Community Foundations
The Asset-based Development of an Australian Community Organisation as a Foundational Source for Sustainable Community Development

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Sharon Lee Bryant
Bachelor of Business
Masters of Business Administration

School of Management
Business Portfolio
RMIT University
August 2006
DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

____________________________________
SHARON BRYANT
August 2006
ABSTRACT

This study seeks to uncover the opportunities and challenges in building the foundations for sustainable community development at the local level, by enhancing the capacity of a community organisation. Challenging the traditional needs-based focus of community development, the research builds from the work of Kretzmann and McKnight by applying an asset-based approach to both community development and capacity building of community organisations. This study thus shifts the focus of community development away from its traditional application on “disadvantaged” communities, to encourage social planning and development in a socially and economically diverse inner urban neighbourhood in Australia. The study describes the organisational development experiences of a community centre confronting the challenges of moving from the traditional deficit model of community development to an asset- or strengths-based approach that is more in keeping with the philosophy of the sustainable communities’ movement.

The study follows the experiences of the community centre through three cycles of action research. Cycle One traced the journey within the community, analysing its characteristics, issues and assets and seeking to identify appropriate organisations through which to undertake the research. Cycle Two focused on the organisational change process, paying particular attention to collective learning and relationship building in the Centre. This involved a number of ways of building the collective bank of local knowledge within an asset-based approach. Cycle Three revisited the goals set in Cycle Two, where key issues and challenges were encountered, and saw a transition in focus back to the management structure of the organisation. In this cycle activities were designed to align the Centre’s strategic direction more closely with asset-based community development.

Although time was limited for this organisational change project, a number of key outcomes were achieved. The first was a shift in thinking and practice in the organisation from a needs-based paradigm to include an asset-based perspective. This was most evident in the marked contrasts between the old strategic plan and
the new one that was developed in the project. The second key outcome flowed from this and involved a shift in the strategic priorities of the organisation. Plummer’s Framework for Action (2000) was used to analyse the opportunities and enabling factors that supported the organisational change process as well as the challenges that were impediments to change. These factors reflect a dynamic interaction of internal management and institutional capacity with the political, legislative and administrative processes in the external operating environment.

The analysis of the project outcomes and these influencing factors enabled a range of conclusions to be drawn. Firstly, local community organisations such as community centres are capable of playing a more prominent role in supporting comprehensive community initiatives for sustainable development. However, the importance of these organisations as a foundational infrastructure has been undervalued and their potential contribution misunderstood. More research and development is required to change this evaluation at all levels of operation.

Secondly, improving the role and strategic direction of such organisations in Australia needs to be reviewed to better understand their potential contribution to sustainable development at the local level, as well as their future purpose. This is particularly relevant in developing and implementing comprehensive community initiatives, including local area planning. This involves a shift away from the traditional social services approach currently encouraged to a broader role that embraces the community through both an asset-based and needs-based perspective.

Thirdly, the capacity building of the Centre through an asset-based perspective proved a useful tool in developing it and the early signs were that it was moving towards an expanded role at the local level (although threats regarding the organisational sustainability of the community centre were also evident during the project).

Fourthly, governance and leadership issues must be addressed in developing these organisations due to their limited capability to staff projects beyond the bare bones. However, as voluntary committees and staff were part-time, the coordination of such capacity-building exercises proved difficult. With no funding
available for the ongoing development of these organisations, an imbalance has been created between external expectations of the Centre and its ability to support external developments.

Fifthly, the knowledge about strategy development and implementation is limited in such organisations and, I would argue, among local development professions themselves. There appear to have been limited efforts to use social techniques to improve the implementation of plans and projects at the local level. The program-centred nature of planning, both at the organisational and community level, produced fragmented solutions that fail to integrate appropriately the various perspectives of different sectors.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On any long journey, there are always many people to thank and acknowledge. To my supervisor, Professor John Fien, I would like to thank you for your belief in my abilities. While I was facing some of the toughest personal challenges in my life, you made the PhD process bearable as a result of your positive outlook on life. We have shared many events during the last four years, including your wedding and the birth of my daughter. I will cherish the friendship and support of both you and Esther and look forward to a lifelong friendship with you both.

To Dr Jenny Cameron, I would like to thank you for your honest and thorough feedback during critical points during the thesis. Your work in the area of ABCD has been a fantastic contribution to the world of community development and I thank you for guiding me in this direction. I also wish you all the best in your endeavours with your book and I look forward to reading about your future contributions to community development in Australia.

I would like to thank all of the committee members and staff at the Wooloowin Community Centre. In particular, I would like to thank the Coordinator for all of her fantastic support and friendship during some extremely challenging times in the Centre. You always made my contribution feel like it was valuable. Your positive attitude and enthusiasm for life, even when the chips are down, was inspirational and I look forward to our ongoing work in the future.

I would like to thank “the girls”, Laurel, Jodi, Deanna and Suzanne. Without the four of you, I would have never put this thesis in perspective and maintained some level of sanity. I love how we are all so different, yet so complementary in our relationships. I only hope I can contribute to all of your work in the way you have to mine.

To my family and friends (the “A Team”), I would like to thank you for never quite understanding what or why I was doing a PhD but being excited about it regardless. You helped me balance my life in a way that helped put this thesis in
perspective. In particular, thanks to Barb (aka the “Gaffer”), who has taught me more about life than any thesis could have ever taught me.

I have left the most important people in my life till last. To my husband Nick, thank you so much for your love, support and patience, during this challenging journey. We have been through some of the hardest personal times in our relationship during this PhD. You have been so patient with the endless hours and disrupted evenings dealing with the Centre and the University. Even when I lost sight of why I was doing the PhD, you continued to encourage me. This thesis would never have been completed without your love and support. I only hope that you feel as supported as you make me feel.

Lastly, I would like to thank my daughter Holly, for coming into our life. After a five year battle full of extreme lows, you gave me the motivation to finish the thesis and the perspective to open a new chapter in my life full of hope and happiness.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY  
1.1. SETTING THE SCENE ........................................................................ 1  
1.2. RESEARCH AIMS, QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES ................. 8  
  1.2.1. Research Question and Objectives ........................................ 9  
1.3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY ........................................ 10  
1.4. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH APPROACH ................... 12  
1.5. OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS .............................................. 14

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW  
2.1. WINDOWS ON THE LITERATURE REVIEW ............................ 17  
2.2. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND THE CITIZEN’S ROLE .. 19  
  2.2.1. What is the Sustainable Communities Movement? .............. 19  
  2.2.2. Locating the Sustainable Communities Movement ......... 23  
  2.2.3. The Citizen’s Role in Developing Sustainable Communities .... 26  
2.3. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT – A TOOL FOR COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY INITIATIVES ....................... 31  
  2.3.1. The Field of Community Development .............................. 32  
  2.3.2. Two Paths to Community Development ....................... 33  
  2.3.3. Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) ............. 34  
  2.3.4. ABCD – Australian Examples ........................................ 36  
2.4. BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS IN AUSTRALIA.............................................. 41  
  2.4.1. Community Organisations in Australia ....................... 44  
  2.4.2. Building Organisational Capacity ............................ 48  
2.5. SUMMARY OF LITERATURE .............................................. 53

## 3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN  
3.1. INTRODUCTION ................................................................................. 56  
3.2. RESEARCH METHOD ........................................................................ 57  
  3.2.1. Action ResearchDefined ............................................... 58  
  3.2.2. Different Approaches to Action Research ................. 59  
  3.2.3. The Action Research Process, Benefits and Challenges .... 64  
3.3. THE RESEARCH PARADIGM ..................................................... 70  
  3.3.1. “How Do You Know What You Think You Know?” ........... 71  
3.4. RESEARCH TECHNIQUES ......................................................... 75  
  3.4.1. Data Collection ......................................................... 76  
  3.4.2. Data Analysis .......................................................... 81  
  3.4.3. Evaluation ............................................................... 83
6.1. PLANNING WITH INTENT AND STRETCH ................................. 188
6.2. BIG VISIONS BUT SMALL STEPS ............................................. 192
6.3. MAKING IT HAPPEN – LESSONS LEARNED ....................... 194
   6.3.1. Without strategic intent – what happens? ......................... 195
   6.3.2. Project add-on versus strategy integration ..................... 198
   6.3.3. Finding Leverage through Shifting Power Structures ...... 199
   6.3.4. Participatory Convenience for Volunteers ..................... 200
   6.3.5. Celebrating Wins .............................................................. 202
7.0 CONCLUSION ........................................................................ 205
7.1. INTRODUCTION ..................................................................... 205
7.2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS .................................................... 206
   7.2.1. Question One: Organisational Capacity Building .......... 206
   7.2.2. Question Two: Sustaining Community Development Efforts 211
7.3. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ...................... 213
   7.3.1. Policy and Planning ......................................................... 214
   7.3.2. Practice ........................................................................ 221
   7.3.3. Education, Learning and Social Change ....................... 226
   7.3.4. Research: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow .................. 231
7.4. FINAL REFLECTIONS ......................................................... 234
   7.4.1. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Research .................. 237
   7.4.2. Recommendations for Further Research ...................... 238
   7.4.3. Closing Remarks ............................................................. 240
TABLE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURES

Figure 2.1: A Framework for Sustainable Community Development
(adapted from Roseland [1997a, p. 24]) ................................................................. 21

Figure 2.2: Activities Contributing to Effective Change Management
(Cummings and Worley, 1997, p. 154) ................................................................. 50

Figure 3.1: The Action Research Improvement Process (Dick, 1993;
Hatten et al., 1997; Zuber-Skerritt, 1991) ......................................................... 65

Figure 3.2: The Action Research Improvement Process (Dick, 1993;
Hatten et al., 1997; Zuber-Skerritt, 1991) ......................................................... 66

Figure 4.1: Community Centre Structure .......................................................... 100

TABLES

Table 2.2: ABCD Process for Shared Action Experience (Beilharz, 2002) .......... 37

Table 2.3: 10 Key Challenges for Community Organisations in Australia
(developed from the Community Manifesto [Abbey et al.,
2003, p. 9]) ........................................................................................................ 45

Table 3.1: Summary of Action Research Approaches in Organisational
Development (McArdle and Reason, 2006, pp. 5–7) ......... 61

Table 3.2: Approaches to Qualitative Analysis (summarised from Davis,
2003; Dick, 1993; Huberman and Miles, 1998; Robson,
1993) .................................................................................................................. 82

Table 3.3: Validity Approaches for Social Research (Lather, 1986a;
McGartland Rubio et al., 2003) ........................................................................ 86

Table 3.4: Ethical Considerations for Ph.D. Research ...................................... 91

Table 4.1: Data Collection Techniques and Outcomes of Each Action
Research Cycle ................................................................................................. 95

Table 4.2: The Five R’s from the Community Centre Audit ............................ 118

Table 4.3: Where Have All the Committee Members Gone? ........................ 146

Table 5.1: Multiple Visions Underpinned by ABCD (Strategic Plan 2005) ...... 156

Table 5.2: Summary of Outcomes Resulting from Strategic Priorities ......... 158

Table 5.3: Internal Operating Context – Opportunities and Challenges ....... 168

Table 5.4: External Operating Context – Opportunities and Challenges ....... 174

Table 7.1: Entrepreneurial Comparison of Private and Community
Organisations................................................................................................. 210
LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: International History of Sustainable Development
Appendix 2: Interview Questions – Cycle One
Appendix 3: Bus Trip Agenda and Questions
Appendix 4: Data Log
Appendix 5: Ethics Approval – Informed Consent
Appendix 6: Community Centre Audit
Appendix 7: Organisational Development Plan
Appendix 8: Agenda for Workshop 1
Appendix 9: Agenda for Workshop 2
Appendix 10: Memo (December): Information for Strategic Plan
Appendix 11: Example of Old and New Brand
Appendix 12: Example of Staff Update
Appendix 13: New (Draft) Strategic Plan
Appendix 14: New (Draft) Marketing Plan
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION
1.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1. SETTING THE SCENE

If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost, that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

*Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862)*

Foundations provide a basis on which things stand or are supported to ensure they remain intact in the future. Whether they are foundations for a physical structure (i.e. a building), or for an emotional one (i.e. a relationship); they are integral to the sustainability of what is being built. This research journey set out to locate foundations for change at the local level in an urban neighbourhood in Australia, to better understand how to improve the contribution of local efforts to change the health and sustainability of the planet. The researcher had no research team and received no funding in this effort. Consequently, it was necessary to ensure that the approach undertaken was accessible and available to the researcher and would incur limited personal financial cost to her. As a result of these constraints, the research journey started with a research team and project located at a community centre in the researcher’s own local community.

At each level of investigation, from the global down to the specific organisation, issues around developing foundations for change became increasingly evident. The thesis suggests that in our eagerness for big bang transformational approaches to change for global sustainability we often ignore some of the key foundations that already exist at the local level that can contribute to improving planning and development in urban areas. In particular, this highlights the importance of building social foundations at the local level through practices based on Kretzmann and McKnight’s (1993) asset-based community development perspective. This perspective was also usefully applied to the capacity building of the community centre so that it could support local change initiatives in the local community in the future.
As a potential foundation to support community development initiatives for global sustainability, the community centre faced its own foundational issues. During the research journey, it was not unusual to hear people questioning the significance of building the capacity of this inner urban community to support community planning and change. Community centres (and many non-government organisations) are not socially valued as vehicles for change. Where they are included, insufficient attention is paid to their resource-constrained nature. This highlights the need to reinvent and redevelop these organisations to support a broader purpose in the future.

While the research and associated project focused on capacity building in a community organisation, the broader purpose of the change initiative needs to be sketched out. The following provides a brief overview of the broader context that influenced the journey. The points sketched include:

- Why we need global change. This is discussed by linking global issues to the rationale for developing local inner urban communities.
- How the sustainable communities movement is linked to these global goals, through social change initiatives that focus on comprehensive community development.
- How the shift from a traditional needs-based perspective to an asset-based perspective to community development will help us to address resource constraints and unleash potential future development.
- How to sustain comprehensive community initiatives using an asset-based community development approach and the role community organisations can play in doing this.
- How the capacity and viability of Australian community organisations, like community centres, can be improved to support and sustain these initiatives.
- How to build up the capacity of such organisations to support asset-based community development (and other local development initiatives) in the future.
These items are discussed in order to position the research question and objectives by highlighting the broader context in which the research took place.

**Why We Need to Change: Global links to Local Development**

Although the Industrial Era had positive results for the development of countries of the North,\(^1\) its negative consequences have been a cause for concern, particularly with regards to our ability to create and sustain healthy environments and relationships for future generations. Characteristics such as climate change, ecological degradation and pervasive poverty, have received increasing attention, and most commentators would agree that progress towards sustainability has been modest, at best (Doppelt, 2003, p. 16). Increased levels of urbanisation have escalated this situation, and social and economic resources are unevenly distributed to suburban dwellers due to factors such as urban sprawl.

Similar to the USA, a large majority of Australia’s population live in towns and cities, spending much of their time indoors, disconnected from the Earth and the people who make up their local community. This behaviour is the basis for our principal built environment today (Hancock, 2000, p. 51). The collective contributions of individuals in these built environments are a potential source for positive change at the global level. This suggests, therefore, that an improved understanding of how we can create change at the local level through social connections is important to building foundations for change in the future.

**The Sustainable Communities Movement, Social Change and Development**

The idea of sustainable communities is derived from the many ways of thinking about the design, construction and operation of society and has a significant overlap with the healthy communities’ movement. (Hancock, 2000; Roseland, 1997a, 1997b). All sectors of the community – health care, human services, education, business and industry, the faith community, cultural and recreational organisations, \(^1\) Phrases such as “first”, “second” and “third” world, are considered loaded statements representing the “first”, “second” and “third” best. This thesis refers to the “less” loaded terminology describing more economically affluent countries as countries of the “North” and less economically affluent countries, as countries of the “South”, based on geography. Australia and New Zealand are exceptions to this geographic categorisation.
government, media, voluntary organisations and the people who live, work and play in the community – are a part of the equation of a healthier community built on the principles of sustainable development.

Roseland (1997a) notes the importance of incorporating these different perspectives into a collective vision, framework or plan, placing great emphasis during the early stages of local development on the social aspects of planning and development. The focus of sustainable communities, therefore is to influence individual choices and actions in such a way that allows community members to associate their individual choices with the impact they have on the community as a whole (Wilcox and Knapp, 2000, pp. 140–142). However, this approach to local development proved difficult to locate during the research project. Currently the approach to local development has been piecemeal, largely ignoring broader scale planning opportunities that embrace the participation and, most importantly, ownership of local issues by local people.

As Ife (1998, p. 115) suggests, the development of autonomous, self-reliant communities is, in general, a much easier task in smaller rural communities because of the size of the community and other variables such as their geographic isolation, clear boundaries and a stable population base; all of which permit existing community ties to be stronger than those found in urban and suburban areas. While the social elements of planning are important to the process of development, they have not received the priority that Roseland suggests is beneficial to the development of communities, particularly in inner-urban areas in Australia.

This thesis is driven by my interest in addressing global concerns identified in the sustainable communities movement, through what will be referred to as comprehensive community initiatives (Aigner et al., 2002; Pitcoff, 2002; Watkins Murphy and Cunningham, 2003). This involves improving the citizen’s partnership role in the development of their communities by using a holistic approach to community development.

**The Contribution of Community Development – An Asset-Based Perspective**

The field of community development is well aligned to social approaches to local development and comprehensive community initiatives. Although “community
development” has been primarily applied to communities which have been labelled disadvantaged, it is applicable to broader planning and could improve local development through its emphasis on social approaches to change that involve active participation and ownership of the wider community. However, I argue in Australia community development is restrictively applied to rural and low socio-economic communities and is entrenched in a needs-based approach, which remains focused on needs, deficiencies and problems (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993). This restricts its usefulness. Community development should be balanced with what Kretzmann and McKnight refer to as an asset-based approach, with a much broader community application. Asset-based community development (ABCD) seeks to locate all of the available local assets, to begin connecting them with one another in ways that multiply their power and effectiveness, and to begin harnessing those local institutions that are not yet available for local development purposes . (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993, p5)

This suggests that the focus in the community should be shifted to what it has rather than what it does not. This perspective proved to be important for this research for the following reasons:

• As the area selected as the site for the research was not considered “disadvantaged” (i.e. rural or of low socio-economic status), the project would be resource-constrained because funding from traditional sources (i.e. government) for a broad community development initiative would prove difficult to raise as there was no perceived “need” for it.

• Applying an asset-based perspective to a community perceived to be “advantaged” suggests that there would be a wealth of under-utilised resources to assist community development efforts within the local area.

The ABCD approach therefore offered a good foundation for supporting community development initiatives (including needs-based projects) as it attracts a wealth of resources that could assist community development efforts without significant government aid. Furthermore, this approach placed a greater emphasis on issues regarding local ownership. These issues will be addressed in Chapter 5 of this thesis.
Supporting and Sustaining ABCD Initiatives and Community Organisations

The case for an asset-based approach is yet to be strongly made in the community development field. It is still largely untested in Australia and although there have been several encouraging examples of ABCD, particularly in rural and low socio-economic areas (Beilharz, 2002; Cameron, 2003; Cameron and Gibson, 2004a), the sustainability of these projects beyond the involvement of the community development researcher/practitioner has proven to be problematic (Beilharz, 2002). This suggests that the foundations for change need to include ways of sustaining the efforts of ABCD projects. While this thesis emphasises these concerns as a result of the early experience of these ABCD initiatives in Australia, I suggest that it is more difficult to sustain change in needs-based community development initiatives, which have been criticised for developing “client neighbourhoods” that become reliant on government resources and support (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993). This is due to the ABCD approach focusing on shifting away from the “client neighbourhood” model to reveal the potential and capacity in a community and its people.

In these Australian examples of ABCD, community organisations were considered a potential foundational asset to assist, implement and sustain the community development initiatives. De Vita and Fleming (2001, p. 5) note that although enhancing the capacity of community organisations is not synonymous with building sustainable communities, it is an important linkage that requires further exploration. This thesis supports the view of De Vita and Fleming, arguing that the capacity of community organisations to support ABCD initiatives has not been a key consideration until late in the implementation process (Beilharz, 2002).

Furthermore, I argue that geographically focused community organisations (i.e. community centres), can provide a foundation to support and sustain community development initiatives, particularly if they adopt an asset-based perspective. However, the capacity of these organisations in Australia to support these change efforts is considered problematic in the current Australian environment.

The Capacity and Viability of Australian Community Organisations

Community organisations in Australia are currently under threat (Abbey et al., 2003; Maddison et al., 2004). The challenge of developing the internal capacity of
community organisations has received even less attention in research and practice than asset-based capacity building. This point is supported by the findings of the Community Manifesto, where Abbey et al. (2003) identified a number of perceived sub-problems faced by community organisations including:

- Significant shortcomings in the organisational structures for supporting community development initiatives;
- Limited involvement and co-ordination of networks and collaboration in the organisation:
- A lack of the necessary breadth and depth of participation displayed by boards and committees, which come from a comparatively narrow sector of the population:
- A lack of skills for refocusing and redirecting these organisations towards future success on the part of the boards and staff.
- Narrow and limited funding and evaluation practices in the organisations, which provides minimal resources for internal development initiatives.

Furthermore, there has been limited research into the organisation of the community sector and several problems with the research that has been conducted have emerged. This has resulted in research about or on, rather than with these community organisations (Abbey et al., 2003).

This suggests that these community organisations as potential foundations for community development have unstable foundations that bode ill for their own survival. DeVita and Fleming (2001) emphasise the importance of developing community organisations in the USA, linking the future development of these organisations to considerations of sustainable development, civil society and social capacity building in communities. Incorporating an asset-based perspective, they also emphasise the importance of building the capacity of community organisations, although they suggest that this task is somewhat challenging.
This research journey seeks to develop a rich understanding of the experiences of one Australian community organisation (a community centre) in building capacity to support comprehensive community initiatives. It also seeks to understand whether building the capacity of these organisations, through an ABCD approach to development (both at an organisational and community level) could sustain and improve comprehensive community initiatives beyond the involvement of the research/practitioner.

By tracing the process of change in the case-study organisation, certain questions may be answered: What areas influenced and impacted on the change process? What opportunities and challenges presented themselves as part of this journey? What is the future potential of ABCD and the capacity building of community organisations in Australia towards an ABCD approach? Lastly, it hopes to highlight some of the benefits of perusing comprehensive community initiatives in Australia outside traditional practice, in a way that recognises that foundation building is required to support the development of sustainable communities in the future.

1.2. RESEARCH AIMS, QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

He who has not first laid his foundations may be able with great ability to lay them afterwards, but they will be laid with trouble to the architect and danger to the building

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527) The Prince

This thesis argues that the local foundations have not been laid well to support and sustain comprehensive community initiatives. If an asset-based community development approach were used, the thesis suggests that a local community centre could provide these foundations due to their geographic focus and community development interests. However, the very possibility of these organisations of supporting and sustaining themselves is problematic. This highlights the importance of building their capacity to improve local planning and development.

Therefore, the problem to be investigated in this thesis is to understand the opportunities and challenges involved building the capacity of a community centre in an inner-urban area in Australia. Specifically, this involves identifying how these organisations can support and sustain comprehensive community initiatives
underpinned by an asset-based approach to community and organisational
development. The following subsections clarify the research questions and objectives
that arose during the research journey.

1.2.1. Research Question and Objectives

The research question to address the problem is:

What challenges do community organisations face as they seek
to build organisational capacity by shifting their focus from a
needs-based to an asset-based approach to community
development?

How does building the organisational foundations for asset-
based community development assist in the sustainability of
asset-based efforts in a community development context?

Specifically, the objectives of the study are to describe and analyse:

• What happened? To trace the steps in the organisational development journey
undertaken by the community organisation when it shifted to an asset-based
approach to community development.

• Why did it happen that way? To analyse the factors that influenced the process
and outcomes of this organisational development.

• What were the implications of this? To identify the impacts, challenges and
opportunities of organisational development for an asset-based approach to
community development and the implications of this for future research, practice
and policy in Australia.

The chosen method was also to be integrated into the study. Thus, the research
objectives also include:

• What are the implications of conducting action research with a community
organisation? To identify issues and challenges facing researchers and
community organisations implementing action research.

The four key outcomes expected from this research were:
To create a clearer conceptualisation of the challenges of building the capacity of one community organisation (community centres) in order to prepare it to contribute to comprehensive community initiatives underpinned by the asset-based approach to community development.

To highlight the importance of developing a community organisation to be a significant contributor to comprehensive community initiatives.

To strengthen both the theory and practice of organisational development in community organisations as well as to provide a further understanding of the potential of an asset-based approach to community and organisational development.

To identify further research praxis that could be undertaken as a result of the research findings. This includes theory and practice in the organisational development and community development practice, as it relates to comprehensive community initiatives.

1.3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this thesis is found in its contribution to the field of community development and organisational development applied to the experiences of a community organisation. Specifically, gaps were identified in the literature and research practice, including methodology, methods and techniques of community development. The following provides an overview of these gaps highlighting the significance of conducting this research.

(a) The Literature

Linking and Strengthening the Literature. This research offers an important link between community development and organisational development literature. This link will inform the emerging literature on asset-based approaches to community development. This will be achieved by developing an improved understanding of how community organisations develop their foundations to sustain comprehensive community initiatives through an asset-based approach to change.
The Organisation’s Contribution to Community Development. The literature on the contribution of community organisations to community development practices has been slow to emerge (Beilharz, 2002; Cameron, 2003; Cameron and Gibson, 2004a; De Vita and Fleming, 2001; Pitcoff, 2002). In addition, the focus of research at the individual community organisation level has also been limited (Abbey et al., 2003). This study focuses on the development of these organisations at the individual community centre level, with the development being guided by successful examples of organisations.

Expanding the Community Development Literature to Other Communities: Community development literature has primarily focused on what is perceived as communities of a low socio-economic status and that are disadvantaged and/or rural (i.e. Latrobe Valley, Long Gully, Bendigo). Without diminishing the importance of this work, it is argued that other communities have hidden disadvantages that can become manifest over time, so that community organisations in such areas should be strengthened to contribute to the development of all Australian communities. More importantly, the social development of all communities is beneficial and requires increased consideration and prioritisation, particularly in the local area planning context in urban areas, where most people live. It is the urban areas that contribute to the negative impacts that affect global sustainability.

(b) Methodology, Methods and Techniques

Action Research in Community Development and Organisational Development: The Community Manifesto (Abbey et al., 2003, p. 14) emphasises the need to actively involve all relevant stakeholders, including the disadvantaged and voiceless, as well as the powerful and influential, in order to generate effective new and systemic praxis. Action research has only recently been acknowledged as a research approach that provides a legitimate and worthwhile contribution to academic research, especially when conducted with groups. It is only in recent times that this research and development methodology has started to emerge in the community development and organisational development field. The consequences and potential of action research in theoretical tests is examined below.
(c) Research Practice

*Shifting the focus from needs to asset-base in organisational development and community development.* Research and practice has been slow to emerge on the asset-based approach to community development (Cameron and Gibson, 2004a) and its application to comprehensive community initiatives (Watkins et al., 2003). As a result, there is limited understanding of the validity of this approach and even less understanding of what it means for community organisations. Due to the time and financial constraints of this research project, the thesis does not implement a comprehensive community initiative, but rather, focuses on the establishment of local foundations to support and sustain these initiatives in the future. This thesis addresses this gap by applying ABCD theory to a community organisation and describing this journey through an action research approach.

*Going Behind the Scenes.* Community development research, in particular the emerging asset-based literature, currently focuses upon working directly with citizens and/or social networks. As a result, research practice has failed to go behind the scenes to discover the challenges and potential of community organisations to help underpin the durability of these efforts. This thesis addresses these weaknesses by placing the researcher in the community organisation as a researcher/participant in the action research process. Furthermore, the experiences of the project will offer perspectives from both the researcher and participants as a result of this collaborative approach.

1.4. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH APPROACH

As highlighted earlier, this study was conducted as an action research project. Applying a critical approach to action research, the study emphasised power sharing in collaborative situations and encouraged all participants (including the researcher) to practice collaborative conversation and self-reflection as a means of learning and recognising their own personal power throughout the entire process. While in theory, this approach was attempted, the thesis will highlight the challenges of gaining participation in these processes, while still highlighting many of the benefits to learning as a result of this approach. Most importantly, the thesis highlights how the method is not about what the researcher can teach the participants, but rather how the
researcher and participants can learn and grow from working together in a self-reflective manner (Zuber-Skerritt and Perry, 2002). Chapter 3 introduces the chosen method, highlighting the importance of this collective education/learning approach. The study was undertaken in an iterative manner through three cycles:

- **Cycle One** describes the journey to locate a local foundation, in this case a community centre sited in the geographic location of choice that was willing to participate. This includes the early orientation in the community centre and involves collaborative problem definition\(^2\) and in-house and community data collection, including the feedback of data collected to participants as part of the data collection process.

- **Cycle Two** describes the organisational development process, with a focus on collective learning and relationship building in the organisation. Specifically, it involved a number of workshops and a field trip as a means to build this collective bank of local knowledge. This cycle highlights some of the significant challenges experienced during the action research project.

- **Cycle Three** of the project returned to the management structure of the organisation and focused on workshops on the development of the Centre’s future strategic direction, incorporating asset-based community development into the future design and strategies for the effective implementation of projects.

As a result of the reflective nature of this methodological approach, Cycle Three revisited goals set in Cycle Two due to the problems experienced as a result of what had been learned by the participants (predominantly the committee) at the end of Cycle Two. Although this may have slowed down the project, it provided a better foundation for the ongoing development of the Centre, which was the original purpose of the change. Chapter 4 highlights the journey of these three cycles and the decisions that underpinned the need to revisit the planning process in the organisation.

---
\(^2\) Collaborative problem definition was undertaken with only the active participants on the community committee due to limited time and availability of the entire group.
1.5. OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

This chapter introduced the research topic and problem. The research question and its associated objectives and an introduction to the methodological orientation of the research have also been provided. Chapter 2 further outlines the research journey as it relates to the literature. The literature review begins by exploring the framework of developing sustainable communities in order to introduce the broad context of the project. Specifically, it introduces the benefits of comprehensive community initiatives for local development, emphasising the importance of improving the role of the citizen and community organisations as a means to balance and sustain local development efforts. Furthermore, the chapter introduces the field of community development, highlighting the potential usefulness of this approach to planning and developing comprehensive community initiatives as a means to contribute to the goal of creating sustainable communities for global sustainability.

Chapter 2 further introduces the two different perspectives to community development practice in Australia. Specifically, these perspectives are referred to as a needs-based and asset-based approach to community development. The chapter highlights the benefits and challenges of shifting towards an asset-based practice in Australia by providing an overview of the experience of a number of leading Australian ABCD initiatives which highlighted the importance of building foundations in local groups to sustain these change efforts at the local level. Lastly, the chapter synthesises the literature on community organisations and organisational development as a means to address issues around developing these capacity of community organisations in Australia, in order to sustain and support community development initiatives in the future.

Chapter 3 explains the process by which the study design was developed and conducted and introduces a qualitative research paradigm, explaining how it influenced the inquiry. As this study aims to implement social change and maximise collaboration, action research was considered the appropriate method for this study, while both limitations and benefit of this approach were identified. Relevant research techniques associated with action research are also introduced and discussed in this chapter.
Chapter 4 explores the organisational development activities in the research project and describes three action research cycles which each entail reflection, planning and collaborative action, as described in Section 1.4. This chapter describes the organisational development journey to provide a background context for the findings outlined in Chapter 5 and 6 of this thesis.

Chapter 5 and 6 outline the impacts, opportunities and challenges that were identified as a result of the three cycles described in Chapter 4. Specifically, Chapter 5 revisits the guiding framework identified in Chapter 2 around the organisational development of the selected community centre, including the external and internal contexts that influence the organisation. Chapter 6 shifts the focus to the impact of the initiatives on the researchers’ understanding with relation to strategy development, implementation and change. Specifically, it looks at the approach to planning and change, reviewing issues around change practice. The focus on implementation dilemmas that impact on the sustainability of the research project and its impact on the organisation in the future is most important here.

Chapter 7 provides the researcher’s final reflections and thoughts about the study, and describes how the results presented in the thesis relate to the original research question and objectives. It outlines some of the implications and recommendations around policy and planning, practice, education, learning and social change, as well as community and social research practice. Lastly, it offers some final reflections about the strengths and weaknesses of the study, offering some final suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. WINDOWS ON THE LITERATURE REVIEW

We know for sure that human activity is influencing the global environment, even if we don't know by how much. We might still get away with it: the sceptics could be right, and the majority of the world’s scientists wrong. It would be a lucky break. But how lucky do you feel?

(New Scientist, 12 February 2005)

The ecological pressure of humanity on the earth is difficult to ignore. The consumption and wasteful use of resources; the burgeoning population growth; the increased social divide between the rich and poor and average urban design due to urban sprawl and traffic congestion, are growing threats to health and safety and the availability of natural resources in the future (Cotter and Hannan, 1999; Hancock, 2000; Wright, 2000). Each one of these local issues combines as a threat to the sustainability of the planet at the global scale. In industrialised nations, like Australia, people live mostly in urban areas, which are characterised by human structures and activities. These structures and activities make a significant contribution to the degradation of the environment and human habitats (Roseland, 1997a).

The development of Australian communities is an important contributor to sustainable development at both the local and global level (Brown, 1997; Roseland, 1997a); however, current approaches to the development of communities has been problematic. I suggest that change at the local level needs to embrace broader global concerns, in a way that balances the emphasis on physical infrastructure and local economic development to include what Max-Neef refers to as human scale development (Max-Neef, 1991). This approach recognises the importance of a social contribution to change in communities focused on improving the relationships that balance power between citizens, governments and corporations (Dunphy et al., 2003). However, the value and power of citizens in the local development of urban communities needs to examine further local development efforts for sustainability.
Community development is an approach well aligned to strengthening the role of the citizen in development efforts. However, this field has struggled to gain the strategic significance it deserves in local planning and development due to:

- the current needs-based approach which has dominated practice in this field and has contained practice predominantly in the realm of social services;
- a fragmented approach to community issues which fail to understand the value of more comprehensive and integrated approaches to local development across a range of different variables (economic, social, environmental and cultural) and
- the questionable sustainability of this practice at the local level, particularly in light of the inadequate development of local infrastructure capable of supporting future development efforts.

The capacity of community organisations to sustain local efforts as supporting infrastructure for local development efforts in Australia is a key driver of this thesis. Although applying Kretzmann and McKnight’s (1993), asset-based perspective (see section 2.3.2) in both a community and organisational development context, I suggest that the views and experiences discussed in this thesis are also transferable to other local development initiatives, particularly those considering local people and organisations as key stakeholders in the process.

This chapter synthesises the literature to provide the underlying rationale and purpose of the study. Presented in three sections, Section 2.2 introduces the concept of sustainable communities, highlighting the importance of improving the citizen’s role in supporting community improvement initiatives for global sustainability. The literature review focuses on inner urban neighbourhoods in industrialised nations to complement the Australian setting of the action research project. Section 2.3 identifies community development as the preferred approach to local planning and development approaches, introducing Kretzmann and McKnight’s (1993) approach. By highlighting a number of leading asset-based community development initiatives in Australia, the chapter notes issues around project implementation, in particular, their ability to sustain their efforts through the support structures that exist in the community of focus (Beilharz, 2002; Cameron, 2003). Lastly, the chapter highlights
the potential of community organisations, in this case a community centre, emphasising concerns regarding the capacity of these organisations in Australia to support and sustain community development initiatives in the future.

2.2. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND THE CITIZEN’S ROLE

2.2.1. What is the Sustainable Communities Movement?

While it is acknowledged that policy and broad national programs at all levels are important contributors to the broader outcomes of sustainable development, many argue that the change is slow and is not capable of meeting the degree of transformation required to address global concerns (Doppelt, 2003; Dunphy et al., 2003; Stead and Stead, 1994; Theobald, 1997). I argue that these programs have predominantly involved top-down approaches to bring about change, with the limited application of more balanced strategies, including bottom-up strategies, to help improve the results of such approaches. Roseland\(^3\) (1997a, p. i), a recognised author on sustainable communities, argues that it takes more than a government, an organisation or an individual to change the world – it will take the rebuilding of community.

The sustainable communities movement offers a response to global issues by linking the practice of community development with detrimental global impacts, suggesting that our most critical global environmental issues are rooted in local, day-to-day problems (Roseland, 1997a, 1997b). In particular, this movement notes that global risks affecting our human habitats are local matters, more often than not created by humans (Brown, 1997). Therefore action to address the negative consequences recognised at the global level requires human interventions at the local level, where humans experience the integration of legislation, policies and planning practice.

---

\(^3\) Dr Mark Roseland, MCIP, is the Director of the Community Economic Development Centre at Simon Fraser University. He is the editor of the international journal, *Local Environment* and has published a number of books, including *Towards Sustainable Communities: Resources for Citizens and Their Governments*. 
The Institute for Sustainable Communities, an independent, non-profit organisation located in the USA, provides a number of different international and local definitions for sustainable communities, offering two of these from their experience both locally and internationally. The second definition offered provides a useful description of the type of community approach I support for the purpose of this thesis. The Institute defines sustainable communities as:

. . . towns and cities that have taken steps to remain healthy over the long term. Sustainable communities have a strong sense of place. They have a vision that is embraced and actively promoted by all of the key sectors of society, including businesses, disadvantaged groups, environmentalists, civic associations, government agencies, and religious organisations. They are places that build on their assets and dare to be innovative. These communities value healthy ecosystems, use resources efficiently, and actively seek to retain and enhance a locally based economy. There is a pervasive volunteer spirit that is rewarded by concrete results. Partnerships between and among government, the business sector, and non-profit organisations are common. Public debate in these communities is engaging, inclusive and constructive. Unlike traditional community development approaches, sustainability strategies emphasise: the whole community (instead of just disadvantaged neighbourhoods); ecosystem protection; meaningful and broad-based citizen participation; and economic self-reliance. (Institute for Sustainable Communities, 2005, p3)

Although I agree with Roseland (1997a) that the definition of a sustainable community should be developed from a local perspective by encouraging local input and participation, the above definition provides a useful vision of a broad range of variables that can help guide the development a community at the local level. For example, it highlights a broader view of the community from various perspectives (environmental, social, cultural and economic), with a particular emphasis on the development of local capacity to plan, implement and sustain a future that community stakeholders have developed collectively. Furthermore, the definition entails a shift away from traditional approaches to community development, encouraging the innovative use of available resources, noting the importance of local capacities through volunteer efforts and the balanced participation of different types of organisations. The length of the definition is also important, as it provides thick

---

4 The Institute for Sustainable Communities, founded in 1991 in Vermont USA., helps communities in existing and emerging democracies solve problems while building a better future for themselves and the world.
descriptions of the multiple aspects that need to be considered in a community, highlighting the complexity of development when viewed from a holistic perspective guided by a vision of global sustainability.

Apart from some of the key themes of sustainable communities noted above, the definition also highlights two important differences regarding this perspective to addressing global sustainability. The first involves addressing issues in a collective way at the broader community level, rather than encouraging piecemeal solutions focused on specific issues which have a tendency to work in isolation from the interconnected jigsaw that makes up a community. The second is the emphasis on social interventions early in the development process, as noted in the modified version of Roseland’s framework offered in Figure 2.1. This includes enabling the connection of people and the building of relationships and networks at the local level, as a priority to address issues of the design and behaviour that contribute to the degradation of our planet.

**Figure 2.1: A Framework for Sustainable Community Development**

(adapted from Roseland [1997a, p. 24]).

Roseland’s approach demonstrates a shift in prioritisation from bricks and mortar planning, focused on the physical infrastructure of a community, to elevating the social aspects of communities in the process of local improvement. This approach encourages the use of social practices such as community development as an important lead approach to address broader community concerns and to inform future development at a broad scale. Furthermore, this developmental philosophy emphasises the role of human creativity in development, particularly at the local
level, to create cultural change towards a society where an economy serves its people and not vice versa (Max-Neef, 1991). This suggests a societal shift away from the existing economic paradigm based on individual wealth, towards community-based economics which encourages the integration of people, issues and ideas (Etzioni, 1994; Stead and Stead, 1994).

However, Roseland warns that the sustainable communities movement is not only about sustaining the quality of our lives, but also includes the continuous improvement of our communities to ensure their legacy to future generations is the best it can be (Roseland, 1997a, p. 2). Watkins et al., in their research on community-controlled development, support this view, suggesting that:

> The reality is that all small place communities that are not consciously and actively preserving and improving themselves are probably declining, although the decline may be slow and imperceptible for a time, like damp spots in a basement floor that suddenly become pools of water due to the sewer pipe below being blocked up by tree roots. (Watkins et al., 2003, p. 2)

The principal of continuous improvement and potential reinvention has been a common theme in the management literature, suggesting that organisations that do not continually focus on their own development have reduced sustainability (Dunphy et al., 2003; Elkin, 2001; Nadler and Tushman, 1992). I suggest that this view is transferable to the ongoing development of communities, particularly in urban environments. Australia’s focus on local development is predominantly directed towards communities that are perceived as “broken” or “disadvantaged” or it involves one-off planning and development projects. This fails to recognise the value a holistic view to the continuous improvement of all communities in Australia, to address and avoid the gradual decline that can occur as a result of a lack of holistic planning and encourages the local ownership of local problems and improvements. The current “command and control” approach to development in Australian communities has reduced the sense of ownership of local area issues and improvements by local people.

However, the continuous improvement of communities is not without its challenges. As highlighted by Watkins et al. (2003), this improvement needs to be aware of the subtle changes in today’s societies that pose significant threats to the future of small
place communities. Senge (2001, pp. 22–23) identifies this issue as a key “learning disability” affecting the success of organisations and, arguably, communities themselves. Specifically, he questions our ability to learn from experience when the consequences of our actions are no longer recognised in our learning horizon. For example, individuals rarely witness or experience the disposal of waste in their local communities. As a result individuals are not concerned about landfill and the need for recycling, as local actions are not connected to the broader impact of these actions.

The localisation of global issues in communities is difficult to put into practice (Cotter and Westcott, 1996; Spangenberg, 2002; Vrakking, 1995), in a way that considers and continually improves our understanding of the subtle consequences of our own local actions. This suggests that it is important to understand how the sustainable communities’ perspective fits into the broader context of the global debate. Subsection 2.2.2 situates the sustainable communities movement in the debate about sustainable development.

2.2.2. Locating the Sustainable Communities Movement

The term “sustainable development” was first coined in a 1987 report of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, often referred to as the Brundtland Report. In this report, entitled “Our Common Future”, sustainable development was defined as “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p. 43).

The analysis of definitions of sustainable development by Palmer et al. (1997) demonstrates that there is no agreement on the exact meaning of sustainability, supporting Roseland’s (1997a) view that such terminological fuzziness is used to forge consensus in promoting this perspective.

The international debate and dialogue regarding sustainability has officially increased only over the last 40 years⁵ (see Appendix 1). In this period a number of

⁵ A Chronology of the Environment and Sustainability can be found in Canada’s Sustainability Report (Institute for Research and Innovation in Sustainability, 2004)
landmark international events have aimed to develop collaborative global agendas and to establish the commitment of world leaders to this cause. Initially, these international meetings addressed issues of poverty and ecological integrity especially for the countries of the “South”. Over time, their agenda expanded to embrace emerging issues in the “North” due to the detrimental effects resulting from industrialisation. This included the North’s contribution to worldwide pollution and the impact of mass consumption on pollution, as well as the potential support that Northern nations should be providing to address poverty.

In addition, there was a growing recognition that the North could learn a great deal from the practices of the South in their approaches to sustainable development, particularly through development initiatives that are owned and implemented by community members at the local level (Brown, 1997; Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991; Freire, 1970; Max-Neef, 1991; Steginga and Dunn, 2001; Wright, 2000). This formed the basis for the sustainable communities movement which was formally launched at the World Conference on Environment and Development, producing Agenda 21 (UNCED, 1993). Section 3 of Agenda 21 emphasised the importance of participatory democracy through strengthening major groups in the development of plans and action to achieve sustainability at the local level.

A number of key themes that inform the sustainable communities’ approach to planning can be drawn from Chapter 27 of Agenda 21. They include the following:

- Ecological, social and economic integrity are vital for future generations:
- People and their social interaction, common bonds or goals and common territory are central to sustainable development;
- Local governance have a vital role to play in building a participatory democracy and self-sufficiency and
- Responsibility, time, patience, care and compassion are important for ensuring the appropriate care for the earth and the beings that inhabit it. (Cotter and Hannan, 1999; Cotter and Westcott, 1996; De Vita and Fleming, 2001; Steginga and Dunn, 2001)

These themes highlight the importance of the social dimensions of local development, with an emphasis on local stakeholders, in particular, the role of
community members in designing, managing and maintaining resources, in such a way as to leaves vital resources for future generations to use. The sustainable communities movement supports integrated local development by a synergistic approach to broad community improvement initiatives. It focuses on balancing local power in planning and making and implementing decisions among the various stakeholders who live, work or contribute to local communities, in a way that encourages the concept of sustained self-sufficiency in the local community.

I argue that Australia’s response to Agenda 21 has not reflected the sustainable communities’ view of local development. The emphasis on improving local planning practices has primarily focused on the improvement of practices undertaken by local councils. Although I support the need for these improvements, they do not reflect the holistic intentions of Agenda 21, particularly with relation to the role of other key stakeholders in the community. This is supported by Cotter and Westcott (1996, p. 11) who note, in their analysis of Agenda 21 in Australia, that local councils were only one among the nine “major groups” named as fundamental stakeholders in the improvement of local development. They suggest that Australia’s focus on improving local councils meant that other key stakeholder groups received only limited consideration in the application of Agenda 21. Non-profit organisations (or community organisations) were one of the nine.

Cotter and Westcott (1996, p. 24) note that, regardless of whether “consultation” has improved or not, the process remains shallow and tokenistic if the wider community is not represented and committed to the goals. In their analysis, they outline a variety of approaches to local planning, ranging from situations where the process is driven by the community and resources are provided by the council, to those where the process is driven by the council with the strategic involvement of the community, and support a balance between these two options wherever possible. In supporting their view, I note that Australia is far from achieving this balance. Here there is a strong emphasis on council-controlled development and a limited understanding of the potential and value of encouraging community-driven development, especially in urban communities. The following subsection discusses the importance of the citizen’s role in the sustainable communities movement, with a particular emphasis on community-controlled development as a potential guide to improving local planning and development practice.
2.2.3. The Citizen’s Role in Developing Sustainable Communities

Murphy Watkins and Cunningham (2003, pp. 6–11) introduce the concept of “organising for community controlled developments”, which entails a comprehensive approach to improving small residential communities by bringing together people in their shared living place to plan and deploy resources in ways that “enhance the local community, enrich society and advance social justice”. Aigner et al. (2002, p. 86) refer to this as “whole community organising”. This approach to local development is based on the assumption that

[w]ell organised residents and the “natural allies” they can garner are nearly always capable of reversing social and physical decline in their home community. (Watkins Murphy and Cunningham, 2003, p. 11)

Although I support the above approach to development, I suggest that it is more readily applicable to “disadvantaged” communities, where residents experience threats to their health, safety and security. While such efforts must continue, in this thesis I am more interested in enlarging the focus of this type of practice to apply to all Australian communities as a means by which they can contribute to global sustainability. These are largely the urban and suburban communities where most Australians live (Ife, 1998).

