when needed?	86.7	85.7	85.7	83.6	85.6	89.7	77.7	82.2	83.7
Do you feel safe on your street alone after dark?	72.4	66.4	65.4	64.4	75.6	78.5	50.0	67.4	61.0
Do you feel valued by society?	74.1	65.3	65.8	69.3	71.8	73.4	46.4	67.9	56.8
Do you feel there are opportunities to have a real say on issues?	59.6	53.8	51.4	58.2	57.4	55.4	37.3	57.5	41.3
Volunteers (yes)?	38.7	34.8	29.1	27.6	36.4	37.9	23.3	27.9	32.3
Volunteers (yes & sometimes)?	51.1	44.9	43.3	36.6	44.0	47.4	45.0	37.8	50.0
Is a member of an organised group?	56.9	55.4	45.9	47.6	55.3	62.2	47.8	45.2	53.4
Group has taken local action?	47.4	47.9	33.1	35.0	38.5	47.3	36.2	31.6	44.3
Parental involvement in schools?	64.8	57.5	55.4	54.3	62.7	65.7	61.0	57.1	60.2
Are you on a decision making board or committee?	23.6	19.9	17.6	16.3	20.0	23.7	-	14.4	-
Have you attended a community event in the past 6 months?	62.5	62.4	52.0	52.8	67.0	76.3	57.3	61.1	68.9
Participation in organised sport?	41.7	36.5	35.0	40.4	41.7	42.1	37.3	34.8	39.8
Feels multiculturalism makes life in the area better?	86.9	79.3	86.1	91.5	82.6	89.8	88.8	89.0	81.3
Could raise \$2000 in two days in an emergency?	63.2*	69.0	52.5	56.8	65.3	74.8	52.0	52.1	71.6
Do you like living in your local community?	92.9	90.0	82.8	90.9	96.4	95.7	87.0	87.0	89.0

*The State average for the question "could you raise \$2000 in two days in an emergency " (63%) is significantly different from that in the VPHS (80% in 2003). It is thought that this difference reflects different survey methodology and in particular the fact that there was less time in the short DVC survey to establish trust for a sensitive question. The variation between areas, however, should be reliable.

Source: Adapted from Department for Victorian Communities, *Indicators of Community Strength at the Local Government Area level in Victoria, 2005*, p.36.

APPENDIX G BRISBANE DECLARATION

We, representatives of countries and communities, including Indigenous peoples, international institutions, national, state and local governments, academic institutions, and business and civil society organizations from across the world, participating in the International Conference on Engaging Communities, held at Brisbane, Australia, from 15 to 17 August 2005,

1. Acknowledge the universal interest and importance of community engagement, founded in the inherent dignity of people and the values, rights and responsibilities of all people expressed in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.
2. Welcome the Seoul Declaration on Participatory and Transparent Governance¹ in its call for the actors² in societies to work together to expand and promote participatory, transparent governance for the benefit of their people.
3. Underscore that community engagement is essential to the achievement of the Millennium Declaration including the Millennium Goals for Development.
4. Express appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations and its specialised agencies in helping to advance the practice of community engagement and support of greater participatory and transparent governance.
5. Express appreciation to the Government of the State of Queensland, to the Indigenous peoples for their welcome to country, and to all the people of Queensland, Australia for hosting the inaugural International Conference on Engaging Communities.
6. Express appreciation to the other Australian governments, tertiary institutions and organisations that have sponsored and partnered in the organisation of this gathering, to the staff and volunteers, and to all those who have through participation shared their expertise and experience to build greater understanding, capability and commitment to the practice of community engagement.

¹ The Seoul Declaration on Participatory and Transparent Governance made at the Sixth Global Forum on Reinventing Government at Seoul, Republic of Korea, 24-27 May 2005.

² The ‘community’ of all ‘actors in society’ are all those who are potentially affected by or have an interest in an issue, decision, service delivery or evaluation, and include government, businesses, trade unions, civil society organisations, non-Government organisations and individual citizens.

Community Engagement

7. Affirm that community engagement is critical to effective, transparent and accountable governance in the public, community and private sectors.
8. Recognise that community engagement is a two way process:
 - By which the aspirations, concerns, needs and values of citizens and communities are incorporated at all levels and in all sectors in policy development, planning decision-making, service delivery and assessment; and
 - By which governments and other business and civil society organisations involve citizens, clients, communities and other stakeholders in these processes.
9. Affirm that effective engagement generates better decisions, delivering sustainable economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits.
10. Also recognise that effective community engagement enables the free and full development of human potential, fosters relationships based on mutual understanding, trust and respect, facilitates the sharing of responsibilities, and creates more inclusive and sustainable communities.
11. Further recognise that meaningful community engagement seeks to address barriers and build the capacity and confidence of people to participate in, and negotiate and partner with, institutions that affect their lives, in particular those previously excluded or disenfranchised.
12. Further recognise that inclusive engagement requires that Indigenous peoples and the poor are marginalized, are adequately resourced to participate meaningfully in the broader community and that they have a stake in the outcome and benefit equitably as a result of being involved.
13. Endorse the core principles of integrity, inclusion, deliberation and influence in community engagement:
 - Integrity – when there is openness and honesty about the scope and purpose of engagement;
 - Inclusion – when there is an opportunity for a diverse range of values and perspectives to be freely and fairly expressed and heard;
 - Deliberation – when there is sufficient and credible information for dialogue, choice and decisions, and when there is space to weigh options, develop common understandings and to appreciate respective roles and responsibilities;

- Influence – when people have input in designing how they participate, when policies and services reflect their involvement and when their impact is apparent.
14. Recognise the availability of a wide range of methods and technologies, including new and emerging tools associated with the internet, to facilitate appropriate and effective community engagement.
 15. Affirm the value of education, ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge sharing about active citizenship and community engagement processes and outcomes.
 16. Draws attention to the materials and recommendations of the specialized panels and workshops which supplement this Declaration.

Next Steps

The participants from all over the world at this conference:

17. Request the Host Country to bring to the attention of the General Assembly of the United Nations the Declaration of this inaugural International Conference on Engaging Communities so that it may provide leadership globally for its promotion and implementation.
18. Further call on international institutions as well as national, provincial and local governments to give effect to the values and principles of this Declaration.
19. Express support for more dialogue between international institutions and others with the people of the world about issues of global interest, and the availability of digital and other means to support such interaction.
20. Encourage the tertiary sector and other public and professional organisations to facilitate research and teaching, policy and practice development, organizational development, evaluation and networking to sustain the learnings and connections created at this inaugural International Conference on Engaging Communities.
21. Further encourage the private sector and civil society organisations to implement practical and meaningful ways to be responsive to, representative of, and enabling of the participation of citizens, clients, communities.
22. Note with appreciation the willingness of the Queensland Government to support knowledge-sharing and capacity-building for community engagement and to be involved in the follow-up to this Conference.

23. Request the United Nations, building on the success and legacies of this Conference, to assist countries and communities to foster effective community engagement practices by supporting research and training, and documenting successful outcomes and disseminating these widely.

Adopted at the International Conference on Engaging Communities, Brisbane, 14-17 August 2005.