This focus on Australian urban and suburban environments raises a number of issues regarding the citizen’s ability to experience, witness and/or understand the subtle nature of change and the distant consequences of our collective actions on the Earth and its inhabitants (Doppelt, 2003; Roseland, 1997a, 1997b; Senge, 2001; Watkins Murphy and Cunningham, 2003). Professor Jim Ife (2003b), a leading author on community development in Australia, suggests that a community development focus is not an easy task in such environments, due to the changing boundaries and variety of connections individuals have outside their geographical community. This is further complicated by the fact that most community development efforts in Australia are still predominantly influenced by a piecemeal, needs-based approach that fails to apply a “whole community” approach to planning, even in areas considered “disadvantaged” (Aigner et al., 2002; Institute for Sustainable Communities, 2005). Furthermore, this piecemeal approach entails that the potential
of comprehensive community initiatives towards local sustainable development is wholly ignored.

Although I support Murphy Watkins and Cunningham’s development approach, I am concerned about their emphasis on community “control”. Informed decision-making is an important element in a broad awareness of the impacts of local decisions on global sustainability. With the lack of established community initiatives that involve community involvement and ownership at a comprehensive community level, the ability to have informed community members who have the time and skill to participate in these activities is challenging. More useful are the ideas of Cotter and Westcott’s (1996), which focus on a balance of ownership and participation by pooling together different stakeholder’s strengths and resources. They suggest that building up the local support infrastructure will ensure that efforts can be sustained beyond the involvement of external community stakeholders. A balanced approach that acknowledges and shares responsibility for the local community brings together different perspectives to allow for learning through collective experiences (Senge, 2001) as part of the development process.

Although (Cotter and Westcott, 1996) advocate balance, it is a challenge to achieve this balance in the current Australian environment around community planning and development. Embracing a “community-controlled” approach to development requires a shift away from the current centralised, command-and-control decision-making currently exercised by government organisations. This top-down approach continues to separate decisions from their point of impact: the local level. Wright notes how this command-and-control approach to making decisions occurs as a result of centralised nature of governments, suggesting that

\[
\text{[t]he greater distance between the two, and the more filters or channels the decision has to pass through to reach its destination, the greater is the degree of command and control . . . (permitting residents) little or no freedom of interpretation or action. (Wright, 2000, p. 20)}
\]

Although Wright (2000) also supports a balance, he suggests that the top-down approach is undertaken by governments in the development of communities for reasons of efficiency, as operations have to be repeated over and over again. Ife (2003a, p. 2) agrees, suggesting that the obsession with setting community
development objectives and specifying outcomes in Australia ignores the importance of assisting a community to be self-determining. The governments’ goal of clearly defined objectives is thus somewhat contradictory to the practice of community development itself.

I argue that Australia (Flannery, 2003) has been slow to recognise the importance of balancing power between the various stakeholders and adopt this strategy in practice, especially with relation to community participation and the ownership of comprehensive planning initiatives. As an antidote to the dominant paradigm of centralised community development, I argue that it is important initially to potentially over-emphasise “community-controlled development” as a first step to improving Australia’s contribution to sustainable communities, with the intention of reviewing the balance between various stakeholders as community control becomes established in Australia. However, for the purposes of this thesis, I will refer to these approaches as “comprehensive community initiatives”.

The value of adopting a comprehensive community approach is particularly important to sustaining a continuous improvement approach in local communities. As highlighted by Murphy Watkins and Cunningham (2003, p. 45):

…although a less tidy approach to top-down business efficient approaches to development, the slow (often messy) changes that are achieved brings a fundamental and longer lasting effect on the local community, by ensuring improvement initiatives are embedded into local practice.

This provides a balance between the three main sources of power they identify as money, public authority and people, with money conventionally being considered the most powerful source of power in industrialised nations. In this way, comprehensive community initiatives are well aligned to the sustainable communities’ movement, which aims to increase the power of people in their communities in addressing local problems and planning for continuous improvement.
Although there are a number of examples of comprehensive community initiatives provided by Murphy Watkins and Cunningham, their reference to two key assessments of initiatives conducted in the USA has proved to be most useful in understanding the benefits and challenges of this approach. The first assessment, conducted by Pitcoff (1999; 2002), focused on five urban neighbourhoods across the USA which implemented comprehensive community initiatives using community-controlled efforts. In the rebuilding community initiative a neighbourhood governance structure was created, rooted in resident-driven multi-group partnerships and focused on reforming local services, and reconnecting households and participants in community life as well as enhancing family stability (Pitcoff, 2002).

The second assessment, conducted by the Development Training Institute (Kingsley et al., 1997), focused on a comprehensive community initiative conducted in the District of Columbia. Both involved neighbours learning to apply an asset-based approach with a particular focus on finding practical ways in which to use their community’s existing institutions and service agencies for transforming people and community building. All the projects highlighted above received external funding and focused on reforming human services as well as community development initiatives. I support this approach, because it suggests that a comprehensive approach to community development can also contribute to social service reform (see Beilharz, 2002).

These comprehensive community initiatives were chosen to address the unsustainability of previous local development efforts that seek the involvement of the community (Pitcoff, 2002). Although this approach to community development was challenging, the assessment found reduced feelings of dependency and improved attitudes of self-reliance, self-confidence and responsibility by local residents (Kingsley, 1997, p. 3). However, Pitcoff (2002) highlights the way that the initial hope and activity was often followed by the pain involved in organising at the community level, suggesting that, while these initiatives showed promise, more work was required to sustain these initiatives at the community level.

\footnote{These include the Dudley Street Neighbourhood Initiative in Boston (see Medoff and Sklar 1994), Rollingwood Neighbourhood Association in Austin Texas}

\footnote{The project was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and included neighbourhoods in Boston, Denver, Detroit, Philadelphia and Washington (Pitcoff, 1999).}
The challenges identified in the two assessments include:

- **Balancing partnerships**: it was difficult to break the traditional partnership arrangements between funders and community members to reflect a balance approach to power which did not undermine working relationships and goal achievement.

- **Outside money for inside goals**: it was difficult to strike a balance between the funders and external agents guiding the development and the ability of community members to set their local agenda, highlighting the funders’ lack of experience around shifting these relationships and structures.

- **Dependency on single donor**: it was found that the level of funding provided maintained the dependency of these initiatives on external sources of funding.

- **Improving participation of non-traditional partners**: it was found that local governments, in particular, were not sufficiently involved in a way that would have proved useful to these comprehensive community initiatives.

- **Assumed competencies of community members**: it was often a problem for community members to realise their potential through their lack of basic skills (such as running effective meetings, developing organisations or finding financing for a project or developing a certain type of program).

- **Time-consuming nature of approach**: it takes a long time to plan, implement and evaluate a project.

- **Evaluation complexity**: it is necessary to investigate ways of evaluating these comprehensive initiatives.

- **Capacity of community organisations**: it was found that some of the organisations that supported these initiatives had management and financial difficulties and a heavy staff turnover.

- **Entrepreneurship and affordable housing a secondary concern**: it was found that the initial focus was on developing “responsible” residents (often linked to
life chances for their children) and that social enterprises and affordable housing were a secondary concern (Kingsley, 1997; Kingsley et al., 1997; Messinger, 2004; Pitcoff, 1999, 2002; Watkins et al., 2003).

For the purposes of this thesis, there are two important issues that can be drawn from the above challenges. The first involves applying approaches to community development that are broader than the dominant needs-based approach which currently exists in Australia. Such an approach will include social service reform as well as developing comprehensive community initiatives. The second focus is around the capacity of community members and their organisations to support, sustain and continue to improve these types of initiatives.

Interestingly, Pitcoff (2002) highlights how the selection of sites was influenced by the fact that there were community-based organisations that were considered capable of leading these comprehensive community initiatives. However, Watkins Murphy and Cunningham (2003) highlight problems experienced in these projects, particularly with relation to their difficulties around management and finance. The following section introduces the field of community development in an Australian context, introducing the asset-based approach to this practice to support comprehensive community initiatives. It introduces the work of community development practitioners in Australia, highlighting issues around sustaining and supporting these initiatives, particularly the role of community members and the capacity of local organisations.

2.3. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT – A TOOL FOR COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.

*Margaret Mead*

Community development provides processes through which people can (and must) contribute collectively to the way a society is run (Ife, 1998). By developing social networks, community development practice seeks to create trust and reciprocity (Etzioni, 1994). This calls attention to the idea that civic virtue – and social capital – are most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations.
This section provides an overview of the field of community development in Australia. It introduces two key approaches, emphasising the value of incorporating asset-based community development as a key approach to local development initiatives. It also analyses a number of Australian examples of this preferred approach, revealing a common implementation issue experienced in these projects. Lastly, the section highlights the issue around building the foundations for this preferred approach, introducing community organisations as a potential place to sustain these efforts.

2.3.1. The Field of Community Development

The field of community development has a relatively short history in Australia. It emerged in the early 1970s when the Whitlam Labour Government established a plan through which community groups could receive small assistance grants (Kenny, 1994, 1999). Since then, it has grown as a field of practice and as an occupation generally situated in the social and community services industry rather than a broader urban (social) planning perspective.

The social services focus has predominantly been directed towards assisting people in a community to identify their needs and obtain resources in a way that collectively empowers people to have more control over their lives (Ife, 1998, 2003b; Kenny, 1994, 1999). However, Kenny (1994; 1999) argues that community development is broader than the welfare sector. Indeed, community development is heavily linked to new ways of viewing and organising the social relations in communities. Kenny supports the more comprehensive and strategic role that community development can play through comprehensive community initiatives. However, its location in social services practice has limited its capacity to achieve the large-scale transformation of society required for sustainable development (Blum-Kusterer and Hussain, 2001; Doppelt, 2003; Dunphy et al., 2003; Post and Altman, 1994; Stead and Stead, 1994).
2.3.2. Two Paths to Community Development

Kretzman and McKnight (1993) discuss two key paths to community development. The most dominant, to date, has been what they refer to as the needs-based approach to community development. This perspective has embedded community development practice in the social and community services sector, predominantly focusing on specific needs rather than comprehensive community initiatives (Aigner et al., 2002; Ife, 1998; Watkins et al., 2003). Most Australian financial and human investment in community development has been directed towards rural and low socio-economic communities, predominantly on economic and social programs based on identified hardships.

The needs-based approach finds its roots in “serving” people’s deficiencies and problems through specific project-based funding. Kretzman and McKnight (1993), in their reference to the “needs-driven dead end” highlight a number of key points that have made the needs-based approach problematic and arguably somewhat unsustainable as a sole focus in the long term, including:

- The promotion of a self-fulfilling prophecy based on half-truths which promotes images, language and “maps” around the idea of “needy”, problematic and deficient people.

- The promotion of a system that only rewards communities for their deficiencies and problems, thus creating “client neighbourhoods” rather than neighbourhoods that practice capacity-focused development based on the principles of self-sufficiency (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993).

The identification of these “client neighbourhoods” creates an industry that further educates, supports and promotes community disadvantage as a means to gain employment. J. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) show how this approach only guarantees maintenance and survival, creating a cycle of dependence that does not address contributions required for the future. This ignores the continuous

---

8 See (Kretzmann and Green, 1998; Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993, 1996; Kretzmann, McKnight and Puntenney, 1996a, 1996b, 1998; Kretzmann, McKnight and Sheehan, 1997; Kretzmann, McKnight and Turner, 1996)
improvement approach that should be used to develop sustainable communities (Roseland, 1997a; Watkins et al., 2003).

In addition to the problems identified above, the needs-based approach is also problematic from a comprehensive community initiating perspective, as

- The cost of fixing problems and deficiencies is considered expensive and can only be allocated to areas that are considered disadvantaged.

- Most inner urban communities in Australia do not fall in the category of “disadvantage” and, therefore, receive limited (if any) community development.

- This focus has traditionally been separate from broader community-wide development initiatives. It usually addresses specific needs that are often influenced by the focus and direction of the organisation providing support.

The other path to community development, identified by J. Kretzmann and John McKnight (1993), is called the asset-based approach (ABCD). This approach emphasises the importance of mobilising human capacity in communities and building from existing assets to create lasting change (Beilharz, 2002; Cameron, 2003; Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993; Walker, et al., 2003). It works from the analogy that a “glass is half full” (rather than “half empty”, as in the deficit approach), arguing that individual and local power exists to create healthy and sustainable communities.

2.3.3. Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)

The asset-based community development approach is premised on the idea that people need to take control of their own lives. It is committed to the idea that people can and should take more responsibility for identifying their own needs and managing their own welfare, resources and directions (Kenny, 1994, 1999). This is well aligned to the holistic approach to developing sustainable communities supported by this thesis.

Different terminology has been used to describe the asset-based approach to community development. Other terms utilised in Australia are a strengths-based approach to community development (Beilharz, 2002) and community capacity
building (Chaskin et al., 2001). Regardless of the terminology, there are a larger number of common elements to this community development approach, including

- A focus on building relationships through participatory practices involving working with, rather than for community members;

- Acknowledging the power imbalances potentially created between “experts” and “clients”;

- Identifying and building from what exists in the community by maximising the capacity and impact of neighbourhood resources and institutions;

- Educating and empowering community members to build from their assets and strengths; encouraging them to be their own agents of change by creating the conditions to direct the process of change;

- Identifying and addressing social, personal, cultural and structural constraints to people’s growth and liberation;

- Developing capable and effective neighbourhood collaborations to which governance authority could gradually be devolved and

- Facilitating the application of self-determined goals to enhance the community’s ownership of collective ideas and encourage reflective action in the community (Beilharz, 2002; Cunningham and Mathie, 2002; De Vita and Fleming, 2001; Dorfman, 1998; Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993, 1996; Pitcoff, 2002).

This asset-based approach introduces the idea that the importance of associational life in any community (in particular, in “disadvantaged” communities) is vastly underestimated (Kenny, 1994, 1999; Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993). As a result, it encourages the connection of local assets and strengths to multiply power and effectiveness at the local level. This supports the philosophical underpinning of comprehensive community initiatives and supports the sustainable communities movement, due to its focus on enhanced local power and informed ownership. While this thesis highlights the importance of adopting this approach, it also acknowledges Messinger’s warnings about adopting it as the only approach to change. She argues:
Most CCIs [comprehensive community initiatives] do not adopt a pure version of the Kretzmann and McKnight approach; instead they use a modified strengths orientation and asset focus that balances community problems and social issues with personal and community strengths. (Messinger, 2004, p. 540)

While I agree with Messinger’s views, once again, I also recognise the long road community development has to travel until it balances its needs-based perspective with an asset-based one. The reorientation of community development towards an asset-based approach is very recent and is still relatively untested in Australia (Beilharz, 2002). Therefore, to incorporate this approach and thinking into the mainstream in the field of community development requires a great deal of work. Although few research examples of this approach exist in Australia, two of the early success stories of ABCD initiatives undertaken in Australia are described in the following section.

2.3.4. ABCD – Australian Examples

Asset-based community development in Australia is still in its infancy. While some projects are currently being conducted, very little research has reported on the progress of this approach. The work of two key research teams were reviewed for the purposes of this thesis. The first was a project undertaken by Linda Beilharz in Bendigo in Victoria. The second is the work of Cameron and Gibson, in both the Latrobe Valley, Victoria, and Eagleby in Queensland.

(a) The Shared Action Experience Project – Bendigo Victoria

Shared action experience was a three-year community development project managed by Linda Beilharz⁹ and funded by the Ian Potter Foundation ($350,000). Using the notion of a strengths-based approach, the project undertook a comprehensive community initiative to address child health and safety. The project involved working with adults and local groups in the suburb of Long Gully, Bendigo, to mobilise resources and undertake community building activities in the area. This ABCD process involved four key stages, as outlined in Table 2.4.

---

⁹ Linda Beilharz was working for St Lukes Australia.
TABLE 2.2: ABCD PROCESS FOR SHARED ACTION EXPERIENCE (BEILHARZ, 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Getting to know the community in a range of sites in Long Gully.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Months 0–6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>Working with the community to develop a shared vision and identify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Months 6–12</td>
<td>strategies and resources to implement the vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>Implementing the strategies (known as projects).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Months 13–30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>Withdrawing shared action from the communities and consolidating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Months 30–36</td>
<td>resources to maintain the initiatives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seeking to develop a “climate of hope”, the project worked to promote the belief that everybody in the community has something to offer; that change is possible; that opportunities can be created with participation and that ongoing involvement is necessary.

Beilharz (2002) notes that finding definitive measurements regarding community development outcomes is complex. Although the project was difficult to measure, it achieved the following outcomes:

- Increased social networks for participants:
- Increased sense of responsibility of adults for all the children in the community:
- Increased reciprocated support between people in Long Gully:
- Increased social support between new friends and neighbours:
- Increased numbers of people studying:
- Increased participation of people in activities in Long Gully and other places:
- Increased investment by welfare and health agencies and local, state and commonwealth governments in Long Gully (Beilharz, 2002, p. 78).

Although the project had to be extended for another two years, despite Beilharz’s early efforts to avoid this outcome, a later review of the project revealed that new activities were being initiated by local community members without the organising efforts of the project team. Although this demonstrated that the project had generated a level of sustainability, Beilharz raised concerns regarding the capacity of the community to continue the efforts of shared action as a comprehensive community
Andrew McCallum, CEO of St Luke’s Anglicare and president of the Australian Council of Social Services, also highlighted the issue of sustaining the project in the local community, suggesting that:

> there is no real end. If the perceived successes are built around a “project” then it will not be sustainable . . . Projects finish, communities continue, so the unlocking and the way forward must be built on the skills and expertise that will continue within the community once the formal project has ceased. (Beilharz, 2002, p. vi)

As a result, Chapter 9 of her book highlights the need to develop community organisations with the potential to support and sustain these types of initiatives. While Beilharz believed she had achieved more than was set out to achieve in the initial project, she states:

> With the benefit of hindsight, we would also focus more on increasing the resources of the community house. The Long Gully Community House is the main agency that provides the continuity of community building activities within Long Gully. Compared to Shared Action’s two full-time staff, the community house has excelled in its endeavours to maintain the momentum, it just does not have the resources to do so at the same level. (Beilharz, 2002, p. 89).

This statement demonstrates the necessity to build local foundations to ensure that communities can maintain the vitality of interaction and common purpose once the excitement of creating a specific project is over. Beilharz points to the need to develop the capacity of the community house to further support ABCD initiatives. This significant finding influenced the direction and interest of this thesis and will be discussed further, following the overview of the second ABCD project.

(b) The Latrobe Valley and Eagleby ABCD Projects

Cameron and Gibson (2003; 2005) discuss two ABCD projects which involved a comprehensive community initiative with a community economic development focus that was underpinned by the work of Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) and the Community Economies Collective\(^\text{10}\) (2001). The first of their projects was located in

---

\(^\text{10}\) The Community Economies Collective rejects the theory that the economy is generally thought of in terms of wage labour, capitalist enterprise and the production. This conceptualises an invisible and disconnected base of community members, rather than people involved in the community and its activities, as in the ABCD approach.
the Latrobe Valley in Victoria. The community partnering project was a pilot project initiated in 1999 as an integrated economic and social response to the disadvantage experienced as a result of a loss of major industry. The second project was located in Eagleby, Queensland, a suburban community recognised by government departments as experiencing economic and social disadvantage. The Eagleby Community Enterprise Project was initiated as a result of the work undertaken in the Latrobe Valley. Both projects involved a similar approach, although the latter was modified as a result of the lessons learned from the community partnering project. In addition to reviewing Cameron and Gibson’s work, I was fortunate enough to undertake numerous site visits to the Eagleby project, which further informed my understanding of the project.

These fundamental elements of these participatory action research process applied by these research practitioners, involved four key stages:

- acknowledging existing representations of the communities;
- generating new representations;
- creating spaces for people to identify with these representations and
- providing opportunities for people to act on that identification (Cameron, 2003, p. 4).

Both projects engaged community members as project administrators that reported to a steering committee comprising representatives from government and community organisations. This project administrator ran the projects as an adjunct to the community organisation. The projects were broken into two stages. The first involved an ideas festival intended to elicit community involvement and participation in the development of ideas for community enterprises that the participants were willing to work on. The second stage then focused on the implementation of these ideas (Cameron and Gibson, 2005).

In comparison to Beilharz’s project, both projects received significantly less funding and were assigned less time (two years) for the process. Regardless of these short time frames, there were a number of different outcomes that were achieved which
demonstrated the potential of this approach for community development. For example, from a narrow economic perspective, both projects formed a number of non-capitalist community economy enterprises that provided goods and services directly to the community at little or no cost. Another benefit was that these enterprises were not isolated from other parts of the local economy, with a range of involvement, from volunteers to local businesses who would supply resources, as part of the asset-based approach. In addition, both projects raised funding grants, with the Latrobe Valley acquiring over $100,000 of one-off grants for three of the four enterprises (Cameron and Gibson, 2005).

Although many benefits and outcomes were achieved that showed the potential and promise of the application of ABCD in a comprehensive community initiative, challenges were also experienced in these projects. This is not surprising in light of the complexity of organising the broader community with limited experiences, time and money to draw from. Similar to Beilharz’s project, the time required to develop networks and ensure that they were capable of supporting ongoing community development efforts was underestimated. So was the time taken by the government in assisting the sustainability of the project, although this happened only in the later stages. It involved shifting the mindset of government organisations from a traditional program-funding role based on needs to one where the government contributes to the development and capacity of the local community (Cameron and Gibson, 2005, p. 164). The authors suggest that the ability to work with networks that were capable of offering strategic, hands-on and ongoing business, managerial and planning support could have made a difference to the sustainability of the enterprises created. This support is especially needed to help with the ongoing development of community enterprises needed as these enterprises grew.

All three projects discussed above highlight issues around sustaining community development efforts in the local community beyond the involvement of the research practitioner. While Kenny (1999) highlights the importance of ongoing commitment and investment required by local community members to ensure successful community development outcomes, Wright suggests that the sustainability of community development efforts is questionable. He notes that

[a] community does not just happen, and experience shows that it is incredibly difficult to create and sustain. While the
countless community development officers employed by both statutory and voluntary agencies over the past 20 years may have contributed significantly to the ongoing debate about how to build community, it is a sad fact that, with a few notable exceptions, they have failed to deliver anything tangible or lasting. (Wright, 2000, p. 145).

Wright’s views, in line with the experiences of the above mentioned projects, does raise concerns regarding the ability to sustain efforts at the community level. Although sustaining efforts can be influenced by a number of issues, such as inappropriate time and funding, it is important to develop foundations at the community level as the first stage of a comprehensive community initiative. This recognises that potential places of support, such as community organisations, have capacity issues of their own, and may therefore be unable to support and sustain community efforts described above (Beilharz, 2002).

All three research practitioners discussed in the examples above recognised the potential of community organisations to assist sustain and further develop ABCD efforts in association with the research practitioner. However, while both experiences differed concerning the practitioner’s relationship with these organisations, the capacity and capability of the organisation was highlighted as a significant issue. Community development projects need to focus on the development of community organisations as the first stage of a comprehensive community development project underpinned by ABCD. The following section discusses the role of community organisations in Australia, highlighting some of the challenges facing the shift towards supporting ABCD efforts for project sustainability.

2.4. BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS IN AUSTRALIA

Communities continue, regardless of projects, that continue to come and go (Beilharz, 2002). The importance of ensuring that a community has the capacity to support, sustain and improve local initiatives cannot be underestimated. The development of local foundations to support community development initiatives are important for the sustainability of efforts, regardless of whether they are conducted by government, business or the community itself.
Although it is important to ensure that “external” programs are supported, sustained and improved, it is also important to recognise that the capacity of communities and their organisations needs strengthening to ensure they are legitimate partners and active participant in the development of their communities. This is done through escalating the source of people power in the community to address the dominant sources of power, namely money and public authority (Watkins Murphy and Cunningham, 2003). As noted by Cotter and Hannan:

[a]s achieving sustainable development is a long term process, commitment will have to be created over and over again. Both councils and community groups will have to develop innovative ways of maintaining the interest and involvement of residents. This may include progressing from the seasonal festival or community ed approach to making the Local Agenda 21 program the mainstream theme of community and council activities. (Cotter and Hannan, 1999, p. 29)

However, organising people at the local level is difficult (Aigner et al., 2002) and sustaining these efforts has proved to be a remote goal for many comprehensive community initiatives. I suggest that sustaining these requires greater consideration of who can continue improvement efforts when external support has “left the community”.

The two Australian case studies discussed in subsection 2.3.4 (see Beilharz, 2002; Cameron and Gibson, 2005) provided useful examples of the difficulties of sustaining and improving comprehensive community initiatives, highlighting the potential role of both community organisations and local government in doing so. These two organisations were also identified as being important contributors in the development of sustainable communities in Agenda 21. However, as highlighted earlier, the key focus in Australia was directed towards the improvement of local government planning practice and not towards the role of community organisations. Section 3 of Agenda 21 notes the importance of strengthening the role of major groups, and in Chapter 27 the importance of strengthening the role of non-governmental organisations to ensure they are legitimate partners in developing sustainable communities in the future is underscored. Section 27.1 of the Agenda states:

Non-governmental organisations play a vital role in the shaping and implementation of participatory democracy . . . Formal and
informal organizations, as well as grass-roots movements, should be recognized as partners in the implementation of Agenda 21. The nature of the independent role played by non-governmental organisations within a society calls for real participation; therefore, independence is a major attribute of non-governmental organisations and is the precondition of real participation. (UNCED, 1993, Section 27.1, p. 282)

These organisations were identified as potential sources for local independence, highlighting the importance of “real participation” as opposed to the tokenistic approach of local planning efforts in Australia (Cotter and Westcott, 1996). Section 27.3 further suggests:

Non-governmental organisations . . . possess well-established and diverse experience, expertise and capacity in fields which will be of particular importance to the implementation and review of environmentally sound and socially responsible sustainable development . . . The community of non-governmental organisations, therefore offers a global network that should be tapped, enabled and strengthened in support of efforts to achieve these common goals. (UNCED, 1993, Section 27.3, p. 282)

Although I agree with the potential contribution of non-governmental organisations, I suspect that the capacity of many Australian community organisations, to support comprehensive community initiatives, is questionable. I suggest that until these organisations are considered as potential partners and resources for comprehensive community initiatives, the drive to build their capacity will not be understood. Furthermore, community organisations in Australia require a significant shift in their thinking from the current needs-based social services focus to be part of this broader agenda. However, no studies to date have examined what is required for these centres to become a foundation for comprehensive community initiatives.

The following section provides an overview of community organisations in Australia, highlighting some of the challenges which can affect a shift towards supporting comprehensive community initiatives. It introduces the view that before community organisations can develop communities they need to improve their own sustainability and the impact of their local coordination and representation.
2.4.1. Community Organisations in Australia

Community organisations, in their current form, have not existed for very long in Australia. Indeed, their development has lagged, as a result of a period\(^\text{11}\) of development where cutbacks, rationalisation and control have largely been the solution of the day (Taylor, 1986). As a result, many community organisations in Australia tend to be:

- **Under-resourced:** their financial and other resources are limited and focused on specific short-term outcomes;

- **Vulnerable:** government funding in Australia diminishes the confidence of these organisations to advance their own cause in the community;

- **Victims of rhetoric:** research is on, for but not with these organisations and the inflexibility of government programs and policies fails to enhance their full potential in the community;

- **Needing support to build social capital:** the skills and resources to build social capital in communities are often not supported by municipalities and

- **Organisationally challenged:** at their worst, they are inward, exclusive, elitist, hierarchical and clogged up with the same old faces (Abbey et al., 2003, p. 4).

In 2003, the Australian “Communities in Control Conference” provided a platform for community organisations to create a Community Manifesto to improve community organisations in Australia. This Manifesto introduced 10 leading challenges for this sector (Abbey et al., 2003). These are outlined in Table 2.5.

---

\(^{11}\) The period described by Taylor reflects the 1980s management approach based on the rationalisation of services. Due to their lack of internal development, it would be difficult for many of these community organisations to have moved beyond this historical level of change.
**Table 2.3: 10 Key Challenges for Community Organisations in Australia (Developed from the Community Manifesto [Abbey et al., 2003, p. 9].)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHALLENGE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Australia needs a well-funded, socio-epidemiological capacity to generate good quality large-cohort data at the local level (and this research must involve the research subjects in decisions about its uses).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment and evaluation</td>
<td>Community groups should be assessed on their own and their aggregated contribution to participants, consumers, the sector and society rather than on narrow input-output criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Community groups should be supported to reach out to a new population to expand, revive, refresh and diversify their membership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance and learning</td>
<td>Community group boards need to regularly overhaul themselves to balance safety with dynamism. Boards should reflect the diversity of their communities, consumers and society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure and organisational capacity building</td>
<td>More concrete support is needed for community groups to make the most effective use of limited staff numbers and physical resources and to build their infrastructure capacity – skills, management, systems, equipment, training and shared resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Australian tax law does not encourage individuals, business and government to fund community groups adequately and without commercial influence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Community groups need to be supported to adopt new technologies in administration, advocacy, networking, learning strategy transfer and social support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation and collaboration</td>
<td>Greater sharing of policies, procedures and strategies between community groups should be facilitated. Large organisations should respect, value and support small groups in delivering programs within a locally designed and locally relevant framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and community partnerships</td>
<td>Partnerships between business and community groups should be facilitated to provide an improved access to finance, knowledge and skills and a commitment to work together towards social responsibility and a healthy and viable society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership and advocacy</td>
<td>Leaders should be supported and celebrated to advocate social change, take risks, defend unpopular positions and pioneer new approaches. More people from a wider range of backgrounds must be included in courses and mentored for leadership roles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vulnerability of community organisations in Australia has increased under the current Howard government, which has sought to silence any form of representation that speaks out against it. This has resulted in many organisations becoming increasingly tentative about their representative role in light of conditional funding arrangements, which affect their future sustainability (Mowbray, 2003). As a result, the interest in reinvigorating democracy has been undermined by a concurrent rise in neo-liberal ideas and public choice theory that sees non-government organisations as selfish and self-serving interest groups with little representative legitimacy (Maddison et al., 2004, p. x). This worldview rejects established partnerships.

12 The core of many non-profit organisations' financial earnings is predominantly government funding. Therefore the organisational dependence for survival is heavily influenced by government policy.
between community organisations and government in favour of a competitive model in which organisations are encouraged to imitate the practices of for-profit enterprises. This reinforces Watkins Murphy and Cunningham’s (2003) view of power in community, highlighting the way that money and public authority are the dominant power sources in Australian communities. While I believe that community organisations can benefit and learn from for-profit enterprises, I suggest that this drive towards developing social enterprises through these community organisations can inhibit the comprehensive role that they can play in the development of sustainable communities.

Despite the difficulty of these power imbalances, I suggest that community organisations are able to address some of the challenges they face. Ironically, while community organisations have attempted to address many of the needs of their local communities, they have been ignoring their own needs and have failed to balance their external development role with the internal development of their own organisations.

A USA study of neighbourhood associations highlights the issue of internal development, suggesting that community organisations are embedded in, and limited by, their own environment (Rabrenovic, 1996). This study highlighted a number of early parameters found in (what were considered) successful community organisations. They included a shift in focus from the external needs-based approach to projects to include a focus on improving their own internal capacity. While these organisations have the capacity to strengthen themselves, they require a shift in focus to create purpose-driven organisations that balance their internal and external approach to development (Nadler and Tushman, 1992).

The study of these US community organisations also note that a shift in focus towards more compact geographic areas with a smaller numbers of participants who share a clear stake in the neighbourhood is important to the change process (Rabrenovic, 1996). While I support this view, I suggest that with the result of urban sprawl in urban areas and the rationalisation of government services, the ability to achieve this in Australia is challenging.
As funding is predominantly focused on the delivery of external projects, the lack of financial and other resources to support internal development makes it difficult for these organisations to finance their internal development. This suggests that a similar shift in mindset from the needs-based perspective is needed in these resource-constrained organisations. An approach that identifies the range of assets and strengths available to these organisations can help to strengthen their capacity to support comprehensive community initiatives.

An example of the application of Kretzmann and McKnight’s asset-based approach in an organisational setting was conducted by Puntenney (2000) on behalf of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute and the Chicago Foundation for Women (CFW). This involved a network of eight organisations (later increased to 10) participating in a series of workshops to examine their organisational sustainability in the asset-based framework and to develop a new model for organisational practice. The study noted a number of improvements in the way organisations viewed their internal development, in particular highlighting significant improvements in strategic planning (Puntenney, 2000, p. 3). Therefore, adopting an asset-based perspective to the development of the community organisation has been adopted for the purposes of this study.

However, while it is essential to focus on the organisational survival of community organisations, Rubin (2000) argues that these organisations also need to refocus onto a broader role of influencing the local environment, through coalitions and leveraging resources underpinned by a specific community development focus. Furthermore, many authors note that the history of community organisations has often demonstrated that the people running them are not able to step out of their “neighbourhoods” to drive change efforts that contribute to the broader global response (Brown, 1997; Chavis, 2001; De Vita and Fleming, 2001; Etzioni, 1994; Hibberd and Harker, 2001). Although it is challenging, the Community Manifesto highlights the potential of community organisations to create new visions and find ways to develop their capacity to represent broader local issues (Abbey et al., 2003, p. 4). Furthermore, it highlights the importance of community organisations to combat feelings of powerlessness that are derived from the needs-based view by embracing the shift towards community networks, by strengthening partnerships and by building on what already exists in the community. Although I support this view, I
suggest that Australian community organisations have a considerable road to travel before we have the foundations to support these broader global goals. Therefore, suggesting we need to go back to the very foundation and build capacity at this level as a means to support comprehensive community initiatives.

The following section introduces organisational development as an important field to inform the changes needed in community organisations in order to construct this new map of development. It focuses on strengthening community organisations to enable them to support comprehensive community initiatives by applying an asset-based perspective, both to the community and the community organisation.

2.4.2. Building Organisational Capacity

The Urban Institute introduced the concept of building capacity of non-profit organisations\footnote{This study focused on large non-profit organisations in the USA who are responsible for providing grants and support to community organisations.} to contribute to the development of sustainable communities (De Vita and Fleming, 2001). In their study at the Urban Institute, De Vita and Fleming (2001, p. 6) emphasise that building the capacity of community organisations is not a simple task. With no magic formula guaranteeing success, it is not surprising that there is little agreement on where to begin or what to do. Organisational development is premised on collaborative management efforts to shift organisational culture through vehicles such as visioning, empowerment, learning and problem solving (French and Bell, 1999). This includes resource development, financial management, strategic planning, board recruitment and development and communications.

Loza (2004) emphasises the benefits of building the capacity of community organisations through business and community partnerships in Australia. He notes:

\begin{quote}
Such partnerships are becoming increasingly important and those that focus on developing the organisational capacity of community organisations can be effective vehicles for sustaining a vibrant civil society and ultimately sustainable business practice. (Loza, 2004, p. 308)
\end{quote}

These were his findings after reviewing the Cisco Systems “The Smith Family” capacity-building partnership in Australia, which successfully demonstrated real and tangible benefits to business, community organisations and the communities they...
work within. However, while this example showed significant improvements in community organisation, it is important to note that The Smith Family is considered a comparatively large non-profit organisation in Australia, compared to the community centre that has been chosen for this study. The social marketing benefits of supporting a small community centre versus one of Australia’s larger non-profit organisations is significant, and the level of business support received is difficult to replicate in small non-profit organisations. This can be confirmed by the constant testing of private sector organisations that were approached during the research project to come on board as potential partners to help build the capacity of the community organisation. This included government organisations. This is not to say that such support would never occur, however, but it does suggest that the challenge of finding these types of partnerships is greater where the organisation is perceived to be small.

While the organisational size may be important, the approach to developing the organisation may not be so obvious. Community development and organisational development, in the broadest sense, possess many similarities due to their focus on the human and social elements of change. Not unlike community development, organisational development has only emerged as a field since the 1970s. However, community development has been applied in broader, less contained and potentially less controlled environments, and is often challenged by the complexity of finding common causes to entice local effort (although many opportunities to do so do exist).

Figure 2.4 provides an example of the range of activities that contribute to the effective development of an organisation. These include motivating change, creating a vision, developing political support, managing the transition and sustaining momentum. These aspects of organisational development are not linear and many of the items listed can, and often do, occur simultaneously. Although all these areas of change are important, this research project is particularly interested in issues around sustaining momentum and the need to ensure that development efforts continue beyond the involvement of the change agent.
Figure 2.2: Activities Contributing to Effective Change Management (Cummings and Worley, 1997, p. 154)

While the above diagram outlines some of the activities that should be considered in the organisational development process, there are also a number of key factors that are important to the success of the development activities. These include:

- A planned process of change for the board, management and staff;
- A process that is participative and empowering;
- Clear communication and on-going dialogue;
- Support for teams and teamwork that encourages ownership and management of processes, systems and relationships;
- Structures that promote innovation, learning and change;
- Action research processes that combine learning and doing – an iterative process where the lessons from one inform the actions of the other (Burke, 1992; Employers’ Organisation for Local Government, 2004; French and Bell, 1999;
Due to my interest in comprehensive community initiatives, and the need to balance the myriad of internal and external strategies in the organisation (Dunphy et al., 2003), a framework is suggested as a way to guide the development of the community organisation selected for this study. This guide has been used to ensure that the development of the organisation is guided by the broader context of a comprehensive community initiative underpinned by the sustainable communities movement.

Plummer (2000) offers a framework of action for building the capacity of organisations to improve community development efforts at the local level. This framework acknowledges the broader context of community development efforts, highlighting their impact on the organisational context. Although I found this framework a useful guide when considering the development of the community centre, I found that a few modifications were required to address the different context in which the framework was being applied. For example, Plummer’s framework was developed for municipalities in countries of the South, rather than community organisations in inner urban areas in a country of the North (Plummer, 2000). Furthermore, this study is focused more on applying community development initiatives for comprehensive community initiatives underpinned by an asset-based approach to development. Therefore a number of small variations have been made in the two orange boxes (i.e. elements and vehicles of community development approach) in Figure 2.2.
Figure 2.2: Framework for Action: Development of Community Organisations towards an ABCD (Adapted from Plummer [2000, p. 85]).

Figure 2.2 highlights both the internal and external elements of the organisation. In particular, it emphasises the pivotal role of the management structure in balancing the internal and external factors of development. Although all the elements identified in the model are important to the development of the organisation, in this research project the long-term nature of organisational development required prioritisation around the specific points of leverage that would help speed up change to fit the limited time frame of the project. However, while it was anticipated that internal development would require the first attention, external developments would also have to progress as opportunities arose. Therefore, the areas of the model that focus on community development, while important, would not receive the same level of emphasis as the internal elements of the organisation. The external operating context will be referred to in light of its impacts on the internal development strategies in the community organisation.

While the above figure and factors provide a useful guide for organisation development, I argue that these processes can be difficult to apply in community organisations in light of the limited resources (especially time) available for internal
development. Many authors have highlighted the challenges and different focuses required due to the fact that many of these community organisations have a structure made up of volunteer boards and paid and volunteer workforces (Lansberry et al., 1995, p. 12; Maton and Salem, 1995). This suggests that organisational development activities in community organisations need to be tackled creatively. This is challenging in organisations whose management structures are made up of local volunteers, who are lack time and other types of resources.

2.5. SUMMARY OF LITERATURE

Community organisations, particularly geographically focused organisations in Australia, have been identified as a potential foundation for sustaining and improving comprehensive community initiatives underpinned by the sustainable communities movement. However, while these organisations have been identified as a foundation, they need to shift away from the current needs-based approach to discovering a broader role in the community. To address the lack of funding available for comprehensive community development initiatives in urban communities that are not considered disadvantaged, as well as the lack of funding available for the development of community organisations in Australia, the thesis has adopted Kretzmann and McKnight’s (1993) asset-based perspective to both development efforts. This involved the organisation using this framework as a guide to work towards improving its role in comprehensive community initiatives, as well as applying this perspective to its organisational development efforts to alleviate problems arising from its resource constraints.

The practice of community development was recognised as the most suitable field to support a shift towards comprehensive community initiatives, with organisational development considered similar to, if not complementary to the development of the community organisation. The chapter highlighted the importance of balancing the internal and external development of the community organisations (Nadler and Tushman, 1992) and provided a modified framework by Plummer to clarify the internal and external focus as part of the development process. However, it highlights the challenges facing the development of community organisations in light of their volunteer/employee structures.
Most importantly, I have suggested that to change an organisation, one must understand it. The field of organisational development and community development are underpinned by social practice and learning. Organisational development, in particular, is underpinned by two philosophical orientations, the first involving learning prior to change and the other, learning after change. This orientation is well aligned to the method of action research. The following chapter provides an overview of action research, highlighting the methodology underpinning its selection and the data collection and analysis that helped inform the research.

14 See authors such as Argyris, Bennis, Blake, Mouton and Schultz.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN
3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.

*William James (1910-1942)*

This chapter outlines the research design according to three dimensions of the research approach: the research paradigm, method and techniques. Methodologists highlight the complexity and confusion over these three dimensions and the complex relationships between these areas (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Lather, 1991, 1992). Van Manen (1975) offers the following distinction between paradigm, method and techniques:

- **paradigm** – the philosophical orientation or methodology of a study,
- **method** – the procedural approach to a study and
- **techniques** – the tools for data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3 incorporates these elements to form the research design, concluding with a validation of the appropriateness of the design selected for this study. Section 3.1 introduces action research as the chosen method for this study. This section discusses the relevance and contribution of the qualitative research method to the research objectives, emphasising its value to this study.

Furthermore, this section provides an insight into the different fields of application of action research, including its beliefs, purpose and principles in order to address some of the complexities involved in this multifaceted approach. It emphasises that all players in the research context should retain their own values and beliefs to bringing about social change in their community organisation. Finally, it emphasises the tensions experienced between research and practice when initiating action research focused on social change in the environment of a Ph.D research project.
The underlying paradigm supporting the research method, including key assumptions, is also addressed in this chapter. It outlines the ontological and epistemological perspectives of the researcher, highlighting the influence of critical theory in guiding the application of action research as the chosen method, including critiques of it, and the relationship between critical theory and other dominant theoretical research paradigms.

Lastly, the techniques utilised to collect and analyse information to inform this research is detailed. This section highlights the diverse range of data collection approaches utilised, followed by an overview of the research analysis. The conduct of the research is introduced, suggesting some of the challenges and considerations for action researchers in the field of community development, including a discussion of the procedures used to ensure the ethical robustness of the research, including research transferability and the validity of the findings.

### 3.2. RESEARCH METHOD

I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion

*Thomas Jefferson*

*(Letter to William Charles Jarvis, 28 September 1820)*

This section introduces action research as the research method used in this study. A definition for action research is offered followed by a brief overview of this approach and its application to the study. The section briefly establishes the historical context of this method, emphasising the different applications across numerous fields including health, education, the social sciences and the behavioural sciences. Building on the complexity of the application of action research, subsection 3.2.4 outlines some of the key benefits and challenges associated with its application, particularly highlighting some of the key opportunities and issues in applying this method in a Ph.D. environment.
3.2.1. **Action Research Defined**

Leading actions researchers in Australia make no apologies for the fact that there is no neat, widely accepted definition of action research (Alrichter et al., 1991). Although this is the case, Kemmis and McTaggart’s perspective is often cited by predominant Australian action researchers, as outlined below:

> Action research is a form of collective self-reflective inquiry that participants in social situations undertake to improve:

(a) The rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices;

(b) The participants’ understanding of these practices and the situations in which they carry out these practices . . . The approach is action research only when it is collaborative and achieved through the critically examined action of individual group members. (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988, p. 5)

This method emphasises power sharing in collaborative situations and encourages all participants (including the researcher) to practice self-reflection as a means of learning and recognising their own personal power to improve their own personal situations throughout the entire process. This involves activities of participation, information sharing and reflection at both an individual and collaborative level during all stages of the process (Altrichter et al., 2002). Therefore, it does not entail what the researcher can “teach” the participants, but rather how the researcher and participants can learn and grow from working together in a self-reflective manner. Senge (2001, p. 4) eloquently clarifies this point suggesting

>[it] is just not possible any longer to “figure it out” from the top and have everyone else following the orders of the “grand strategist”. The organisations that will truly excel in the future will be the organisations that discover how to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organisation.

This approach is well aligned to the purposes of this study, as it suggests that communities need to improve their participation and involvement in developing their own communities, rather than being guided predominantly by policy and plans developed by government(s). It involves encouraging participants to commit their strengths and passions to collaborative learning, where people can play the leadership role at different times in the process. Therefore, the distinctive feature of action research is that those affected by planned changes have the primary
responsibility for deciding on courses of critically informed action which seem likely to lead to improvement, and for evaluating the results of the strategies they have carried out in practice (Dick, 1993; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988).

While this approach seems straightforward in theory, I suggest the reality of applying this theory is messy and often challenging. This method of change research requires active participation and flexible leadership that encourages participants to recognise their full potential before, during and after the process has been implemented. It requires behaviour that demonstrates a mutual respect for all stakeholders involved, as well as individual and group reflection, to ensure that all levels of potential can be realised through collective group learning and decision-making (Boog, 2001; Boog et al., 2001). However, where there are a number of different stakeholders (as occurred in this project with volunteer community members and employees), finding common ground across the diverse sets of values can prove to be extremely challenging.

Although the importance of participation is paramount, I suggest it is also acceptable for individual participants to choose not to actively participate, while still being included in some of the development activities in the process. For example, as will be highlighted in Section 4.5.8, a participant may support the direction or changes proposed, but lack the time or ability to be involved in those changes. Despite this, participants can still choose to learn and develop where time permits. Therefore, to achieve change the process does not necessarily have to (and often does not) rely on every participant being actively involved as a “lead agent of change” throughout the entire process.

Due to overlaps in this project across the fields of community development and organisational development, an overview of some of the history and approaches to action research, with particular emphasis on its application in organisational development, will be highlighted below.

3.2.2. Different Approaches to Action Research

While the roots of action research have been traced back to the work of both John Dewey (1959–1952) and Kurt Lewin (1890–1947), the adoption and application of this approach is still trying to find its feet in a world that is struggling to shift the dominant mindset of positivist, scientific thought (Clarke, 1972). Action research
emerged predominantly from practices in the fields of education, health and community development. Not long after this emergence, the field of management, specifically the behavioural sciences, began the journey of action learning\textsuperscript{15} or action science\textsuperscript{16} as a strategy to help gain and/or retain a competitive advantage in an organisation’s marketplace by working with the human and social factors in the organisation.

Although initially business-orientated in nature, the field of organisational development draws on action research practice as a guide to improving organisations through involving those most affected by change (McArdle and Reason, 2006). Zuber-Skerritt and Perry (2002) note that while these fields and their terminology, were going off in different directions across different organisational contexts, there was minimal (if any) cross-fertilisation across what was referred to as action learning, action research and process management.\textsuperscript{17} It was not until the 1990s, when a group of early adopters established the First World Congress on Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management in Brisbane, Australia, that dialogue to clarify the overlap and future potential of action research practice in organisations began.

While there are fundamental similarities regarding the application of a variety of approaches to action research in organisations and communities, the basics of this process have been adapted and elaborated on in different ways by different schools of practice. McArdle and Reason (2006) provide a review of some of the major adaptations of this process, summarised in Table 3.1 below.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Process} & \textbf{Description} \\
\hline
Action Learning & \textsuperscript{15} The term “action learning” evolved out of the organisational literature as part of the learning organisation movement. Linked to the work of Senge, it involves individuals expanding their capacity to achieve their desires and nurturing expansive thinking, releasing collective aspirations through a process involving people within organisations learning how to learn together (Senge, 2001). \\
\hline
Action Science & \textsuperscript{16} Building from the work of Schon, Dr Chris Argyris has continued to develop the concept of action science for organisational development. Action science is a strategy for increasing the skills and confidence of individuals in groups to create any kind of organisation (thus fostering long-term individual/group effectiveness). It addresses complex problems at a group level (Argyris et al., 1985). \\
\hline
Process Management & \textsuperscript{17} Process management was seen as the “third tradition” and was introduced by a Brisbane-based group called the Process Management Group. Its focus was complementary to the broader term cause of action research, focusing on new ways of facilitating the process of individual, group and organisational learning in a wide variety of different organisations (in scale and purpose) (Altichter et al., 2002). \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}
Although there are differences, the above approaches follow a number of the basic foundations which underpin the approach to improving practices. The most fundamental of these is underpinned by the idea that we cannot generate a valid understanding about human persons unless we engage with them fully as persons. Other common factors include:

- A focus on improving things.
• Engaging all concerned in the process, including making decisions about what will be improved.

• Participants learning about their own behaviour through group inquiry.

• Teaching people that they can learn to become researchers of their own life situations through processes that are rooted in democratic values which aim to be emancipatory for participants (McArdle and Reason, 2006, pp. 1–4).

While there are similarities and overlaps across these different approaches to action research in an organisational development context, there are also notable differences which demonstrate the emerging practice of this approach to change in organisations. The focus on who, how and why participants are involved in the process is one key example. Another is the focus of the change process, whether that is a historical review, a needs-based review or a focus on the future. This suggests that the choice of approach, regardless of what you call it, may depend on the task at hand. For example, an organisational-wide intervention may differ from one that is focused on improving a small team in an organisation. The size of the organisation and the type of work that is conducted may influence the type and level of participation that is practical and operational requirements can also influence the approach. For example, if employees work around part-time rosters (as in the case of this research project), then participation is affected by the available funds to pay for group sessions, including the ability to provide time for individual development and reflection.

This research project was well aligned to appreciative inquiry, action inquiry and participatory action research, as described in the Table 3.1 above. Appreciative inquiry was of particular interest as it shares a similar perspective to the ABCD approach adopted in this study. The appreciative inquiry approach suggests a shift away from the dominant problem-oriented view of the world to enhance people’s capacity to create dialogue that inspires the imagination, and which can elicit innovation and commitment from participants in a way that creates consensus around social change. (Cooperrider, 2003; Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987; Elliott, 1999).

In addition, the project (at times) was also influenced by an action inquiry (or action science) approach. This involved attempting to incorporate planning and practice into the everyday lives of participants (Argyris, 1990a; Argyris et al., 1985). Furthermore,
due to some lack of understanding of the purpose of the organisation, encouraging an ability to develop a purpose and frame of reference for the future that could be incorporated into the behavioural structures of the organisation was considered important. Lastly, the project also adopted elements of participatory action research, with a particular emphasis on involving participants so that they could learn about the social context in which they currently exist and develop a greater understanding of their own personal and collective power and capabilities to change their situation (Brophy, 2001; Francis, 1991; McTaggart, 1989; Smith, 1990). Although the level of ownership and participation was not always to the level that the small group on the committee desired, efforts were made to ensure (wherever possible) that the committee and staff were in a position to continue and implement activities without my involvement as the “expert facilitator”.

The influence and adoption of multiple approaches in the research project highlights both the commonality of these approaches and the complexity of implementing this method. Action research is not a neat, predictable method, so that to claim perfection in the process ignores the inability to plan the social context in which the process is implemented. For example, while participatory action research encourages participation in the design, development and implementation process, these participants need to manage their own personal circumstances and they are not always available in practice. Even the best action research practitioners can only work with what they have and outcomes may need to be achieved by applying different approaches to different environments.

The experience of action research in different social contexts (such as organisation, community, education and health) provides an opportunity for cross-sectoral learning about this method. For example, the field of organisational development can learn a great deal from the application of action research in a community development context and vice versa. Organisational development has often been criticised for falling back into the more traditional style of management practice that is considered somewhat coercive in nature (Jones, 1991), while community development has increasingly moved towards the more participatory application of this method (Beilharz, 2002; Cameron, 2003; Cameron and Gibson, 2004a, 2004b; Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; McTaggart, 1989; Saul, 1997). The often uncontained nature of communities, especially when considering the
comprehensive community initiatives suggested in Chapter 2, encourages community
development to consider techniques that encourage maximum participation, whereas
organisations often (but not always) expect or instruct employees to participate in
improvement activities. However, community development can also learn from the
contained environment of organisations, which provides a useful training ground for
testing different approaches to action research, through ensuring participation.

Apart from the contained nature of the environment, another key difference in the
application of this method in these two fields is the intent that drives the change
process. For example, the driving force behind organisational development is often
based upon business survival or gaining a strategic advantage over one’s
competitors. Such success is often measured by financial indicators (although there
has been a growing acceptance of the competitive advantages gained from
developing that the staff of the organisation) (Senge, 2001). Participants in a
community setting are often volunteers, who choose to be part of a community effort
(i.e. they are not paid to participate). This highlights the challenge involved in
gaining active participation, due to the lack of ability to enforce accountability. This
encourages action researchers in organisations to better understand what tools will
engage participants, when such engagement is not always expected to be part of the
job. In addition, it is important to understand the different mindsets that are brought
to the table from the fields of community development and organisational
development due to their impact on the way these types of organisations can be
developed.

3.2.3. The Action Research Process, Benefits and Challenges

The inventor of the term, “action research”, social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1951),
described it as proceeding in a spiral in which each step is composed of planning,
action and the evaluation of the result of the action. The following diagram provides
a simple representation of the cycle:
Although action research is not always made up of multiple cycles, for the purposes of this thesis, three cycles were adopted to reflect the three key phases experienced during the implementation of the action research project. These included:

- Locating, entering and gaining an initial understanding of the research site to inform the direction of the organisational development process.

- Organisational development workshops with the committee and staff, including a bus tour that sought to locate the assets in the community and the organisation, as well as identify the organisation’s capacities.

- Strategy development sessions with the committee, including early implementation of the plan.

These activities were conducted utilising the diagrammatic representation of the process, shown in Figure 3.2 below.
The cyclical nature of the approach selected for this research project encouraged flexibility and responsiveness throughout the process, acknowledging the participants and my own inability to anticipate everything that needed to be done. This diagram was no more than a guide in the action research journey, and was intended to be utilised as a shared map through the development process. For example, it does not demonstrate the stage of the project that involves locating an organisation in the community. Furthermore, while, the process appears somewhat linear, the project would jump between different stages depending on what was occurring in the organisation at the time. For example, during the first cycle, the project activities continually alternated between the data collection phase and problem definition, with different activities and participants being involved in these stages.

Although it is not shown in the diagram, the most important (yet most challenging) aspect of the process was the ability of participants to continue their efforts beyond the involvement of the action researcher (Boog, 2001; Boog et al., 2001; Clarke, 2001; Clarke, 2001; Hatten et al., 1997; Zuber-Skerritt, 1991).
1972). This perspective underpins the purpose behind this doctoral research. The following subsections address some of the benefits identified of this chosen method.

**Benefits**

Regardless of the approach undertaken, or process applied, applying action research has a number of benefits and challenges. The importance of working with the people who are affected by the research project should not be underestimated and is a primary benefit. There are others:

- **For participants.** As this research practice is relevant and useful to participants, they can subsequently choose to apply this to their everyday lives (Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991, p. 14), improving the acceptance of the research findings and enhancing their ownership of it. Furthermore, the element of reflection provides participants with an effective way to learn from experience and expand their understanding through the experience of others (Schon, 1983).

- **For the researcher.** By the integration of theory and practice, participants can experience social change outcomes. In addition, researchers can utilise their current practice as a research opportunity, while being able to apply a level of flexibility to account for the unknown of everyday life (Dick, 1993).

- **For research** (in general). The method increases the rigour of the research by improving our understanding of participants in the change process in a way that is considered less judgmental and more orientated to future action than other methods (McTaggart, 1989);

- **For practice:** The method enhances teamwork, whether applied in an organisational or community development setting due to the use of dialogue that can improve relationships and enhance collective learning opportunities (McTaggart, 1989).

The Australian ABCD case studies (Beilharz, 2002; Cameron, 2003; Cameron and Gibson, 2005) discussed in Section 2.3.4 are useful examples of the benefits of applying action research. These projects provided useful insights in the changing views of participants and demonstrate real life outcomes that were achieved as a
result of the action research studies. The action research approach also pinpointed places where points of resistance existed in the change process, which helps to inform potential points of improvement for future application. Research findings were drawn from the outcomes achieved by participants, highlighting the importance of ensuring research is relevant and continual adapts to the social context in which it is being applied.

**Challenges**

Castello and Henrick (1991) note that although action research can seem like a simple and elegant solution, it is full of challenges and dilemmas. There is no denying that the researcher who chooses this method is confronted by its multifaceted, complex character, from both a theoretical and a practical point of view (Boog et al., 2001). Issues around the implementation of action research, such as who is in control (i.e. who is playing the expert role) and determining how participants learn (or unlearn) and participate in an informed environment, are challenging when applying theory in a field of practice. Furthermore, funded projects have the additional pressure of the sponsors’ expectations of potential outcomes and timeframes. These place pressure on the action researcher to deliver, while trying to create an environment that allows for active participation (Castello and Henricks, 1991). In addition, maintaining the flexibility required to adapt to the field situation and build relationships, while also gaining knowledge about the area in which the practitioner is working is challenging, but also bears fruit in the latter stages of the project (Jain and Nagan, 1991).

In addition, social research using participatory techniques is particularly marred by the lack of the “wow” factor often found in natural science research (Tormey et al., 1994). Change is slow and difficult to predict and the results of social research can result in changes in people’s behaviour that is often difficult to measure. This lack of predictability can affect the researchers’ confidence in the implementation of this method and often can influence them to drive the project forward to ensure they gain results.

One of the most challenging factors of this method involves the decision of when to let go of the project and determine whether participants are in a position to take on the project without outside assistance (Castello and Henricks, 1991). This is linked
to the issues around project sustainability and the participants’ role, which is a key focus of this study. Beilharz (2002) notes some success in her action research project in Bendigo when advising participants of the three-year deadline. She noted responses from participants regarding their need to learn about the process as part of it. Although some outcomes were achieved and continued by the residents, the complexity behind continuing comprehensive community initiatives was potentially underestimated. Ironically, to overcome many of the challenges identified above regarding the implementation of this method in organisations or communities, proactive planning and communication is needed. In particular, clarity around the roles of both the researcher and participants, including timeframes and expectations regarding handover could prove useful in addressing some of the challenges identified above.

While there are challenges in implementing action research in an organisational or community setting, Dick suggests there are further challenges when applying this method in the context of a Ph.D. thesis. This type of thesis can be more difficult due to:

- the greater responsibility that the research practitioner must undertake to achieve change with participants.
- a lack of acceptance by some examiners of this method.
- the library work is considered more demanding, as the relevant literature is defined by the data collected and the practitioners interpretation of this material.
- the thesis does not suit traditional scientific formats, therefore making it harder to report and is more likely to be longer (Dick, 1993)

I agree with the above difficulties of applying this method to Ph.D. research. The approach requires a much greater learning curve, which occurs in front of an audience of participants who are often initially looking for guidance.

Action research can be compared to learning how to walk. It is important for us to learn, but we may need to fall and bump ourselves on the journey. I suggest that the complexity and unpredictability of human beings means that however we improve
our application of this method, we will never perfect it. This recognises that there is a
great potential to learn from our mistakes and action research offers an environment
where we can and do make them. Therefore, while researchers identify flaws in this
practice, the importance of involving participants as co-researchers in the process of
changing their own lives and environments is a far greater benefit, and the chaos and
mistakes that come with it are important to the learning process. The following
chapter highlights the methodological underpinning of this research method.

3.3. THE RESEARCH PARADIGM

The concept of a paradigm was first introduced by Kuhn (1970) to describe a
researchers’ basic orientation to their research. Husen describes a paradigm as
something which:

determines the criteria according to how one selects and defines
problems for inquiry and how one approaches them
theoretically and methodologically . . . (in short) how a problem
is formulated and methodologically tackled. (1997, pp. 16–18)

Research paradigms involve beliefs about and ways of doing research. It is therefore
not surprising, due to the complexity of human beings and the myriad of beliefs they
hold, methodological selection has become a central theme in the social sciences
(Giddens et al., 1994).

This emerging methodological tension has occurred as a result of a number of key
philosophical and conceptual issues that have created a paradigm shift away from a
positivist perspective of mainstream science (linked to the natural sciences) towards
a post-positivist “counterview” (including action research) in the social and
behavioural sciences (Argyris et al., 1985; Hughes, 1990; Kenny, 1999; Lather,

18 Mainstream science goes under the names of logical empiricism, critical empiricism, or
critical rationalism, and is heir to the tradition of logical positivism (Argyris et al., 1985).

19 Guba and Lincoln (1989) refer to this shifting paradigmatic perspective as "post-positivist",
acknowledging the roots of this paradigm from the humanities.
Kuhn (1962) was recognised as one of the earlier advocates of the counterview, challenging the acceptance of mainstream science in both the social sciences and, controversially, challenging its historical application even in the natural sciences. Although there has been a wide acceptance of the positivist view in the social sciences, contemporary methodologists continue to build from Kuhn’s work, encouraging a shift towards this counterview through applying methods such as action research and critical ethnography (Brodkey, 1987; Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Freire, 1973; Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Husen, 1997; Lather, 1986b). However, it is important to highlight that the counterview is not a unified movement, but rather a convergence of approaches that focus on social action and align themselves against the mainstream scientific method.

As a result, there has been an increasing emphasis on social researchers to clarify their paradigmatic perspective by declaring their personal interests and biases upfront (Clough and Nutbrown, 2002; Graziano and Raulin, 2004; Jackson and Keys, 1982; Lather, 1986b, 1992; Neuman, 2000; Oliga, 1988). Other research theorists encourage the clarification of ontological and epistemological assumptions in the early stages of research, such as in the selection of a methodology for social inquiry (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Although there is a growing acceptance of the importance of tabling social researchers’ perspectives, Neuman (2000) and Newberry (1991) point out that these intentions and assumptions are rarely offered in research.

Argyris et al. suggest that researchers clarify their paradigmatic perspective in the social sciences by demonstrating “how they know what they think they know?” ensuring the meanings of action are understood and accessible to the participants being studied (Argyris et al., 1985). This following subsection addresses this question, with the latter parts of the chapter addressing issues around research techniques.

3.3.1. “How Do You Know What You Think You Know?”

To date, the mainstream science perspective has been seen as the pre-eminent way to generate reliable cumulative knowledge. However, understanding the meanings that are the essence of humans social action is fundamentally different from explaining
the events of the natural world (Argyris et al., 1985; Carr, 2000). This thesis is about bringing about social change in a community organisation to support social changes at the community level. To bring about such change requires participants to implement changes in a way that can be applied and sustained in their own lives. Therefore, these changes require a level of involvement and participation to bring about change. This requires a balance between the theoretical knowledge of the researcher and the “lived” experiences of the participants (Argyris et al., 1985; Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Therefore requiring a shift towards collective “perspective taking” is implicit in the reflexivity of practical forms of critical theory. Instead of looking for the universal and necessary features of social scientific knowledge, this methodology focuses on the social relationships between researchers and participants (Bohman, 2005). This methodology is well aligned to chosen method (i.e. action research) for this study, due to its intent to examine participant's worldviews in a socially critical manner.

Critical theory is associated with the Institute of Social Research in Germany in 1923. Known as the Frankfurt School, following the Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukács (1971), it attempted to link cultural and ideological analysis to explain why the revolution expected by Marx did not occur (Agger, 1998; Carr, 2000; Kellner, 1998a). Many supporters of critical methodologies (Agger, 1998; Bronner, 1998; Kellner, 1998b; McCarthy, 1981) recognise Jurgen Habermas as the most recent and influential representative of this approach (Agger, 1998, see also McCarthy, 1978). This methodology encourages democratic involvement that is considered cooperative, practical and transformative. The methodology is well aligned to this research project for reasons noted above.

Critical theory is distinguished from traditional theory by its specific view towards practice. There are two core perspectives of this approach to theory, including a commitment to freedom and the need for ongoing revision and reflection. To support these goals, critical theorists seek to:

- guide human action to produce enlightenment which is inherently emancipatory;

- offer a form of knowledge that is multi-dimensional, avoiding the reduction of knowledge to linear, quantitative empirical perspectives:
be reflective and open to new possibilities by exploring unexamined assumptions and comparing these with the resonance of lived experience (Carr and Kemmis, 1986).

Many social scientists argue that socially critical forms of inquiry that deliberately critique existing conditions and aim to be inclusive and transformative characterise a new paradigm for human research that is discontinuous with previous worldviews and methods (Lather, 1986b, 1991; Reason and Rowan, 1981; Smith, 1984, 1990). The cooperative, practical and transformative perspective of this methodology emphasises the role and worldviews of the researcher and participant in the research. Integral to this approach, based as it is on joint involvement and shared responsibility, is the application of mutual reciprocity between the researcher and participant (Boog et al., 2001; van Beinum and van Beinum, 2001a). This is no small challenge for the researcher who needs to remain cognisant of a range of impacts and biases that can occur throughout the life of the project. For example, Fals-Borda (1991, p. 4) shows how the knowledge and experience of the researcher and participants often come from different class conformations and rationalities, suggesting:

Outsiders are used to “seeing” what should be done and therefore are prone to propose solutions regardless of consultation with those directly concerned. Often the outside activists are under pressure “to produce results” and this may quickly lead to counterproductive effects. Authoritarian attitudes (even unconsciously) may thus lead to actions which reproduce current domination patterns. (Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991, p. 58)

Critical theory emphasises the need to incorporate the view of the “outsider” (researcher) with that of the “insider” (participants). Van Beinum and van Beinum also highlight the complexity involved in the multiple roles that may be required to be adopted by the researcher:

The role of the researcher is therefore one of “role taking; it fluctuates and is contingent. It is a paradoxical one, as the researcher is both inside and outside; he or she is close as well as distant at the same time. . . . To maintain . . . one’s authenticity and develop the necessary trust is a never ending major challenge and a continuous concern. One has to be on one’s guard all the time against slipping into fight, flight, collusion, or some other form of defence against the anxiety caused by the unavoidable paradox of one’s position as
researcher engaged in action research. (van Beinum and van Beinum, 2001b)

This requires a shift away from the researcher as “expert” towards research participants being recognized as “knowledgeable” and “capable” of influencing and changing their own environment(s) (2001a). Furthermore, researchers are encouraged to openly present their ideologies of the social universe, in a way that encourages them to raise their consciousness of the different perspectives and power relationship between themselves and participants throughout the research process.

The influence of the researcher on research participants is also an important consideration in this methodology, especially in issues around researcher neutrality. Guba and Lincoln (1981) highlight the challenge facing researchers to remain impartial in their research orientation, especially when social change is a core objective of their research. They note that the researcher’s close involvement with participants in a study can be problematic and that this is a key argument against openly ideological enquiry.

The most obvious sources of bias include the researcher’s social positions20 and intellectualist (or scholastic) bias. Our knowledge of social change cannot be entirely free of researcher bias; however, efforts can be made to reduce or declare this bias as part of the research process. This view is further supported by Lather (1992) who argues that there is “no neutral education (Freire, 1973) and there is no neutral research” (Reason and Rowan, 1981), showing that research that is explicitly committed to critiquing the status quo and improving social justice through research praxis provides an important (if not crucial) voice to the methodological debate. She argues that natural scientists firmly believe that as long as they are not conscious of any bias or political agenda, they are neutral and objective. Building from the work of Paulo Friere (1970), Lather’s emphasises the naivety of this perspective, suggesting how researchers who hold this view are only unconscious of the impact of their own values, intentions and backgrounds on their work (Lather, 1986b, p. 257).

20 The social positions of researchers include their class, gender and the hidden interests of individual academics and research institutions (Bourdieu, 1977, 1988, 1990, Wacquant, 1992; p. 39).
Clough and Nutbrown (2002) agree with this perspective, suggesting that social research has a specific purpose from a particular position with an aim to persuade readers of the significance of its claims. They show that these claims are always broadly political, emphasising that social research is persuasive, purposive, positional and political. They ask:

Why would you want to carry out a piece of research if you didn’t, in some way, want to persuade somebody of the value of what you are doing . . . There is little point in carrying out a research project, whatever the scale, if there is no ultimate aim to achieve something as a result. (Clough and Nutbrown, 2002, p. 6)

However, they also note that this change for the better is focused on the collective good of the groups studied, rather than the individual researchers’ self-interest. Echoing Adorno, Carr argues that all cultural phenomena can (and must) be viewed as mediated through the social totality applying mutual reciprocity between researcher and participant (Carr, 2000; see Adorno, 1967).

My choice of method for this thesis is underpinned by a desire to acquire knowledge and understanding through praxis-orientated research that acknowledges the important role of the participant in the research process. The aim to develop knowledge through the reflection of my actions as a research, as well as learn from others (participants) through their individual and collective reflection of events, suggests a qualitative research approach underpinned by a post-positivist perspective. The following section outlines the research techniques that were applied to collect data. These data collection techniques are underpinned by the methodological approach chosen.

3.4. RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

This section introduces the third dimension of the research design, building on the research method described earlier in the chapter. This section begins with an overview of the how data were collected and analysed and is further supported by the subsection following which describes how I ensured that the study was conducted in a manner that supported the chosen method.
3.4.1. Data Collection

This study has a variety of different data collection techniques to help strengthen the research design and to validate the findings from other sources. Specifically, this can be broken up into:

- accessing existing information
- participant observation, conversations and self-reflection, including a journal of anecdotes, emails, subjective impressions and reflections, accounts of meetings and working notes
- semi-structured and in-depth interviews
- focus groups and field trips.

The above techniques were utilised during data collection to help me develop an understanding and insight into the perspectives of participants throughout the action research process. This section will introduce the different approaches undertaken, discussing how they contributed to the findings of this study.

(1) Accessing Existing Information

While there were a multitude of data sources available over the three-year period in which data was collected, the following sources of existing information proved useful in the collection of data for this study:

- Community centre and local documentation, including reports and plans, evaluation studies, correspondence, meeting agendas and minutes, publications, proposals (i.e. for grants), local newspaper articles and media transcripts.
- Demographic and archived records, including census data, history of the area, data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, as well as reports, assessments and information provided by the Brisbane City Council.

My collection of this pre-existing information took account of the fact that the documents collected were not developed for the same purpose as the action research study. To address this issue, I routinely enquired about the social context of these
documents from participants throughout the research process. This assisted me in developing a more accurate historical understanding of the organisation, by supplementing the messages of the documentation with the memories of participants.

Overall, I found that these data sources were rich sources of information that helped guide subsequent data-gathering techniques, in particular, the interviews, focus groups and field trips. It also helped to reveal the level of awareness of the staff and committee members about the community in which they were situated and their knowledge of their own community development role.

(2) Participant Observation, Conversation and Self-Reflection

This research is situated in the fields of organisational development and community development. Both areas involved a wide variety of social situations that offer an opportunity to observe people’s behaviour and decisions. Furthermore, they provided a useful opportunity for personal reflection about my interpretation of events. Marshall and Rossman (1995) emphasise that participant observation is to some degree an essential element in all qualitative studies. Observation, conversation and self-reflection proved useful in confirming with individuals and the group, the intended meaning behind language used, highlighting discrepancies in the interpretation by different participants (including the researcher) during the research project. Throughout this process, the emphasis of observation shifted predominantly between the community committee (the committee) and the staff members. There was little opportunity to observe members of the community centre due to the Centre’s lack of connection with them. Visiting stakeholders, such as political leaders and leaders from other community organisations were also observed on occasion; however, the emphasis was predominantly on the committee.

The researcher or observer can be provided with access to a range of different techniques that can be flexibly used. These include observation, interviews, conversation and document searches, surveying or simply “hanging out”. The following techniques were used to carry out participant observation and personal self-reflection.

- Accepting an invitation to perform the role of secretary on the committee, as this role enabled me to have constant contact with the committee and the coordinator;
• Observing participants in their day-to-day activities, in both formal and informal settings (i.e. work and social settings);

• Recording meeting notes (such as management and staff meetings), conversations and events or initiatives that occurred during this time and

• Writing a journal to capture personal reflections and perceptions.

To address the hurried nature of community organisations and the voluntary capacity of the committee members, I gained a great source of input and self-reflection from the use of emails. This entailed writing questions, asking for responses to questions and gaining different perspectives from my correspondents. This exercise also encouraged certain participants to reflect on how different people perceived different outcomes. This environment was a comfortable and convenient medium for the committee members and helped speed up the co-ordination and communication throughout the life of the project. Furthermore, this medium assisted me in gaining timely responses from those participants to whom I would otherwise have limited physical access, when seeking their reflections regarding events. To ensure that I understood the context of the email messages and responses, I followed them up through phone calls and face-to-face conversations to ensure that I did not misinterpret the perspective each person was putting forward. This proved to be a far more acceptable practice with committee members than staff members. It proved difficult to gain information back from the latter in a timely manner (if at all).

Feldman (1999) suggests that data collection based on conversation is not only an important technique in the research process, it can help to share and clarify knowledge. He suggests three types of approaches:

• **Oral inquiry.** Self-conscious, self-critical conversations that attempt to understand practice through joint problem posing, problem solving and joint examination of issues, concepts, texts and other features of learning. I used oral inquiry mainly with the committee members at both committee meetings and after the implementation of workshops. The coordinator provided key information in this way.
• **Collaborative conversations.** This approach was often used in team meetings with staff and during workshops to inform the strategic planning process.

• **Long and serious conversation.** This is similar to oral inquiry, but takes place over a long period, allowing for in-depth and extended exchanges (Feldman, 1999, p. 128). This was primarily undertaken with the coordinator and president during extra-ordinary planning meetings.

While the above approaches were considered useful, their potential shortcomings have been identified. They have particularly been criticised as being overly subjective, impressionistic or idiosyncratic in nature when generating findings (Bannister et al., 1996). Although it was difficult to address this criticism in every situation, due to the time-consuming and labour-intensive nature of this technique (Dick, 1993), I ensured that I confirmed my interpretation, either verbally or in writing with individual participants, and provided minutes for review by participants in group sessions.

**(3) Semi-Structured and In-Depth Interviews**

Conducting interviews in the field of social science is both complex and involved, while it is also recognised as one of the most important sources of data in qualitative research as interviews focus on human affairs. This study used individual, face-to-face semi-structured interviews. While the interviews were predominantly semi-structured in nature, they also were influenced by some in-depth interviewing techniques, proposed by Minichello et al. (1997). This included:

- Repeated encounters, implying that the greater the length of time spent with the informant, a potentially improved level of understanding may be achieved by the increased social interaction.

- Encouraging a mutually beneficial relationship between the researcher and informant to address the perceived power imbalances.

- Valuing the informant’s account, rather than the researcher’s perspective as the only valid view (Minichello et al., 1997, p. 68).
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the committee members and staff primarily during Cycle One, with an in-depth interview being conducted with the coordinator during the end of Cycle Three. Although a number of planned questions was planned for each interview, it was not unusual for additional questions to be included to clarify the different focuses and areas of the organisation. An example of the interview questions is provided in Appendix 2.

Two key challenges were identified in applying this approach during the research project, including the ability to maintain accurate accounts and trying to determine when to stop collecting data. During the interviews in Cycle One, I was fortunate to gain the assistance of a student to sit in on the interview, take notes and provide her interpretation of the interview after each session. This proved useful in improving the collection of information that is difficult to acquire while interviewing. To address the issue regarding the collection of data, I ensured that I established timeframes with cut off dates which provided boundaries around the data collection process.

While tape-recorders would have proved useful in the collection of data when conducting interviews, I found the use of this type of technology problematic during the early stages of the action research project. The level of trust of some of the staff steered me away from using this technology. Sessions with the committee during Cycle Three that were focused on strategic planning proved more conducive to the use of a tape recorder, as relationships and an improved level of trust had been established.

(4) Focus Groups and Field Trips

The changing nature of the organisation made the use of focus groups essential in the data collection tool kit. Change requires significant group work to help develop collective views of the future of the organisation and provide a good base for collective learning. These focus groups included specific organisational development sessions, as well as team and committee meetings, which were often tape-recorded.

Basch (1987) suggests that focus groups have several advantages over individual interviews. One key advantage is the synergism that results from the combined energy of the individuals in the group and the snowballing effects that result from a comment of one individual that may generate many more ideas from other members
of the group (Fontana and Frey, 2000). The ability to expose different and new ideas through the collaboration of ideas and perspectives proved useful in this action research project.

Due to the organisational focus shifting towards an asset-based approach to community development, taking a field trip proved to be a very useful approach in both development and data collection processes. This involved a bus trip and site visits around the local community to help raise the team’s consciousness about the community in which they worked. Some of the committee members and staff came along on the trip. They were provided with a map and a number of key questions to address. An outline of the bus trip is provided in Appendix 3. This proved to be an effective tool for improving awareness of change and helped draw together some of the views of the two different camps; namely the staff and the management committee. This experience helped us to compare our descriptions of the world with what we had expected or wanted to see and helped shift the group’s thinking to the next stage (Wadsworth, 1984).

3.4.2. Data Analysis

The management, analysis and interpretation of qualitative materials is a complex process and organising and documenting the data in this study emerged as a significant issue (Davis, 2003; Dick, 1993; Wadsworth, 1984). A distinct but related set of techniques deriving from qualitative research methods were adopted to guide and facilitate the analysis and interpretation of data collected during the study.

Three key approaches were considered useful in the analysis of data for this project: namely progressive focusing; pattern searching and reflections based in the literature. A summary of these approaches is provided in the table below.
As noted in the table above, progressive focusing involves the emergent categorising of themes throughout the early stages, particularly when the research question appears quite fuzzy. Dick (1993) suggests this is a central feature of action research encouraging Ph.D. students to focus on agreements and disagreements during the early stages, in order to help clarify the research question and to gain further clarity in the answers. I found this approach to analysis particularly useful during the early stages of the research process. In particular, the ability to categorise information into different themes, for example, sustainable development, planning, community development and the community organisation, was useful in the discovery of the research question.

Stake (1995) suggests that searching for patterns rather than meaning is a useful tool of analysis in qualitative research. While these patterns can be known in advance as a result of an established research question, in the early development of action research, they can also help clarify and tighten the research question through the emergence of patterns that may not have been visible previously. This can also be a cyclical exercise where the data are also revisited through reflection, triangulation and raising scepticism about the initial impression or interpretation of the experience (Huberman and Miles, 1998). This approach was applied during the latter stages of Cycle One, to further clarify the research question, as well as to understand the development process that would occur in the community centre. Five key themes were drawn from the collection of documentation and interviews, which is further outlined in Table 4.1 in Chapter 4.

---

See also (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Dick, 1993)
Davis (2003) also encourages using the literature review as an aid in analysis and interpretation, suggesting that literature, data collection and interpretation of data are intertwined. Dick (1993) recommends searching for disconfirming evidence and argument in the literature, at the time that the researcher is making tentative interpretations, since this actually helps to reach conclusions with more confidence and results in actions being better informed. I support the views of Davis and Dick. Most literature reviews require multiple sessions of reading and writing, which provided a rich source of reflection and clarification throughout the life of the research project.

**Data Management**

To address the magnitude of data collected, a data record was created as a basis for further categorisation and exploration of patterns discovered in the ideas, relationships, events and perceptions of key stakeholders throughout the research. Due to the non-linear nature of action research, the analysis involved continuous weaving between the collection of data, and my analysis and interpretation of it as a result of plans and actions throughout the life of the project.

Two approaches to data management were considered:

- Categorising this information into the three different cycles of the project.

- Creating data folios that organised the data chronologically (Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

The size of the data set resulted in my including only selected information in this thesis. Appendix 4 provides a list of contents of the data in these folios and highlights those items referred to directly in this research report.

**3.4.3. Evaluation**

As highlighted in 3.3 of this chapter, the role of the participant is important in the evaluation of the research findings. However, I suggest that the reality of this involvement in the evaluation is not always as neat and tidy as desired, particularly when there is constant turnover of participants during the process. Time available for
evaluation also proved to a constant challenge for incorporating participants’ views of my findings. As the project shifted from cycle to cycle, different participants were called upon to participate in the evaluation. This was more of a reflection of operational practicality than researcher choice.

For example, the evaluation of data during Cycle One involved the committee in the first stage of the cycle. The committee members undertook an early evaluation of progressive findings during this project. Their evaluation of the information informed the development of a document for all participants to review, with regards to the information collected (including interviews). During times when not all participants were available, the president and the locum coordinator were invited to review and make an input into the evaluation of data that I had located during this cycle.

The evaluation of Cycle Two occurred progressively both during and after the development meetings. Three points of evaluation were experienced:

- The group would reflect on what was discussed at the end of the workshop, highlighting suggested themes and useful activities for the future.

- The committee would meet after the session to review their thoughts about the organisational development process and to confirm the changes and actions that were needed.

- All participants were asked to review the minutes and key findings after each session and provide feedback regarding the analysis of the data collected during the meeting.

Due to the shift in focus during Cycle Three, the evaluation of data involved the committee, with staff input requested during the later stages of the project. However, with the change in the committee during the end of this Cycle, the coordinator became a key source of input in the evaluation process. To ensure that my overall evaluation of events and outcomes was valid, I asked the coordinator to review the thesis and any other findings that I came across late in the process.
3.5. ROBUSTNESS OF THE RESEARCH

Investigating human and social phenomena is challenging. Positivist research is embedded in three fundamental principles, including reductionism, repeatability and refutation (Checkland, 1981) which can lead to replication. Qualitative research approaches typically place less emphasis on reliability and generalisability than quantitative approaches, choosing to focus on depth and specificity. Post-positivist approaches to qualitative research involve finding ways to develop an understanding of meaning that is socially constructed by individuals through their interactions. This suggests that “reality is not a fixed, agreed upon or measurable phenomenon that is assumed to occur in positivist, qualitative research” (Merriam, 2002; Oliver-Hoyo and Allen, 2006, p. 42).

Determining the robustness of the research, therefore, is about determining what would constitute a “fair test” in the case of this action research project. Checkland and Holwell (1998, p. 14) highlight the complexity of doing this in action research due to the fact that “one observer’s success if often another’s failure”. They argue that hypothesis testing in action research is problematic due to the volatility of the environment during the research process. They ask, “Can the method of science be applied to material which is not homogenous through time, making complete replicability impossible? If not, what else can be done?” (Checkland and Holwell, 1998, p. 9).

Checkland and Holwell (1998) note that while positivist researchers challenge the difficulty of achieving replicability in action research, transferability and the fittingness of the results can still be defended by post-positivist methods. They suggest that the research must recognise the limits to its claims as part of the validation process. Furthermore, they suggest that clarifying the epistemological foundation is crucial to validation issues when guaranteeing the transferability of the research is limited. This involves the researcher declaring the set of ideas and the process in which they have applied the methodology, by highlighting how they will make sense of their research, and so define what counts for them as acquired knowledge. This suggests a move away from hypothesis testing to identify “themes” in which lessons can be sought.
Three measures of robustness were considered relevant to this research project: content validity, construct validity and catalytic validity (Lather, 1986a; McGartland Rubio et al., 2003). Table 3.3 outlines these three different approaches to validity providing a description and the different application of these approaches in qualitative research.

**Table 3.3: Validity Approaches for Social Research (Lather, 1986a; McGartland Rubio et al., 2003)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>TYPES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content validity</strong></td>
<td>Extent to which the items on a measure assess the same content or how well the content material was sampled in the measure.</td>
<td>(a) Face validity indicates that the measure appears to be valid, “on its face”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Logical validity indicates a more rigorous process, such as using a panel of experts to evaluate the content validity of a measure.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construct validity</strong></td>
<td>Extent to which a panel of experts can provide constructive feedback about the quality of the newly developed measure and objective criteria with which to evaluate each item.</td>
<td>(a) Factorial – assessed by conducting an exploratory factor analysis such as principal components or a confirmatory analysis using structural equitation modelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Known groups: determined by finding statistically significant differences in scores between a group with a known property of a measure and a group that does not have a characteristic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Convergent and discriminant (or divergent) validity: the research measures different constructs with different methods (such as self-reporting and observation). To the degree that the convergent validity is present, the construct that is measured with different methods should have the highest correlation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catalytic validity</strong></td>
<td>Extent to which the research process ”energises participants to effective political action (Smith, 1990, p. 229).</td>
<td>Points to the degree to which research moves those it studies to understand the world and the way it is shaped in order for them to transform it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Face validity was a key approach to validate knowledge sources during this action research project. This approach helped to address the issue faced by the researcher as participant by inviting participants (or informants) to confirm the descriptions, interpretations and analysis of statements made in the research. Specifically, member checks were a key technique applied to determine the validity of the data, wherever the participants’ time and capacity allowed. For example, this involved asking available participants to examine transcripts and tentative conclusions and provide feedback to assist in the refinement of my own interpretation of events (Lather,
The application of member checks differed during the different stages of the research, predominantly due to the focus and availability of participants. For example, during Cycle One, both the committee and staff members were asked to review and comment on the audit findings that were presented at the end of Cycle One. During Cycle Three, the committee were given transcripts of meetings on the strategic planning, or modified versions of the strategic plan to confirm that my interpretation reflected their differing perspectives. Lastly, a number of participants were asked to read elements of the Ph.D. thesis to determine whether my interpretation was accurate for the purposes of the study.

While the member checks proved to be useful during the study, I was cognisant of Lather’s warnings that few appropriate mechanisms exist to validate subjective knowledge, suggesting this is new territory (Lather, 1986a, p. 77). McGartland Rubio et al. (2003) agree with this view, noting that researchers may need to create or modify their own measures of validity for particular studies and suggesting that there is a need for further research in this area, which needs to determine more extensively the predictive capacity of constructs of social effectiveness (Ferris et al., 2002).

The second validation approach applied was convergent and divergent construct validity. This involved determining the degree of alignment between the constructs and categories defined in research findings compared to those constructs articulated by the participants during the research process (Bannister et al., 1996). During the research, this involved deriving theory and data from sources such as participant observation, document analysis and interviews and then consulting participants to determine whether their constructs and intentions concurred with the researcher’s interpretation of the conclusion. Although this does not always make the process free from misconceptions (Reason, 1994; Reason and Rowan, 1981), I did find this approach helpful in determining the appropriateness of the themes that were arrived at and the conclusions drawn during the process. This approach was predominantly carried out with the active committee members due to their willingness to review my findings, as well as my interest in having them constantly shape and guide the direction of the research process.
The last validation measure provided in Table 3.3 is referred to as catalytic validity. This validation method, although requiring longer timeframes, can be determined through reflecting on the difference between the early and later positions and actions of participants. Although this can be difficult to establish during the research project, reflections by key participants helped to clarify where changes had occurred in light of the research. This involved looking for changes that were implemented after my own involvement. One of the measures that was important to this research was the ability of participants to continue the development of the organisation without my lead facilitation. While this was not perfect, there were many examples that demonstrated a shift in thinking and participation that suggested a shift in the mindset of participants. Furthermore, the use of language during committee meetings, which referred to the strategic plan as a “living document” was another example of participants’ ability to embed new approaches to development in the organisation.

In addition to the above approaches, the validity and reliability of the findings have been achieved through a procedure referred to as triangulation (Bannister et al., 1996; Huberman and Miles, 1998; Lather, 1986a). Triangulation involves gathering multiple sources of data, methods and theoretical schemes to ensure that the design seeks counter patterns as well as convergences to enhance the credibility of the data (Minichello et al., 1997). The aim of this approach is to determine convergence, inconsistency and contradiction (Lather, 1986a, p. 69), in an effort to highlight the shortcomings of the dominant method, or to validate findings by examining them from different vantage points to minimises distortions created by subjectivity and bias in non-quantitative and new paradigm approaches.

Three forms of triangulation were identified for the purposes of this study, including:

- Data triangulation, using several data sources.
- Investigatory triangulation, incorporating the perspective and work of more than one investigator in the research process (Bannister et al., 1996, p. 146)
- Methodological triangulation, referring to “the use of multiple methods in the examination of social phenomenon (Mathison, 1988, p. 14).
Data triangulation was applied consistently during the research process, obtaining different data sources on core themes throughout the research. For example, while the original strategic plan was one source of data, validating the understanding and meaning of this plan was also derived from early interviews, participant observation and correspondence received, as well as workshop discussions. This provided an improved understanding of what was being stated in documentation compared to what was being understood by participants in their everyday actions. Investigatory triangulation was also applied. One example of this was during the early interviews during Cycle One, where a research student attended the interviews and provided her interpretation of the findings. These findings were further confirmed by members of the committee and staff. Multiple methods were not directly applied during the research process, due to the limited timeframe for establishing and implementing other approaches during the research process, although I suggest that using different data collection approaches did strengthen the validity of the research.

Although triangulation proved useful for the purposes of this study, it also has some limitations. The large volumes of data collected during qualitative research makes drawing conclusions from such a wide range of information a challenging task (Oliver-Hoyo and Allen, 2006, p. 42). The cross-validation of qualitative data and complete convergence may not always be easy to determine, when there is a need to define a manageable range to be investigated (Oliver-Hoyo and Allen, 2006). Regardless of these challenges, the development of a more integrated assessment strategy, although somewhat challenging due to the amount of literature, can create a system of checks and balances to address some of the complex issues of validating qualitative research.

3.5.1. Auditability

The audibility, or consistency of the research results, is important in ensuring other researchers in the field understand and can follow the journey. This is offered in the form of an audit trail and understanding the process of analysis. A comprehensive audit trail was maintained throughout the research process. This consisted of:

- The research proposal:
Instruments used to obtain data, including interview questions, statistical data and documents:

Raw data collected from the research, including interview transcripts, field notes and notes from documents analysis:

Reflective diary entries, minutes, memos and personal notes:

Analytical interpretations including case reports; notes used to record and construct categories and their properties and notes on concepts and the interrelations between concepts, interpretations and results.

Apart from ensuring the quality of the research, it is essential to also address the ethical considerations faced when working with human beings.

3.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics and its application to this research is important due to the level of involvement and evaluation of human beings in an action research framework. Minichello highlights three ethical principles that are paramount for social science research. These include:

- The morality of the practices used and the personal and professional morality of the researcher who used them.

- The integrity, both personal and professional, of the research itself.

- Social justice in relation to the informants, the community, the profession and/or the society at large (1997, p. 191).

Four key strategies were undertaken to ensure the project was implemented in an ethical manner. This included gaining informed consent (see Appendix 5), maintaining confidentiality, securing the data that were collected and ensuring that face validity was considered when making observations. These considerations are further explicated in Table 3.4 below.
TABLE 3.4: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR PH.D. RESEARCH

| Informed consent | Community committee and staff:  
| All staff members were briefed and an overview and consent form was given to them with a good amount of time allocated for them to review and sign it. All staff had the opportunity not to sign the form. |
| Confidentiality | All interviews undertaken respected confidentially.  
| All names of places and people mentioned in all written reports were given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.  
| Relevant sections of the written report were shown to the participants to confirm that their anonymity was protected.  
| All tapes were destroyed once transcribed. |
| Security of data | All data were stored in a locked cabinet at the university. |
| Face validity | As a result of in-depth interviewing and observations, the participants were asked to provide feedback on the accuracy of transcripts, summaries and interpretation at all stages of the research project. This was sought through email, telephone calls or face-to-face conversation.  
| I ensured I maintained confidentiality where requested through my choice of methods, which involved collecting feedback all the way through the project. |

Interestingly, gaining informed consent proved to be a challenging process in the early stages of the project, as the research question was fuzzy and the relationship between me and the participants was very new. During the first cycle interviews, the level of trust from many of the staff was low, resulting in tentative responses early in the process. Producing these forms did not appear to allay the staff participants’ fears, but merely emphasised them further. To address this I extended the time and provided numerous follow-up emails and phone conversations to clarify the purpose of this ethics requirement.

As a result of this experience, it appears that the ethical process requirements of a university are not always conducive to building trust in the field of community and organisational development, as it can emphasise the different worlds of the researcher and participant. However, over time, this became less of an issue when the staff discovered that this research involved an ongoing commitment and encouraged participation throughout the project.

Confidentiality was highlighted in the ethics forms signed by participants. While maintaining the confidentiality and security of the data was an important concern, writing up the data required more effort and attention to detail to ensure that confidentiality was maintained for the participants. Asking participants to design, comment and provide feedback (wherever possible) proved to be the most useful tool in building a relationship to further the study. The ability to comment on different
perspectives also helped me, as a researcher, to gain a substantial insight into the different realities that existed and expose the data that I was personally unable to truly observe. Throughout the research, I ensured that I followed these key requirements to ensure the project maintained its ethical statues. More information about the ethical approach undertaken in the study can be located with my formal application to the Human Research Ethics Committee at Griffith University.

3.7. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have articulated the methodology, method and techniques that guided this research. Here I have offered my philosophical views and linked these with my chosen methodology, namely critical theory. The change orientation was then linked to action research as the chosen method for this study, which guided my selection of research techniques including data collection and analysis. The last section of this chapter clarified the robustness of this research, highlighting the validity of conducting emancipatory research and emphasising the ethical considerations that were made as a result of this chosen method.

The next chapter provides an overview of the events that occurred during the action research cycles as background to the findings outlined in Chapter 5 and 6 of the thesis. It conveys the story of the research journey as a means to inform the research audience of some of the key activities and events that occurred.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE RESEARCH CYCLES
4.0 THE RESEARCH CYCLES

4.1. OVERVIEW

This chapter describes the researcher’s three years of participatory inquiry and action in the Wooloowin Community Centre from 2003 to 2005. As described in Chapter 3, the method utilised in the study was based primarily on a mixture of collaborative, participatory and facilitative modes of action research. Data were collected using techniques including observation, interviewing, workshops and a field trip and analysed using qualitative techniques. Three action research cycles of reflection, planning and action comprised the study, specifically guided by Wilson and Streatfield’s (1981) adapted model of action research (see Figure 3.1). Table 4.1 summarises the three cycles of the action research study and identifies techniques for data collection and analysis employed during the study.

The first cycle situates the research location and determines the focus for collective action. This involved meetings with community leaders, including the president and locum coordinator of the Centre, with an ongoing review of local and organisational documentation to further inform the direction of the study. The cycle concluded with individual interviews with the Centre’s coordinator, committee and staff. These were intended to clarify existing perspectives regarding the organisation to inform the collaborative development planned in Cycle Two. These interviews and the local and organisational information were delivered as audit findings and selecting the organisational development strategy evolved from this analysis as derived from the Centre’s previous strategic plan. Lastly, an asset-based community development approach was incorporated as a framework and was accepted as an overarching guide for planning outcomes for Cycle Two. The analysis of the data was undertaken both as a collaborative group and with individuals at different points of time.
### TABLE 4.1: DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND OUTCOMES OF EACH ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>action research</th>
<th>Description Of Events</th>
<th>Data Collection Techniques</th>
<th>Key Outcome and Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Precedents and pre-existing data</td>
<td>Situating the research. Determining topic and its potential place in the local community to conduct research.</td>
<td>Literature. Personal/professional experience. Local information. Meeting local leaders.</td>
<td>Location for the research determined. Early stages of research question begin to emerge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cycle Two 2004</strong></td>
<td>OD Workshops. Workshops on topics identified from the audit determined by committee and coordinator. Field trip. Bus trip to investigate broader community and the local assets that exist in the community. Determining next steps Reflecting on progress in OD plan and planning Cycle Three.</td>
<td>Participant observation Meeting notes Workshop x 2 Emails Participant observation Participants field notes Meeting notes from committee meeting. Meeting notes Emails</td>
<td>Outcome. Different perspectives shared about future direction and views on ABCD. Key change. Clarity around limited capacity of existing staff structure and the clarity around the role and increased accountability on other organisational sources for the development of the Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cycle Three 2005</strong></td>
<td>Strategic planning. Committee develop draft strategic plan and clarify future development of plan with staff. Reflection. Reflecting on what has been achieved and future steps with new committee.</td>
<td>Participant observation. Workshop x 3. Centre documentation. Emails. Reflective interviews.</td>
<td>Outcome. Draft strategic plan, process to complete plan and outcomes to demonstrate early adoption by committee Key change. Shift in responsibility for future development from staff to include committee.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second action research cycle entailed the collaborative creation and implementation of a plan to develop the organisation to support ABCD activities in the future. This included the incorporation of the ABCD perspective in the
improvement of current services. The organisational development process entailed several group workshops and a field trip to help the group improve its strategic and operational direction and enhance relationships across and in the organisation (i.e. committee and staff). These development activities were collaborative, intentional, and change-oriented and arose specifically from group reflection from Cycle One (Comstock, 1982, p. 279). Cycle Two aimed to:

- develop a understanding of the organisation and its role in the community;
- collectively learn about ABCD and
- determine what changes were required to develop and sustain future community development projects.

Observation, participant evaluation and interviews conducted in conjunction with each activity provided insights which in turn contributed to an emerging development plan and a clearer understanding of the preferred future direction of the Centre. During the latter stages of this cycle, a review of literature and the extension of this literature review also proved to be a useful tool in determining action for the following cycle.

Cycle Three re-emphasised the value of reflection during action research activities. As highlighted in the action research model in Figure 3.1, the project had two different paths, including implementing or revisiting the aims of Cycle Two through a different approach. The latter was chosen due to the acknowledgement by the committee that the initial path chosen was not conducive to achieving the desired outcome. Cycle Three therefore involved utilising the data collected from Cycle Two and changing the approach towards developing a plan for the future direction of the Centre. This cycle included a range of strategic planning meetings and other learning opportunities. Data collection and analysis were carried out collectively with committee members who would inform and review the development of a collective plan.

Each cycle of inquiry generated data for this study which were collected and analysed, then validated using techniques including triangulation and member
checks. The following section provides an overview of the research destination – the Woolooowin Community Centre. This is followed by an explanation of why the organisation was selected as the site for this study.

4.2. THE COMMUNITY DESTINATION

Community centres in Australia were first established in the 1970s to provide a broad range of community events and social, educational and recreational programs at minimal cost (Humpage, 2005). There are approximately 111 community centres or associations in the State of Queensland. This includes community organisations focused on specific issues, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and other cultural organisations. This does not include privately run community organisations that have been established by other funding (i.e. large developments). South-East Queensland has approximately 42 community organisations in the region of which approximately eight are located in the City of Brisbane to serve a population of approximately 898,480 (Brisbane City Council, 2001).

The Woolooowin Community Centre is situated in the Brisbane central and north sub-region of South-East Queensland. The Centre is physically located in the suburb of Woolooowin, although its outreach extends well beyond this neighbourhood. Due to the broad geographic expanse between available centres in South-East Queensland, the Centre often attracts participants, volunteers and members from neighbourhoods as far as 15–20 km from its physical location. The Centre is approximately 5 km from the central business district (Brisbane City) and is relatively close to rail and bus services, which are often used by members to access the Centre.

---

22 Also referred to as neighbourhood houses, community houses or learning centres.
The community centre was established as a . . . central resource for people in the area of Wooloowin and surrounding suburbs, our aim being to interact with people in our local community and respond through the provision of services and educational opportunities that support and enrich the local community. (Woodruff, 2004, p. 1)

Due to the nature and funding of these organisations, it is difficult to gain formal documentation regarding the historical context of the Centre (Cycle Three, email from Department of Child Safety, 9 December 2005). As a result, the historical information was drawn from past documentation and the recollections of staff who have been involved with the Centre and its members for a considerable period of time. The Wooloowin Community Centre (previously known as the Wooloowin Family Centre) is situated at the Warilda Conference site located directly behind the Wooloowin Primary School. The building occupied on this site was previously the kindergarten for a children’s orphanage until placing orphans directly into foster care was introduced by the State in the early 1980s. This shift in policy led to a review of the use of the facilities, with a needs analysis revealing that the local area was interested in using the facility for a playground for young children, as well as local parenting support and respite services. As a result, the Centre was officially opened on 20 May 1982 (Application for incorporation letter, Cycle One, no date provided).

The Centre currently receives two key sources of funding through grants provided by the Queensland Department of Communities. The first funds the main community centre activities and is known as the Community Support Services Fund, receiving approximately $124,552.00 per annum. This funding is assigned to three key program areas including:

- **Family Support Services.** This service is responsible for providing family and individual counselling as well as coordinating and facilitating support groups. The expanded activities by the Centre include supported play groups for families considered at risk. The differentiating factor is that the counsellor works with the families collectively as well as children individually.

- **Community Education.** This is responsible for the providing affordable and accessible learning activities which address the interests of the local community,
with a particular emphasis on job support (i.e. computer courses), arts, crafts, recreation and cultural activities.

- **Community Development.** This primarily focuses on the development of relationships with other community centres, local groups, non-government and government bodies and social, recreational and educational activities (WCC coordinator, position description, 1999).

This funding is also expected to cover the management costs of the coordinator (who was also responsible for community development in this case study (five hours per week) and basic business support services, involved in running the organisation (i.e. reception, administration and bookkeeping).

The second major funding source is provided for the delivery of a Limited Hours Childcare program, with the Centre currently receiving $25,000 per annum in grant funding. It is expected to raise the shortfall through fees charged. The program provides:

> ... a childcare service for local families who have little support in family structures. It is designed to provide opportunities for parents with young children to access childcare on a casual basis. In accordance with the Queensland Department of Communities guidelines, LHC is limited to 12 hours care per child per week. The program is multi-aged catering for children 6 weeks to 5 years of age. (Limited Hours Childcare, 2004)

Other financial sources also come into the Centre through applying for specific grants (i.e. gambling funds), rent charges, fees applied to community education courses, childcare fees and other small fundraising activities. Other resources include non-financial sources, such as volunteering and partnership arrangements that permit other activities to occur in the Centre.

The Wooloowin Community Centre is a relatively small operational centre. The community committee has four constitutional positions that must be filled each year in order to allow it to continue operating. This includes the positions of president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer (Wooloowin Community Centre Constitution, 1984). As a result of problematic participation, the number of potential committee members now includes two further positions, called “project committee” members,
to help increase the focus of project expansion in the committee. The Centre includes 8 part time paid positions, with several staff members often having minimal overlapping hours with each other, making team meetings challenging.

As seen in Figure 4.1 (below), the coordinator has a challenging role, being required to balance relationships between the Department of Communities through a position called a community resource officer, a volunteer community committee and paid and volunteer staff, as well as to oversee issues raised with regards to members, users and suppliers of the Centre. The structure shown in Figure 4.1 does not include the small number of volunteers who provide support on both ongoing and project bases. This has been purposely excluded from the diagram due to the lack of development and consistency experienced in this area.

**Figure 4.1: Community Centre Structure**

The staff positions reflect the programs and administration of the Centre. Apart from the coordinator’s responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the Centre, she is also responsible for the design, development and implementation of community development activities. Other positions are based around the functional services in
the Centre, including a community education worker and family support worker. The Limited Hours Childcare is made up of a Limited Hours Childcare Director and two support childcare workers. At the end of the project, the Limited Hours Childcare also established an informal committee to oversee its development. The business support function is required to manage the administration and bookkeeping duties for the entire operation.

There were approximately 100 members of this Centre at the time of writing the thesis. Although this appears a low figure, levels of participation in courses and other programs reflect much greater usage of the Centre’s services. Many of the programs do not require individuals to join the Centre and membership fees do not currently provide a major source of income for the organisation. Furthermore, I discovered very early on that the requirement for a membership quorum to formalise decisions is more problematic for organisations with a large membership base, as attaining a quorum is difficult to achieve at formal meetings such as the annual general meeting. Although discussions about membership are often held in the Centre, it became clear that it was more important (and viable) to attract users rather than work on increasing membership, which offered limited funds for the Centre and would require greater administration.

The Centre is historically and currently services-based, linked to its key funding sources and current performance expectations. There is very little emphasis on comprehensive community initiatives, with the key community development focus being focused upon small group activities. The current capacity to expand in this direction is constrained by the number of hours currently given to this area. The use of assets outside the Centre is limited, as were partnerships at the beginning of this project.

Although the first Cycle is described as beginning at the community centre, the research journey includes locating and entering the research destination. This took approximately eight months to achieve and considerable work during the early stages of the Ph.D. research. My known interest in creating change at the local level is one reason for the difficulty of the search, as there is a lack of focus on local planning and development in my area. My desire to find a research site with willing and
interested participants who were open to the idea of sustainable community
development and to exploring their potential contribution added to my difficulties for
a considerable period of time. This was further complicated by my steep learning
curve in relation to undertaking doctoral research, understanding what was involved,
and defining the topic I was interested in and what it meant with relation to the
research project. The following subsection provides an overview of my journey to
locate the research before Cycle One could occur.

4.3. BEFORE CYCLE ONE – LOCATING A DESTINATION
“What Comes First – The Chicken or the Egg?”

As noted in Table 4.1, Cycle One was preceded with a search for a research site. To
arrive at this destination, it was important to define the “community” by limiting its
geographic borders. These borders reflected an amoeba with constantly shifting
boundaries, and the more detailed elements of my search are best described as a child
trying to find her way through a number of community mazes full of signposts and
roadblocks. For example, initially I thought I could go straight to the public to create
change in my community, but I realised I did not have the resources. I then
considered the local primary schools, as a result of the work undertaken by Beilharz
(2002) in Bendigo. However, early investigations demonstrated that working with
such a large organisational base without funds would prove difficult. Searching for
the research question felt like trying to answer the question, “what comes first, the
chicken or the egg?”

My desire to know the question (or even the answer) is often
overwhelming as I try to find a location with interested
participants. This is further encouraged by local leaders I am
meeting who consistently want me to map out an entire project
with the answer before I find a location for change. I really
want to undertake action research; however, the more I meet
people, the more confused I feel. Am I doing the right thing by
undertaking a Ph.D., especially in action research? (Reflective
Journal, Cycle One, 14 February 2003)

The fuzziness regarding the research direction and project site negatively impacted
on my level of confidence in the early stages of this search, often resulting in a desire
to hide behind the literature. The literature did provide some renewed confidence to
continue the search for a research destination. During this early stage, one local
leader proved to be particularly helpful. The State Member demonstrated significant
flexibility and interest in the idea of sustainable community development. When I questioned why she was interested in assisting me, even though I was unclear about specifics, she stated:

Most people come to me with complaints and issues that need to be addressed at the local level, rather than coming with an idea about how to improve the area . . . you can imagine why I see you as a refreshing change. (Meeting Transcript – State Member, Cycle One, 18 August 2003)

Her comments helped me understand the arduous and challenging life of a politician; as well as providing some early insight into the behaviour of members of the community. Her assistance allowed me to meet a range of community leaders, including the CEO of the local council and various leaders of local organisations. This included the locum coordinator at Woolooowin Community Centre. However, little came of this early meeting with regards to my entering the organisation.

My meetings with the different leaders from different organisations proved to be interesting and useful, and some early themes were an outcome of these meetings. This included:

- Community development and other change strategies involving local communities were not being applied outside “disadvantaged” communities.

- Few leaders, especially in government, had worked across different sectors, or in different sections in their own organisation. For example, urban planners rarely involved community development workers in the early stages of planning (Meeting notes – Brisbane City Council Community Development, Cycle One, 10 March 2003).

- It was constantly said that there is no money to be made and no reputation to be grown by focusing on small-scale change approaches. This was demonstrated through simple examples, such as the huge pay inequities23 between the government and the non-government sector for similar positions.

---

23 A coordinator at the Centre earned approximately $50,000 per year (gross) whereas jobs being advertised in private estates for similar positions attracted $100,000 per year (Position description – Redlands Shire Council, 26 May 2003) (Email of position description – Trinity Consulting, 16 January 2004).
Some of these early meetings further impacted on my already tentative confidence at the beginning of the Ph.D. process, due to the often patronising tone used by people I met. More specifically, leaders in government positions often used this tone towards my research interest and constantly demonstrated that they were unconvinced in the value of local initiatives. On the other hand, leaders in the community sector appeared to be either incredibly cynical or frustrated by their constant battle for fair policies and resources.

Eventually, I realised that my desire for change had to start small. The challenge was to find an organisation with the geographic focus, although not necessarily possessing a planning and development focus. My discussions with the State Member brought the conversation back to the local community centres, of which two key centres were identified. I was concerned about entering these organisations because of my lack of success with the locum coordinator and her description of the “bottlenecking” and “controlling” behaviour at the other available Centre (descriptions which proved to be accurate later in Cycle Two).

Eventually, the State Member contacted me as a result of a phone call she had received from the president of the Wooloowin Community Centre. The president had called looking for potential committee members, due to a lack of interest in the position expressed by members and the imminent annual general meeting (AGM) that was to occur in September 2003. I arranged to meet the president of the Centre.

Interestingly, when arranging to meet the president, I discovered that she had never been informed of my interest in working with the Centre. She stated:

I can’t believe [locum coordinator] didn’t inform me of your interest in the Centre. We need all the interested people we can find . . . This was similar to my experience with the Centre. I was turned away when I first came to volunteer and then I ended up joining the committee because they were struggling to get enough people. (Meeting Notes president, Cycle One, 20 August 2003)

My first meeting with the president was significantly different from my meeting with the locum coordinator. She was extremely positive and interested in gaining assistance in the future development of the Centre, with a particular interest in improving the community development focus of the Centre. She had undertaken
studies in this area (before having children) and appeared to have a good understanding about the benefits of community development. Furthermore, she was eagerly searching for somebody to perform the role of secretary on the committee and invited me to join, with a commitment to incorporating the Ph.D. research.

At first, I was concerned about taking a position on the committee as a result of my role as researcher. I advised the president that I would accept the position on the basis that the other committee members and staff were comfortable with my researcher/committee role. She felt they would be fine and confirmed this soon after our conversation. After eight months of searching, I had finally found a site that invited me in to undertake my research.

Although finding a location proved challenging and extremely time-consuming, the eventual outcome was positive for a number of different reasons:

- The president invited me into the Centre to undertake research and development, and noted her commitment to be a willing participant in the process, which was an important early outcome for the action research process.

- The Centre had a geographic as well as a services focus, and community development was identified as a key function in it (although there were concerns about the Centre’s application of this function by the president).

- The president was interested in the Centre improving its community development focus and capacity.

- Membership on the committee provided access to the developmental part of the organisation and provided regular opportunities to meet the committee.

To address my own personal concerns regarding my position as secretary on the committee, I ensured that I worked hard to establish a good relationship with the coordinator and reinforced the fact that staff could raise issues through the coordinator. This would help to alleviate some of the concerns I had around “perceived power”. I also planned to spend some time with the staff through interviews to ensure I clarified this arrangement with the coordinator. However, while this idea worked in theory, it was sometimes difficult to perfect in practice due
to issues that occurred between the coordinator and some staff members. This is further discussed in Cycle Two (Subsection 4.2.2.) of this chapter.

The search for a site, helped to clarify a number of other decisions regarding sustaining community development efforts. In particular, it helped clarify the complexity of working as an individual trying to bring about change and the importance of social connections and access to resources in this regard. Furthermore, it highlighted the difficulty of entering an organisation when one was solely focused on Ph.D research. It highlighted the inability of a single researcher to implement a transformational change strategy in the destination I would finally choose. Lastly, it raised my concerns regarding the amount of additional work that I would be required to do outside the Ph.D. process. Unfortunately, this proved to be necessary for building relationships and trust. The following provides an overview of the events that occurred during Cycle One.

4.4. CYCLE ONE: FINDING FOUNDATIONS

As noted in section 4.3, the initial stages of the research journey involved finding a site to conduct the action research project. Once the site was selected, the first Cycle was initiated in August 2003 until lasted until approximately May 2004. Specifically, this Cycle focused on:

- entering the community centre;

- building relationships with key participants;

- developing a shared understanding about the organisation and community and

- clarifying the aims and potential direction of the action research study.

Although the period of time was longer than I had anticipated, it incorporated the Centre’s Christmas closure (one month), staff leave arrangements and several operational issues which arose, as well as my own personal obstacles resulting from unexpected surgery. This demonstrated the complexity of working in a small organisation as well as the unpredictable events that arise, emphasising the need for flexibility with relation to plans. It was clear that persistence and patience would be important skills to have during this project. Furthermore, as I was new to the
organisation, I had to remain alert to not creating a situation where the project created obstacles to people's existing responsibilities. As a result, time became a consistent challenge to the project – both from the perspective of planning timeframes and implementing the project around operational requirements and personal obstacles. The following subsections provide a more detailed description of the journey of Cycle One.

4.4.1. Beyond the Superficial . . . Welcome

Three annual general meetings (AGMs) occurred throughout the project timeframe, proving useful for comparing events later in the project. My attendance at the first AGM revealed my early lack of general knowledge of community centres in Australia, making my rapid entrance somewhat daunting. Two weeks after my meeting with the president, I was sworn in as secretary, and, after having been briefly introduced to the two other committee members and various staff members I was then expected to start performing my role. A number of other observations were made during the AGM, in particular:

- The coordinator did most of the talking and presented the various business areas in a very casual and disorganised way, with the committee covering only administrative requirements for the meeting.

- Attendance was extremely low.

- Staff and committee members did not display a great deal of interaction and there appeared to be tension between the coordinator and some staff members.

- The only local leadership representation came from the State Member, who gave a speech about the importance of the Centre, highlighting her hopes for its future. The Local Member arrived as everybody was leaving.

24 There was no competition for any of the positions.

25 All three committee members had been on the Centre committee for a minimum of two years and were therefore already familiar with each other.
• There was no focus on the future of the Centre. The AGM only reported on basic program achievements for the year (Observation Notes – AGM 03, Cycle One, 8 September 2003).

I quickly realised that although I had been invited to join the organisation, there would be little effort to induct me into the new position and the organisation I was joining. Furthermore, the welcome experienced from the president, State Member and a few potential participants was not equally warm across the entire group, and clear relationship issues between individuals and groups were already starting to show through in the early stages of the project.

These early perceptions regarding strained relationships were further reinforced at the first committee meeting I attended four weeks after the AGM. These meetings were my key opportunity to work with the committee as a group and were important to the progress of the research agenda. The challenge of initiating the research project became even more evident during the first couple of committee meetings. This involved being provided with a copy of an old constitution, a rough template for minutes, with no time for small talk. My induction involved sitting down and taking minutes, with limited guidance on how or what was recorded. The meeting went for over three hours with an exhausting focus on administrative issues that could have (arguably) been handled by the coordinator. There was apparent tension and aggression directed from one of the committee members towards the coordinator, who also consistently drove the agenda into very detailed issues. The other two committee members, including the president, often appeared reluctant to air their views, especially during confrontational moments. The relationships on the committee appeared problematic, and the lack of focus on the future of the Centre once again caused me concern (Observation Notes – Mgt Meeting, Cycle One, 27 October 2003).

Some early questions started to arise during these meetings with relation to the project. These were:

What is the current perception of the Centre, as held by the committee and staff?
What work has been done on the future direction of the Centre and how has that been incorporated into the operational management of the Centre?

What is the current capacity of the committee to lead the Centre with relation to its development and how open is this group to driving change?

What is the best way to initiate an action research project within this current environment, where relationships appear to be fragmented and complex? (Observation Notes – Mgt Meeting, Cycle One, 27 October 2003).

The next step was to negotiate a partnership with the committee to determine the first steps to be taken in the research project which could assist the organisation.

4.4.2. Negotiating a Partnership

During these early stages of the project, I had discovered that the committee was made up of a diverse group of individuals who demonstrated limited involvement or understanding of the organisation they were expected to guide. Although the president had expressed her enthusiasm for a research project to be conducted at the Centre, the complexity of currently (strained) relationships led me to ask the following questions:

Who are the people best positioned to progress the project?

How will we work together?

How can activities be incorporated into current practice without adversely affecting current constraints?

How can I shift the emphasis away from the project being the researcher's responsibility, to joint decision-making and development? (Reflective Journal, Cycle One, 29 October 2003)

The answers to some of these questions were emerged early on, while other answers changed as the project progressed. Although countless efforts were made for the committee to drive the process, most of the outcomes and input were predominantly received from two positions, the president and the coordinator, with follow-up agreement sought from other committee members at meetings or through email. Increasing the use of email between meetings helped to further alleviate the decision time lag experienced by the locum coordinator. The desire to also incorporate a staff
member (apart from the coordinator) into this decision-making framework proved difficult because of the following factors:

- Staff worked during business hours and the committee met after business hours. The coordinator worked the most hours and had the greatest level of flexibility to work around the president’s availability, where other staff did not.

- Staff involvement outside their normal activities would require additional paid hours that had not been budgeted for. Furthermore, their decision to undertake part-time employment was guided by their personal commitments outside the organisation.

It was therefore difficult to find an overlap that was operationally and financially feasible. To address the lack of involvement in the planning by some of the committee and staff members, I attempted to ensure that checks were put into place to assess plans and time was given for feedback to be received from all participants, through the president and the locum coordinator.

Although the partnership arrangements were not as good as I hoped for, they were adequate for starting the project. I realised that waiting another month for a committee meeting would lose valuable time and the much-needed momentum for the project. To address my early panic about getting something started, especially with the Christmas closure impending, I asked to undertake the following to initiate some focused research activities:

- I arranged a time to meet the president to clarify her thoughts about the future of the Centre and the potential focus of the project.

- I scheduled weekly meetings (where possible) with the locum coordinator, to develop this relationship and increase my knowledge of the current operational status of the Centre.

- I asked the committee’s permission to undertake semi-structured interviews with all committee members and staff in order to gain a snapshot of their current views regarding the Centre and its future.
The committee agreed to my three suggestions. It was November and the research was finally getting started.

4.4.3. Focused Research Task

The design of the interview was developed in consultation with the locum and the president. A number of key areas were chosen as the focus for the questions (see Appendix 2), with the aim of obtaining information and allowing time for building a relationship with individual participants. The interviews specifically aimed to:

- Introduce me to all participants as the only new person in the participant group;
- Provide an overview of my research interests and their relevance to the Centre;
- Gain insight into individuals’ roles and personal motivations at the Centre.
- Understand the participants’ knowledge about the broader community, including its assets and the networks it had which they felt were useful for the Centre.
- Clarify their understanding of the role and purpose of the Centre.
- Confirm their understanding and background with relation to community development and what this means for the Centre.

To address concerns regarding my position on the committee, I provided each individual with the right to refuse to participate.26 I also provided an overview of my early ideas for the research and a detailed ethics form signed off by the University. To assist with note taking and analysing key themes, I was fortunate to gain the help of a volunteer student. This was an important decision in these early stages, as I had concerns about initiating my meetings with a tape recorder, in an environment that was clearly displaying early signs of relationship breakdowns and suspicious attitudes. In addition to the above, the participants were informed that the summary of findings would be presented to the wider group for review and comment once all research activities had been complete (see Appendix 6).

26 The president and the locum coordinator agreed to speak to potential participants to confirm who would participate. All staff members and committee members agreed.
In addition to the interviews, a documentation search and review of local and organisational information was collected and built on with the feedback received from the individual interviews. This included the

- strategic and operational plan;
- marketing plan and marketing materials such as newsletters and letters;
- constitution, policy and procedures document;
- job descriptions and information regarding roles;
- previous surveys undertaken;
- local information from the newspaper;
- government planning information, such as the local area plan.

To further supplement my broader understanding of community organisations, I also undertook searches on community organisations in Australia. All this information provided basis for the collection of data to help determine the group determine the next phase.

4.4.4. Early Audit Findings – Researcher Reflections

Staff interviews were conducted first. Every interview with the staff highlighted the lack of involvement and interest they had experienced from the committee in the past. This was demonstrated through statements such as:

Nobody from the committee has ever spent the time talking to staff. I was a little suspicious at first, and now you have further outlined your interest and intentions I think it is a good thing. (Staff Interview Notes, Cycle One, 12 November 2003).

I think it is great that you are talking to all of the staff. It is good that everybody’s perspective is considered if we are to consider changes within the Centre. (Staff Interview Notes, Cycle One, 11 November 2003)

Further remarks by staff highlighted the strained relationship between the committee and themselves, particularly the committee’s lack of involvement in the Centre. My
early observation regarding the lack of focus on the future direction of the Centre was reinforced during these meetings. Several staff members referred to a strategic plan involving group planning activities that had been conducted just before the locum coordinator had joined the organisation. This included comments such as:

Who is focusing on achieving the strategic plan? The document is sitting on the shelf collecting dust. We spend time working out the future direction and never look at it again (Staff Interview Notes, Cycle One, 11 November 2003).

Already, these two key points of staff frustration demonstrated their concern with the leadership of the Centre and its lack of focus on the Centre’s future. This included the expectation of joint implementation and responsibility for action from both the committee and the staff.

In addition to these issues, there were two camps of staff support around the coordinator. Half of them said how much they enjoyed working with the locum coordinator and the other half expressing quite the opposite view. This was an important issue with relation to any development process in the organisation, as the locum coordinator was required to be the conduit between the committee and staff, yet he clearly did not have the respect of all the staff or committee. Furthermore, the locum coordinator only had four months left of his 12-month contract (including the Christmas closure) and would start to wind back his efforts for the previous coordinator’s return. Developing relationships and consistency would prove challenging during this period. Of those who did not support of the locum regarding undertaking any development work, one said:

I don’t think we should start doing anything until [past coordinator] returns to the Centre. There is really no point. (Staff Interview notes, Cycle One, 12 November 2003)

However, other staff members were concerned about they described as the dogmatic style of the returning coordinator and had very different views about beginning development:

I think it would be good to start the development before [Past coordinator] returns. She was not very supportive of our program and was quite difficult to work with . . . for example, she wouldn’t let my support staff come to the staff meetings because they were casual. (Staff Interview notes, Cycle One, 14 November 03)
This divide in staff also reflected the divide in the committee, where two committee members were expressing their concerns about working with the past coordinator and the other bitterly complaining about the locum coordinator. As a researcher, a four-month delay was concerning, but as I needed to work in the confines of the organisational environment; it would not be up to me to decide.

While there were obvious issues with relation to the committee leadership, as well as issues around the personalities and working styles of the different coordinators, there was also evidence of a lack of understanding regarding the Centre’s future; its current role and existing relationships in the wider community. While several responses showed a view of a place that built connections to address social isolation, the actual descriptions of the current role in the Centre were unclear. One response that provided some clarity around the current operation included:

We are not a neighbourhood centre as we are focused more on where services are provided. It is a place where you can build relationships. However services appear to be weighted heavily – due to the funding structures. There is a strong administrative focus within the Centre, amongst the staff and management (Staff Interview Notes, Cycle One, 12November 03).

Furthermore, a clear lack of connectivity and involvement in the wider community, such as through programs with schools, was also evident. The view of the community was contained within the four walls of the Centre, which individual staff members rarely ventured out of. Furthermore, although most participants noted the limitations of the existing infrastructure and the Centre’s lack of resources, they were all reluctant to work with volunteers unless it involved a well-coordinated program.

All staff worked as part-timers and their hours did not always overlap with other team members. People chose to work in the Centre because they want part-time hours, and they resisted any growth in these hours. The coordinator worked of the longest hours and was expected to pick up any part of the operations which were not covered by the staff and the committee: a considerable extra workload. The hours of operation, however, were significantly different from the hours that many people in the community worked, and limited after-hour’s programs were offered.

Lastly, the lack of clarity around the role of the Centre and a lack of understanding of whom the Centre should be servicing often resulted in the organisation trying to be
everything to everybody, without prioritising key services based on the demographics of the local community. Activities were clearly guided by available government funding which continued to retain the Centre primarily in a social services paradigm focused on needs that were uniform across every community in which a Centre was located.

Due to the difficulty in scheduling a time with committee members, I was only able to interview two out of the three individuals during this Cycle. These two interviews reflected two different extremes, one being extremely positive and hopeful of the future, the other being negative and frustrated by the organisation. While many of the key themes discussed above were relevant, there were a number of others that arose; specifically, the lack of connectivity to the local community and the untapped potential outside the four walls of the Centre.

The president was extremely clear about frustrations arising from the business aspects of the Centre and was more interested in working on projects. She stated:

I was more interested in working on projects within the Community, but they weren’t really happening, so I thought I would take on a role with the Centre (Committee Interview Notes, Cycle One, 07November 03).

This interest in projects rather than running the business often proved to be a common theme of committee members during the project. When volunteers realised they had to work on the challenging and often mundane aspects of the business, they would lose interest because they preferred to work on projects (email from secretary, Cycle Three, 8 May 2005). Furthermore, their lack of knowledge in running a business reduced their level of confidence in making decisions, which was further reflected in their aversion to making decisions.

All committee members often said that they personally did not utilise the Centre as they found its services irrelevant. In addition, the Centre predominately offered programs during business hours during times when they had other commitments. Therefore their connection to the Centre was limited. Lastly, one of the committee members focused on the Centre’s failure to service the “disadvantaged”, although she could provide not say what “disadvantage” actually looked like and what role the Centre could play to address it. During this interview period, I also endeavoured to
locate and review all relevant documentation. The following provides an overview of some of the early findings in the documentation.

4.4.5. Documentation Findings

The documentation provided a number of different insights into the health and focus of the organisation. For example, the strategic and operational planning process had only been undertaken within the year of my review and was developed with the assistance of a consultant. My assessment of these plans was, firstly, that the strategic plan was not strategic and the operational plan was a padded out version of the strategic plan (Documentation Review Notes, Cycle One, 30 November 2003). The plans focused heavily on different programs and failed to take into consideration the business aspects. The vision was not a vision, the mission said nothing to the people working there and while this dialogue may have been useful at the time, it had died the same natural death that so many other plans had, due to their lack of focus on implementation and ownership.27

The marketing plan also failed to plan for communication and outreach. The fact that only five staff hours a week were assigned to this task easily explained why the plan was not very useful. While I understand the constraints and limitations on the staff and the limitations which may have also been placed on the consultant who assisted in the planning process, a great deal of work needed to be done in this area.

The second interesting fact that I discerned through the interviews, day-to-day experiences with staff and committee members and my early experience on the committee was that several staff members would often use some of these documents (in particular the constitution) as a way to roadblock ideas or explain why something could not be done. After further probing, I would find that these statements were made without fully understanding the constitution as the committee often didn’t have the time or interest to continually review these documents. This issue was easy to address in the early stages, by asking the person who raised the issue to demonstrate clearly where these statements were written.

27 This was confirmed by several staff members during individual interviews. Furthermore, this was evidenced by the focus on the committee meetings and the lack of connection back to the strategic planning outcomes listed in the plan.
Overall, my findings were that the future sustainability of this organisation was potentially under threat due to its lack of direction, its lack of focus on growth and its limited connectivity to the community. Furthermore, the internal capacity of the organisation was problematic for any future growth, without further capacity development. Resources were not being utilised effectively and this appeared to limit the growth of the Centre. However, it also appeared that staff members were comfortable with this situation, as this meant they were able to continue in their part-time positions and the responsibility attached to them. For growth to occur, an entrepreneurial spirit and energy would be required, and this was proving incompatible with the current establishment of the organisation.

Teamwork was also relatively non-existent, as a result of different hours, separate functions, different interests and a clear “us” and “them” mentality that had been created between the committee and the staff. This was further encouraged by the locum, who would continually make many of the operational leadership issues that he was to handle the “responsibility of management”, in order not to have to deal with the tougher issues. Of all the resources that I felt were most scarce at the Centre, were “collective time” and a “positive attitude” – two factors that were essential to bring about collective change.

The first step identified was developing a plan of action with the committee and the coordinator to help determine how the Centre would define itself and its future. The limited understanding of the role and purpose of the Centre and the lack of connection to the Community also highlighted the importance of undertaking an environmental scan of the local community, which included identifying local people, organisations and places.

4.4.6. Common Themes – The Five R’s

The next stage of the process involved working with the committee (predominantly the president and locum coordinator) to ascertain what information we should collect and how we could use it to assist the future planning process. This involved revisiting the findings from the interviews and documentation review to identify core themes. This was presented within what was called a community audit (see Appendix 6). Key themes were developed in the audit findings. These include:
• community demographics and geographic boundaries

• stakeholder analysis

• documentation analysis and

• a summary of interviews.

These themes were then put together into five groups (as outlined in the table below). This included roles, responsibilities, relationships, relevance and responsiveness.

**Table 4.2: The Five R’s from the Community Centre Audit**

| Roles | Limited clarity around the role or purpose of the Centre.  
Limited clarity around collective goals and their link to a broader vision.  
No vision specified.  
Strategy was set low to avoid failed implementation.  
Any role that was established in the community, organisationally or individually was disconnected and insular. |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Responsibility | Unclear responsibilities assigned to the Management committee resulting in a lack of accountability and commitment from the committee with regards to actioning items.  
No integration of the plan outcomes into day-to-day operations.  
No follow-up evaluation of plan progress.  
There was an “us” and “them” culture of blame.  
The committee were perceived to be responsible for a great amount considering the limited time and volunteer nature of its position.  
The Centre was expected to operate like a business, but did not have the funding or skills to become a successful business. |
| Relationships | Relationships were broken down in and across the structure.  
The committee had accepted the position of a disempowered supporter and orientation support was minimal.  
The forum to meet and dialogue was limited and unstructured due to conflicting time availability.  
The desire to meet was, however, high. |
| Relevance | The organisation and its people were disconnected from the wider community and have a limited voice at the community level.  
From early discussions outside the organisation, it was clear that the Centre was not seen as a vital one or an organisation with vitality. |
| Responsiveness | People were not responsive to each other in and across the organisation and they were unable to respond quickly to community issues, members’ ideas, etc.  
Furthermore, their responsiveness to growth opportunities was constrained by their lack of connection to other resources, assets and strengths in the community or field in which the individuals operated. |

Key opportunities were also identified as a result of the audit. Specifically, it revealed that:

• Nobody was happy with the status quo, although they showed concern about recognition for existing efforts.
• There were a large number of assets and strengths that could be potential resources for the Centre’s growth.

• There was a clear desire to work on the image and relevance of the Centre.

• Any change or growth would need to consider the internal and external balance required (i.e. external program development often brings additional work and costs to administration).

Although there were several other positive outcomes, the key outcome that created some early changes was the fact that participants were given a forum to express their views. Furthermore, the opportunity to discuss these views in a team environment with members of the committee was also well received.

Although there were some clear opportunities that were discovered from the audit, there were also some key challenges. For example, the documentation review clearly revealed a lack of understanding of strategy development, strategic planning and implementation and review. Planning and implementation was further complicated by the fact this organisation was restricted to “business hours”, when many people in the local community, including committee members, would be at work. Although participants continually raised social isolation as a key issue in the community, the participants in the organisation, had made their own organisation somewhat socially isolated itself. An interesting example during the interviews was when a number of staff perceived that young children and youth in the local area made limited use of the Centre. This perspective was interesting in light of the fact the Centre sat at the back of a primary school, was a block away from a high school and had six primary schools located in its catchment. Was the issue that we had not developed a connection that was relevant to children and youth in the area? (Interview Notes, Cycle One, 11 November 2003)

One of the more contaminating issues to be addressed in the organisation was the “us and them syndrome” that was being created between the staff and the committee members. This once again reinforced the issue of roles, responsibility and relationship breakdowns that had built up from insecurities and a lack of trust developed over a long period of time. Although the audit was useful in providing a basis from which to start further group discussion, it did not offer examples of
potential future approaches. The following subsection outlines the search for future guides for the organisation.

4.4.7. Searching for Guides

Although there was a great deal of work to be done in the organisation, it was of little worth to do this without clarifying the external framework that the organisation could work towards. This was more difficult than I had first thought, as it became difficult to find up-to-date knowledge about the future direction of these organisations. To find some of the early guides, I was directed back to three sources; the literature, local leaders and comparable sites.

Three key groups that were focusing on community organisations and community development include:

- The Urban Institute and their work focusing on building the capacity of non-profit organisations in the US (De Vita, 1997; De Vita and Fleming, 2001);
- The ABCD Institute which focused on changes in the approaches to community development (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993) and
- The Community Manifesto (Abbey et al., 2003) produced as a result of the Australian Communities in Control Conference, 2003.

These organisations provided useful links and guides regarding up-to-date perspectives in the US and Australia with relation to SCD and community organisations in Australia.

In addition, further insights were gained as a result of my visits to two other centres that were described as successful in the City of Brisbane. Both centres demonstrated some early success in ABCD practice, although they would not have used this terminology. The first was an inner urban centre similar to the one I had chosen to work with. The second was an outer suburban centre that was an amalgamation of three community centres. One of the more striking observations I gained from visiting these sites was the skill and similar perspectives of the coordinators in comparison to other coordinators I had met. Two particular differences included:
• a broader understanding of sustainable development and the importance of participatory democracy at the local level, including the role their centre would take in representing the local community;

• demonstrated business ability in running these Centres (Observation Notes – Community Centres, Cycle One, 15 February 2004).

Many of these discoveries provided a useful base from which a new approach could be considered.

4.4.8. Reflections from Cycle One

The journey of Cycle One, although quite long, was essential in establishing the direction of both the thesis and the action research project. The research journey involved balancing my continual search of the literature with my ongoing discovery of the local situation, with learning resulting from the convergence of all this information. Although there were many different themes that arose during this Cycle, the key one was trying to understand whether the community centre could develop itself to provide local infrastructure for supporting future community development efforts. Although the focus was about a shift towards an asset-based approach, it was questionable whether any community development activity could be adequately managed and maintained given the current organisational capacity and the strained relationships that had been created over time. Cycle Two would need to address this lack of balance in the organisation.

4.5. CYCLE TWO: THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

Cycle One involved collecting a snapshot of the current status of the Centre, including identifying gaps and gaining an understanding of the different perspectives and knowledge that existed in the organisation. The plan for Cycle Two involved using this information and developing a plan to work together to determine a key developmental focus in the organisation. This involved dialogue and planning in a team environment as the basis for building collective learning and future planning. The Cycle was made up of a number of workshops and a field trip to expand the group’s perspective of the Centre and the wider community in which it worked,
introducing ABCD and the need to develop the organisation to support future development.

Although at the beginning of the cycle these activities appeared to be manageable, the events that took place in the Centre during this time created major time lags and (at times) intensified relationship tensions. This stifled my ability as a researcher to move the research forward in a timely manner, although some of the changes proved to be beneficial by the end of the Cycle Two. This cycle involved issues and changes around leadership, including a considerable period of time without a coordinator. Furthermore, the part-time status of staff, the volunteer status of committee members and the limited funds available to pay staff to participate in additional group activities made the logistical aspects of Cycle Two challenging. The following describes the events that occurred during Cycle Two, highlighting some of the contextual roadblocks experienced, which further emphasised the complexity of undertaking action research and the importance of using an asset-based view for any form of development that involves resource-constrained situations.

4.5.1. Preparing a Path Forward

The path for Cycle Two was developed in consultation with the committee. The decision to work with the committee as the lead group during this cycle was influenced by two factors: availability and cost. Most of the committee were willing to make themselves available for additional meetings on the development of the Centre, and there was no financial burden to the Centre in arranging this, except for the time of the coordinator. The cost to the Centre could then be saved for collective committee/staff activities to ensure that staff could be paid.

In addition, my experience from Cycle One, demonstrated substantial commitment from two of the leaders, namely the coordinator and the president. This also proved to be the experience during Cycle Two, although this cycle went without a coordinator for a significant period of time. Although the other committee members did not actively drive the process, their participation was provided through reviewing and refining any ideas that were raised, as well as presenting ideas to staff. In addition, the staff were invited to nominate a representative on the OD planning, but the only staff member who volunteered was working 10 hours a week (reduced from 15) and was already experiencing difficulty with her very busy role in this reduced
time (Management Committee Update to Staff – March 2004). As a result, it was quickly decided by the committee that the coordinator would be the staff representative. This proved to be an important decision, as it was soon realised that the only staff position that focused on the broader context of the organisation and future community development activities was that of the coordinator.

An extraordinary committee meeting was held to start this planning. The meeting involved reviewing some of the audit findings and reference material. Four key areas of focus were agreed on as a result:

- Revisiting the strategic plan, including its vision, purpose and roles;
- Improving the current community development focus and considering the asset-based view for both types of development (internal and external) to combat issues around limited resources;
- Developing a current understanding of the Centre and a framework to work together to help improve relationships in, across and outside the Centre.
- Ensuring that organisational capacity and infrastructure was considered in light of community-wide initiatives, in a way that could be sustained over the longer term (Meeting Notes – Committee Meeting, Cycle Two, 7 June 2004).

These four focus areas were no small task in themselves. This activity was about balancing the committee and staff perspective. The committee sought to promote external developments while the staff appeared interested in the internal capacity of the organisation and the development of their specific service areas. Furthermore, the more that was discovered, the clearer it became that the level of internal development needed may have been greater than anticipated. As a result, this became the key focus.

The decision to focus on the development of the organisation was further reinforced by the locum coordinator who reminded the committee that the past strategic plan’s eighth goal was entitled, “internal organisational development” (Community Centre Strategic Plan, 1 January 2003). This goal would provide a useful link to past planning activities. In addition, the locum coordinator provided an overview of the
current relationships in the Centre with some additional information about rebuilding relationships between the committee and the staff (email to committee from locum coordinator, 30 March 2004). This attachment further reinforced the issue around strategic planning and the need to have a clear vision and purpose. It stated:

Is there a clear vision and sense of purpose in the organisation?
Are the organisation’s goals and values clearly stated in its mission? Is there a long term strategy to achieve the organisation’s purpose? Has the Board signed off on it?

If you think your goals are clear and that everybody knows what they are and agrees with them, then the problem lies in the implementation of your strategies. (OurCommunity.Com, 2004)

As the audit identified clear concerns with the strategic plan and operational plan, especially the lack of vision, purpose and clarity around roles, the aim of Cycle Two would be to further inform a new plan for the future which addressed several of the concerns raised above. This guide was also useful in highlighting the difficulty of implementation and the need to continually review the approach to change.

Although I had hoped that other committee members would take the lead in developing a path forward, I found that they were seeking direction. To assist, I developed an outline of rough ideas, which proved enough to ignite discussion and resulted in the development of a draft plan of action made up of a number of planned workshops and a field trip. To ensure that reflection was factored into the process, the group decided that the agenda for Cycle Two should be designed with the intention to consistently be modified as a result of committee/staff feedback after each workshop/trip (See Appendix 7). This ensured that the input received regarding the process from both groups encouraged reflection as each activity occurred.

Although the committee now had a draft plan to move forward, once again the difficulty of working within real life constraints meant that developing it would be put on hold, although the amount of work for committee members had increased during this period, further complicating the issue around gaining the committee’s time for planning future development. The following subsection outlines some of the challenges experienced during this Cycle as a result of changes in the position of coordinator.
4.5.2. **Co-ordinator Chaos**

Although the committee was aware that a transition would be required from the locum to the past coordinator, they did not expect the transition to become such a big issue. The locum coordinator was to finish in March and the past coordinator would return in April. The two camps of staff supporters for each coordinator started to make themselves visible as the time drew closer. Efforts were made by the president to talk to the past coordinator about her return, before advising the locum of an end date. The past coordinator noted that she wanted to return in May and that the Centre would operate without a locum for six to eight weeks. The president advised the committee that the past coordinator had raised serious concerns about the performance of the locum coordinator to her. This was interesting, in light of the fact that the past coordinator has only spent one hour with the locum 12 months earlier before going on extended leave, and had had no other contact with the locum since then. This made the committee aware that communications were being passed from Centre staff to the past coordinator regarding the locum.

Although not entirely comfortable with the gap, the committee agreed to the six to eight-week gap, on the proviso that an adequate handover took place with the involvement of a committee member. This would ensure that the committee was aware of any support or major activities they would need to manage during this six to eight-week period and ensure that the feelings expressed about the locum by the past coordinator were managed appropriately. The past coordinator made it very clear to the president she was unhappy about the presence of the committee member at the meeting, but agreed to it. Although I had hoped not to be the committee member attending, no other member was available during the scheduled time and I reluctantly attended what was a very difficult and uncomfortable meeting. It started with the past coordinator making it clear she was not happy that a committee member was present. This would not be a good start for my future work with her.

Once this meeting took place, the locum coordinator was then given an end date and the past coordinator provided a letter to the committee with changes to her employment contract, a reduction in her hours and a change in the days she worked. The committee had some concerns about these changes, as they were not operationally conducive to staffing operations. Furthermore, they were annoyed by
the fact she did not ask for the changes but proffered them as if they had already been approved. However, the committee members noted their lack of confidence in negotiating employment contracts and their lack of understanding of the rules. To address this lack of confidence I located a body that provided this kind of support to community organisations. The Centre became a member and as a result, made a more confident decision about what could be accommodated with the past coordinator. Some small changes were suggested in a letter sent back to her, including a request for a face-to-face meeting with the committee to negotiate these changes. The president also made a follow-up phone call to further emphasise the need to meet and discuss the changes and how they could work in the current operational environment. This request was followed by a refusal to meet the committee and was soon followed by a letter of resignation. The locum coordinator was finishing and moving to another region and the Centre was left with no coordinator.

Although the president was disappointed with the difficulty in trying to meet the past coordinator, she decided to see this as a positive change and focus on recruiting a new coordinator who could assist drive the future development of the Centre. Although this situation required more work and direction from the committee (namely the president and myself), it was seen as a good opportunity to gain a greater understanding about the operational aspects of the Centre. Furthermore, the money saved as a result of not having a coordinator would provide useful for implementing activities identified in future strategic planning.

Although this outcome allowed the committee to identify opportunities, further challenges would also arise in the relationships between some of the staff members and the committee. The resignation of the past coordinator reignited old suspicions and led to harsh accusations. This time, the team of supporters of the past coordinator suggested the committee had forced her to resign. Although the committee understood how they could have perceived this to have occurred, it was adamant that this was not the case. As a result, a special committee update was sent out highlighting the events that took place (Management Update, Cycle Two, 14 April 2004). A follow-up team meeting was also called to try and reduce the tension. This meeting revealed that only three staff members were upset by the coordinator’s resignation, while the remainder expressed clear lack of concern about the past coordinator and more interest in getting a new coordinator. This helped to show the
disgruntled staff that their view were not held by all. The committee could now move on to organisational development, once a new coordinator was recruited.

One of the disgruntled committee members, who had been slowly pulling out of the Centre (as demonstrated by her lack of attendance at a number of committee meetings) also resigned. The efforts by the committee were mainly shouldered by the president and me during this time. Although the other two members were invited to assist, they resisted doing so. One member clearly stated that she was a “bum on seat”. She had made that clear in many meetings and we appreciated her feedback and input. The other member became threatened by the work that was being done. This was evidenced from many emails that were received during this time, for example:

I realise at the staff meeting how much you and (president’s name) do at WCC and how little I know of that activity and so I see little point in my attending next week’s meeting because I don’t really know what’s going on. I read the staff memo and I am comfortable with the bits I understood. (Email from Treasurer, Cycle Two, 30 June 2004)

Regardless of continual efforts to invite the committee member to participate, it became clear that she needed to break from the organisation, especially due to recent stressful personal issues that had arisen. Furthermore, she had made it clear in Cycle One that she was not happy with the Centre.

4.5.3. Just in Time . . . The New Leadership Arrives

To ensure that the process of selecting the new coordinator was open and transparent, the president, a staff member and a community development worker from the local Council undertook the interviews for the coordinator position. The choice of the future coordinator was unanimous and all parties involved were very happy with the decision. This helped settle the tension between the committee and staff. The new coordinator was a very positive personality and had been involved in an ABCD projects in Eagleby.28 Furthermore, she appeared confident with the use of email and was a friendly and open communicator. The new coordinator would prove to be

---

28 This project was the project conducted by Cameron, who was also my associate supervisor for the Ph.D. thesis. This would help provide useful guides in latter part of this research.
better than the committee had anticipated and the Centre’s ability to revisit the OD agenda was looking promising.

The delays that occurred as a result of these issues resulted in the need to determine whether the committee should start the first workshop for organisational development before the new coordinator began work. As she had some of the skills and knowledge of ABCD, the committee decided to hold the first workshop and invite the new coordinator or keep her informed of the first meeting. The need to wait for the new coordinator was used as an excuse not to have the meeting, but eventually, it was decided to have the first meeting, which predominantly would cover the audit findings and start to talk about ABCD. Furthermore, as some of the material presented at the workshop was based on the ABCD project that the new coordinator had been involved in, providing her with an update would not be difficult.

With a commitment to the first workshop, the committee revisited the initial plan and assigned responsibility to each committee member to facilitate different parts of this workshop. The following research activities eventuated as a result:

- **Informing the Vision Workshop.** Sharing some of the findings regarding future possible directions and gaining comments from participants.

- **Informing the Centre Workshop.** Providing a forum to share and understand existing and potential perspectives of staff concerning existing programs and the future of the Centre.

- **Road Trip.** Undertaking a road trip in an effort to highlight the ABCD approach and start to widen the perspective of a “community centre without walls”.

- **Revision.** Revisit the strategic direction of the organisation and clarify priorities and responsibilities through a planning exercise.

29 The new coordinator would be required to provide notice and wished to take a week of leave before taking up the new position.
Although the plan had aimed to undertake additional workshops, the list became unrealistic due to the time lost in Cycle Two and the change of focus and direction required as a result of reflections after the field trip. Subsection 4.5.4 outlines the beginning of the OD workshops, highlighting some of our experiences during these group sessions.

4.5.4. Workshop One: Informing the Vision

The first workshop was entitled “Informing the Vision” (see Appendix 8). The purpose of this workshop was to

- initiate learning and dialogue about the purpose of the Centre;
- revisit the community audit and discuss the findings and what this meant for the future of the organisation;
- introduce information that could help to inform the purpose of the Centre, focusing on community assets and strengths;
- build relationships across the group and
- provide input for follow-up sessions with the Centre (Management committee/Staff Development Meeting, Cycle Two, 28 June 2004).

Although pot luck was suggested (i.e. where everybody brings food to the meeting), food was supplied only by the president and me. This sharing of food was somewhat symbolic of the lack of commitment or interest in building relationships. A decision was made by the president to ensure that at each meeting, the group would check in rather than going straight to business. This was a simple yet useful technique that helped people to unwind and set the tone for an open meeting. To start the session I was asked to present the findings from the audit and ask for comments on these findings. One staff member noted a few changes to the neighbourhoods included in the catchment area. The group agreed that they were satisfied with the findings.

To build up from the lack of knowledge regarding community development, a short video was shown, outlining a project in Eagleby which demonstrated an ABCD initiative in an area that was considered to be disadvantaged. The visual nature of this
project was useful. At the end of the session, the staff members appeared positive. One staff member correctly observed:

> Eagleby is a very different community to our community. However, I can see how we could still apply this type of approach within our own community through our programs and the Centre activities. (Workshop Notes, Cycle Two, 28 June 2004)

The staff understood the philosophy behind the asset-based perspective; although understanding how they could apply the concept would prove more challenging. The next stage of the evening was supposed to be organised by another committee member, who admitted to the entire group at the start of her presentation that she had not done the preparation for her section. Immediately, I saw the body language of the staff members change. We had asked them to stay back into the evening, but we had not prepared our material for this discussion. As a result, responses to the committee member were guarded. This disappointed the committee member who stated in an email the next day: “I didn’t feel great about last night; also as a management committee we probably didn’t look very unified” (email from VP, Cycle Two, 29 June 2004).

With only three committee members (as one was about to resign), this lack of unification was frustrating. However, it was only this committee member who did not prepare, as the president did a great deal of preparation for the meeting. This was the first time this committee member had been in front of the group since the AGM and she was now disappointed with the session due to her own lack of preparation. Although, I found this frustrating, there was little I could do but to let the conversation continue and try and work out how I could bring the session back to the journey it had started on.

Furthermore, due to the limited amount of time available, the president was required to end the session. However, before it ended, I asked the group whether they felt the session was beneficial and asked if they would review the proposed agenda for the next meeting and to offer any changes they felt would be important. The positive impact of this session was further reflected in my ability to ensure that staff made a time for the next session. The president also asked the staff to take away the entire agenda for the OD and submit any changes they would consider making. What
started as one of the most difficult tasks in the entire process, in minutes became slightly easier.

While no feedback was received with relation to the OD design, feedback was received from several of the staff who acknowledged that they enjoyed the session, specifically saying they felt it was a good start. This was demonstrated in a number of emails that I received after the session. One example was an email received by the president who stated:

> Just thought I would let you know that [Limited Hours Childcare Director name] had overhead conversations in the kitchen the morning after the meeting and they were all really positive. So your energy and effort was greatly received. Thank you for all your hard work and dedication to the centre and the community. You are a treasure !!!!!!! (Email from president, Cycle Two, 5 July 2004)

In particular, the ability to get both the committee and staff members together was seen as a considerable improvement. Regardless of a few hiccups, the first workshop was a good start and some of the negative and destructive events of the last few months were slowly starting to fade. With the entry of the new coordinator planned for the second session, the committee was starting to see a glimmer of hope that this organisation was on track with relation to its future development.

4.5.5. Workshop Two: Informing the Community Centre

As noted in Workshop 1, there was an improved commitment to meeting times for the second workshop. Apart from the positive response received from staff regarding taking time out together to discuss the Centre, this commitment was also due to the arrival of the new coordinator. The staff agreed that it would be a good idea to meet as a group with the committee and coordinator and continue with the workshop agenda.

The new coordinator (in her first week), demonstrated that she was the vital source of positive energy that both the committee and staff needed. The president and I decided that this session would now start to link some of the ideas discussed in the first session to the different functional areas of the business. The workshop was held at the community centre during the day and as a result, only the president and I could attend to represent the committee. Although as committee members we were
somewhat disappointed that we couldn’t get a time when everybody could attend, it was often questionable whether participation from the other committee member would have changed the outcome, in light of the events at the previous workshop.

The agenda for the second session involved each functional area presenting an overview of their program and their role(s). This also involved clarifying the staff’s long-term vision of the Centre in relation to their assigned program. This task was suggested as it sought to:

- assist the staff and orientate the new coordinator in her first week;

- clarify how the staff member perceived their roles;

- enable staff to learn more about other functions and identify potential areas of overlap or growth that were available from working together and

- provide a number of different ideas in relation to the future development of each program, including revealing blockages to change.

This exercise proved to be quite revealing about the different personalities and their different levels of commitment in each functional area. Each team (which was in practice often an individual) provided a presentation answering questions outlined on the agenda (see Appendix 9).

The first presentation was by the business support team. This team was administrative and focused on detail. Interestingly, the presentation was very structured, with the vision based on airing gripes rather than future aspirations. This was the group that was clearly affected by the impacts of the Centre’s growth. The more the Centre did, the more they would have to administer. This view was also reinforced in an email received after the first workshop:

> It was good to get together last night. Overall I think the ideas for our future are great – as long as we keep a solid infrastructure – in order for the “bigger picture” to have a solid base. (Email from Admin, Cycle Two, 29 June 2004).

This highlighted two key points:
• The need to consider the oncost of program development and our current inability to expand the working hours of existing workers;

• The importance of flexibility in both directions (i.e., there has to be some give and take in the development). The Centre cannot always have everything at its disposal at the beginning of project development.

While this team had prepared their presentation, the family support worker clearly had not. This was evidenced by her handwritten notes made during the meeting and her offer of a report provided at the last committee meeting. Although mentioning the use of strengths-based practice in counselling, her focus was clearly on providing services around needs. The Centre provided less than 20 hours per week of counselling services. It was questionable whether this was the best approach for the Centre, in light of the work undertaken by Beilharz (2002). However, the amount of change that would be needed might require new skills and the focus of this program was therefore maintained as a result of the development discussions. They highlighted a potential overlap in developing community education programs that are tailored around the family support role. This was well received and programs such as parent effectiveness training eventually resulted due to these discussions.

The next presentation was community education. The community education person was a talented individual who was interested in having a part-time position with limited pressure due to her family responsibilities (Staff Interview, Cycle One, 12 November 2003). Although she was talented, her focus was problematic, as this position had been identified on numerous occasions as the key area for developing a social enterprise to enhance the financial position and ultimately reduce its risk exposure of the Centre. Her presentation reflected her desire to grow the program and then maintain her current status. As a result, her presentation was often confusing and contradictory. This area continued to be a constant frustration to the committee and coordinator due to its untapped potential. Later in Cycle Two the coordinator would write:

Hey evening classes are a must, I just can’t believe how little substance our community ed program actually has, I hope this doesn’t sound mean, but you know where I am coming from.
(Email from coordinator, Cycle Three, 30 November 2004)
From a positive perspective, some of the ideas that the locum coordinator and I had discussed with the community education worker were incorporated into the discussion, although actually implementing them would prove challenging. A number of other ideas and opportunities arose by individuals in different teams, which provided some good opportunity for improvement by building capacity across different functions within the Centre.

The last presentation was from Limited Hours Childcare. The director of this area is passionate, yet balanced, about her role in the Centre. She lived in the area and had young children and she demonstrated a good understanding of the role, the program and her position. Her team also backed her up on this vision, which she had developed with them. The team had done their homework well, embracing the task and emphasising how every decision made was heading towards a much grander outcome. The financial viability of this service had been put in question by the departing committee member; as a result, the committee reminded the Limited Hours Childcare director that it would be important to continue investigating the potential to turn the program into a financially viable service in the medium term, suggesting visits to other sites. This presentation demonstrated a clear link to the asset-based discussions from the first workshop through the development of this program area. For example, the Limited Hours Childcare director highlighted the incorporation of a number of volunteer efforts and activities that were drawn from available resources in the local community. This was an exciting presentation, especially in demonstrating its connection to asset-based thinking at the service level.

Before closing the meeting, I asked for comments from staff on what they had learned and whether they felt that this session had been worthwhile. The new coordinator felt that this had been a very useful experience. All the staff noted that they really enjoyed taking the time out to learn about each other, the ideas they had about the future and the challenges that they face. The coordinator added that the information prepared for workshop two could be used in the AGM report, which also pleased staff, as this would reduce their preparation requirements for the next AGM.

Not surprisingly, time slipped away and the meeting closed without an appropriate check out. Enthusiasm was expressed about the next session, which was the bus trip. A tentative date was set, which was later changed due to operational reasons. It
appeared that the OD was improving slowly and the new coordinator was already proving to be a refreshing change in attempting to implement this process. Furthermore, there were glimmers of positive behaviour from staff who had not previously shown such enthusiasm. Although there was still a long way to go, this was a great start.

4.5.6. **The Road Trip: Looking Outside the Four Walls**

The road trip had an air of excitement about it. The resourcefulness and energy of the new coordinator was already shining through, as demonstrated by her ability to acquire a community bus for the local community adventure, free popcorn from a local movie cinema and a supply of water for the trip. Unfortunately, as time was against the committee, I did most of the preparation for the plans for the trip, however, I ensured at the committee meeting held prior to this event that all committee members reviewed the agenda, maps and questions and suggested any changes they felt were important.

Once again, only the president and I were able to attend the trip as the session had to be run during business hours. With the AGM soon approaching and a potential new committee to consider, this did not affect the development of the program. Although a generally positive feeling was expressed, another example of poor communication between staff reared its ugly head. In this case, one of the staff members noted that she was not aware of the date of the trip, although there had been preparations and discussion regarding the bus trip during the prior week. This frustrated the committee and coordinator, as there had been such positive energy until this point.

Eventually, all the staff except for one person, who was ill, boarded the bus with their popcorn, water and a booklet I had prepared for them to fill in on the tour (see Appendix 3). Unfortunately, as I had developed the route, I was required to sit in the front and spend a lot of my time navigating, something which is not a personal strength of mine. Due to the layout of the bus, I had insufficient opportunity to fully observe the behaviour of the passengers and to encourage dialogue, which I felt was lacking at times.

The first part of the bus tour went past a number of sites that were along a busy road very close to the Centre. In the early stages, this demonstrated the broad potential of
assets that were in close proximity to the Centre. Potential partners and locations were identified. However, because the road was busy it was difficult to gather information, as there was no place to stop. Once the bus pulled into the quieter streets the group attempted to reflect on the busy strip. Although some of the staff were aware of some of the places along this strip, it appeared to be many others had not been aware of them, as they had not applied the ABCD mindset to their thinking. In the event, it was some of the smaller back streets that proved to be even more interesting. In hidden streets were halls, groups that should be working with the Centre and even a large art institute that nobody in the Centre knew existed. Even though I had driven through some of these parts, I too, continued to be surprised at how much was available within the area and how much potential the Centre had in connecting with these groups.

Another key area of interest was the stop at the Mercy Centre. For several years there had been enquiries about developing a community garden. This provided a very useful example of the benefits of ABCD, as Mercy had a fully designed and developed community garden. For a month and a half before this trip, the coordinator had been searching for a place to establish a community garden and the work had already been done 500 metres down the road from the Centre. This was a great example of how many assets are contained in urban areas and how underutilised they are and how disjointed the information to connect people is.

The last stop was in the park. Although there had been great learning and some enthusiasm, the end of the trip seemed to lack energy, potentially due to the heat and the time of day. The key staff who did demonstrate energy and interest was the same staff who had demonstrated good levels of preparation for the second workshop. The bus returned to the Centre and a number of staff came up to the president, the coordinator and me and thanked us for our efforts. They remarked how they really enjoyed the trip and learned a lot. Each person was assigned homework, which proved a challenge to get them to complete.

30 This garden was designed and developed by Northey Street Neighbourhood Farm, which is the leading example of community gardens within the inner city.
The president, coordinator and I debriefed after this session. While we were pleased with the road trip, we realised that continuing these sessions with staff in the first instance was not the best path to take. The apathy of some to commit to homework or agreeing on times to work together suggested that the committee was starting change in the wrong location. This thinking was further ignited by the pressure of the AGM coming up in the next month and the fact that we were down one committee member. A number of decisions were made that afternoon. These included:

- The committee needed to recruit new members and potentially extend the group to six to include two project committee members in order to attract volunteers with specific project responsibility;
- The committee would need further development;
- The committee needed to develop a business strategy to articulate and clarify its thinking before working with staff further (Reflective Journal, Cycle Two, 30 August 2004).

Although the organisation was small, the rationale for going back to the committee was based on the fact that they were responsible for the overarching framework of the Centre and, from meetings held with staff, it appeared that they were more interested in the operational aspects of the business (the piecemeal view). These tasks were quite considerable, in light of the limited timeframe available. There was a lot more work to be done.

4.5.7. The Gems from the AGM

The annual general meeting (AGM) for 2004 proved to be an interesting comparison with the first AGM I had attended. This AGM helped to highlight some of the positive changes that had resulted from the early stages of the OD as well as the early good work undertaken by the new coordinator. Her leadership resulted in the creation of a clearer and more professional report than that of the previous year which involved contributions from each functional area. The coordinator and staff were both expected to present their portfolios, which had primarily been prepared in the OD sessions. Furthermore, the coordinator made the general administration of the Centre considerably less arduous on the committee. I worked on the marketing
materials, the president on the catering and the coordinator on the invitations and running of the night.

Although I was initially disappointed with the membership attendance on the night, I was reminded by the president that this was not necessarily a forum for enticing future members. She said, “Who seriously would want to come out tonight for an AGM? They are boring. This is not the forum that we need to meet new people” (Observation notes, Cycle Two, 10 September 2004).

However, the membership attendance was so low that we had to ask the staff to join as members to ensure we had a quorum. While the committee was reluctant at first, this proved to be a good idea.

Although much of the evening covered what had been done and the technical matters of re-electing a committee, the most interesting part of the evening was the attendance and presentation by the Local Member. He had not been involved with the Centre and was not aware of many of the features of the area in which the Centre focused their activities. As a deliberate strategy, the president, coordinator and I arranged to meet him before the AGM to introduce the new coordinator. This person was very perceptive and not only made sure he attended the AGM on time, he had prepared material for the Centre, together with a presentation answering the following questions:

- What do you perceive are the major issues within the area?
- Major challenge in the longer term?
- Vision of community centres?
- Their role in the future for SCD?
- Views on local area planning in the past (email to Federal, State and Local Member, Cycle Two, 10 August 2004).

The Local Member used this forum to answer several questions, as well as utilising this as a platform to communicate the Council’s initiatives. There were two points of interest during his presentation. The first was the amount of paper advertising he had
brought with all the different programs initiated by the Council. I noted during the meeting that, while it was great that the Council organised so many of these activities (which arguably should be organised at the local level), the disjointed way these programs were run was reflected in the collective marketing. He noted that he had not realised this previously and thought it was a valid point. The second was his presentation in which, while outlining the importance of these Centres he publicly admitted his lack of knowledge about these organisations. Although he lacked this knowledge he then revealed the potential threat to funding that may continue to occur in this sector in the future.

Ironically, I was pleased to have the Local Member present this perspective in order to ensure that the committee and staff were exposed to some of the external threats that were quite real for the Centre and its future sustainability. While I opposed this eventuality, it was a reality that the organisation faced in the economic paradigm in which it was expected to operate. The impact of his presentation was further discussed by the staff in the kitchen the next day and proved to be a good catalyst for future energy. This was demonstrated through a follow-up email from the coordinator:

   Staff meeting was really positive, which was refreshing! In relation to the Centre issues and ideas, I’ve got the staff interested to start developing some working groups to progress things. (Email from coordinator, Cycle Two, 4 October 2004).

The AGM meeting ran smoothly and gave rise to a pressing sense of urgency to develop a new strategic direction and plan. However, the Centre was back to the old problem of having a new committee that needed to be inducted, with the Christmas closure rapidly approaching and a strategic direction that needed to be worked on. Although having to revisit the past can be frustrating, it is also good to reflect on the these past actions and the new members did offer a fresh set of eyes and a somewhat detached contribution which could help test some of the ideas that had been tabled before the AGM to help guide the future direction of the Centre.
4.5.8. Reflections and Learning’s from Cycle Two

Although Cycle Two started with a plan of action, chaos set in. However, these unplanned changes proved to be helpful in developing the organisation during the latter parts of the cycle. The energy required to manage the chaos provided a feeling of being burned out by the drama and administration required to address operational problems during this time. This energy would have been more usefully applied to the OD project, but it was difficult to maintain by the end of Cycle Two. I also was ill in hospital twice (twice for ten days) during this Cycle which added further complications to my ability to sustain momentum on the project, although it did raise questions as to whether such development would continue without my involvement.

4.6. CYCLE THREE: PERSISTENCE PAYS (OR DOES IT?)

Cycle Three shifted away from group sessions with staff, to focus specifically on the committee and coordinator position. The aim was to develop a strategic plan to clarify the purpose, role and future direction of the community centre, with the intention to involve staff at a later date. The strategic planning sessions were not developed as a full or half-day activity due to the fact that new committee members would join the committee during the beginning of this cycle and it would take the group time to get up to speed with each other and the Centre.

Although revisiting Cycle Two would feel as if the project had taken three steps forward and two steps back, these two steps back demonstrated the importance of the chosen method. The reflection required by action research ensured that the group did not continue to commit to the initial path, but rather demonstrated a willingness to reflect on and revisit some of the goals established in Cycle Two in order to achieve their change agenda. The following provides an overview of the events of Cycle Three.

4.6.1. The Strategy Development Process

Cycle Three predominantly focused on the committee, although staff issues did arise from time to time during this cycle. The committee retained the president, I was promoted to vice president, the past vice-president took a project committee role and three new members joined the group in the role of secretary, treasurer and project
committee member. The position of treasurer resulted in a promising outcome. The role was undertaken by a person who worked at the tax office who was also a certified practicing accountant. However, challenges would be experienced due to the fact that he was also married to one of the staff members. The committee had been desperate to find somebody with these skills for some time, so an arrangement was put in place to manage any issues arising to a conflict of interest, and the treasurer agreed not to attend parts of the meeting regarding his wife’s position. The person taking the secretary position resigned due to personal commitments before any of the group met her. Eventually, the Centre would have five committee members to start the process which began in November.

The first meeting was held two months after the AGM (as a result of my own inability to attend due to illness). This involved having a one-hour committee meeting and then a one and a half hour development meeting. It also had to involve people getting to know each other and time had to be provided for the new committee members to be oriented to what had been achieved, the future potential and the challenges to the development of the Centre. Once again, this meeting had a large agenda and limited time. To help speed up the process, I developed a memorandum outlining information regarding local issues and opportunities and examples of what other community centres, both locally and abroad were offering (See Appendix 10). This information aimed to help elevate the discussion from an operational to a strategic level and provide some broader thinking to help stretch the conversation during the strategic planning session.

However, before embarking on actual planning activities of the meeting, urgent operational issues needed to be addressed in the committee meeting and some time provided to get to know who was now on the committee. The president asked the group to introduce themselves and talk about why they joined the committee and why they wanted to work at the Centre. This proved to be a useful “get to know you” exercise. It also helped draw out the purpose and potential role the Centre could play. This drew out participants’ past connections with community centres, rather than their connections with the current Centre. One committee member highlighted the issue of lifelong connections at different life stages.

I was thinking back to my first experience of a community centre when I was 8... and my home life was really [expletive]
(quite literally). It was my way to escape my family life was to go to my nearest neighbourhood centre where I did pottery. That was my first experience at a community centre. I used to go and pay 50 cents every Wednesday afternoon and would do whatever they offered. That was just one way I found I could escape my family. I then went back to the same Centre when I had my first child to do Yoga and then I discovered here at the same time. It needs to be a lifelong thing. (Meeting transcript, Cycle Three, 24 November 2004)

This highlighted the fact that many of the staff members were drawn to the Centre because of their past experiences with community organisations rather than their more recent experiences. Further discussions also considered the role of the Centre, with the notion that a waterwheel symbolising what the Centre represented in the community.

... the image of a waterwheel. You know, like here is the community, a big river coming round, and a waterwheel, it’s the mill, but you are actually using the force of the water to run your watermill and mill your flour ... 

This image provides a visualisation of how the group saw the Centre operating. It represented a place where people can come back to during different periods of their life to connect, learn and grow with others in the community. This analogy proved useful in later sessions and was placed at the beginning of the Strategic Plan as a reminder of how the group saw the role of the Centre in the future.

I soon recognised that the agenda was too ambitious for the evening; however, the free-flowing dialogue was extremely useful in helping to establish some early relationships and develop the foundations for further discussion. Furthermore, it helped me understand how far our thinking had come as a result of the past OD workshops and the field trip. For example, during the meeting, the past committee members and coordinator would often raise the idea of an asset-based approach to change (both internally and externally) as the preferred approach, emphasising the need to develop the organisational infrastructure to support these efforts in the future. The president noted:

We want to take on the broader roles within the Community, but we need to work out who we are and where we are heading. Then we have to make sure the organisation is in a position to support this growth in the future. (Meeting transcript, Cycle Three, 24 November 2004)
This was a positive demonstration of her shift in thinking, as she had been more interested in developing programs or projects rather than developing the capacity of the organisation to support these initiatives in the future.

Although little was achieved in forming the plan during this first session, it did help to clarify a number of areas that needed to be considered. As a result, it was decided by the committee that the next two meetings would focus on answering the following questions:

  Who are we?

  What is our core purpose?

  Where are we headed? (vision)

  What is our future role in our community?

  What are our collective values? (WCC Strategic Plan, Cycle Three, 2005)

Once this was decided, like all meetings, time was starting to work against the group and the meeting ended quite abruptly as it was late and people had not eaten. The group agreed to meet in January\(^3\) as the next get-together would be the Christmas party and another meeting during this period was difficult to arrange.

### 4.6.2. Planning Convenience

The Christmas party during December also proved to be a great success and set the tone for more positive new relationships between the committee and staff in the New Year. However, my old concerns about making progress through the planning activities arose again. Reflecting on the beginning of Cycle Two, I realised that the group might work better with another set of guides to help determine how much work needed to be undertaken and help clarify how and when the group could complete the task. The process also had to incorporate the existing roles and

---

\(^3\) This meeting was held in November, just before Christmas. Christmas in Australia is a difficult time for coordinating activities due to social activities and school holidays. A Christmas party was held with staff and the committee. January was the only time when people could come together. This time, however, fell in the school holidays which was a positive reflection of an increased level of commitment from the committee.
responsibilities of each committee member and address urgent issues that would arise from time to time.

To ensure the plan was not developed solely by me, I spent time with the coordinator to develop the template for discussion. The plan was broken into six key sections:

- **Introduction.** Clarifying roles, purpose, vision and values.

- **Strategic Priorities.** Guide for future action and decisions linked to the vision.

- **Internal and External Environment.** Overview to remind the group of its impact on the Centre.

- **Roles, Capacity and Accountability.** For committee and staff.

- **Strategic Program Development.** Linking vision to guide future direction of existing programs.

- **Plan Implementation and Evaluation.** To ensure that implementation and accountability were considered as a key part of the plan.

A decision was made not to include the operational aspects of the programs, as this could be conducted in a separate forum with the coordinator and staff and linked to the outcomes of this plan. It was anticipated that a draft outline of the committee’s thinking in this plan would be developed and then tabled with the staff for further input, dialogue and discussion, before operational planning could be conducted.

Once the draft guide was developed, a goal was established to try to finish the plan by the end of February 2005. After several meetings that always appeared to be rushed due to committee members’ personal commitments, it was clear that this goal was not going to be reached. This meant that the sessions needed to be well organised and focused and responsibilities delegated to individuals on the committee to help complete the plan. This helped to move forward several elements of the plan, but the process was far from perfect.

The coordinator and I became concerned about the possibility of a low level of commitment to the implementation of the plan when planning itself was proving to
be a challenge. However, while I shared some of these concerns, I also noticed that the language during committee meetings was changing and the focus on key priorities was starting to come through. For example, the president noted when a new idea was tabled:

> This is not a strategic priority in our plan, therefore we shouldn’t spend too much of our time or money focusing on it but rather go back and focus on the things we said we would do to assist us achieve our longer term outcomes. (Meeting notes, Cycle Three, 9 May 2005)

This was a positive shift, as it highlighted a collective focus on what the group hoped to achieve in the longer term and also ensured that short-term ideas were linked to the future vision. Although the completion of the planning document was slow, it proved quite useful to continue bringing development to the forefront. Furthermore, although the plan was not finalised, actions in the plan were already starting to be adopted and implemented as discussions continued. This demonstrated that a final plan was not necessarily essential to ensuring that action started. Developmental meetings with the committee continued to progress where possible throughout the year. As actions were being implemented during this time, I did not push to finalise the plan. However, once again, as the year progressed, imminent changes in the committee were starting to arise that would eventually delay finalisation of the plan and affect its implementation once again.

### 4.6.3. Committee Consistency

The complexity of developing a collective plan over the longer term requires long-term commitment. While Cycle Two experienced issues concerning the coordinator position, the committee positions now became the issue during Cycle Three, when the September 2005 AGM welcomed an entirely new committee (except for me). As the year progressed, the following events occurred which resulted in the loss of all the existing committee members:
TABLE 4.3: WHERE HAVE ALL THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS GONE?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Why</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Left at AGM but reduced involvement throughout second part of year</td>
<td>Family business was expanding and husband needed her to undertake a greater role in the growth of the business. This had to be managed between raising two young girls in primary school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Resigned in first month before attending meeting (November)</td>
<td>Was unable to join the committee because of personal commitments. Most of the committee never met this person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Resigned after one meeting (May)</td>
<td>Joined the Limited Hours Childcare group as she was more interested in projects than administrative business tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Asked to resign in May but had not been able to make it to many of the meetings.</td>
<td>She was asked to resign as she had not been attending meetings and had not supplied the information requested (after four months) regarding child safety. Without this information, the Limited Hours Childcare would have been shut down. Her mother became ill and she was also required to take on more family responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Would not resit after AGM and reduced involvement.</td>
<td>Due to problematic health and key interest in working on projects focused on aged care. Limited contribution during time on committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>AGM</td>
<td>Resigned due to complaints from two staff who felt that it was not satisfactory to have a husband of a staff member on the committee, regardless of committee’s efforts to manage this.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although each committee member had valid personal reasons for not continuing on the committee, the issue with the treasurer was the most disappointing. The same two staff, who had often proved to be problematic during the early two cycles, would not accept that the husband of the staff member could perform the role of Treasurer. This became extremely frustrating as this person had the skills required by the committee and a good attitude. Furthermore, these staff members could provide no examples throughout the year of any problems that had been created. They eventually won as the treasurer grew tired of finding ways to rectify the situation.

Therefore, while efforts were made to start projects and finalise the plan to go to the next stage with staff, this was not to eventuate by the end of Cycle Three, as the focus was on trying to find a new committee by September 2005. Four new committee members were found, three of whom had volunteered or had done some work with the Centre. This was encouraging as the need to induct them into the organisation was not as great. One of the new committee members was currently working in the social services industry and demonstrated a good knowledge of some of the issues facing the Centre. Another committee member eventually resigned in the early stages of the year due to a conflict of interest with relation to his
involvement in the Centre’s education programs. Although this was after the cut off date for the thesis project, a new committee member has been sourced who appears to have strong business skills.

Early meetings indicated some new energy; however, two members failed to attend the second meeting and the same old issues around time, attendance and commitment starting to arise. Furthermore, the key problem regarding the committee starting discussions towards the end of the calendar year (a key holiday period) proved disruptive.

As the Ph.D. time period was coming to a close, I decided to finish the Cycle and continue working with the Centre for another year until the committee could be strengthened. Although I felt a sense of failure in relation to some aspects of the project, on reflection, I also found that there has been significant progress made in the organisation and the potential for change was still alive in the skills and knowledge of the coordinator. As several new committee members had some involvement with the Centre, the program was not starting from scratch. However, while this area continued to be a challenge for the Centre, it became clear that improving the recruitment and selection of committee members is an ongoing journey that needs constant sourcing to build up the leadership potential of this group. Early indications with the new committee are however, that a couple of them have been more actively involved and are taking responsibility for specific items.

4.6.4. Reflections and Outcomes from Cycle Three

Cycle Three had a different tone and momentum from the previous two cycles. The group had become more realistic about what could be achieved and there was a shift in focus towards assigning tasks to suit individual strengths and interests. The plan provided a catalyst of clarity for all participants, so that decision-making became clearer and more authoritative during this period. Early feedback from staff through the coordinator provided further reinforcement that the ideas in the plan were pointing in the right direction. There were many other smaller successes that occurred during this final cycle, although the issue around the committee and leadership still concerned me as a researcher. However, there were a number of achievements and there was a demonstrated commitment from the coordinator to continue driving the plan forward. The following chapter outlines some of the key
achievements at the end of these three cycles and outlines some of the key challenges and opportunities identified as a result of the OD process.

4.7. REFLECTIONS ON THE THREE CYCLES

The three cycles demonstrated a journey full of hidden possibilities and unexpected turns. Initiating this journey with a broad commitment to change proved a useful guide. Although it was often daunting and frustrating not to be clear about exactly what the goals were, it became clear to me during the cycles that, even if I had a specific goal, this would change as events would occur and new information would unfold.

Cycle One demonstrates the importance of building relationships early in the action research process. However, it also demonstrates the political complexity of such organisations, highlighting how leadership issues can stifle organisational capacity-building and an action research project. Being in a resource-constrained organisation also presented a challenge to the researcher as participant. Every contribution I made helped this organisation, which resulted in my having to play a much broader role than researcher if I was to build trust and make any progress in the organisation during the research period. The rules and regulations of the university can also be somewhat daunting when attempting to build relationships with participants. The University wanted ethics approval early in the process, which required spelling out the focus of the study. In action research the focus of the study is somewhat guided by participants who had not yet participated. Regardless of these challenges, the process was treated as a flexible one that attempted to satisfy the two different worlds (i.e. the university and the community centre) to allow for ethical practice that encouraged participation.

The first cycle therefore focused on building relationships and establishing some basic foundations from which to move the action research project forward. The loss of the coordinator position during the early stages made Cycle One much lengthier than I had anticipated. However, the result of the events during this cycle strengthened the committee’s resolve to move ahead in Cycle Two. The committee and staff workshops, field trips and meetings demonstrated improved progress during the action research process. Although relationships in and across the organisation
were still problematic, there were improvements regarding the direction of the Centre. However, the intention of this cycle was to develop a joint strategic plan, by creating a group that was better informed about possible future directions. Although this did not happen, this was not necessarily detrimental to the process. These sessions were informative and useful. They created shared knowledge about the future and exposed the current perceptions of different participants in the organisation. This helped the committee formulate potential directions forward and highlighted the importance of their role in setting the future direction of the Centre. Clarifying the roles of the committee and staff also assisted relationships. The bus trip during this Cycle helped to show all participants the potential assets in the area, encouraging a broader understanding of the role of the Centre in the future.

Cycle Three was the action cycle offering the most tangible results in the change process. Although not all these changes came to fruition in the time period, I was more confident than in any other cycle that a great deal could be achieved over time and this did not require a level of involvement from me demanded in Cycle Two. My biggest concern about the sustainability of future implementation however, was located in the ability of the committee to clarify goals and to attract the right people to ensure that some of the vision and goals would be achieved over the various time periods. While this has not been resolved entirely, improvements have been made to the Centre and potential committee members are being constantly assessed as part of the process. Although the strategic plan was still in draft form, it proved to be a useful tool for conversations about the future and continues to be utilised as a basis for discussion regarding the future direction and committee responsibilities.

Although during many periods of this project I felt that I would never achieve much, I am surprised, looking back, at some of our achievements. Could this project be sustained beyond my involvement in it? Although the project was only in the early stages of the change process, I felt that I could have achieved greater sustainability beyond my own involvement. The following chapter highlights some of the lessons learned and findings.
CHAPTER FIVE

KEY SHIFTS
AND
LESSONS
LEARNED
5.0 KEY SHIFTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

I am never been especially impressed by the heroics of people who are convinced they are about to change the world. I am more awed by those who struggle to make one small difference after another.

*Ellen Goodman (1941–)*

Although some could consider the three cycles ended in failure, the outcomes delivered at the end of Cycle Three, plus the small differences made throughout the three years demonstrated key shifts and early steps forward in the development of the community organisation in an effort to improve its capacity to support ABCD initiatives at the local level (in the longer term). Although the study was too short to determine whether the organisation could establish or sustain comprehensive community initiatives, this chapter highlights some outcomes that may support or inhibit this development in the future.

Chapter 5 reflects on the three cycles and provides an overview of some of the key outcomes of the project. These included:

- The early integration of the asset-based perspective into the organisational and community development activities in the Centre as a result of the organisational capacity-building experience.

- The alignment of strategic priorities to guide the future direction of the Centre towards asset-based community development, to support both comprehensive community initiatives and improve organisational viability in the future.

In addition, the chapter outlines some of the key challenges and opportunities experienced in the organisation when attempting to develop its capacity to support community development initiatives in the future. The opportunities and challenges are linked to Plummer’s adapted model (see Figure 2.3) to help highlight both the external and internal experiences that enabled or stifled the shift in the capacity-building project.
5.1. KEY OUTCOMES

The action research cycles delivered a number of key outcomes as a result of the organisational capacity-building undertaken in the organisation. Although there were many small outcomes, this section focuses on two core outcomes that incorporate some of the smaller outcomes achieved, resulting from the research project. The first outcome discussed in this section was the integration of an asset-based perspective in the organisation, emphasising the potential of the research to shift organisational thinking from the dominant needs-based paradigm. To demonstrate this shift, this section revisits the old and new strategic plan. The second outcome focuses on the shift in strategic priorities and direction, highlighting the benefits of clarifying these priorities. These include improving the capacity of the organisation to support community development activities such as comprehensive community initiatives in the future.

5.1.1 Integration of ABCD Perspectives

The integration of the asset-based perspective into an organisational development and community development context during the project was encouraging. The benefits of looking at the organisation and community from the view of abundance rather than deficit not only opened up future possibilities for both the organisation and the community, it helped break the feeling of frustration and helplessness that was often felt as a result of the resource-constrained nature of the organisation.

Leadership proved to be an important, and at times, illusive resource to the integration of the asset-based perspective. However, while the sustainability and implementation of some of the outcomes were not consolidated due to the replacement of most committee members at the end of Cycle Three, there is evidence that development efforts can continue. Although the Centre’s ability to sustain ongoing developments was far from perfect, it was certainly not untenable. For example, although the turnover of committee membership challenged the sustainability of the project – at least in the Ph.D. timeframe – the recruitment of new committee members may yet provide positive results, just as the new coordinator did in Cycle Two, and allow for an improved induction into the organisation, including
clearly articulating the role, responsibilities and expectations of individuals on the committee. The recruitment of a committee is a never-ending journey. Like attempting to hit the bullseye with an arrow, the search for a committee that has a good fit with the Centre involves trial, error and a lot of practice. Although the research project had been completed, capacity-building continued in the Centre, predominantly driven by the coordinator with some assistance from me. The clarity of the direction of the organisation attracted a number of committee members who have already proved to be involved and useful in developing the organisation, with other participants wanting to make decisions from a distance, in an uninvolved manner. However, even as this thesis was being written, the Centre has now been able to attract a committee member with strong business consultancy skills, a much required resource for this group. This suggests that the recruitment and selection of the leadership structure (i.e. the committee) requires continual work and effort to find the right fit and balance for the organisation.

Although committee issues will impact upon its future activities, the coordinator’s leadership experience in the planning and development process (especially during Cycle Three) highlighted the potential for planning and implementation to continue, regardless of the Committee. This was demonstrated by her ongoing commitment (after the third AGM) to continue implementing key strategies and her actions to ensure the new committee were aware of the draft plan and the need to complete it in the new year. In addition, there was a notable shift in her own development, particularly in light of the short time she had been with the Centre, which was reflected in her confidence in communicating the strategic plan to key stakeholders and continuing to implement the plan. This clarity also resulted in her improved consideration of projects and her use of time in light of the strategic priorities that had been identified. Evidence of this improvement was demonstrated in an email regarding a meeting the coordinator had attended with community development workers at the local Council. She stated:

Had a meeting with [community development worker name] from BCC and her supervisor [name] today – they’re really interested in our ideas for the future – and were pretty impressed with what we’ve been thinking about! They said that they weren’t aware of any other Centre thinking at this strategic level and were excited about future discussions. (Email from coordinator after Cycle Three, 2 December 05)
This feedback was particularly significant, as the one of the community development workers was on the selection committee and had specifically highlighted her concerns about the skill of the coordinator and the need for providing ongoing mentoring for her in this role. Therefore this feedback highlighted the shift in the capability of the coordinator. The pivotal role played by the coordinator is essential to the ongoing implementation of the Centre’s development. However, sustaining such efforts over the long term requires an active and focused committee to share the workload and the responsibility of development. The demands of change, especially when managing multiple stakeholders, requires a strong support system and failing to put this into place would compromise future development outcomes. Subsection 5.3 elaborates further on the issues around the coordinator and leadership.

The last key shift that was evident as a result of the three cycles was the change in strategic thought in the organisation, and the influence of asset-based thinking on the planning process. The planning process purposely did not involve a one-day or half-a-day planning session with committee and staff, but rather, incorporated planning into existing meeting structures over a period of time. Furthermore, the broader process of engagement (by including staff and other key stakeholders) was factored into the planning process, providing a potential driver for achieving outcomes as part of the process. This would retain the plan in draft status for a considerable period of time. The benefits of making the plan a draft were not fully understood until the imminent loss of committee members. For example, the fact that the plan remained in draft form meant that it was not complete and would require constant review and changes. In addition, the process of engagement provided a point of assessment where staff and stakeholders would also have some involvement in the process.

Although, the coordinator and I were initially concerned that this draft approach would delay implementation, this did not prove to be the case. The constant revisiting of the plan ensured that the strategic priorities were continually discussed and incorporated into current practice. Over time, as they were revisited, we would discover that elements of the plan had been implemented. The challenge in the future would involve further incorporating this plan into the organisational process, such as in agendas for meetings and quarterly plan reviews (which were also factored into the strategic plan). Although the strategic plan was incomplete, it was still considered
to be a significant improvement on the past plan and actions. The fact that the plan was still being discussed after a considerable period of time demonstrated that it was not the “plan that was sitting on the shelf collecting dust” as was remarked of the previous plan during Cycle One (Interview notes, Cycle One, 11 November 03).

Key shifts in thinking about the future role of the Centre, influenced by ABCD, could also be identified in the language of the plan itself. An example of these improvements in thinking influenced by the ABCD perspective can be demonstrated by comparing the original\(^{32}\) and new visions. For example, the original vision was to develop, implement and promote quality services and educational opportunities for people within our local community” (WCC Strategic Plan 2001–2004, revised March 2003).

This vision said nothing about the role, purpose or direction of the Centre. Furthermore, it ignored timeframes and the broader purpose of the Centre. This stands in marked contrast with the with three vision timeframes developed in 2005 (See Figure 5.1)

---

\(^{32}\) The old plan was developed with the support of a consultant.
TABLE 5.1: MULTIPLE VISIONS UNDERPINNED BY ABCD (STRATEGIC PLAN 2005)

| Short- to Medium-Term Vision (3 years) | COMMUNITY CENTRE WITHOUT WALLS | Asset-based community development that develops activities, projects and programs building on underutilised and available assets, talents and skills located in the local area. A virtual community established through use of technology to streamline marketing, communications and coordination. Rebrand the Centre to reflect the demographics of the area we serve and make our presence felt in a broad spectrum of the community. Enhance financial sustainability of organisation through the development of functions such as education. |
| Medium to Long-Term Vision (3–5 years) | PARTNERSHIPS FOR CENTRE EXPANSION and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT | Enhance local partnerships to improve community governance on local level issues and plans. Establish a mutually respectful partnership with Brisbane City Council working on urban renewal and local area planning. Enhance community awareness, input, participation and action in local area issues encouraging self-reliance at a community level. Facilitate and coordinate a political environment for community issues to be discussed, encouraging a collaborative environment across different perspectives. |
| Long-Term Vision (5–10 years) | CREATING THE COMMUNITY PLACE Multi-purpose facility with partners | To own and operate a multi-purpose physical premises close to public transport hub(s) that brings together a multitude of different community-based activities and organisations including for-profit and not-for-profit organisations, community leaders and government organisations. This hub would create activities for multiple ages, abilities and cover areas such as information, education, recreation, lifestyle and social services. |

Based on what was learned from ABCD, the Centre looked at its development from the perspective of their long-term goal of a community place and applied the asset-based perspective to how the Centre could develop towards this vision in the short and medium terms, with the intention of supporting a local community development agenda in the future. The notion of a “community centre without walls” was about finding ways to expand the organisation’s capacity, awareness and relevance in the local community without being restricted by the limited facility in which they were located. This demonstrated the application of an asset-based perspective to both the development of the organisation and its community development role in the community, shifting the focus away from specific program development to building the capacity of the organisation towards a broader community development role.
As a result of this there was a shift in focus regarding key priorities in the organisation to put in place broader and more cost-effective means of communication, both internally and externally. This included improving the use of technology\textsuperscript{33} to enable better internal coordination with staff, and improving the quality and cost effectiveness of external communications with volunteers and the wider community. Furthermore, changing the trading name of the Centre from Wooloowin Community Centre to “The Community Place” reflected the longer term vision of the Centre as a place of connection for the local community. This resulted in a rebranding exercise that also attempted to link the future name and image with the vision (See Appendix 11).

Although this was not anticipated, the clarity around the vision particularly the longer term vision, proved extremely useful after Cycle Three. A location for a future site had been discussed on the bus trip and the potential arose to start negotiations with a private sector company who had purchased the site, as well as negotiations with government regarding the potential development of The Community Place. Furthermore, the broader awareness gained regarding urban planning (through greater external awareness from the Centre), and some early awareness of available land and potential sites for future development allowed the Centre to enter negotiations knowing how the long-term vision could link into the urban planning agenda (around transit-orientated developments). These discussions are only in their early stages. The ability to recognise this opportunity and communicate the Centre’s future vision demonstrated a commitment and increased clarity around the roles, purpose and direction of the Centre, including how an asset-based perspective can support the Centre on this journey (both internally and externally). This was a useful and significant shift in the organisation that will continue to guide future development beyond Cycle Three.

\textsuperscript{33} The coordinator and staff did not have their own email and their computers were so old they could not be networked to improve internal communication. Furthermore, they could not support web-based technology for improved communication with the wider community and volunteers.
5.1.2 Alignment of Strategic Priorities

In addition to the clarity around the vision, purpose and role of the Centre, a number of key outcomes were achieved in relation to the strategic priorities although the plan remained in draft form. These outcomes are outlined in the table below:

**TABLE 5.2: SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES RESULTING FROM STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Financial Management and Planning</th>
<th>Early investigations were undertaken with relation to gaining Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status to assist with private funding of events. Available funds were identified and assigned to the different strategic priorities in the strategic plan.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Marketing and Communications</td>
<td>Draft marketing and communications plan developed. (See Appendix 14) New brand developed, including new stationery. New newsletter being developed, including selling advertising. Launch planned for early 2006. New technology grant (over $20,000) was received, with new computers and software.. Web portal quotes received for new design with new brand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Program sustainability and accountability</td>
<td>Limited Hours Childcare was the key program developed. Developed a new policy: it is currently profitable and has established a program committee. Raised over $2000 for the year through volunteer initiatives. Incorporated volunteers into the program. Arranged two days of volunteer maintenance for the Centre. Free trees received and ongoing maintenance arranged through government program. Community education grew programs and profitability. Looking to turn into a social enterprise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Network and assets</td>
<td>A project focusing on the partnership with a major health organisation was undertaken. However, near the early stages of the project, the CEO resigned and the project could not be continued. Current negotiations are being undertaken with a private developer regarding a public/private partnership for a new community facility in a transit-orientated development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Staff and community committee structure</td>
<td>Requires more work due to the need to recruit a new committee. Increased number of committee members in an effort to improve the level of participation of volunteers (i.e. account for absences when people are unavailable). Undertaken improved meeting structures around planning to include general management and development work. Continually recruited new committee members and challenged those who were not participating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Events for 2006</td>
<td>Launch of new Centre brand planned for early 2006.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Resourcing</td>
<td>Increased revenue from rent and advertising has been received through the Community Education program. Grant received for new technology. Currently in negotiations about a public/private partnership for a new facility.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These improvements show that the efforts with the staff in Cycle Two also resulted in some positive outcomes, although there was not a strong focus on the internal programs in Cycle Three. For example, Limited Hours Childcare received a key
focus due to the positive attitude of the Director and the need to ensure that the program addressed urgent financial concerns. Although the profitability of the program was one achievement, several others resulted since the asset-based discussions in Cycle Two. For example, a volunteer committee was established involving users of the service who now guide the development of the program. Ground maintenance and improvement programs were made, involving volunteers including the receipt of 50 new plants and turf free of charge through different smaller programs identified. Volunteer support in the childcare facilities themselves was also developed, with fund-raising and social events raising approximately $2000 in additional funds for projects and resources for the group. This shift was notable in light of concerns about retaining the program in the longer term.

In addition to improvements in the Limited Hours Childcare, the Community Education program (which included community development activities) also improved, despite experiencing three staff changes in the one year (Cycle Two/Three). This included the expansion of groups such as:

- the women’s friendship group (expanding from five to over 25 people);
- increased number of education classes run by local people;
- “sell out” bus trips that resulted from the interest of local community members; and
- a “restaurant-lovers group” based on people meeting and enjoying food in the local community.

These programs were all developed as a result of interests in the community and were facilitated by the Centre, with a focus on financial contributions to the Centre or developing the group to the point at which they can self-manage. The new Education Officer now focuses on finding ways to increase rent and expand his hours and role to further develop this function of the organisation. The coordinator has already had discussions about expanding this function through partnerships with other local organisations (i.e. schools). Although there were other small examples of outcomes
achieved throughout the life of the project, those named above help to demonstrate some of the key shifts and outcomes that were achieved.

5.2. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The following section discusses the opportunities and challenges experienced in the different aspects of the organisation (both internal and external) during the capacity-building efforts. The opportunities and challenges are presented in a format that considers Plummer’s adapted model, revisited below. This model proved useful in reminding myself and the participants about the broader context in which the organisation works. This helped highlight the complexity around shifting the mindset in the organisation towards both an asset-based perspective to community development, as well as working towards comprehensive community initiatives in an locale that is not seen as having needs. This model illustrates both the internal aspects of the organisation (i.e. its management capacity and internal capacity) as well as the external elements of the organisation (the political, legislative and administrative context, as well as the community development role the organisation plays in the local community).
5.2.1. Management Capacity

Peter Senge suggests that if organisations were ocean liners, the leadership role is the “designer of the ship”, rather than the navigator, captain or helmsman (Elkin, 2001, p. 18; Senge, 1999). This metaphor emphasises that the key to creating deep change is to ensure that the structure supports intent and that the relative importance of different goals is clearly spelled out. However, this project demonstrated the challenges of dealing with structural issues when there was limited clarity around the intent itself. This is further complicated by the fact that the existing structures were linked to the goal of the current government agendas, rather than a goal that was established by the local community or the organisation itself. As a result, the resources in the organisation were structured to retain existing funding around current program agendas, with future development opportunities also clustered around this same model, and with no holistic view of developing the community and the organisations that work in it.
As a result of the program focus described above, the key available human resources to focus on driving and implementing the organisation’s future intent (including the organisational capacity to support this) becomes the committee and the coordinator. The focus on these leaders is further emphasised in this research project, due to the fact that the project was unfunded, resulting in development ideas and actions being based on whatever resources were available. This included any community development activities that the group wished to implement. Therefore, the importance of ownership at the leadership level and the ability to build from what the organisation and community already has (the asset-based perspective) proved to be vital to the outcomes of this project. Several authors have highlighted the importance of ownership to successful implementation, emphasising that better strategies on their own cannot improve an organisation (Giles, 1991; Rashford and Coghlan, 1994). This proved to be challenging to achieve with all committee members, although some ownership was experienced at different stages of the project.

Four key themes arose with relation to the challenges and opportunities experienced with the committee role and their impact on the Centre’s development including:

- locating, attracting and retaining leaders,
- balancing strategic intent with today’s realities,
- planning and accountability for successful implementation,
- addressing the challenge of time and development.

Although there were other experiences during the project, these four themes appeared to arise during all three cycles.

**Locating, attracting and retaining leaders.**

The creation and development of a community committee focused on leading and managing the organisational aspects is challenging. This was demonstrated through issues such as the lack of relevance of the Centre’s programs to the members of the committee (who did not use the Centre), operating hours which were not
complementary to people who worked during the day and the motivation of several members to work only on fun community projects rather than the organisation’s development. The type of program committee several members desired was the one offered by Limited Hours Childcare (established in Cycle Three), which was able to locate and recruit people from the user group (who thus had a vested interest in it) with the primary focus on the projects, rather than their business viability. The comparison of the two committees led me to raise this question at the end of Cycle Three: “Why would somebody want to sit on a committee and work on business operations when they could be doing something more fun with their time?” (Reflection Notes, 12 December 2005).

Busy lives makes additional responsibilities linked to boring business issues a difficult sell. Furthermore, while there was no economic benefit to contributing expertise and energy to the Centre, the other rewards available were also limited (such as reduced rates for childcare or free training,) because of issues around fringe benefits, tax and the marginal resources of the different programs.

Lastly, issues around choice and the continuity of committee members proved challenging to the Centre’s development. For example, most of the time was taken up in finding people to make up the numbers rather than finding the right people for the position, as the selection of the committee occurred every September. This resulted in the early meetings running into the Christmas holiday period, so that most business took place in the months between February and August, and after August the committee started preparing for the next AGM.

Although challenges were experienced, there were also a number of key opportunities that were experienced as a result of the development. Awareness of these improvements appeared to reduce the need to advertise for positions on the committee and with the third AGM gained its full quorum (minus the treasurer). This included three people who currently had some connection to the Centre through its various programs. This suggests that developing the organisation and raising its profile may attract new members to the committee in the future, hopefully with a vested interest in the success of the organisation. However, OD remains challenging and the committee needs to be constantly aware that if somebody should do something, that somebody is more than likely the committee itself.
The need to spread responsibility among different people was recognised in the strategic plan, which ensured that clear accountability for key priorities was well articulated, emphasising the areas of leadership that each role would be responsible for. This was a clear shift from the past plan that would highlight a program (such as OD) but make the entire committee responsible for the outcome. The application of accountability to specific committee roles proved to be helpful in the development process during Cycle Three. However, it was a far from perfect accomplishment. In particular, managing underperforming committee members who had volunteered to assist was awkward and challenging during all the Cycles. Assigning accountabilities in the draft plan proved to be useful during the induction of new committee members who could clarify and confirm whether certain priorities could be implemented with their support. Once again, accountability is difficult to gain without ownership and such ownership appeared intermittent and difficult to achieve during the project. As a result, it is suggested that this area requires further investigation in order to understand its impact on the implementation of strategies to improve an organisation’s capacity.

Clarity around the Centre’s strategic priorities assisted the committee to balance the tension between working towards a longer term vision and managing the operational realities of the organisation. This required a shift from focusing on administrative detail and doing things right to considering whether the organisation had been doing the right things in the first place (Kofman and Senge, 1993). This was evidenced through the shifting discussions at committee meetings from the first cycle to the third. Furthermore, the need to balance the committee’s involvement between strategy and implementation in the realities of the organisation allowed the group to modify their thinking as they learnt more about the organisation. However, the challenge remains as to whether the committee members have the skills, capacity or (more importantly) time to work in both areas.

The issue of time was a continual theme throughout the project. Almost all the committee members throughout all three cycles, were attempting to balance family responsibilities, marriage, work and other personal interests, while also attempting to be “good citizens”. Putting aside time for development consistently proved to be
problematic. Although strategies were put in place to manage issues around time, this impacted on the level of ownership of members. Furthermore, as the Centre was not a key priority in their life, their commitment to additional activities was limited.

Balancing the skills on the committee also proved to be more challenging than at first anticipated. Lansberry et al. (1995, p. 15) suggest:

> Effective community development organisations demonstrate a healthy relationship between resident leadership and technical expertise. They are not run by professionals who “talk the talk” of resident empowerment, but balk at putting residents in positions of power, who recruit residents for boards intended to rubber stamp decisions, conceived and carried out by staff; or who bring residents in for “input” after development goals have been established, sites selected, occupancy options defined and blueprints drawn. Professionals should be brought on board by the residents rather than the reverse.

The healthy relationship alluded to above, while useful in theory, was hard to achieve during the project, due to two factors:

- The financial resources to buy in technical expertise, and/or the time to locate resources which undertook pro bono work were difficult to obtain. For example, there were continual legal and financial issues that arose but the committee had limited confidence to address these issues. Consultancy positions were established on the committee on a needs basis, but resources to fund these were difficult to acquire.

- While a committee of residents can invite this expertise into an organisation, they need know what expertise they want and the level of performance they expect.

In addition to acquiring resources, the development of the group and individuals is also important. However, although there were a variety of different courses that could have been undertaken to develop the committee, obtaining their collective (and individual) time proved a constant problem throughout the cycles. This suggests that the various training programs available, while useful, fail to acknowledge the issues of time, availability and cost in the organisation. More importantly, it ignores the
need for mentoring these groups (and individuals) when they are back in a somewhat challenging work environment.

The capacity-building of the organisation depends on continuing to find ways to improve the role and participation of the committee to the point that an adequate level of ownership is achieved. Succession planning for these positions proved to be problematic in this study, as we were reduced to trying to make up numbers rather than finding the right people. The loss of continuity of the committee has raised more questions than answers, but it may also provide an opportunity to try out new people until a balance is achieved in this leadership group (Nelson, 1991). The change of coordinator was beneficial to the development of the Centre. The following further outlines some of the key opportunities and challenges concerning this pivotal position in the organisation.

**The coordinator**

Although many of the findings on the committee, can be applied to the coordinator position, the role of the coordinator proved to be the most enabling and most limiting of all the positions during the study. This position is the key conduit for communication between the committee and staff as well as other external stakeholders, and balancing the two different focuses (and cultures) is a critical role for this organisation. Ensuring that each side understood and appreciated the other was not an easy task. Developing trust was challenging when there was limited time to build relationships across the organisation.

Our experience of three different coordinators during the project offers an insight into the outcomes of different leadership styles and their effect on the internal culture of the organisation. It demonstrated that the position-holder could be a positive enabler as well as a dysfunctional bottleneck. The locum coordinator proved to be a roadblock in implementing any change. However, this role was made worse due to some of the issues he experienced with members of the staff and one member of the committee during Cycle One. As a result, the development of the organisation became problematic and communication was difficult. The final coordinator, employed during Cycle Two, proved to be the opposite kind of person. Her positive attitude and good communication skills helped bridge some of the dysfunctional gaps
that had been created between the committee and staff and enabled the development of the organisation to progress at a pace not experienced during the earlier cycles.

The skills of the coordinators were also important, especially in their ability to grasp the broader context of community development and manage the capacity of the organisation to support it. Although the capability to do both was desired, the development of the Centre was more reliant on a good attitude to learning and a motivation towards growth (it is far easier to teach people a new skill if they have a good attitude). However, development shifts were required, especially in light of the social-work background proving to be the dominant background of those applying for these positions (as evidenced during the recruitment of the coordinator). This field ignores the small business skills that are important to running an organisation and is largely embedded in a needs-based paradigm that often ignores the benefits offered by the field of community development.

To address issues experience regarding leadership, I came to the conclusion that it is important to have a minimum of two people who are willing to share the lead role and drive planning and implementation forward. However, this is premised on the fact that the coordinator is one of these positions, due to the bottlenecking behaviour experienced in Cycle One. As highlighted in the quote below:

One person can have a profound effect on another. And two people . . . well, two people can work miracles. They can change a whole town. They can change the world.

Hugh Elliott, Standing Room Only. Weblog 5May, 2003

Each successful project that I visited during the project, had a coordinator with a broader understanding of community (underpinned by principles of sustainable development as well as good business capabilities, rather than a strong social-work background. This broader perspective resulted in an involvement in local area planning and community development solutions to issues that would have traditionally summoned forth a needs-based approach. However, skills can be learned and, if the attitude and support for change exists, with some level of competency in the abovementioned areas, the organisation has the potential to support broader initiatives at the community level, as evidenced by the progress made by the coordinator in Cycle Three.
5.2.2. Internal Operating Context

The internal operating context in the organisation considers its internal development, which includes staff structures, systems, procedures and issues around financial stability. The key activities undertaken in this project involved working with the staff. As highlighted in Cycle Three, the need to maintain the program focus in the organisation became evident during workshops held in Cycle Two. Therefore, while a shift towards an ABCD perspective helped to improve some of the programs (such as Limited Hours Childcare and Education), moving the staff’s focus and energies towards an organisational-wide view proved difficult due to the committee’s lack of clarity and cohesiveness. Table 5.3 provides a summary of some of the key challenges and opportunities experienced in the internal operating context, together with an overview of each of these areas.
Table 5.3: Internal Operating Context – Opportunities and Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff and Attitudinal Change</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive change agents do exist.</td>
<td>Arranging times to meet over-complicated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find early points of leverage.</td>
<td>Job vs community perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication can improve relationships.</td>
<td>Balancing negative and positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everybody has choices.</td>
<td>Addressing bottlenecks and “Chinese whispers”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistence is important to overall success.</td>
<td>“I will if they will syndrome”. Resist growth, but desire change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for destructive behaviour.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage new ideas if current ones are rejected.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create momentum.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New blood.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structures</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop programs with people who want to grow a business in collaboration with the Centre.</td>
<td>Limited staff numbers to modify structures and expand the management of volunteers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to coordinate broadened relationships needs better use of technology and facilities.</td>
<td>Needs-based grants influence who and what can be delivered anything above this means extra time and resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Systems and Procedures</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be changed and improved as shown in other successful centres.</td>
<td>Gaining financial support is time-consuming and not guaranteed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System changes offer a greater opportunity to apply ABCD in an efficient and cost-effective way.</td>
<td>Support roles to manage and continually improve this area is problematic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There were good examples of improvements in this area during the project.</td>
<td>Skills of existing staff may be limited in developing technological solutions and a difficult sell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Stability</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing policies and procedures can assist with the financial stability of the business (e.g. Limited Hours Childcare) one program at a time.</td>
<td>Time and resources to work on development is limited.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall financial stability is possible, through the development of key business areas in the organisation.</td>
<td>Expansion takes time, energy and some seed funding that is not necessarily available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudinal Change and Develop Staff Capacity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overarching concept of ABCD was well received by staff, as expressed below:

Taking this perspective helps us look outside our existing constraints. (Workshop 1, Cycle Two, 28 June 2004)

However, concern was expressed, particularly in the areas of business support, regarding the capacity of the organisation to support external developments. This was an important during the workshops, as it helped highlight the fact that a focus on developing ABCD activities would involve falling into the same trap the Centre had fallen into in the past – going straight to external activities without considering the internal development of the organisation. This particularly affected the business support staff, as the greater the number of projects, the greater the internal workload,
with limited funding to support it. This highlighted the need to clarify the future direction by balancing the external strategy with the internal capacity to support this direction.

At the end of Cycle Three, these workshops also highlighted the importance of applying the asset-based perspective to the external development of the organisation and building the capacity of the organisation as a whole, as well as applying this mindset to developing existing programs and services. This was important to differentiate, as all these improvements were beneficial to the future of the Centre, helping to clarify the focus of the committee versus the staff.

Although the staff sessions illuminated the focus of participation in their contribution to development, some staff also demonstrated found it difficult to deal with changes in attitude. These resembled some of the key danger signs of inbred management that were described by Frederick R. Kappel (previous CEO at AT and T). These include:

- Clinging to old ways regardless of being confronted by new situations:
- Failing to define new goals with meaning and challenge:
- Undertaking action without studied reflection:
- Institutionalised contentment setting in as a result of a secure and stable environment (i.e. not venturesome):
- Passing old “wisdom” on to new people (Argyris, 1990b, pp. 74–75).

Although all the above were experienced, the institutionalised contentment of some of the longer serving employees proved to be prominent. Furthermore, the threat to existing power and authority often fuelled a level of protectionism in some areas (Argyris, 1990b; Cummings and Worley, 1997). This became particularly evident during the beginning of Cycle Two during the loss of the coordinator. Due to the poor behaviour that had been experienced, the president decided to give less attention to the individuals who were demonstrating this negative (and somewhat destructive) behaviour and reduce their power, shifting the committee’s attention to individuals who were showing positive changes during this time. This helped reduce the negative
behaviour and often resulted in these staff letting go of some of this behaviour in their effort to re-establish a new power base, especially with the new coordinator when she joined the organisation (Hamel and Prahalad, 1993).

In addition to managing issues around power to influence positive behaviour, the following tactics were used by the committee and coordinator:

- **Improved communication.** Increase in communication from the committee, through tools such as meetings and staff updates (see Appendix 12). Face-to-face communication proved to be most effective, especially when dealing with difficult issues.

- **Addressing the victim mentality.** Reducing the victim status of staff and emphasising that ownership of choices is crucial to positive change.

- **Providing alternatives rather than arguments.** Working on the premise that saying “no” to an idea was easier than coming up with another idea. To demonstrated the complexity of developing ideas, staff were often asked to come up with alternatives rather than arguments.

- **Balance the Negative with the Positive.** Negative views would often overshadow positive achievements. This required recognising that one negative view was not the perspective of the entire group.

- **Implications for Destructive Behaviour.** Where behaviour was not satisfactory or proved to be destructive, the committee started showing the implications of this behaviour, in an effort to reduce or prevent it.

- **New Blood.** One last opportunity exercised during the project was employing new staff.

Overall, it was important to persist with the reform and maintain a level of momentum with the staff. However, the constant tension between the values of the committee and those of the staff proved to be difficult to manage and understand. To the staff, it was their job and to the committee, it was about the organisation supporting the community. Furthermore, the need for the committee to lead by
example became more evident around Cycle Two, as the level of trust in the performance of past committee’s made several staff cynical about the committee’s input. Regardless of these tensions however, by the end of Cycle Three relationships had notably improved and early feedback on the plan appeared positive, particularly in light of the key elements of accountability assigned to committee positions and not staff (except for the coordinator).

Establish Effective Structures

Establishing effective staff and financial structures for ABCD proved challenging during the change project for the following reasons:

- The Centre funding was based on the delivery of key services, rewarding needs-based activities. The existing services needed to be maintained to satisfy these service agreements.

- The only area of the business with any level of flexibility to support change was the business support function, which amounted to a total of 25 hours per week for two key functions (administration and bookkeeping).

- The financial skills of the bookkeeper and the treasurer (on all occasions) were not high enough to bring about changes to financial structures to assign budgets to different program areas. When one person did have the necessary skills, the task would require a considerable amount of time, which was not available from this individual due to work and family commitments.

Two potential strategies were identified that could change the existing internal structure. These include:

- Developing social enterprises (wherever possible) that could fund an increase in the position hours. However, this was dependent on the interest of the current incumbent in expanding the role.

- Revisiting the service-level agreement and undertaking discussions with the Department regarding changes in structure and delivery. This was difficult to do without being clear around the future direction of the Centre. In addition,
negotiations regarding the service-level agreement had already been postponed for approximately 18 months with no clear date agreed for future negotiations.

While the first option has started to be investigated in the Community Education role, the other decision that was eventually made was that the committee members would be required to contribute to implementation, based on the fact that there were no other resources available. However, part of the strategy would eventually incorporate changes in the structure. The financial structures could then be improved as part of an overall review of the current systems (see Strategic Plan 2005, Cycle Three, Strategic Priority 1).

Reform Systems and Procedures

Clearly, with limited focus on the internal capacity of the organisation in the past and no clear direction, the systems and procedures in the organisation required further development to support the longer term vision of the Centre. Although there was limited time to work on this, three key achievements occurred in this area, including:

- Improvements to procedures for the Limited Hours Childcare, resulting in a planned profit which can be reinvested into the program.

- Small changes to the financial administration to streamline some of the procedures with relation to banking.

- The successful application for and implementation of a new computer system to address some of the technology requirements identified in the strategic plan.

The technology changes were particularly significant to the ABCD approach discussed in the strategic planning sessions. Coordinating, administering and communicating both outside and inside the Centre as a result of applying an ABCD approach could be more effectively managed by using improved technology. However, before any of these external strategies could be implemented, the internal issues needed addressing. For example, there was only one email address for all staff (including the coordinator), and the new coordinator used her own personal email address. This meant that internal communication was less than adequate and the current computer systems were incapable of supporting future development.
Therefore to increase the capacity of the organisation to support community
development efforts, the Centre applied for and successfully received a $24,000
grant, for new equipment, software and internet technology. This provided a platform
to support further development in this area. In addition, quotes were obtained and
discussions undertaken with a company regarding the development of a web portal
which could be managed and changed by staff (to reduce costs). This portal would
help enhance the communication capability of the Centre both externally and
internally and was a key tactic in the new Strategic Plan.

Establish financial stability

Although the Centre could be considered viable (in that it did not make a loss), the
financial sustainability of the organisation in the longer term was questionable in
light of the high level of reliance (approximately 90 per cent) placed on receiving
core funding from one government department. Any growth in activity that does not
fund both the internal and external development role could compromise the financial
stability of the organisation. The key challenge is determining how to develop in a
way that continually addresses issues around financial stability.

Due to the continual change and skills in the treasurer position, consistent
development of this area did not occur. However, two areas of improvement were
identified with some early success in the existing programs. Firstly, improvements in
the financial viability of the Limited Hours Childcare resulted from changes
discussed earlier. The second was the potential development of Community
Education into a social enterprise that could fund increased hours and eventually
provide a return to the organisation for community development initiatives.

This was particularly important in highlighting the shift towards an ABCD approach,
expanding relied on using hitherto underutilised assets and finding local providers
(where possible) to deliver a range of training and development activities, both
formal and informal. This included offering high-end and low-end training, with the
more expensive training subsidising the less. In addition, redesigning the newsletter,
which was predominantly focused on community education, could include a range of
advertising (including charging a fee to people offering existing programs). The early
stages of this strategy slowly started to be put into place after Cycle Three by the
new incumbent. The key challenge in developing this social enterprise is determining whether the current incumbent has the interest and capability to expand the enterprise, while taking into account the additional on-costs that will result from the program’s expansion.

5.2.3. External Operating Context

The external operating context for the project encompasses legislative and policy frameworks, administrative processes, political priorities and professional development as it relates to the shift in community centres in Queensland. Although limited work was done in this particularly area of the business, the project revealed key challenges and opportunities that impacted on the organisation’s development and its shift towards an ABCD approach. This is outlined in the table below.

**Table 5.4: External Operating Context – Opportunities and Challenges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Legislation, Policy and Planning</strong></th>
<th><strong>Opportunities</strong></th>
<th><strong>Challenges</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early discussions and examples.</td>
<td>The social undervalued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Existing ABCD efforts.</td>
<td>Regionalising communities is an oxymoron.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neighbourhood planning.</td>
<td>Disjointed and disconnected development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Efforts have improved but fail to understand local change and the importance of social infrastructure.</td>
<td>Supports and rewards needs approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government Administration</strong></td>
<td>Implementation improvements through strengthening partnerships.</td>
<td>ABCD submissions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Future training and redesign.</td>
<td>System complexity and information overload.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recruitment and retention sector divide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mutual reciprocity and timely warnings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Context</strong></td>
<td>The threat of local advocacy.</td>
<td>Detached representatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge and connections important.</td>
<td>The support office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You only need one leader on side.</td>
<td>Tension between party policies and local context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Representatives disconnect experience.</td>
<td>Active support vs letters of support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Context of community development</strong></td>
<td>Early beginnings.</td>
<td>ABCD not taught or not understood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emerging programs.</td>
<td>Limited social change applied research and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ABCD integration into other fields more than social work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legislation, Policy and Planning**

Legislation, policy and planning specify current rules and future directions established in the main by government organisations. Although ABCD is still emerging in Australia, understanding and applying community development (from a community-wide perspective) is also under-represented, as evidenced through a range of documents, such as local area plans and the Centre’s service-level
agreement. Community development, regardless of the perspective applied, remains in the domain of disadvantaged communities. This thesis does not argue that this work should not continue, but highlights the lack of its social application in planning in most communities in Australia. This represents an opportunity lost from the lack of this social integration in the planning process. However, the work of early adopters in Australia have provided a positive base for the future application of ABCD and its broader application.

Some of the features that affected the shift in the organisation are listed below.

- The current and proposed service-level agreement continues to be premised on a needs-based approach, that is, services-based rather than encouraging a broader community development role. The “one-size-fits-all” approach will make negotiations challenging. However, the 18-month time delay in negotiations provides time for the Centre to determine how to incorporate their long-term vision into the new agreement.

- Funding is not available for OD activities apart from piecemeal grants for specific technology (email from OurCommunity.Com Representative, Cycle One, 12 January 2004). In addition, funding programs do not account for many of the on-costs that result from project development.

Two additional issues arose concerning the impact of the external operating context on the future development of the Centre. Specifically, the more the Centre learnt about ABCD, the greater their awareness of the disjointed and disconnected nature of government planning programs at the local level. The lack of holistic thinking from a sustainable development perspective was particularly evident, as local solutions were being planned and implemented independently of each other. One example of this was the committee’s involvement in consultation on a major road initiative in the area which was completely separate (in time and design) from a major public transport initiative in the study area. Community consultation revealed that the local community were unsupportive of the design, but had been given no form of urban planning consultation outside the scope of the transport and road initiative. Although local area planning was not incorporated in this road initiative, representatives from the community organisations (including the Centre) managed to lobby government to
integrate the plans for both projects. The true test for the Centre, however, will be when the local area planning starts and their ability to influence the community development agenda and improve their role in future planning activities will be tested.

In addition to issues around integrated planning, the second potential issue raised during Cycle Three was the local council’s discussions about regionalising community centres. This statement appeared to be an oxymoron, and was based more on economic rationalism than the development of thriving local communities. This concept located the Centre in a “services” model, but sought to rationalise these services. This idea demonstrated a clear lack of understanding of these Centres, and their potential role, and showed no understanding that the current community “catchments” are already well beyond the resourcing capability of the current services model. Evidence of this policy was witnessed at one of the sites I visited, where three community centres were merged into one, servicing over 100,000 households. This could further entrench the role of the community organisation in a needs-based paradigm that create a greater disconnect with their local communities.

**Government Administration**

During the project, there was evidence to suggest that government administrators can influence the shift towards ABCD through their interest and willingness to find ways to adapt current legislation and practice to support the development of the organisation and the community as a whole. However, a number of opportunities and challenges were identified when working with this angle. These include:

- **a Needs-based dominant paradigm.** Incumbents in such positions have been inducted into structures that support and reward a needs-based paradigm. The guidelines for funding submissions were examples of the ongoing recognition and reward for needs-based programs.

- **Structures and systems reveal piecemeal approach.** The structures and systems in which the staff work are primarily focused on one specific function/service. As a result, the Centre would be the target of a wide variety of individual government programs that were not integrated at the local level. The structure of
these organisations proved confusing and frustrating (i.e. finding the right person focused on a specific area), often resulting in feelings of information overload.

- **Resources of Support; However Availability is Limited.** There were several government administrators who demonstrated support and a general understanding of the concept of ABCD (and community development). However, these resources were primarily assigned to “disadvantaged” communities and were not included as key participants in areas outside this category.

- **Recruitment and Retention Sector Divide.** Pay and career opportunities in government provide greater opportunities than in current community organisations. In addition, private sector developments outside the city, are now incorporating community organisations with positions offering more than double the pay rate of public sector community organisations.

- **Mutual Reciprocity and Timely Warnings.** The coordinator, in particular, experienced many examples where government administration staff underperformed, demonstrated extremely poor time management (in light of warnings about the Centre’s involvement in programs) and were disrespectful in their involvement with the Centre. This frustrated relationships and often led to the Centre trying to develop others ways to implement actions, to avoid having to deal with the lack of responsiveness experienced with representatives.

Although all the issues above impacted on the organisation, the last issue was particularly prominent during the research project. Examples such as receiving invitations to participate in events organised by the Council, one week before the event, or finding out through the grapevine that the event had been cancelled was common during the three cycles. Another example of underperformance and lack of respect was experienced by the coordinator. She informed the committee:

> I worked significant overtime this week trying to get the report to the Department. I can’t believe [name of staff member] threw out all of the data I required before she left the organisation. I tried to get an extension from the Community Resource Officer, but he wouldn’t allow it. (Phone conversation with coordinator, Cycle Three, 21 April 2005)
You won’t believe what happened today. I had a meeting arranged to meet the Community Resource Officer . . . you know the one who wouldn’t give me an extension . . . He showed up at the meeting and hadn’t even read the report that I he pressed me to have to him on time, regardless of the fact that [name of staff member] threw out the information I required before she left. To make matters worse, he is the fourth resource officer I have met since being with the Centre and he is only in the role for the next two months . . . I was so angry, I told him to turn around and come back when he actually respected the effort I had to put in. (Phone conversation with coordinator, Cycle Three, 26 April 2005)

Eventually, the Community Resource Officer did return, bringing a peace offering (i.e. morning tea). Unfortunately, there were more negative experiences with government administration than positive ones. Sometimes this resulted from issues around structure and systems and other times it could be linked to poor performance. Although the shift towards a community development focus is not constrained when applying an asset-based approach, the frustration of working with a multitude of individuals in these organisations was time-consuming and frustrating, particularly for the coordinator.

**Political context**

Political representatives are required to represent a large number of people while also performing key roles in government and their political party. Due to the number of people they are elected to represent, their time and energy is often spread across the different layers of issues that make up their multitudinous roles. Arguably, their jobs are potentially too big at times and they needed to develop an ability to prioritise. Managing and coping with this level of expectation and magnitude of information is challenging; this resulted in our experience of in differing levels of performance.

This project dealt with two different leaders at different levels of government. One proved to be considerably detached from local issues in the Centre’s catchment area, while the other was connected and provided considerable assistance to the Centre’s development. Although, gaining commitment from all levels is beneficial, this project demonstrated that the support of one leader was also beneficial to the Centre. Although there were key differences between the styles and approaches of the two representatives, a key difference appeared to be the focus on service and the
capability of the support office to represent the representative. One office was particularly efficient and effective in ensuring that communication was maintained and timely feedback was received, where the other support office struggled to ensure the representative returned emails and phone calls within a six-month time period. As a result of this lack of service, the Centre tended to liaise must with the representative and team that were easier to work with.

However, the committee often expressed anxiety about remaining apolitical wherever possible, wishing to retain the focus on community representation rather than being aligned to a political party. This required an ongoing awareness of the different political agendas and political battles that were being taken place behind the scenes. For example, the two representatives discussed in this section worked at different levels of government and were from different political parties.

The representatives proved particularly helpful with relation to ABCD, particularly in assisting with government and local contacts and locating local assets. In return, they also received information and local knowledge from the Centre. The improvements in the Centre often improved the relationship with the two representatives, who could see opportunities to get in at the ground level to win political bonus points with the local community. However, although each individual tried to provide support, the Centre needed to ensure that such support was not tokenistic. The key support representatives traditionally offer is a letter which is then sent to government. The impact of these letters was highly questionable. As a result, the coordinator made the decision to push for greater levels of support. This proved to be successful in Cycle Three, when the state representative arranged a meeting with the Deputy Premier to push the future vision of the Centre and a current opportunity that had arisen regarding a potential public/private partnership. As a result, the involvement of these positions in the future of the Centre has been incorporated into the Strategic Plan as part of the community leaders network.

**Professional Context of Community Development**

The professional context of community development relates to the Centre’s experience with students seeking work experience or employment in the Centre. They were usually TAFE and university students. This area was particularly relevant
to the change process, as placement students and students seeking work were considered potential assets to help speed up the development process. Furthermore, it provided a reflection of the latest teaching and project preparation for these students who would work in the industry in the future.

Overall, the student’s training and workplace assessment was significantly needs-focused, so much so that student actually left in the first week after being asked to assist with the asset register because she wanted to “help” people. The assessment of the two TAFE students was specifically around establishing a new project focused on needs, underpinned a social work orientation. Where students said they had learned something about ABCD, they did not appear to understand how to apply it in their projects. Furthermore, they had a limited focus on applying community development in a broader community context. Work with planning students undertaken their masters degree also revealed their limited understanding and application of the social context of planning, as physical design remaining their key focus. However, ABCD is in its early stages in Australia and the potential to be involved in larger scale projects may appear enticing to future students. Therefore, the key challenge is the growing need for a positive application of ABCD so that students can understand and reflect on the value of the two different perspectives in order to support the development of the field towards an asset base.

In addition to students, the role of the coordinator or community development worker in the organisation requires broader skills than are currently developed in the social sciences. Skills in business, project management and potentially social planning in a community context would be beneficial. However, even if these skills were developed, the question could be asked, “Why would they work for a community organisation when they could have a better career path and better pay?” This is not to say these are the only motivators for leaders. However, it is currently a difficult sell when the difference in pay can at times be almost double what is currently received. Arguably, if a coordinator has the above capabilities, the capacity of the organisation to develop into a social enterprise that could support the expansion of this role would require further investigation. This is outside the scope of this thesis.

The external environment is complex and frustrating and is embedded in the long-term legacy of the Welfare State. While there have been some examples of changes
on the horizon, these changes need to be expanded and speeded up in local communities everywhere and included in major planning frameworks that acknowledge that change requires a basis in local communities. This base needs to be healthy and capable of sustaining the changes desired by the local community and government.

5.2.4. Learning about the Community Development Approach
As noted earlier in this chapter, this project resisted the temptation to go directly to the community to apply the ABCD approach. It resisted any form of large-scale community events, due to the initial concern regarding the existing capacity of the community centre. Although community direct ABCD efforts were not implemented as part of this research project, community development activities did occur as a result of people building ideas and programs, and as a result of the skills, talents and interests of people in the community. This was achieved primarily through the community education and community development program.

The audit of the local community helped to reveal that the capacity of the organisation to support an expansion of community development activities in the future needed to be developed and highlighted the growing imbalance between external development and internal capacity. This involved recognising that the level of administration, coordination and additional resources required was currently unfunded. As will be highlighted in Chapter 7, this discovery ensured that the Centre took a more balanced view to a gradual shift towards ABCD, utilising the asset-based perspective for both internal and external development.

Plummer’s model also emphasises finding vehicles for change outside the organisation through networks (Plummer, 2000). However, the management and development of future partnership programs also required a level of resourcing that could not be sustained in the organisation in its current state. Although some smaller partnerships were developed, there is still considerable work to be achieved in this area in the organisation. However, the strategic plan and the application of an asset-based perspective have already started to help clarify the purpose and a process to meet potential partners has been factored into the planning process (see Appendix 13).
5.3. SUMMARY

It is necessary to ensure that the internal capacity of the organisation can support external development opportunities through community development practice such as ABCD, as was shown during the action research project. This required clarification of the future role of the Centre to contribute to broader community development initiatives, as well as a better understanding regarding the capacity and ability of its staff, systems and procedures to support this shift. While the asset-based perspective was considered desirable for future community development by the Centre, this perspective also proved to be useful in unleashing the capacity of individuals in the Centre. This shift in thinking was particularly clear in Cycle Three during the strategic planning process with the committee. In particular, the asset-based perspective resulted in developing a vision that focused more on the future than on past planning efforts. Strategy design and implementation were important to this project and its future success. The following chapter discusses the challenges experienced during the change process, highlighting some key shifts and potential future challenges that may require consideration for future success.
CHAPTER SIX

THE

CHALLENGE

OF

CHANGE
6.0 THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

Chapter 5 outlined some of the key shifts, challenges, opportunities and lessons learned as a result of the organisational development process in the community centre. Applying Plummer’s adapted model, it highlighted both the internal and external experiences during the change process and the impact this had on shifting the organisation towards an ABCD approach. Chapter 6 builds from this knowledge and reflects on the learning around the actual process of change, including planning and implementation. The review of change is important to this thesis, as it challenges the planning and implementation of ABCD (if not community development) initiatives, highlighting the importance of building foundations for change through vehicles such as locally focused organisations to support the sustainability of these initiatives in the future. As a result of this perspective, my experience with the project revealed that the capacity in these organisations to support community development initiatives (in general) required further development, and that the amount of organisational development required had been underestimated, particularly in sustaining the change efforts beyond the involvement of the community development research practitioner (or other expert facilitator).

Successful implementation is considered a significant challenge in a range of fields (Sandy, 1991) and this research project was no exception. Therefore, a better understanding of how to avoid failure would have been helpful, especially during the early stages of the action research project. As the literature regarding strategy and implementation was visited late in the project, the following chapter introduces some of the strategy and implementation literature as it applies to key items learnt.

Doppelt (2003) suggest that organisational and community leaders who are seeking sustainability must understand why change efforts fail, and they must institute strategies that explicitly overcome potential failure. He notes that this is particularly important given the complexity of the human factor in change initiatives, suggesting:

Sustainability-change efforts must focus on cultural change, because organisations are communities and communities involve people, they are extremely complex. (2003, p. 71)
This project supports this view, as a result having often experienced unpredictable and undesirable events and behaviour during the change process. This lack of predictability emphasises the need for constant reflection, review and revision of strategies and plans throughout the process. The strategy literature also proved useful to address issues around implementation failures from flawed strategy design in the organisation (Mintzberg, 1994a; 1994b; Piercy, 1989; Sandy, 1991; Vrakking, 1995). This includes issues such as:

- The strategy is not a strategy at all.

- Objectives or tactics are often mistaken for strategy. Some so-called strategic plans are little more than a mixture of budgets and management wish lists.

- The strategy is not implementable (Giles, 1991, p. 76).

The Centre’s existing strategic (and operational) plan demonstrated flaws in all three areas suggested by Giles. This helped to demonstrate in Cycle Three that the strategic planning needed to be revisited in a way that incorporated issues around implementation failure. The decision to revisit this plan with the committee and coordinator in Cycle Three proved to be important for a number of reasons:

- The development of the organisation needed to be focused at the organisation level and not only at the program/project level.

- The committee and coordinator were the only positions that were currently responsible for this focus, with staff input remaining focused on programs.

Hence, ownership by the committee and consistency and clarity around the centre’s purpose and message was essential to help develop a future direction and momentum around implementation. The following chapter specifically discusses three key areas of the change process namely, strategy development and planning, the approach to change undertaken, and issues relating to implementation dilemmas experienced during the project.

It is noteworthy that many of these findings can be applied to issues around planning and implementation in a community development context as well as an organisational development context, with potential areas of overlap. The following
sections addresses issues around strategy design in order to understand some of the preferred approaches to strategy for implementation success. These issues include:

- **Planning with intent and stretch.** The section discusses the importance of stretching our minds to future possibilities and being driven by this broader intent for change. Specifically, it highlights issues around being guided by our current view of our personal and organisational capacity which can limit the potential of resource-constrained organisations in the community.

- **Big visions but small steps.** This section notes the use of this broader intent as a vehicle to guide and influence change, emphasising the importance of balancing this intent with the day-to-day challenges and opportunities that occur along the way. It highlights the constant tension between the broader vision and the current reality of implementation, showing how and why this can affect successful implementation.

- **Lessons learned when we take small steps.** This last section identifies some of the issues that occurred when a strategic intent was not applied, highlighting the fragmented approach to planning and implementation that occurs as a result of not linking change efforts to a broader purpose. Furthermore, it notes issues around finding “leverage” for change in the organisation, in relation to volunteers and managing the environment to encourage future participation. Lastly, it discusses the challenge and importance of celebrating wins as part of the process, especially in an environment that can often feel thankless.
6.1. PLANNING WITH INTENT AND STRETCH

Strategy and strategic planning is not well understood (Donohue, 1998; Liedtka, 1998; Mintzberg, 1994a). The Centre’s old strategic plan, although developed with the support of a paid external business consultant, demonstrated a clear lack of understanding regarding strategy development. This was shown in the lack of vision and holistic organisational focus in the document, as evidenced by the strong program and project focus in the strategic and operational plans. This critique is supported by Hiam, who argues that the collaboration of business unit plans is problematic to successful strategy development, suggesting:

> Once plans are presented to (the) corporate (level of the organisation), a host of effective tools exists for evaluation and selection. But the business unit plans that appear on the executive menu are flawed by a fundamental failure to capture the corporate “big picture” (Hiam, 1990, p. 24).

The importance of incorporating the program focus with the “big picture” is supported by Liedtka (1998) who suggests there are five major attributes that are important to improving the planning process. These include

- a system or holistic view.
- a focus on the strategic intent of the organisation.
- thinking in time frames that link past, present and future, recognising that strategy is not driven by future intent alone.
- hypothesis-driven in a way that models the “scientific method” in a way that is both creative and critical in nature.
- intelligently opportunistic, ensuring the organisation remains aware of the risk of losing sight of alternative strategies better suited to a changing environment (Liedtka, 1998, p. 32).

Management expert guru Michael Porter supports this view, emphasising that “strategic planning in most companies has not contributed to strategic thinking” (Porter, 1987, p. 19). Strategic thinking is creative, disruptive, future-focused and experimental in nature. The old strategic plan clearly lacked this dimension, which
constrained its capacity in the real, restricted current state of the organisation and impeded its preparation for supporting future development. I consequently argue that any criticism of strategic planning has resulted from a lack of understanding of the strategy development process, suggesting that there is a need to improve strategic planning practice, rather than abolish it.

While the holistic focus and approach to thinking proved extremely important in the Centre’s development of the new strategic plan, developing a clear focus on the strategic intent proved particularly useful during the planning process. This approach encouraged the participants to marshal and leverage their energy so they could focus their attention and resist distractions from achieving the Centre’s longer-term vision (Hamel and Prahalad, 1989). Elkin notes how strategic intent is about developing a broader vision in a way that elicits a creative tension between the current reality and the future desire (Elkin, 2001). His view is represented in Figure 6.1, which provides a diagrammatic view of strategic intent, highlighting the importance of managing creative tension in the strategy development process.

**Figure 6.1: Creative Tension: A Framework for Creating Outstanding Results (Elkin, 2001, p. 22)**
This figure proved particularly useful in the strategic planning process, as it became clear after the individual interviews in Cycle One that the organisational participants were becoming trapped in the current reality of the organisation with no clear picture of where they wanted to be. Developing the strategic intent during the new strategic planning process not only assisted the committee (in particular) to better understand and manage the creative tension between the vision and current reality, but it allowed it to think beyond its current capacity, which was important to its future acceptance and support of ABCD. This conclusion is supported by Hamel and Prahalad, who describe strategic intent as “the capacity of an organisation and its leaders to envision success out of all proportion to their current resources and capabilities” (Hamel and Prahalad, 1989, p. 64).

They suggest that the strategic intent helps elicit an obsession with achieving self-defined success at all levels of the organisation, helping to sustain the vision and the action needed to support it over a period of 10, 20, even 100 years – until the impossible becomes reality (Hamel and Prahalad, 1989). However, while strategic intent captures the essence of winning, they warn that it is more than simply unfettered ambition, as the concept also encompasses the following management process:

- focusing the organisation’s attention on the essence of winning
- motivating people by communicating the value of the target
- leaving room for individual and team contributions
- sustaining enthusiasm by providing new operational definitions as circumstances change

Although these processes were applied during the development of the new strategic plan, motivating volunteers did prove to be challenging, often due to issues around their time and availability. Regardless, the application of Hamel and Prahalad’s view of strategic intent did deliver improvements in both collective decision-making and
outcomes achieved, as a result of greater clarity around a future direction and potential opportunities that arose, especially after Cycle Three.34

Hamel and Prahalad (1993, p. 67) also emphasise the importance of backing up this intent with strategic stretch and leverage. While design and future destination is important, achieving these “impossible goals” can only be realised when there is a clear focus on successful implementation. This requires a level of resourcefulness, innovation and learning-by-doing in the organisation (or community) to leverage available resources into outstanding results. Once again, this supports the asset-based perspective to development. Although the lack of time in the designated Ph.D. timeframe proved to be problematic with relation to completing a strategic plan, it was be a useful tool to ensure that stretch and leverage were factored into the planning process. This was achieved as a result of the following:

- Reflection and flexibility were factored into the planning process by incorporating the plan into organisational processes that retained a key focus on the creative tension between future goals and current reality (i.e. committee meetings).

- Accountability was assigned to the various roles on the committee (as well as staff where required) to ensure that the responsibility was not solely that of the committee.

In addition to the above, the new strategic plan factored in review cycles that included other key stakeholders, both inside and outside the organisation, to provide key accountability drivers in implementing the plan. These also acted as a continual review process to ensure that strategic action steps were changed, when necessary, in light of the ongoing learning that would occur on a day to day basis. This ensured that strategy development and implementation were not separated as part of the development process (Giles, 1991; Liedtka, 1998). Although more work needs to be undertaken in the development of the plan with key stakeholders, the fact that this

34 As highlighted in the outcome section of this thesis, discussions were held regarding a purpose-built community centre that would further challenge the current role of the organisation in the community. This was to include new facilities in a planned transport orientated development.
review process is in the plan, provides early evidence that the ongoing development and implementation of the plan will be continued by the new committee. Although a strategic approach is important, understanding the change approach to support implementation is also important to success. The following subsection discusses the change approach.

6.2. BIG VISIONS BUT SMALL STEPS

There is no one-size-fits-all formula for change. (Stace and Dunphy, 1996, p. 93)

There is no single path to successful change that holds true in all situations (Stace and Dunphy, 1996, p. 93). The authors suggesting that the field of organisational change somewhat resembles an “overgrown weed patch rather than a well-tended garden” (Dunphy et al., 2003, p. xiv). Every change situation has different challenges. The possibility of developing a “one size fits all” approach is not realistic, as every situation includes different people, places and site-specific issues. This is further influenced by the fact that the change expert assigned to each situation often comes from the perspective of a specific field (e.g. social work, community development, urban planning or human resource management) rather than from a background in strategy and change that brings experts to the table when required. This influences the approach to change selected at the community level as well as the organisational level.

Although this thesis highlights the importance of strategic intent and the application of stretch and leverage through applying an asset-based perspective, it does not imply that this combination will necessarily guarantee success. Strategic intent often encourages longer timeframes and grander outcomes than previously thought possible. As experienced in this project, consistency and commitment from the implementers (in this case, the coordinator and the committee) did not occur during the project, emphasising that an implementation strategy should be able to be continually adapted to the changing nature of the organisation. Although strategic intent may support a transformational change approach, due to the grand nature of change desired, the approach to stretch and leverage in this research project was more supportive of an incremental approach, defined as: “... planned and emergent,
continuous and ongoing and for the most part impacts on the organisation’s day-to-day operational processes” (Dunphy et al., 2003, p. 209).

Transformational change requires a significant investment in time and focus to push forward an aggressive strategy. This approach would not have been appropriate during the action research project. An incremental approach ensures the future vision and strategic steps undertaken are continually aligned with the current reality of the organisation. As opportunities arise (i.e. some consistency and commitment in leadership), Abrahamson’s (2000) change approach, referred to as “dynamic stability”, can be applied. This involves a balanced approach between transformational and incremental approaches, depending on the changes in the environment. This approach proved challenging for this particular project due to the lack of consistency in the leadership of the organisation.

The approach to change is important to this thesis. Transformational approaches to community development have a tendency to overlook the foundations required to sustain efforts in the local community. Furthermore, the outcomes desired in (what I suggest are) short time frames, does not adequately provide time or scope to develop the local social infrastructure (i.e. organisational, group or individual) to sustain these efforts appropriately beyond the involvement of the community development practitioner. Furthermore, in competing for community development funding there is no doubt that a transformational change project is more marketable and impressive than an incremental approach that builds the foundations for longer term success, although these approaches are more likely to fail (Sandy, 1991).

Regardless of whether the transformational change approach is applied in a community or the community organisation, the action research project demonstrated that this type of approach is further challenged by the very nature of volunteerism. Even incremental change approaches require significant energy, time and commitment, and transformational change arguably requires more of all three than incremental efforts. Furthermore, leadership consistency to help sustain momentum proved difficult to deliver by the voluntary researcher. However, while a transformational approach is not recommended for the implementation of ABCD initiatives or organisational change in community organisations, it may be suitable
for other situations. One such is a community development context when the local foundations (i.e. community organisations, groups, etc.) demonstrate a clear capacity and commitment to support such an initiative from the outset. Another is an organisational context where the leadership is stable and has the capacity to commit time and resources to a time-consuming and people intensive process.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of change strategies is also problematic, especially the timing of the evaluation process (i.e. immediately at the end of the project, versus a significant timeframe later to determine sustainability). Evaluating community development initiatives beyond the involvement of the research practitioner requires more consideration, in order to improve planning and practice in the future. This will be discussed in Chapter 7 of this thesis. Lastly, this very nature of this research project has demonstrated that a transformational approach to change was not adequate or satisfactory, due to my own volunteer status and the need to fit into the development in the current operational requirements. However, this constraint allowed the group to better understand the creative tension between managing a grand vision within the operational realities of the organisation. Furthermore, the incremental approach allowed for a level of flexibility and reflection during the baby steps applied during implementation.

6.3. MAKING IT HAPPEN – LESSONS LEARNED

Implementation was not easy in this project, particularly due to the numerous changes that occurred in the organisation’s committee and staff. However, while these changes may have delayed implementation, they also could be seen as having enhanced the longer term potential for the project’s success. The key lessons drawn from the research project include

- the challenge to planning without establishing a strategic intent
- approaching implementation as a project add-on versus an integrated strategy
- the importance of redistributing influence for leverage
- finding ways to create participatory convenience for volunteers
• issues around celebrating wins and recognising shifts.

Although several other issues were experienced in planning and implementation, the above five themes were considered an important part of this particular action research project. The following subsections highlight some of the key shifts that were beneficial to the implementation process, as well as some of the key challenges that require further consideration with regards to sustaining implementation efforts, particularly emphasising issues around the committee.

6.3.1. Without strategic intent – what happens?

One of the key differences between the first strategic plan and the development of the new strategic plan, is that the latter appeared to take away the continual urge in all participants to be everything to everybody. During the first two cycles, staff suggestions and committee ideas would be raised and begun but little was completed. There was no focus to what was to be achieved; whatever was raised became the focus of that meeting. The development of the future intent, with supporting strategic priorities, improved decision-making so that committee members would often say, “that is outside the scope of what we have agreed to do”.

However, while the strategic intent helped provide greater clarity around the Centre’s direction and decision-making, the broader vision created a feeling that it all had to be achieved as soon as possible and everybody wanted to do everything at once. The frustration of not moving forward fast enough often affected the coordinator and myself during the Third Cycle. However, when a new committee was formed, a noticeable shift occurred in the group’s thinking, suggesting that baby steps forward were better than no steps forward at all. To manage decision-making, I found the following questions helped to put the implementation of the plan into perspective: “Who really cares if this doesn’t get done in the timeframe? Who does it affect? Is it worth getting stressed over it?” (Reflective Journal, Cycle Three, 30 September 2005).

35 This was evidenced in a review of the management committee meeting minutes and the shift in focus from constantly changing ideas on the agenda, to a specific focus on outcomes that were the aim of the strategic plan.
These questions were helpful and resulted in the delay of some of the implementation of the plan. However, they also ensured that the plan was continually implemented and allowed for changes as new information was gathered. In addition, rapidly implementing the plan without being clear about who would be on the committee after Cycle Three might potentially reduce the capacity of the new committee in the New Year to take accountability for key areas, therefore affecting its implementation further.

While managing the “unmanageability” of the whole was important, Kofman and Senge (1993) warn that the need to be efficient in managing the process can lock planning back into piecemeal and fragmented solutions, resulting in the organisational challenges become increasingly systemic. This highlights the creative tension between the strategic intent and to the plan’s implementation in the current organisational reality. While fragmentation resulted from the old strategic plan, creating an efficient implementation process for the new plan could result in similar fragmentation. While implementing the new plan is not yet over, the strategic intent demonstrated early on that fragmentation was reduced by encouraging the programs to fall into line with the future direction, rather than the other way around.

The fragmented approach undertaken by local and state government was increasing evident, as committee members became involved with local planning issues. Although the State and City had made efforts to develop integrated plans focused on the whole, when they were being implemented they met with fragmented responses at the local level. For example, two major physical infrastructural projects were being conducted in the study area, one focused on traffic and the other on transport. Both projects were being conducted in isolation from each other, with a 12-month gap between the progress of each. Representatives from community organisations and groups who sat on the consultation committee (including the Centre representative) were able eventually to push for these projects to be integrated. What was clear from the process, however, is that the strategic intent for the City was lost in the focus of the program outcomes (i.e. large-scale development initiatives) and this fragmentation was demonstrated through the lack of integration at the local level.
Not noticing the lack of strategic intent, whether it be planning for the local area or planning in the organisation, was further exacerbated by the fact that the project participants were often drowning in the detail, without a clear understanding of how the pieces fitted together (Vrakking, 1995). This was evidenced in the first cycle during committee meetings, at the second AGM presentation by the local representative and the mass of literature from the Council, as well as by our experience on the consultation committee on the major traffic project. Although detail is important, it can hide the fact that strategic intent is lacking (or non-existing). Furthermore, it ignores the importance of implementing a strategy that is simple, unambiguous and in a format the people implementing the strategy can grasp (Giles, 1991). Information is needed that sets out the bigger picture of what we are trying to achieve, in a way that is logical and organised for action where the work needs to be done (Sandy, 1991). Therefore, in developing the operational plan (including programs), participants need to be encouraged to show they have linked it to the strategic intent. This will influence the development of the new strategic plan and ensure that a broader context is developed before the operational aspects and detail are considered. Furthermore, the importance of ensuring a strategic plan that appeared simple and easy to understand was also intended to ensure that, as the group’s knowledge developed, the plan could develop with its audience, rather than become another shelf warmer.

Although strategic intent is important, it can generate two key drawbacks that linked to implementation failure. The first involves an over-commitment to the strategic intent, rather than ensuring that a level of flexibility is exercised in order to allow the intent to shift as a result of new information coming to light during the implementation process. This key trap is referred to as an “irrational escalation of commitment to failure” (or escalation bias) (Biyalogorsky et al., 2001). This emphasises the need to defend initial positions and resist change, even when faced with substantial negative information. Biyalagorsky et al. (2001) find that escalation bias is influenced by the overweighing of initial positive beliefs in the face of negative new information. Any future plan needs to ensure that there are enough checks and balances in place to assess its future direction, in light of growing knowledge and understanding. While this commitment to past ways of operating was difficult to change during the first two cycles, the approach to ongoing planning
discussions became extremely useful in ensuring the committee discussed changing circumstances and altered their plan to adapt to new information and conditions.

The second key implementation pitfall that was experienced during the project was what Vrakking (1995, p. 32) refers to as the “law of decreasing implementation result”. The threat of this occurring due to the volunteer contribution efforts required did challenge the sustainability of implementation. Although the results demonstrated a momentum in implementation, this was challenged by the fact a new committee would need to be prepared (yet again) to take the Centre into the next phase of implementation. These two pitfalls were difficult to test as the new strategic plan was very recent, suggesting that the design of the plan will need to consider these two issues.

6.3.2. Project add-on versus strategy integration

One of the clearest lessons learned during the research project was the difference between a project add-on and the development of a comprehensive strategy for change that could be incorporated into existing processes. For example, the organisational development and planning process was not run as a separate project outside the organisational system, but was incorporated into the system instead. Sandy reports that (1991, p. 30) a key frustration of implementation is that

> Those who receive the plans can become frustrated because they don’t perceive the initiatives as relevant to their real-world issues. Such perception might be flawed, but we live in a world in which perception is reality.

Community development projects and programs, like many organisational change programs, are seen as project add ons to participants’ everyday jobs (or roles). If the ABCD project is seen as an additional project outside the normal scope of work in the community organisation its long-term success may easily be jeopardised, inviting old habits back into the organisation. Communities and organisations do not operate in a world where everything can give way to a focus on one particular aspect. They are complex and often chaotic. It is thus important to develop an implementation plan that acknowledges the broader strategy in which the change project is a part. Furthermore, it needs to be encompassed (to a degree) in day-to-day operations, rather than becoming a project that will eventually die a natural death.
The initial strategic plan was clearly developed as an add-on to existing operations. The consultant was only engaged for a half-day planning session and had very little knowledge of the organisation’s context. The new strategic plan was purposely developed in the meeting framework that already existed and it was eventually incorporated into committee discussions. This is not to say it was not project managed to ensure that the proposed outcomes were achieved, but rather, that it is important to ensure that planning takes into consideration the environment in which it is expected to be implemented. The ongoing development of the plan allowed for review, reflection and revision in the context of today’s realities, which proved useful to determine what was achievable in the short term.

6.3.3. Finding Leverage through Shifting Power Structures

Dunphy et al. (2003, p. 211) emphasise the importance of selecting change agents and developing a change strategy internally (wherever possible). Although efforts in this direction were made in the projects undertaken by Beilharz, Cameron and Gibson, their ability to embed these strategies internally, through vehicles such as community centres, was challenged by the fact that these organisations require significant development themselves.

This project revealed that it is difficult to locate potential change agents in the community organisation itself. For example, while staff were important to the process, the did not focus on the holistic perspective of the organisation. Implementing some of the key strategies fell outside their area of responsibility. Furthermore, any development outcomes involving staff increased overhead costs: an area that is often not provided under current funding arrangements. Lastly, the limited available hours of staff to meet collectively meant that staff were unable to spend time on development activities. This required a shift in emphasis to the committee and the coordinator.

This was further exacerbated by the difficulty experienced in recruiting internal stakeholders, particularly as the committee members were volunteers. Although this may not be the case in all community centres, the amount of time and effort needed to bring about change far exceeded the capacity of most committee members. Even in examples where community members were employed part time to implement strategies, these positions had a shelf life and became more difficult to sustain as the
project funding came to a close. Furthermore, a considerable length of time was required to induct the change agent and develop skills, despite the short time frames assigned for community change. The development and the ability of volunteers to support capacity building thus requires more investigation.

6.3.4. Participatory Convenience for Volunteers

Another lesson learned with relation to the change approach and the ability of the organisation and its members to influence the community, is the issue of time. On many occasions, whether working on the committee or attending local community consultation processes on behalf of the Centre, there was insufficient time and resources to do appropriate research, develop strategies and effectively implement these strategies.

As highlighted throughout all the three cycles, gaining people’s time was much more difficult than gaining money. It was found that the most effective tactic to address this issue was to continually educate the coordinator to work with the volunteer committee in a way that focused on being well-planned, conveniently situated and respectful of people’s time. This improvement did occur during the three cycles, transforming committee meetings from an event that was dreaded to being a productive contribution to the Centre’s future. Furthermore, the increased use of technology to address time lags and communication breakdowns also proved useful in making planning and implementation more productive and convenient. This involved ensuring the plan was broken down into bite-sized pieces to avoid having too much on the agenda at each meeting.

However, while this convenience was factored in, it could be argued, that this project struggled to achieve the participation levels required to support future implementation. Arnstein’s description of citizen participation is particularly relevant to the experience project, suggesting that participation is:

. . . (it is) a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you” and is considered the cornerstone of democracy, but if we don’t have to eat it we won’t. (Arnstein, 1960, p. 216)

The project experienced a range of different participatory styles, from active to passive participation. As highlighted earlier, time and experience in the leadership
role was a key factor affecting the implementation of this project. During committee members, it was extremely important to continually reinforce that any new idea is only as valid, as the committee’s capability and capacity to implement the idea. This ability to gain successful implementation was further complicated by the majority of the staff’s lack of faith in the committee’s commitment to the Centre. Interestingly, this lack of commitment was often emulated in some of the behaviour of staff members (particularly those who had been most critical, as, for instance, in the bus trip). An improvement in the perceived involvement of the leaders did influence the level of commitment demonstrated by staff. However, this was difficult to manage at times, as committee action would not necessarily occur in front of staff for them all to see, since the committee’s involvement took place after hours. Ife suggests:

. . . people will participate if they feel the issue or activity is important. People must feel that their action will make a difference at the individual level . . . different forms of participation must be acknowledged and valued. People must be enabled to participate and supported in their participation. Structures and processes must not be alienating. (1998, pp. 112–113)

This highlights a key challenge to the development of community organisations in Australia in general. As these organisations are funnelled into providing specific services, their relevance to community members has weakened. Therefore, gaining interest from community members to help improve the Centre for the future of the community is not easy to sell. Furthermore, the tasks that are required of volunteers do not always reflect the fun activities (such as festivals), but rather the business and operational duties that are characteristic of a job.

Lastly, while Ife highlights the need to work on something that is important to you, I found volunteering for the Centre compared to other volunteering (such as large children’s hospitals) was not really valued by friends and peers. While this could be seen as a personal issue, the lack of prioritisation applied to the Centre by the committee may also reflect the level of relevance and personal perception regarding the importance of this work and the potential that this involvement could create.
6.3.5. Celebrating Wins

Sandy (1991, p. 33) notes that the precious missing element in organisations during change processes is momentum. Many companies and individuals who have figured out the right direction in which to move stay in the same place because there is little energy or intensity behind their intentions. This proved to be a significant issue during all three cycles, although less so during Cycle Three. The coordinator issues, in particular, took a significant amount of time and the atmosphere in the Centre was not conducive to celebratory events, due to the tense relationships that had formed amongst staff and with the committee. However, during the end of Cycle Two and the beginning of Cycle Three, people began to see improvements and celebrate small wins and this was reflected in the momentum of the outcomes achieved. This supports Sandy’s view: bold moves forward need the reinforcement of small victories and celebrating accomplishment does provide a powerful propulsion for organisational change.

Celebrations at the committee level were a little more difficult due to the time required. Due to the volunteer nature of the position, the committee always appeared to be lagging behind in their responsibilities because of the limited time and the large task of changing the business aspects. It was difficult to implement incentives for good performance, but over time, even achieving a small positive outcome was considered a success. However, sometimes in looking forward, the committee ignored the need to celebrate organisational wins, no matter how small. At several committee meetings, the coordinator would report a number of key achievements, only to rush on with the next goal, rather than a pause to recognise the hard work that had already been done. She would often state in a flustered manner:

> Can we stop and take time to recognise how much we have achieved on this newsletter before we start thinking about the next improvement. It (the newsletter) is a substantial improvement from the last one and these changes have taken considerable effort so far. (Committee Meeting Notes, Cycle Three, 10 August 2005)

Fortunately, the relationship with the coordinator was a healthy one and she was able to express her frustration about being given time to celebrate the wins that had been achieved. This is a very important part of the change process and could have easily
affected future implementation if time was not taken to acknowledge and recognise the challenge of even the smallest changes.

While celebrating wins is important, recognising the contribution of volunteers on community centre committees may also need further investigation. In addition, the organisational design and available funding for staff limits the possibility of rewarding staff (even through additional training, etc.). However, the organisation acknowledged that there should be scope in the future to incorporate bonuses into specific roles, although this was limited to the potential social enterprises identified. All the same, social celebrations such as Christmas parties provided useful forums to build relationships and celebrate the achievements in the Centre.

Overall, celebrating successes is an example of the constant tension that is experienced as a result of attempting to work towards an ambitious strategic intent. Although the Centre needs considerable work to continue developing and implementing their new strategic plan, there is early evidence that key initiatives, including the potential to achieve the longer term vision, are being implemented. However, the ability of the committee to sustain these efforts will continue to be challenged until greater clarity is achieved around the recruitment, retention and performance of this group in the context of the change process. The following chapter will revisit the research question in light of the findings, offering key conclusions that were arrived at as a result of the action research project.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION


7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1. INTRODUCTION

He who has not first laid the foundations may be able with great ability to lay them afterwards, but they will be laid with trouble to the architect and danger to the building.

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527), The Prince

Building requires solid foundations to ensure the sustainability of the structure. Even extensions to built structures require serious consideration regarding existing and future foundational requirements. This thesis suggests that the same argument applies to the development of local communities to support sustainable development efforts. Old (1995, p. 6) posits that true transformation needs to occur at the deeper levels of an organisational system, making reference to building foundations for change. However, as noted in Section 4.2, in a local community these foundations are not necessarily as obvious or as well structured as they often are in a corporate organisation.

Roseland (1997a, 1997b) argues that such foundations can be found in the social infrastructure of a community and that they can be enhanced through asset-based approaches to community development which highlight the potential of development opportunities that focus on what we already have, rather than working from a deficit model. Leading Australian examples in ABCD (see Beilharz, 2002; Cameron, 2003; Cameron and Gibson, 2004a), were referred to during the research, highlighting issues around sustainable implementation beyond the involvement of the research practitioner, although the findings of the research now suggest that this could be applied to any type of community development effort. This emphasised the importance of building foundations at the local level, with community centres identified as potential foundational source.

The thesis described the journey to develop the capacity of a community organisation as the foundational support to ABCD initiatives, highlighting the complexity and challenges involved in light of the organisation’s own issues of business sustainability. The thesis sought to address two key questions:
What challenges do community organisations face as they seek to build organisational capacity by shifting their focus from a needs-based to an asset-based approach to community development?

How does building the organisational foundations for asset-based community development assist in the sustainability of asset-based efforts in a community development context?

These questions were answered through three cycles of action research in an inner-urban community centre in Brisbane, Australia. These cycles were structured around the questions:

- What happened?
- Why did it happen that way?
- What were the implications of this happening?

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the findings of the study and to identify the key implications and recommendations for practice, policy (relating to change in a community development context) and change in an organisational context. The chapter also offers a critical reflection on the challenges and possibilities for the application of action research doctoral research.

7.2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Section 7.2 summarises the findings of the two key research questions and focuses on the challenges in shifting to an ABCD approach. The following sections discuss whether building the foundations for community development through a community organisation can assist in the project sustainability of community development initiatives in the future.

7.2.1. Question One: Organisational Capacity Building

What challenges do community organisations face as they seek to build organisational capacity by shifting their focus from a needs-based to an asset-based approach to community development?

While in theory the creation of a shift in the community centre from a needs-based to an asset-based approach made sense to the group, putting this into practice was more
complex than anticipated. The challenge of time was a constant theme, in light of the fact that the development process was required to work with what the Centre already had. Although any type of organisational change is challenged by the need to manage the future development in current operational requirements. This was further complicated by the difficulty in finding a time that was suitable for all participants to work together (or across different areas), in light of limited (if any) funding being available for internal development efforts (including staff training).

Although time inhibited development, this tension between wanting to develop towards a strategic intent and the need to manage current operations resulted in trying to find ways to streamline the process to incorporate the time lines. Although this was not entirely successful, there is evidence in Cycle Three that the momentum around planning and implementation had improved since Cycle One. It can be said, therefore, that creating efficiencies in the process assisted the change momentum. However, streamlining the time required for development may have also developed dependencies on specific individuals so that the level of commitment to implementation in the latter stages of Cycle Three went untested.

Chapter 5 outlined a number of key challenges and opportunities experienced during the organisational development process. While the time available for development and implementation proved to be a key tension, there were four other key challenges that affected the shift in the organisation. These include issues such as:

- strategic planning versus program improvement
- leadership (both in the committee and the coordinator)
- existing structures established by external bodies (i.e. predominantly by government) and
- the development of small business and the need for an entrepreneurial mindset.

A shift in direction required the organisation to revisit its focus and approach to planning. As highlighted in Cycle One, the strategic plan encompassed an operational plan which allowed for very few operational changes outside the existing programs. As a result, initial efforts to shift the thinking in the organisation often
were constrained to a program focus rather than reflecting holistic organisational thinking. For example the vision provided in the old strategic plan lacked a focus on the future direction of the organisation, maintaining a services focus (often based on needs) rather than a holistic focus which reviewed and revised the future purpose, role and intent the organisation would take. Therefore, any form of past organisational development was locked into the current reality and constraints of the organisation.

In the early workshops in Cycle Two the continual focus on programs emphasised that both the committee and staff lacked both understanding and skill in the area of strategic planning and organisational development. Therefore, while the planning process aimed to be inclusive of all participants, it failed to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the two groups in the change process. Once this was identified at the end of Cycle Two, the focus of the third cycle could shift towards holistic planning efforts, predominantly involving the committee and coordinator. The decision to change from an inclusive planning approach, involving everybody at the same time, to one where the committee and coordinator developed the strategic intent to help set the focus, was also useful. The staff and other stakeholders were henceforth to be included in the review and revision of the plan so that planning would be expanded to incorporate their program focus. This arrangement acknowledged the fact that a significant proportion of the implementation of organisational solutions were the responsibility of the committee and coordinator and allowed the staff to focus on linking program improvements to the strategic intent. The intention of this decision was to ensure that the current reality of operational requirements also addressed issues around short-term business sustainability (i.e. satisfy existing service-level agreements).

Although it was hard to shift from the dominant program focus, doing so made it possible to apply asset-based development at both the organisation and program level. While the organisational development required significant attention, strengthening current programs could at least contribute to the health and viability of the organisation, if not to ABCD initiatives in the future. For example, the application of both an asset-based perspective to change as well as an improved business focus led to one area of the business becoming a financially viable, thriving
program (i.e. Limited Hours Childcare). More important was developing the community education program to become a social enterprise that could fund and support the growth of community development initiatives in the future. Therefore, while the program focus was retained among the staff, the application of an asset-based perspective provided the scope to strengthen the financial viability of the organisation through the improvement of the programs.

During the three cycles it was seen that once roles and responsibilities were clarified, and the of organisational strategy was separated from program improvement, there was an improved momentum for change and implementation. However, this process was dependent on having an individual working with or in the organisation with the skills and knowledge of strategy development and implementation. While it is assumed that external consultants or the coordinator have such knowledge, there was little to suggest that this was the case before the research project was initiated.

Although the clarification of roles and responsibilities proved extremely worthwhile in the development and implementation of the strategic plan, it led to increased reliance on the committee and coordinator. As the Centre came to rely more on unpaid volunteers in the committee, their performance often proved hard to manage and at the end of Cycle Three, this reliance rendered the development process more volatile. The coordinator position, in particular, is vital to the successful development of the organisation, due to its role as a conduit between the various stakeholders. This was evidenced in Cycle One and Two with regards to some of the bottlenecks that occurred compared to the end of Cycle Two and, more specifically, Cycle Three, which demonstrated an improved momentum in outcomes, despite the performance of the committee.

Furthermore, the recruitment and retention of a committee for these organisations proved to be a constant challenge, especially with regards to finding “active participants” rather than “bums on seats”. While this lack of continuity and consistency proved challenging, small improvements were made, as evidenced at each AGM, although considerable work still needs done in this area. All the same, the project demonstrated the importance of the coordinator position in sustaining development efforts, regardless of the committee, although it is to be hoped that a supportive and active committee will be elected in the longer term, to ensure that
coordinator does not burn out from taking the most responsibility for implementation.

In addition to issues around leadership, challenges also resulted from the impact of the external operating context. Section 5.3.4 particularly emphasises the needs-based paradigm in the external systems and structures which can reinforce unwanted behaviour in community organisations. Although it did not restrict our ability to build capacity towards ABCD, it did make the process more challenging, particularly with relation to satisfying existing needs-based funding requirements, as well as gaining additional funding to support a broader development role. However, strengthening organisation and its leadership alleviated some of these blockages and encouraged the lead sponsoring organisation to consider changes if these demonstrated improved outcomes. Although still in its early stages, ABCD provides scope to offer this potential in the future. However, this is also reliant on the time available to the leadership to negotiate this matter: the one resource that was most lacking throughout the entire project.

Lastly, the development of the community centre’s capacity can be compared to issues faced in a small business. Community organisations are small businesses and thus need an entrepreneurial spirit to drive development forward. However, in my own experience with small business, I found that this spirit of entrepreneurship in the community organisations was significantly more challenging as a result of the leadership being driven by different forms of motivation and reward. Table 7.1 outlines some of the differences identified with relation to a non-profit and for profit small business.
### Table 7.1: Entrepreneurial Comparison of Private and Community Organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>personal financial gain and the risk of failure. This allows entrepreneurs to cope with additional effort (hours) especially when early financial compensation is not realised.</td>
<td>Limited financial gain for scale of effort required to build capacity of the organisation. Would need some reward structure for early set up stages.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity Across Industry</td>
<td>Private salary is dependent upon success of the business. The potential for significant financial success and control over decision-making is high.</td>
<td>These organisations currently are paying below counterparts (government/business). Attracting skill is difficult without being able to offer comparable pay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards &amp; Recognition</td>
<td>Personal satisfaction of success plus the potential for financial rewards. Autonomy and control over the organisation’s direction. Often do not have boards.</td>
<td>Could be factored into the development over time, as an incentive for growth, but largely untested. Complicated by under-skilled committees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seed Funding</td>
<td>Flexibility to develop a plan for seed funding for the expansion of the organisation.</td>
<td>Governments needs to particularly invest in the development of the organisation for growth to develop. Particularly in the light of the need to pay additional efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Purpose</td>
<td>Core purpose is often linked heavily to a profit-driven outcome. The core purpose of the business is often compatible with this profit motive.</td>
<td>Many of the Centre functions are not tailored towards revenue raising. Balance business drive with socially driven core purpose can be challenging.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is not to say that the entrepreneurial spirit does not exist in these organisations, but that issues around investment, potential risk and reward can differ in them, and this may affect the investment of time that both the committee and staff are willing to make. The relationship between the level of value investment versus the rewards reaped is an important feature of the commitment and retention of volunteers. This area requires greater investigation with relation to the recruitment of committees and their commitment of time and action to the development of the organisation.

Even though the organisation experienced a number of shifts towards ABCD, the focus on the second question was directed more towards the ability of the community centre to sustain efforts, both internal and external developments, in the future. The following subsection addresses this question.

#### 7.2.2. Question Two: Sustaining Community Development Efforts

How does building the organisational foundations for asset-based community development assist in the sustainability of asset-based efforts in a community development context?
Although the question was directed at supporting ABCD initiatives, I realised at the end of Cycle One that it underestimated the amount of capacity building required in the community organisation to support these initiatives, particularly in the timeframes set for a doctoral thesis. As a result, the question whether the organisational development process can continue to build the capacity of the organisation beyond my own involvement became a prior, important first step. This further supports the view that it is important, though difficult, to develop the foundations for change at the community level.

As noted in Section 7.2.1, issues around leadership were the most challenging in sustaining any type of development effort. However, it could be argued that while these issues had an impact, the results of the research project were not all negative. This is due to the fact that the new coordinator, recruited at the end of Cycle Two, already knew of ABCD and supported this approach to development. Furthermore, at the end of Cycle Three, there was evidence that the coordinator had continued to implement the strategic plan, including the disbursement of the plan to new committee members, with the intention to continue discussions on developing the plan in the New Year.

However, while this demonstrates an ongoing commitment to the development of the organisation, this could be challenged by the lack of a successor if the coordinator were to resign. Furthermore, issues around coordinator burn out or frustration could result if the committee and/or staff and commitment did not show enough support to such development. Thus, while it could be argued that the development of the organisation towards supporting ABCD can be sustained, the level of risk in sustaining these efforts has been increased considerably.

This raises the question: *Can this project be sustained beyond my involvement?* This question is difficult to answer when the true measure should be performed well beyond the Ph.D. time period. All that can be said at present reflects the early indications of success. The answer to this question is further complicated by the fact that ABCD practice is still relatively new in Australia, particularly in inner-urban areas that are not considered disadvantaged. In addition, the development process was significantly constrained by the continual changes in leadership position, particularly during the first two cycles and the need to locate an organisation in the
local area and the need to develop relationships from scratch. Given the pace of change that was being achieved during the last cycle, in comparison to the first two cycles, there was evidence to suggest that another year of research, plus an additional six months of managing the project would provide a more accurate indication of the potential for this organisation to support ABCD initiatives in the future.

7.3. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section outlines some of the key implications and recommendations that resulted, addressing two sub-questions raised in Chapter 1. These include:

- What were the implications of this (the shift within the organisation) happening?
- What are the implications of conducting action research with a community organisation?

The following subsections address these questions as they apply to the following four areas:

- **Policy and planning.** Discusses the importance of comprehensive community initiatives and improvements that can be made to planning practice which embraces the role of community organisations in the process of local development.

- **Practice.** Suggests improvements to practice in the field of community development, local planning and the capacity building of organisations. It specifically highlights some of the challenges arising from the voluntary nature of leadership roles within community organisations and their impact on its future role in local development.

- **Community and organisational development research practitioners.** Emphasises training and the lack of comprehensive community initiatives, together with the application of an asset-based approach to community development.
• **Research.** Offers suggestions for future research opportunities, highlighting many of the unanswered questioned that still remain as a result of this research project.

Each section provides an overview of the implications of the action research project, offering a number of recommendations for improving the capacity of community organisations and community planning and development in general.

### 7.3.1. Policy and Planning

... organisations that work from a neighbourhood-wide blueprint for community change are likely to have a far more positive and long-last impact than those that focus on helping a specific and limited number of individuals within the community. (Lansberry et al., 1995, p. 13)

This research journey began when I was able to find a way of working with an organisation where I could create change that contributed to the goal of sustainable development, with a particularly emphasis on local development. This notion was based on the assumption that it would take more than government policy and government-driven planning to create this change: it would also require individuals to own the project by reviewing and altering their contributions to the health of their local communities, as outlined within Local Agenda 21 (UNCED, 1993). However, early investigations in my local area revealed that planning and development efforts, such as local area planning, had not been undertaken for close to 10 years (at the writing of this thesis), involving the local community minimally and with little indication that future local planning efforts would incorporate the neighbourhood-wide blueprint, described by Lansberry et al. (1995).

Participation by representatives on the committee (including me) involving major traffic and transport initiatives in the area demonstrated that, while integrated regional plans had been recently promoted, this integration was not evident at the local level. However, it also demonstrated the ability of the local community representatives (from the local community organisations) to push for integration as part of the consultation process. Community feedback showed that local area planning should be revisited, particularly as this feedback was considered outside the scope of the study area of both projects, which ignored the broad impacts of these
initiatives to the surround community.\(^{36}\) This helped reinforce the view that neighbourhood planning was important, particularly in inner urban areas that are continually affected by development generated by the problem of urban sprawl.

To improve policy and planning, particularly local area planning and development initiatives, greater consideration should be given to the social aspects of planning. This should be incorporated into the process of planning and, more importantly, implementation. For example, none of the development plans that were assessed during the research project included social aspects of development or gave them priority, indicating limited community ownership of them.\(^ {37}\) Until the social aspects are valued, community development may prove hard to advance. Without a foundation for change built at the local level to support it, planning initiatives represent lost opportunities for sharing ownership between governments and local communities. This is a fundamental flaw in the planning process and helps highlight key implementation problems in local area planning (Sandy, 1991).

However, improving local involvement in planning is challenged by two key issues:

- The existing foundations at the local level through organisations like the community centre, require significant redesign and development and

- Relying on voluntary involvement in planning can be problematic in light of the amount of work that must be undertaken to support development initiatives.

It is noteworthy that the last issue proved to be the greatest issue around development in this project, especially in my own experience of volunteer burn out. Furthermore, using paid community organisations workers was not always suitable, unless they were well connected with the area and local issues. This was further complicated by the fact that community consultation sessions predominantly occurred after business

\(^{36}\) For example, residents suggested issues around traffic calming in areas outside the limited study for both projects, recognising that the impact of this would be experienced more in the broader community than in in the study area. Although this agreed to, when questioned by community participants the feedback was that this was outside the scope of the project.

\(^{37}\) This was shown by the fact that nobody within Council or the local community could be found with the key responsibility for overseeing the implementation of this plan in relation to the local area.
hours, resulting in additional overhead costs to the organisation. These issues can also be attributed to the general community development experience, which is further outlined below.

Community Development

Many of the implications and recommendations regarding ABCD can be applied to the field of community development in general. However, one of the key differences is how ABCD could provide more interesting, creative (and potentially less costly) solutions to both urban planning and community development initiatives. The knowledge of local assets, community organisations and their connections, as well as the talents and interests of the local community, could be a useful starting point in improving local development solutions, particularly in older communities with a more established (albeit older) infrastructure. For example, during the bus trip, and as a result of several meetings with other local organisations, it was discovered that most community organisations were located in government facilities scattered throughout the local community. Many of these buildings were aging and were often unsatisfactory for the organisations’ development. However, as the organisations received no funding for rent, they were not able to develop their operations beyond the building, particularly in light of the growing maintenance costs of the old buildings. Ironically, the land on which the buildings are sited was currently worth a considerable amount, due to the increase in property values in the area. Therefore, relocating, with limited funding and high property prices was not feasible.

However, after the bus trip, the committee discussed (as a result of their longer term vision) asking the government to relocate some of these community organisations to a shared site which would not only offer improved facilities, but also potential economies of scale in operations (i.e. administration). This would free up premium land for improved local development at a fraction of the cost of having to maintain and improve the old facilities that are currently in place within the area. Furthermore, the organisations could be moved closer to public transport and local community facilities for accessibility. This idea was well received by the State Member as part of the negotiations at the end of Cycle Three to relocate the Centre. This was an example where understanding the local area from an asset-based
perspective could lead to improved urban planning and community development outcomes.

However, ABCD is still relatively new and untested in Australia, and there is little evidence to suggest that this approach is being considered beyond the traditional areas of disadvantage. This needs-based perspective in Australia has further entrenched community development in the field of social services, rewarding piecemeal solutions to community needs and issues, rather than encouraging solutions that would fit into a broader, community-wide development initiative. This requires policies (that often guide funding) that consider broader community development solutions which reward communities and organisations for working from what they already have, regardless of their perceived status.

Sustainable implementation should be the bedrock concern of holistic community development. Planning for development thus needs to find and develop potential foundations in the community to ensure that any initiative is owned by the local organisations and that they have the capacity to sustain community development efforts. This is obviously dependent on the community itself; however, it could also influence the amount of time and types of activities that are included in the development process.

Lastly, the three-year timeframe that was applied to the Australian examples is somewhat questionable, in light of issues experienced in handing over the project to the local community. Change is constant and policy-makers need to understand their choices better: whether to continue investing community development expertise into the local community, or to ensuring that the local community has the capacity to support this in the future. If the strategy involves ensuring the community is well placed to continue development activities beyond the involvement of the CD worker or research practitioner, this must be incorporated as part of the planning and evaluation process. Furthermore, if the CD worker or research practitioner is to manage out of the project, ongoing, part-time mentoring for the community members who would continue development, would prove useful. Furthermore, it is easier to measure, report and contain piecemeal solutions, as opposed to broader community development initiatives whose outcomes are often hard to identify, measure or predict. Regardless of the approach to community development, planning and policy-
makers need to consider whether the foundations for change exist, and in what state they are in, to ensure that successful implementation is factored into the community development initiative. Community organisations proved to be one potential location in which to look.

**Building the Capacity of Community Organisations**

There are both external and internal implications regarding planning and policy to develop community organisations to support ABCD initiatives. From an external perspective, the Community Manifesto (Abbey et al., 2003) emphasises that a lack of ongoing focus on short-term, compartmentalised policy, plans and funding restricts the capacity of these organisations to develop creative new approaches. A comprehensive review of the current and future focus of community organisations (like community centres) in Australia is needed concerning their capacity to support community development initiatives. This review should revisit Chapter 28 of Local Agenda 21 and assess the gaps that result from initial implementation efforts.

This would include a study of the purpose and role of these types of community organisations, both of which are influenced by the way they are funded and rewarded. A change of approach would not aim to abolish the needs-based perspective influenced by the social services nature of the industry, but rather develop a balance between an asset and needs-based perspective to development in the future. In addition, this shift would need to consider the funding of both external projects and projects that consider the strategic health of these organisations to support the change initiatives.

Lastly, the ability of the community centre to be involved in planning and development consultation requires further consideration, in light of the voluntary nature of the personnel. Any involvement, especially in after-hours activities can become a significant overhead to the business operations if a volunteer is not available to participate.

Chapter 6 of the thesis emphasises issues around strategic planning and implementation to build the capacity of this organisation towards an ABCD approach. While internal policy improvements did occur during the project (i.e. Limited Hours Childcare), the broader strategic framework proved to be an important
tool to the change process. The asset-based perspective also proved helpful in the development of the organisation, although it often slowed the development process, in light of the need to try and find ways to raise funds for certain initiatives. Furthermore, implementation considerations must be incorporated into the plan.

The research project showed that the organisation needed to understand strategic planning. The committee had engaged a consultant to help them develop the old strategic plan. By moving away from the constraints of the program-centred plan to one that embraced a more holistic perspective, the capacity of the organisation improved. The implications of poor planning in these organisations in Australia cannot be underestimated. It must be recognised that the ability to develop a business strategy is not necessarily among the traditional skills sought by such organisations, and the ability to acquire this expertise (including understanding whether the person is skilled in this area also) is problematic. The people working in these roles tend to have a social services, rather than business background. Many of them start as part-time administrators and are paid as such, so that finding people with the skills and interest in developing and expanding their own work and working longer hours can also prove challenging.

Lastly, the financial capacity of the organisation to support any type of planning initiative, whether that be external or internal, is clearly important. While the Centre identified mechanisms to improve its own financial viability and fund future development initiatives through its development of a social enterprise, this approach is not without its challenges. During the project I was unable to locate appropriate seed funding to develop the enterprises identified during the project. The availability of seed funding for development thus needs to be taken into account.

**Planning and Policy Recommendation**

Building the foundations for organisational, community or local development is important. My key recommendations for planning and policy, with a particular emphasis on building the capacity of community organisations to support and sustain community development initiatives is listed below:
• Social planning, utilising fields such as community development, requires greater consideration and incorporation into planning processes, including practice in implementation.

• The potential role and future purpose of community centres (or similar community organisations) requires a review in Australia, in the context of the broader contributions that community development can make to local sustainable development.

• Any community development role that is developed in these organisations requires a balance between assets and needs approaches, which should be reflected in policy-making and funding. Furthermore, business on-costs\textsuperscript{38} for all external projects and seed funding for the development of social enterprises require greater consideration and application.

• Community centres (and community organisations in general) need funding for the internal development of their organisations, that ensures that development efforts (i.e. strategic planning) take into account the resource of people who have these skills.

• The timeframes currently applied to community-wide development needs to consider building foundations for change and have some flexibility in light of capacity of volunteers and their time to support initiatives.

As noted in Chapter 6, a holistic approach to planning at all three levels requires greater consideration and review. Furthermore, the application of an asset-based perspective to planning could potentially enhance planning and development initiatives, whether applied to local area planning or community and organisational development. Regardless of where it is applied, each planning and development

\textsuperscript{38} Business on-costs refer to the additional costs that are not incorporated into funding arrangements. For example, the cost of administration, additional office space and materials and supplies are costs that do not appear to be factored into the funding available for projects. Furthermore, these costs are difficult to cover for short periods of time (i.e. increasing a staff members hours for a project timeframe and then reducing them again is difficult when staff specially choose to work part-time.
process requires an understanding of implementation failure and the importance of developing the foundations to help sustain efforts beyond the expert facilitator.

7.3.2. Practice

Practice is about taking an idea, whether it is in a plan, policy or concept in our minds, and implementing it. The key challenge to practice, both from an organisational and community development perspective is who will implement it, particularly after involvement by external agents have ceased? This thesis has argued that it is important to develop the capacity of the local community to support the implementation and ongoing development of the community and its organisations beyond the involvement of external agents. Although the action research project highlighted the potential for this to occur, it also revealed the complexity around developing local capacity, particularly within community organisations. As a result, this brings to the forefront the issue around the capacity of local implementers themselves.

Australian examples discussed in this thesis\(^{39}\) demonstrated the incorporation of local community members, often in part-time paid positions during the project. This project did not have access to any form of funding for the project, resulting in the need to gain resources from wherever they were available. This entailed applying an asset-based perspective to the development process, by ensuring that the project was not limited by these funding constraints. Regardless, of differences between community development projects, four key issues proved important to improving practice and can be applied to issues regarding organisation and community development. This includes issues around:

- the voluntary nature of key players and their capacity to contribute and sustain efforts within the current environment;

- the time required for planning, development and prioritisation by key participants;

---

\(^{39}\) See (Beilharz, 2002; Cameron, 2003; Cameron and Gibson, 2004a)
applying on-costs to development initiatives, to sustain efforts in a way that does not jeopardise the financial viability of the community organisation; and

sustaining paid local project workers beyond the lifetime of the funding, including considerations regarding the impact this has on the project outcomes.

Does having ownership at the local level require local people to “own it”? This thesis has suggested that it is important, particularly with relation to the motivation behind capacity building to sustain community development initiatives. Although this may not always be the case, it did prove to be important during the committee experiences throughout the three cycles. In particular, the committee elected during Cycle One and at the end of Cycle Three did have members that were not from the local catchment area. While different motivations are not necessarily an indication of the performance of community members, it can impact the representative nature of the committee within the local community.

For example, where the Centre was invited (during Cycle Three) to provide a representative to participate in consultation regarding local development, only two committee members were actually in a position to undertake this role due to the fact that they lived locally, where the majority of staff (including the coordinator) and the other committee members were not affected due to the fact they did not live in the area. The same theme also arose in Cycle Two, during the loss of the coordinator. Only two committee members demonstrated concern regarding the ongoing management of the Centre during the coordinator absence. Furthermore, the inequity in workload that often resulted, often led to feelings of resentment, misunderstandings and, I would argue, volunteer burnout. Many of the issues faced during Cycle Two and the somewhat negative environment which existed did not make volunteering a pleasant, motivational experience.

The development of any organisation requires considerable time and energy. This is further complicated by the small business nature of these organisations, and the voluntary nature of participants. The resource-constrained nature (in particularly

---

40 For example, the transport and traffic consultation that was being conducted in the area allowed only local representatives working/volunteering in incorporated organisations to participate.
staffing) within these organisations results in the fact that if you have an idea regarding improvements to the organisation, you are more than likely going to have to be the person who implements it. During the project, locating people with the time, skills and energy to volunteer to this degree proved challenging. Specifically, the required hours for planning, development, as well as the general operational duties assigned to tasks were far greater than committee members were able or willing to provide. Many of the committee members had several other responsibilities outside the organisation (including work, family, etc) which were a key priority in their lives. Furthermore, as revealed in early interviews during Cycle One and discussions in Cycle Three, the lack of relevance of the Centre to the lives of the committee members, resulted in their contributions to the organisation being well down the priority list of committee members. However, as momentum was created around planning, including the assignment of responsibilities, there was evidence to suggest an increased contribution from committee members. However, this was clearly affected by the loss of committee members at the end of Cycle Three.

Therefore, further investigation is required regarding the ability to build relevance of these organisations in the community and whether that may have some impact on the level of active participation in the future. During the project, there was evidence to suggest that relevance was important, when developing the committee for the Limited Hours Childcare. This program was relevant due to committee member’s utilising the services for their children. Of further note was the fact that the focus of the Limited Hours Childcare committee was directed towards projects rather than business issues regarding the program. Having an interest in the volunteer activities and making the activities fun (i.e. projects) did prove to be a key factor in being able to attract and retain committee members.

However, this fun environment is difficult to sustain due to the amount of business type work that required consideration during committee meetings. As the Centre was a small business there was no shortage of work to be carried out. In addition, to requiring skills to run a small business, other skills such as project management also proved to be in short supply, particularly with relation to project costing. For example, simple project considerations, such as factoring in on-costs can contribute
to building both the financial and organisational capacity to support future community development initiatives. This includes the oncost of managing and enabling volunteers to work in the organisation, factoring in costs such as communications, office space and technology requirements, as well as additional coordination and administration that often results from their involvement.

The issues regarding volunteers and project costing are particularly important to community development projects, even when there is a funded local position, due to the fact that the person in this position is still required to work with members of the community in a voluntary capacity and establish community development projects. Although a funded local position may appear a useful solution to community development initiatives, this decision may have implications for the sustainability of the project. Funding for a community member to perform a community development role is only usually applied for the life of the project. This results in the cessation of employment at the end of the project, similar to the community development research practitioner.

Therefore, self-funding community development practitioner, or sustaining the involvement of a local person in this role needs to be considered. One way of doing this is to develop a social enterprise to fund the role. This may require transferring these projects to volunteers or incorporating them in a local community organisation. Whether the role is incorporated into the community organisation, or whether it is decided to develop it as a self-sustaining local position requires time that is often not available in community development funding. Therefore, while the role of the local person proved important in this project, further research needs to be undertaking with regards to improving and sustaining the role of local participants from these different perspectives discussed above.

**Recommendation for Practice**

Building local foundations for change, whether it is for ABCD or the development of community organisations, requires consideration in sustaining development efforts in the local area. Primarily, this comes back to developing the local people and available local resources to understand, support and sustain these efforts. Therefore, development practice requires an improved understanding of how the foundations
can be improved, with respect to the volunteer nature of local people, as well as (in this case), the skills and capacity of the coordinator. Even when the project receives funding to employ a local person, integration into the community remains an issue. Although further research and application is needed, the following recommendations are offered as potential considerations to assist sustain efforts in the future:

- A broader application of ABCD needs to be encouraged, including using this perspective for capacity building community organisations.

- Community development projects need to be funded in a number of different stages. The first should include an assessment of the existing foundations in the local community that could provide potential local succession to sustain community development efforts. The second would involve developing these foundations and implementing the community development project. The third would be about “managing out” of the project and ensuring that local succession is satisfactory to the project longevity.

- Where local community members are employed as part of a project, thought must be given to how this position can either become self-funded or incorporated into the local area.

- The committee should be encouraged to continue to improve the role and relevance of community organisations, to improve recruitment and selection of staff and to ensure that clear communication is provided with relation to performance expectations during the induction process.

- Further investigation is needed on the governance role as it is applied within community organisations and community development initiatives. This may include consideration of paid versus unpaid committees, or funding of a number of positions on the committee.

- Business and project management skills should be improved in the organisation to ensure that all development work is undertaken in a manner that considers the financial viability of the organisation to support developments.
The following subsection provides some of the implications for education, learning and its impact on social change.

7.3.3. Education, Learning and Social Change

The implementation of social change strategies, whether at the community or organisational level, provides a great source for learning about planning and the challenge of implementation. This section discusses some of the key implications resulting from this research on education, learning and social change. This includes issues around

- The institutionalisation of fragmented planning and development; its impact on the sustainable community development and the potential for integrating fields to work on real-life solutions.

- ABCD and the need for applied learning and research which can also contribute to community development outcomes. Skills in community development need to be applied in a broader context to demonstrate a different approach to addressing local issues.

- Putting social planning and the field of community development on the “boardroom” (planning) agenda.

- Education around any type of planning and development requires a better understanding of strategy development and, more importantly, why strategies can fail to be sustained.

- Recognising the balance between business and social services and the need to develop these skills within community organisations.

- The development of committees in an environment that is conducive to turnover of business and the time availability of these groups.

The following discusses these themes further and offers a number of recommendations that are suggested as a result of the research.
**Fragmentation and Integration.** Planning and development efforts, whether applied to local planning, community development or the development of a community organisation, encounters issues regarding fragmentation. Employees may focus on specific programs or areas of expertise and may have a limited capability in integrating these different areas. This was demonstrated through the lack of integration of local area planners with community development workers in local government. The compartmentalisation of different views and the program-centred approach that was consistently experienced at different levels of planning and development may be creating what Koffman and Senge refer to as “skilled incompetence”. They suggest that...

... the walls that exist in the physical world are reflections of our mental walls. The price we pay is enormous ... (we become) skilful at protecting ourselves from the threat and pain that comes with learning but also remaining incompetent and blinded to our incompetence. (Kofman and Senge, 1993, p. 8)

This thesis suggests that these walls have affected our ability to understand the complexity and chaos required in the holistic planning approach that is important to achieving sustainable development. The level of fragmentation in industry is institutionalised by the education system. Whether it is urban planners’ understanding and incorporating social planning, or social workers incorporating an asset-based perspective, the education system is about getting people jobs and these jobs often maintain the compartmentalised nature of positions available. There is a greater need for integrating different areas so as to trial different approaches to integrated solution building with local communities.

**Applied Learning in a Broader Context.** Learning about planning and implementing change involving people is best experienced in an applied setting. The process of implementation to achieve development outcomes requires application and reflection. How can we understand the complexity of implementing plans for change if we haven’t experienced change in a learning environment? Such applied learning assists in demonstrating the challenges of implementation, including the need to revisit plans in light of the constantly shifting environments in which implementation occurs. Furthermore, integrating different fields in applied settings would reveal new possibilities for change through the different perspectives that emerge. In instances where placement is undertaken, a change in the approach to assessment from a needs
focus to embrace larger solutions should be considered, particularly when encouraging application in a broader context. For those already employed, job swaps across government and the community sector may also help individuals to appreciate the work of the different sectors more.

Furthermore, applied learning in a broader context requires improved efforts in colleges and universities to establish or partner organisations to develop more substantial opportunities for learning, apart from individual work placements. For example, this may involve a scenario where students from different disciplines (i.e. urban planning, community development, social work and business) are integrated and placed in a community where they are required to develop improvements, using only whatever resources already exist. They would have to identify existing areas that have not been traditionally considered through approaches like ABCD. This would help raise their awareness of the importance of the social dimensions of the community, highlight potential resources for development and emphasise entrepreneurial business practices that may result in improvements through seeing what already exists in a different light. The biggest challenge however, would be to test how many of these ideas could be sustained and implemented by the local community themselves.

In addition, these projects could prove useful in community centres themselves and could provide a win–win scenario if they were well organised. For instance, these organisations are highly under-resourced, especially regarding skill, talents and time in the areas of business and community development. Developing these organisations requires an injection of time, focus and skills to overcome problems in the early stages of development that are often so hard to defeat. Improved co-ordination of six-month placements could provide a substantial input to be handed over to the next round of students on placement. This injection of skills and time could prove useful in assisting the committee and coordinator to achieve development outcomes.

**Social Planning on the Planning Agenda.** However, while integration is important, social planners and community development workers need to recognise the OD and human resource professions are facing similar challenges. Raising awareness of the strategic benefits of social (human) aspects of the organisation to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage will increase the importance of planners and
community development workers in organisations. They need to find ways to do the same thing, by identifying the strategic benefits of this type of practice. This may often involve human resource and OD professionals undertaking additional training, through less-fragmented business programs, such as the Masters in Business Administration, to increase their knowledge and understanding of organisational strategy. Community development professionals need to consider acquiring a range of skills that will help them to operate strategically beyond their traditional social science backgrounds. However, the challenge is whether the industry can appropriately recognise and reward these skills, especially in organisations in the community sector, like community centres.

**Why Do Strategies Fail?** Broadening the knowledge or expanding the understanding of students on different perspectives should be underpinned by a holistic view of sustainable development. This includes developing a good understanding of strategy development and implementation. In particular, understanding why strategies (or plans) fail is important to any type of development initiative in communities or organisations. This highlights the importance of embedding projects at the local level so as to improve chances of sustaining these efforts beyond their involvement.

**It Comes Down to Business.** ABCD and OD require business skills with an entrepreneurial mindset when they are applied to a small business like a community centre. These skills are often not part of social service training, neither are they necessarily available on committees, although members are expected to lead and guide the organisational system, including its business operations. They are essential if the organisation is to truly prepare for further growth and development as a result of its role in community-wide ABCD practice.

**Time for Committee’s Development.** The major issue around the skills of committee members, is the time for such development to take place. New methods of learning and education to address these issues of time and convenience are needed. Members’ motivation to undergo training also needs consideration and incentives for doing so need to be understood. For example, several committee members had children who would have to go into care if they attended training. Night meetings were often worked around family commitments, or committees would go to different people’s houses to alleviate baby-sitting problems. All these factors require time and
coordination. Time, more than willingness to be educated, would prove to be the more challenging element in educating the committee.

Such education requires more learning based on application for social change. Research on ABCD and the development of community organisations is still in its early days. If requires greater focus and input, especially when seeking sustainable community development. Our implications and recommendations for social change research are as follows:

- Practical in-field scenarios should be considered where students are expected to develop plans with limited funding (if any they have funding at all) through an ABCD perspective in a way that can be applied to a local planning or community development context. The implementation of such plans into the local community should be taken into account. This could entail a pilot program to include business and social services students, which focuses on developing a community centre for a broader community development role, underpinned by ABCD.

- Social planners should ensure they are well versed in other areas to show that they have the strategic capacity to influence outcomes. This could include real-life scenario-building exercises that focus on understanding change, strategy development and implementation, with a particularly emphasis on how and where local foundations can be created to sustain local development for successful implementation.

- Practical sites should be identified for the development, application and evaluation of students around a community-wide ABCD project, shifting students’ experiences from individual placements to the experience of community development at a broader scale.

- Learning programs that can assist develop committees in a way that takes into account their part-time status need to be established.

To be able to look at an organisation holistically, including its role within a broader community development context, requires different types of skills and training from
those traditionally acquired, to ensure that community organisations not only support community development initiatives in the future.

7.3.4. Research: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

DeVita and Fleming emphasise that the available research on social change does not go down to the level of the individual organisation and is mainly American in origin (2001, p. 12). Large cohort studies researching the impact of Australian community groups do not exist. Little research is directed towards finding solutions and mechanisms to support the community sector (Abbey et al., 2003, p. 12). Abbey notes that much research on community remains research about or on groups, rather than with or for them, when the groups themselves may have a say about what, how and why research is undertaken (Abbey et al., 2003). There is an urgent need for community groups themselves to take an active role in the research and evaluation process with those working to assist them.

Dick highlights a number of different reasons why researchers choose not to do an action research thesis, including the points that

• The change agent requires greater flexibility than offered in conventional research.

• This type of research often requires more work and time than conventional research projects.

• The library work is more demanding because the relevant literature is defined by the data collected and the interpretation of that data.

• The researcher is required to take on greater responsibility for the change outcome and is faced with a higher failure rate due to the inability to control the environment that the researcher is seeking to change.

• It can be risky to submit work using this method to examiners who do not support or understand the application of this method, including issues such as different analysis and writing approaches to positivist research practice. An action research thesis is traditionally longer than a conventional Ph.D. (Dick, 1993).
The experience of this researcher suggests that Dick is correct and that research focused on testing out social change is indeed difficult. The additional workload, in particular, led me to believe that the desire to create change must be greater than the need to fulfil the requirements of a Ph.D. thesis. This statement is based on the fact that it is difficult to contain the researcher’s change efforts to the research project only, suggesting that a greater commitment to achieving change must be a major driver in the process. The issue of the workload and additional tasks made it particularly difficult to decipher what would be included and what would be excluded from writing up the research.

In addition to the workload, the level of skill required to implement an action research project is important to undertaking an action research doctoral study. Action research is about experience and learning by doing and so experience and support in the field is important. However, while the heavy workload is challenging for students, they are also challenging for busy Ph.D. supervisors. This raises a key issue: where do people acquire these skills and how do we know we are performing them well in our own action research project? The lack of well-established action research projects or learning environments often results in what Dick (1993) describes as people who state they know what action research is but do not demonstrate this knowledge in practical ways. This was my personal experience during the doctoral study. For example, although I had implemented action research programs in an organisational context, I had not applied this practice in the context of doctoral research. At the end of the Ph.D. process, I still question how well I did with my chosen method, in light of not having received on-site mentoring during the process. Furthermore, most of the guides I used to help me understand and implement action research in a research context, are predominantly in texts. Although I attempted to attend a local association of action research practitioners, I found this distant mentoring approach problematic. Although I can assess where I went well and not so well, it would have been beneficial to have understood different approaches to different circumstances in a proactive way.

In addition to the lack of mentoring was the problem of active participation. As noted by Jain and Nagan (1991, p. 24), however much you attempt to make this process participatory, maintaining equity of ownership, power and influence is difficult. I
found it particularly difficult to know when to step up and get things done and when to sit back and see what happened. Part of the reason for this was that many of the committee members did not have the skill or the time to work on business activities. To address this, a chart listing the accountability and responsibility of each individual was developed. This was well received by committee members, however, the adoption and application of these roles by committee members is yet to be tested.

The drive to achieve a successful outcome can also adversely affect the action research process, if the researcher fails to relinquish control of the change process. We have to know the direction and the answers we are after; however, much of this is difficult to know within action research until you have understood the environment and the interests of the people you are working with. This is particularly daunting if the researcher is relatively new to research, action research or any other form of practice that may have provided some of the skills required to implement this method.

The key finding concerning action research or research underpinned by social change is that a great deal of flexibility and adaptability is required during the research process. The Ph.D. student needs to be confident. Existing approaches to supervision in action (change) research need to be reviewed and supervisory capacity in the field needs to be improved. This should include an induction focused on social change methodologies, followed by improved in-field mentoring. Together these could:

- Ensure that action research becomes a more legitimate and usable method, encouraging more doctoral research focused on social change;

- Redirect the student onto the correct path early in the process to avoid losing time from a lack of knowledge. This is particularly important, as you need to start to project early to have enough available time within the Ph.D. timeframes.

- Develop confidence and understanding in the student, who may encourage others to undertake social change research in the future;

While there are challenges to selecting this method, I still believe that my learning from these life experiences were invaluable. They helped tone down the perspectives
gained from research that are rhetorical and have not been applied in practise. It is easy to have an idea: it is always more difficult to implement it. Action research and other research methods focused on social change provide a platform to test out our ideas and to include other people’s realities in a way that can reshape and alter our own views, perspectives and biases.

7.4. FINAL REFLECTIONS

This thesis provides insights into the importance of building foundations in local communities to support comprehensive community initiatives, with a particular emphasis on applying an asset-based approach to development, at both an organisational and a community level. It highlights a potential change in the role of geographically focused community organisations such as community centres, to contribute to supporting and sustaining comprehensive community initiatives that contribute to sustainable development. The thesis clarified the importance of understanding why change projects need to consider community foundations to help improve the potential sustainability of project implementation. The notion of sustainability was focused on developing the ability to sustain efforts beyond the involvement of the external agent (i.e. community development worker or OD practitioner).

Although the study experienced many challenges, it also provided some early examples of potential longer-term foundations for community development in general, as a result of building the capacity of the community centre. While the current sustainability of the project (and organisations) may be in doubt, the recruitment of the new coordinator with experience with asset-based community development was a step towards the continuation of efforts beyond my involvement. However, her ability to sustain these efforts needs the ongoing support, input and action of the community committee, due to the resource-constrained nature of the organisation.

The asset-based approach to change proved to be a useful mindset to apply to both community development and organisational development initiatives. This organisation’s lack of financial resources made the process of development and
growth often seem insurmountable. However, looking beyond existing boundaries to a collaborative use of assets and strengths for the future development of the community, proved to be a positive influence in the change process and helped increase capacity building efforts during Cycle Three. This also helped to combat the issue of limited funding for building the capacity of these organisations so as to strengthen their role in community development. However, the piecemeal, needs-based nature of programs made change slow, as the operational realities with limited resources (namely, people) often diverted attention away from the broader purpose the organisation was trying to achieve.

The resource-constrained nature of the organisation resulted in marginalised participants and dysfunctional systems that inhibited development during the action research project. Some of the key barriers discussed in this thesis include:

- The limited funding (if any) for the internal development of these organisations to ensure they had the capacity to support external projects. Funding for projects tended to ignore many of the internal on-costs of developing and (more importantly) sustaining external projects.

- The difficult of finding funding for asset-based projects as organisations are rewarded on the basis of their needs. The external environment continues to reward piecemeal, needs-based solutions rather than encouraging holistic approaches to planning and development that can incorporate asset-based community development.

- Supporting both organisational and community development initiatives relies predominantly on people’s skills and time (i.e. the volunteer committee and coordinator). Acquiring the required skills, and more importantly, collective time for development and action proved to be the most difficult resource in this project. Furthermore, attracting and retaining committee members proved to be a challenge, as the Centre was not connected to other organisation in the area.

- The limited knowledge and understanding of strategy development and implementation in the leadership structure. The committee role is to lead and guide the organisation, but these committees are often not well equipped with the
skills (or the time) to develop holistic strategies, resulting in a focus on piecemeal program development. Furthermore, committee members did not have the time to develop these skills. While this did improve during the project, the level of understanding regarding strategy and implementation was still in its very early stages.

While there were barriers, a number of opportunities presented themselves to overcome some of these barriers. These include:

- The recruitment of a coordinator who was aware of and committed to the concept of asset-based community development and the development of the organisation to support this practice. This proved beneficial to sustaining development efforts beyond my involvement.

- Developing strategic intent and priorities, which helped to clarify the purpose, direction and focus of the organisation and eventually instilled greater confidence in decision-making and action in the committee.

- Clarity around direction and expectation, which improves the recruitment and selection of committee members over time. However, while it improved the induction of volunteers, require further implementation should take place to ascertain whether it eventually will improve the level of ownership and commitment required for implementing the development of the organisation.

- Leading by example against the odds, which can often entice government leaders and administrators to show an interest in the future development of such an organisation, especially if it shows that it is positioned in a comprehensive community initiative context to support global sustainable development.

Whether for a sustainable asset-based community development program or to improve contributions at the local level in general, the development of this community organisation demonstrated promising signs in the longer term. The new focus away from external, piecemeal projects where the organisation was trying to be all things to all people, towards a balanced approach to community development that could supported by the community centre, was a noteworthy shift. Understanding that the health and survival of the organisation required this balance was another
major step forward for this organisation. In addition, the recognition that the committee was best situated to take ownership and responsibility for considerable elements of the development also helped to improve the momentum of change in the organisation, although it was challenged by the turnover of committee members.

This organisational balance also helped reinforce the rationale for working with the Centre in the first place. Comprehensive community initiatives underpinned by an asset-based community development approach require significant coordination and administration, especially in preparing for community-wide initiatives. The community development worker needs to ensure that the community has the internal capacity to balance the external changes desired. This change is often not quick and requires ongoing monitoring, reflection and modification to adapt to the constantly changing landscape that is created as the planner learns more about the environment and the people who exist within it.

7.4.1. **Strengths and Weaknesses of the Research**

The research questions were limited to the early development of the organisation, due to practical constraints such as time and money. However, while these were constraints, they also provided some useful insight to how far the organisation could develop without any form of planned support through applying the asset-based approach.

Most of the strengths and weaknesses associated with the study are derived from the research approach discussed in Chapter 3. The challenge of openly ideological research was exactly as Lather (1986a) described it, like being between a rock and a hard place. Trying to understand where to step in and where to stand back proved extremely challenging, especially during the first cycle when others were standing back. It was not until the final coordinator joined the organisation that I was able to step back in my role as research participant, although continuing to make contributions through all three cycles.

At times, I became concerned about how much of my reality was being incorporated into the change process. This was sometimes difficult to avoid. To address this concern I gave participants several opportunities to comment about and make changes to my views. However, participants who showed interest in the project only
provided feedback. To alleviate any final concerns regarding my bias and personal perspective of the project, I asked two leading participants to read through important parts of the thesis to ensure that my perspective and my story was representative of their views. This was also helpful to gauge their responses and fill in any gaps that I may have not captured during the research process.

Another potential weakness of the research approach is that universal claims cannot be made about the study. However, action research studies can be a starting point for further research. To capture some of the common elements across these organisations, I attended other community organisations or spoke to other coordinators throughout the life of the project. These people who would often confirm the themes I arrived at. In particular, one site that was identified as a potential early model of business development provided many hours of useful validation of my findings.

7.4.2. Recommendations for Further Research

My results indicate that more research needs to be done in social change, community development and capacity building community organisations in Australia, with a particularly emphasis on the potential role of organisations such as community centres and their contributions to SCD. What follows provides some suggestions for future research identified as a result of this thesis.

Local Area Planning

Local area planning heavily influences sustainable community development. Further research in Australia needs to be carried out to understand the approach to planning in local communities and the true impact of change. Best practice examples, which involve longer-term implementation and involve community governance, also need to be considered. A greater application and understanding of comprehensive community initiatives and the application of an asset-based approach to community development requires further investigation.

Secondly, further research needs to be undertaken on the inclusion of Chapter 27 and 28 in Agenda 21. Examples need to be found where:
• local area planning has successfully incorporated all the areas identified in these chapters, including embedding the plan at the local level.

• the involvement and strengthening of community organisations is incorporated by applying an ABCD approach to the planning process.

Focusing on the totality of issues in a community is a complex task. Further research needs to be undertaken to determine where and how the pieces fit together to enable a better long-term process for change. Furthermore, the evaluation of integrated planning at the regional level and its impacts at the local level (i.e. whether this integration carried down to the local level), would provide an indication of the integrative success of the plan.

**Community Development**

Community development was chosen as the organisational development function in a community. The research supports the asset-based perspective to enhance change efforts within local communities and the community centre. However, this thesis deliberately did not focus on areas seen as traditional client communities (i.e. low socio-economic and rural areas). Research in Australian communities on comprehensive community initiatives and asset-based community development is still new and is limited by the need to learn as we go. A greater application of such research in Australia may improve the skills and knowledge of community development workers in this area in testing the potential of these projects.

Lastly, as this approach to community development is still in its infancy in Australia, further investigation on how and where local foundations (i.e. community centres) can be created to support and sustain change initiatives at the local level is required. A project which combines these two aspects would prove to be useful in informing local development efforts in Australia.

**Organisational Development of Community Organisations**

Geographically focused community organisations (like community centres) need to be significant reviewed and assessed on their purpose and potential to contribute to comprehensive community initiatives, particularly by revisiting Chapter 28 of Local Agenda 21.
More research needs to be undertaken on preparing organisations for development in an asset-based approach, with specific emphasis on improvements with government organisations, the organisations’ leadership capabilities and the changing structures of the organisation. Furthermore, a better understanding of the successful organisational development of small business through entrepreneurial practice and its potential application to community organisations, would also be useful.

Most importantly, this thesis suggests that there needs to be greater research on community and organisational change to determine what and where foundations are needed to ensure successful ABCD projects for SCD. One possibility is a larger research project that includes both foundation building in an organisation and a ABCD project, to take place over a five-year period. If the timeframe of the Ph.D. thesis can be addressed, potential assets and strengths in the community could be identified in such a way to allow for greater momentum and growth.

7.4.3. Closing Remarks

The challenge of developing community-based structures in urban and suburban areas is critical, as this is the context within which most Australians live (Ife, 1998, p. 115) Asset-based community development can be embedded in a community in a sustainable manner if the local foundations have been developed to support these initiatives. However, geographically based community organisations in Australia are not structured, skilled, equipped or funded to play this role and a significant review about the shift in the structural systems that reward needs-based practice is required.

The value placed on the contributions of these organisations is reflected in their lack of development and sense of purpose in the broader community context in Australia. Although funding was not available for the internal development of the community centre, an asset-based approach helped to develop the Centre. However, the sustainability of this development, although partly addressed by the recruitment of a new coordinator with some experience in this area, proved volatile in light of volunteer issues experienced during the project. Collective time and skills to develop the organisation were the most important, yet most challenging resource needed in this project. This thesis has suggested that such organisations have the potential to
sustain community development efforts and contribute to broader local area planning for sustainable development.
REFERENCE LIST


APPENDICES
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix 1</th>
<th>International History of Sustainable Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2</td>
<td>Interview Questions – Cycle One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3</td>
<td>Bus Trip Agenda and Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4</td>
<td>Data Log</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 5</td>
<td>Ethics Approval – Informed Consent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 6</td>
<td>Community Centre Audit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 7</td>
<td>Organisational Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 8</td>
<td>Agenda for Workshop 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 9</td>
<td>Agenda for Workshop 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 10</td>
<td>Memo (December): Information for Strategic Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 11</td>
<td>Example of Old and New Brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 12</td>
<td>Example of Staff Update</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 13</td>
<td>New (Draft) Strategic Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 14</td>
<td>New (Draft) Marketing Plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX 1 – History of SD

**Summary history of Sustainable Development – International Level** *(Adapted from Sustain-Ed, 2003, p1)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>The Stockholm Declaration</td>
<td>United Nations Conference on the Human Environment</td>
<td>1st major meeting looking at impact of human activity on the environment. Problems highlighted: pollution, destruction of resources, damage to environment, danger to species, enhancing human social well-being.</td>
<td>(a) Acknowledged need for countries to improve living standards of their population &lt;br&gt;(b) 26 principles developed to ensure development is sustainable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Rio Earth Summit</td>
<td>First International Earth Summit</td>
<td>100 countries. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Addressed urgent problems of environmental protection, social and economic development</td>
<td>Several major agreements made: &lt;br&gt;(1) The convention on Climate Change &lt;br&gt;(2) The Convention on Biological Diversity &lt;br&gt;(3) The Rio Declaration and the Forest Principles &lt;br&gt;(4) Agenda 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Agenda 21</td>
<td>Rio Earth Summit</td>
<td>Proposes that poverty can be reduced by giving people access to resources they need to support themselves. Developed nations committed to assist other countries and minimise environmental impact while increasing economic growth.</td>
<td>Commitment to: &lt;br&gt;(a) Reduce pollution, emissions and use of precious natural resources. &lt;br&gt;(b) Government lead change, but emphasis on broader participation. &lt;br&gt;(c.) Local action lead to solutions for global problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Kyoto Climate Change Protocol</td>
<td>Meeting in Kyoto, Japan</td>
<td>Problem of global warming. UK &amp; Germany only ones to reach reduced emission targets (set in 1990).</td>
<td>New agreement: Emissions of six major greenhouse gases must be reduced to below 1990 levels. To be evaluated in 2008 and 20012.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Rio +10</td>
<td>Johannesburg</td>
<td>Ten years after Rio Earth Summit Review of progress towards SD. Focused on poverty and access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Protests from environment groups on poor progress. Politicians highlighted shift from biodiversity and climate to poverty and poor living conditions.</td>
<td>Agreed aims: &lt;br&gt;(1) To reduce the number of people that are not connected to clean drinking water supplies from over 1 billion to 500 million by the year 2015. &lt;br&gt;(2) To have the number of people without sanitation to 1.2 billion. &lt;br&gt;(3) To increase the use of sustainable energy sources and restore depleted fish stocks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2 –Interview Questions (Cycle One)

INTERVIEWS – STAFF & COMMITTEE
WOOLLOOWIN COMMUNITY CENTRE

EXPLANATION

Provide the following overview at the beginning of each interview. This includes:

(a) My role on the committee and my research interests in the Centre.
(b) Collect ethics forms and address any questions participant may have.
(c) Provide an overview of the three key themes that will be covered in the interview.
(d) Outline additional activities that I will be undertaking to further understand the Centre (i.e. documentation retrieval, etc).
(e) Clarify that feedback from interviews and documentation will be provided in a small report that will be presented back to the group. This will include a synthesis of individual input, but will be presented in a way where individuals are not linked to their responses.

(1) PERSONAL

(a) What is your role at the centre?
(b) What does the role involve?
(c) What made you choose this centre?
(d) How long have you been with the centre?
(e) Are you from the area?
(f) What motivates you to work at the centre?
(g) Can you describe the people you work with at the centre? (ie members/non-members).
(h) What organisations and individuals do you currently work with to perform your role?
(i) Who would you consider important to work with in the future?
(j) Do you see an interest or capacity of members/stakeholders to volunteer time to help the community centre?
(k) How do you feel about having volunteers at the centre?

(2) COMMUNITY

(a) What is your perception of this community?
(b) Who is in it? What are some of the key issues? Etc
(c) What “assets” do you believe exist within the community that could be of interest to the Centre?
(d) How do you think this impacts the role of the Community Centre?
(e) Do you have any information on the community?

(3) COMMUNITY CENTRE

(a) What is the role of the community centre?
(b) What do you believe should be the two key priorities of the centre over the next year?
(c) Are we fulfilling this role adequately for the community?
(d) The strategic plan notes a “flexibility to change”. What changes would you NOT like to see happen at the Centre?
(e) What would you like the Centre to be/look like in the future (best case scenario)?
(f) If you were running the community centre what would you do?
(g) What is your expectations of the management committee and what role do you see them playing to:

1.1. make the Center a better place for the community and its members?
1.2. Make the Centre a better place for staff?

(4) COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

(a) What is your understanding of community development?
(b) How does it relate to the role of the Centre?
(c) How does it relate to your job?

THANK YOU
APPENDIX 3 - Bus Trip Agenda and Questions

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE/STAFF DEVELOPMENT MEETING
AGENDA – 30 AUGUST 2004

Everything is possible with dialogue and time.

SESSION THREE: ROAD TRIP

The purpose of this session is to:

1. Get a feel for the communities in which we work.
2. Explore potential assets that are available within the local area.
3. See where some of the organisations who work in our area.
4. Highlight any assets you might see that are not listed.
5. Make a list of those assets that we see and have fun coming up with ideas of how they could be used for the Centre to become a “community centre without walls”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.00pm</td>
<td>Set Up</td>
<td>Meet at the Centre Instructions given for the day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.10pm</td>
<td>Lutwyche/Windsor</td>
<td>Drive Past Points of Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.40pm</td>
<td>Clayfield/Albion</td>
<td>Drive Past Points of Interest Stop and Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10pm</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Mercy Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.30pm</td>
<td>Wooloowin/Kalinga</td>
<td>Drive Past Points of Interest Stop and Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.30pm</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Kalinga Bowls Club and Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.50pm</td>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td>Stop at Kalinga Bowls Club for a drink Talk about reflections of the trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00pm</td>
<td></td>
<td>Travel back to the Centre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MATERIALS TO HAND OUT

- Agenda
- Maps
- List of sites

HOMEWORK

- Ensure a summary of what was presented at the last meeting is provided.
- All staff asked to provide a summary of their reflections after the bus trip.
- All staff to provide suggestions for next session.
SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

For all of the assets you see on the tour today, it would be appreciated if you could list the name of the place down and answer some of the following questions.

1. Were you aware of this asset within the community?
2. If yes, what do you know about it? (i.e. has the community centre used it at any point, is there some history we should be aware of?)
3. Could this be a resource to the Centre?
4. If yes, can it enhance the possibilities of existing programs?
5. If yes, how could it be used to inform the idea of a “community centre without walls”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ideas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. YES/NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 16 |      | 1. YES/NO  
|    |      | 2.  
|    |      | 3. YES/NO  
|    |      | 4.  
|    |      | 5.  |
| 17 |      | 1. YES/NO  
|    |      | 2.  
|    |      | 3. YES/NO  
|    |      | 4.  
|    |      | 5.  |
| 18 |      | 1. YES/NO  
|    |      | 2.  
|    |      | 3. YES/NO  
|    |      | 4.  
|    |      | 5.  |
| 19 |      | 1. YES/NO  
|    |      | 2.  
|    |      | 3. YES/NO  
|    |      | 4.  
|    |      | 5.  |
| 20 |      | 1. YES/NO  
|    |      | 2.  
|    |      | 3. YES/NO  
|    |      | 4.  
|    |      | 5.  |

**REFLECTION**

Did you find the trip useful?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What did you learn from the trip?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Does it change your perspective in any way about how the Centre could operate in the future?


What are other things should we consider looking at to build from the assets and the strengths of the community?
APPENDIX 4 – Data Log

NB: The majority of emails to the Committee are also sent to the Coordinator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TYPE OF DATA</th>
<th>REFERS TO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every Month</td>
<td>Minutes of Committee Meeting</td>
<td>A meeting was held every month and continued to inform meetings. Minutes for extraordinary meetings are noted. Example is provided within the data folder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/02/03</td>
<td>Reflective Journal</td>
<td>Outlining concerns about finding a topic and having answers to people’s questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/03/03</td>
<td>Meeting Notes – BCC CD</td>
<td>Informal meeting with CD worker from local council. Highlighted the lack of focus on CD and the lack of integration across the different areas of planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/03/03</td>
<td>Meeting notes – Nundah Co-op</td>
<td>Outlining the complexity of social tendering and local change. Highlights the complexity of dealing with governments with social enterprises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/04/03</td>
<td>Fax to Management Committee **</td>
<td>Fax from the President reminding the committee about the up and coming meeting and questions to consider regarding the future of the Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/05/03</td>
<td>Position Description - Redland Shire Council ***</td>
<td>Manager Community and Social Planning $100,000 package. Position Description attached.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/08/03</td>
<td>Agenda of meeting with State Member</td>
<td>Example of discussions and trying to find a potential topic in the local area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/08/03</td>
<td>Meeting Notes – State Member</td>
<td>Outlining how it was refreshing to have somebody come to her with ideas rather than complaints.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/08/03</td>
<td>Meeting Notes - President</td>
<td>Meeting about joining the Committee and highlighted disappointment in Coordinator not informing her of my interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/09/03</td>
<td>Observation notes – AGM 03 **</td>
<td>Provides observation of first AGM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/09/03</td>
<td>Agenda for meeting with Locum Coordinator</td>
<td>Outlines agenda of early meetings as well as many questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/09/03</td>
<td>Letter from President</td>
<td>Welcoming me to the committee and outlining the next meeting and committee contacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/09/03</td>
<td>Email to Julian</td>
<td>Follow up from meeting. Outlined my discussions regarding the strategic plan, and operational plan. Asked him to read through my notes on the plans and see what his feedback was. Trying to work out the best way to work in the Centre as Secretary and researcher and asking for guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/09/03</td>
<td>Email to President</td>
<td>Email of thanks. Provided an update on meetings with coordinator and outline of who I am for the Committee report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/09/03</td>
<td>Telephone notes – BCC Urban Planning</td>
<td>Outlined that there is limited plans to develop a local area planning in the area, highlight the council’s key focus on physical infrastructure rather than community development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/09/03</td>
<td>Email to State Member and Coordinator **</td>
<td>Confirming what was discussed about a community centre of the future based on SCD. Demonstrated approach to clarification of meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/09/03</td>
<td>Agenda for meeting with State member and Locum</td>
<td>Outlined what would be discussed before meeting with BCC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>TYPE OF DATA</td>
<td>REFERS TO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/09/03</td>
<td>Agenda for meeting with BCC</td>
<td>Coordinator Brisbane City Council Agenda discussing potential future project with the local community centre. Was given very little support, pat on the back and then sent off on my way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/09/03</td>
<td>Briefing Note for BCC Meeting</td>
<td>Example of where we was required to try and say what I was going to do before working with the site. This changed significantly once joining the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/09/03</td>
<td>Letter from State Member</td>
<td>Invitation to attend an information session by Mr Dan Hanson on Social Philanthropy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/10/03</td>
<td>Email from Locum Coordinator</td>
<td>Response to question about networking meeting. My expectations of the meeting at the outset was to simply gather people from the immediate area and check out the lie of the land….I think I am less focussed on some action outcome and more focussed on keeping the discussion happening about what is happening for people and what the purpose and vision of the group could grow to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/10/03</td>
<td>Email to Locum Coordinator</td>
<td>Outlining initial thoughts and asking for his feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/10/03</td>
<td>Email to Locum</td>
<td>Providing outline of advice provided by supervisor regarding community development and ABCD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/10/03</td>
<td>Email to State Member</td>
<td>Follow up to advise where my thinking currently was travelling since meeting with the community centre. Showed the development in my thinking towards ABCD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27/10/03</td>
<td>Observation Notes – Mgt Meeting **</td>
<td>Observations from first management meeting including relationships and tensions. Key questions raised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/10/03</td>
<td>Reflective Journal</td>
<td>Who are the best people best positioned to progress the project? How will we work together? How can activities be incorporated into current practice without adversely affecting current constraints? How can I shift the emphasis away from the project being the researcher’s responsibility, to joint decision making and development?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/11/03</td>
<td>Email to Locum Coordinator</td>
<td>Confirming what was agreed at the meeting, regarding interviews and arranging interview times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/11/03</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator **</td>
<td>Outlining some early questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/11/03</td>
<td>Email from Locum Coordinator</td>
<td>Attachment showing the logo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/11/03</td>
<td>Email to Staff **</td>
<td>Thanking the staff for their time for interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/11/03</td>
<td>Documentation review notes</td>
<td>Noted key thoughts as reviewing the key documentation provided within the Centre, including the Strategic and Operational Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/12/03</td>
<td>Email from Locum Coordinator</td>
<td>Attached outline of meeting with other community organisation developing network meetings. Outcome was barefoot bowls not organised by the Coordinator but the other partner. Coordinator took credit for the work at the Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/12/03</td>
<td>Email to University Student</td>
<td>List of activities and tasks that could be undertaken as part of the volunteer work at the Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/01/04</td>
<td>Email from Our Community.Com representative ***</td>
<td>Example of the fact they could find no funding available for the internal development of community organisations. Exception was for technology funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/01/04</td>
<td>Email from Our Community.Com representative</td>
<td>Example of grants available for developing partnerships. The Centre did not fit into any of these areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/01/04</td>
<td>Email of Position Description -</td>
<td>Position description for Coordinator Position in outer city development. Offering $100,000 package.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>TYPE OF DATA</td>
<td>REFERS TO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/02/04</td>
<td>Observation Notes – Community Centres</td>
<td>Notes taken on a visit to two community centres considered successful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/03/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Rough minutes from meeting regarding Community Education. Really only came up with a list, but never progressed further than this discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/03/04</td>
<td>Email from Locum Coordinator to Committee **</td>
<td>Advising we had received approval for 50 free trees (after a letter I had sent to Council). Example of an array of available resources. Key problem became a plan to actually pick them up and plant them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/03/04</td>
<td>Email to Committee from Locum Coordinator **</td>
<td>Attaches a diagram of organisational development that needed to be done. He also attached the outline of governance information from Our Community Com (sent to him by me) as well as the Community Manifesto (sent by me).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/04/04</td>
<td>Email to Locum Committee</td>
<td>Email outlining actions undertaken to try and gain Family Hub funding. Example of working with staff to develop submission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/04/04</td>
<td>Letter from President</td>
<td>Advising of past Coordinator’s resignation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/04/04</td>
<td>Email from Admin Officer</td>
<td>Outlining legal status and funding arrangements to assist fill in information for grants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/04/04</td>
<td>Email from Locum Coordinator **</td>
<td>Outlined target group, overall aims and goals (taken from the plan) and project partners (very few outside of the Centre). The Locum Coordinator had been retained to work on the Family Hub grant with staff. The result of the work was unplanned and did little to answer the questions on the actual grant sheet. Example of lack of preparation and “fuzzy” submissions that were put forward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/04/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Noting receipt of email and meeting time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27/04/04</td>
<td>Letter from Family Support Worker **</td>
<td>Letter highlighting the wish to maintain the existing role and hours. Raises concerns regarding a flat structure (not really discussed) and concerns over restructuring without a Coordinator. More interestingly:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/04/04</td>
<td>Project Profile Sheet</td>
<td>Project profile sheet for the project by the TAFE Student on the Foodbank. Had already advised what they were going to do before speaking to the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/04/04</td>
<td>Email from TAFE Student</td>
<td>Provided survey questions for the project she wanted to undertake regarding FoodBank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/04/04</td>
<td>Report from Student re Foodbank **</td>
<td>Example of the Centre driving a project regarding a foodbank without any clarity around need. This was to satisfy a TAFE project requirement and must have been aligned around “needs”. The Centre would be left with the outcomes of the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/05/04</td>
<td>Email to Committee</td>
<td>Example regarding the need to send all information as much as possible and highlighting the shift to email in the Secretary position. Only way people can receive timely information and stay up to date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/05/04</td>
<td>Email from Admin to Committee</td>
<td>Informing of a meeting for the new service agreements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/05/04</td>
<td>Email to Committee</td>
<td>Changing times and highlighting the need to meet regarding filling the Coordinator position. Several more emails were sent trying to negotiate times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/05/04</td>
<td>Team Meeting Minutes **</td>
<td>Extra ordinary team meeting where President and myself attended due to no Coordinator being employed at this time. Highlighted issues around resignation of Coordinator and other key issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>TYPE OF DATA</td>
<td>REFS TO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/05/04</td>
<td>Email to Red Hill Paddington</td>
<td>Trying to arrange a time for some staff and committee members to come to the Centre and learn about what they do. (This did not occur, and only happened with the new Coordinator).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/05/04</td>
<td>Email from Education Officer</td>
<td>Trying to reschedule meeting by 1 to 2 weeks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/06/04</td>
<td>Email to Committee</td>
<td>Shows support for committee member going through a very difficult personal time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/06/04</td>
<td>Email from VP</td>
<td>Response to email and funny attachment about “how to stay awake at meetings”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/06/04</td>
<td>Email from VP **</td>
<td>Meeting with admin officer to try and work on changes to the role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/06/04</td>
<td>Email to Committee</td>
<td>Highlighting the staff update that was developed to communicate with staff.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CYCLE TWO**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TYPE OF DATA</th>
<th>REFS TO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every Month</td>
<td>Minutes of Committee Meeting</td>
<td>A meeting was held every month and continued to inform meetings. Minutes for extraordinary meetings are noted. Example is provided within the data folder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/06/04</td>
<td>Email from Treasurer</td>
<td>Advising she would not be available for meeting on the usual scheduled night of the Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/06/04</td>
<td>Email from President</td>
<td>Happy with the staff update to go out to staff (new communication initiative).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/06/04</td>
<td>Email from Treasurer **</td>
<td>Example of not wanting to attend and highlighting feelings of being left out due to work by President and myself. This committee member was consistently invited to be involved but resisted and rejected all offers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/06/04</td>
<td>Phone call to Treasurer</td>
<td>To try and settle things down and convince her not to resign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/06/04</td>
<td>Email from Treasurer</td>
<td>Example of difficulty of working with different volunteer staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/06/04</td>
<td>Email to Treasurer (cc’ed Committee)</td>
<td>Trying to outline what had occurred highlighting the games being played. Specifically highlighting the “shift in blame”. Explained session with staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/06/04</td>
<td>Email From Treasurer</td>
<td>More email about times and trying to make one conducive to everybody. Also another example of poor communication skills from staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/06/04</td>
<td>Email to Treasurer</td>
<td>More of issues around getting the treasurer involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/06/04</td>
<td>Meeting Notes – Committee Meeting</td>
<td>Outlined some of the ideas that were suggested to start the OD process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/06/04</td>
<td>Email to Committee **</td>
<td>Example of follow up regarding discussion regarding future development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/06/04</td>
<td>Email and Attachment from President</td>
<td>Questions for the Coordinator position reflecting the shift in thinking and direction for the Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/06/04</td>
<td>Email to BCC CD worker</td>
<td>Thanking them for their assistance with selecting the Coordinator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/06/04</td>
<td>Email from BCC CD worker</td>
<td>Assistance with the recruitment of the Coordinator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/06/04</td>
<td>Email from Admin Officer</td>
<td>Example of trying to organise times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/06/04</td>
<td>Email to Admin Officer and President</td>
<td>Example of frustration regarding times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/06/04</td>
<td>Email from Admin Officer**</td>
<td>Example of time issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I have checked with other staff who are here and their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>TYPE OF DATA</td>
<td>REFERS TO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>understanding of the discussion regarding planning meetings was that they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>were to get back to me with times that suited them asap…They did not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>think that the 28th was set in cement until this happened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This was provided days before the meeting was to take place. The time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>was actually set by the staff not the committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/06/04</td>
<td>Email from Education Officer *</td>
<td>Boundaries of the Centre and the need to link programs to a strategic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/06/04</td>
<td>Email from Admin Officer **</td>
<td>Another example of the frustration of poor communication in the Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The person emailing this sits next door to this staff member with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>overlapping time and did not mention the date nor did the Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>support worker follow up on parts of the meeting she had missed and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>read the minutes to confirm what information she did not have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/06/04</td>
<td>Email from Admin Officer</td>
<td>Assisting set up the materials required for the OD meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/06/04</td>
<td>Workshop Notes</td>
<td>Notes taken as a result of the first workshop “Informing the Vision”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/06/04</td>
<td>Email from VP **</td>
<td>Example of feedback from unprepared committee member. Nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>surprised me about the staff response…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/06/04</td>
<td>Email from Admin Officer ***</td>
<td>Positive feedback from a staff member who had been quite resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>earlier in the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/06/04</td>
<td>Email to Committee ***</td>
<td>Example of questions I would ask regarding development meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/07/04</td>
<td>Email from President **</td>
<td>Positive feedback regarding OD session from President. Example of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>responses not answering questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/07/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator to</td>
<td>Example of work done with local paper to try and get free editorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Committee members **</td>
<td>space. Would need to share with other Centres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/07/04</td>
<td>Email from Vice-President</td>
<td>Example of last minute cancellation of meeting (night before) as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>going to Cairns (knew a week before) and demonstrates lack of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>connectivity or understanding of the Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/07/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Reflections on meeting (and missing the first meeting).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/07/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator to</td>
<td>Outlining complexity of providing discounts or non-economic deals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Committee **</td>
<td>with regards to volunteering and use of services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/07/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator **</td>
<td>Example of community education program being identified as a potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>program for greater development and the complexity of developing this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>with the current person and current hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/07/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Highlights issues around name change and backing up the name change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>by connecting to people and spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/08/04</td>
<td>Email to Local Member</td>
<td>Follow up email after meeting with the local member. Summary provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of what we were seeking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/08/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator to</td>
<td>Examples of complexity of getting funding and the many different roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>garden volunteer and myself</td>
<td>that can be taken with funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/08/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Example of consistent programs occurring with technology in the Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/08/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Frustration at grant process and the potential that has not been</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tapped into yet, especially for community education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>TYPE OF DATA</td>
<td>REFERS TO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/08/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Example of coordination complexity and success with local asset. Just need to make sure that I keep a note of everything I need to get done in some sort of methodical process…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/08/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Ideas for improving volunteering in the Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/08/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator **</td>
<td>Example of LHC visiting other recommended site to learn about how to make the service viable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/08/04</td>
<td>Email to Federal, State and Local Member</td>
<td>Invitation to attend the AGM of the Community Centre. Update on recent changes. Request to also have the members provide a brief overview of their previous year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/08/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator **</td>
<td>Example of complexities of working in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/08/04</td>
<td>Email form Coordinator **</td>
<td>Example of problems getting projects up and running and dealing with government rules and regulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/08/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Fundraising opportunities for community organisations that take the centre away from core business (telephone book distribution for example).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/08/04</td>
<td>Brochure – Enhancing Community Assets</td>
<td>Outlines the ABCD talk by the founder of this process, Dr John (Jody) Kretmann. I attended this session and found that there was very little on actually understanding the Australian context of community organisations and the ABCD approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/08/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator to Committee **</td>
<td>Example of progress regarding development, especially use of the local paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/08/04</td>
<td>Email to Staff from Coordinator</td>
<td>Example of frustration with staff time management. Then has the “motivating” staff message to try and get feedback from the trip.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31/08/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Example of expanded thoughts about future potential outside the four walls of the Centre by considering community assets. Also highlights the issues within the staff group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/09/04</td>
<td>Email from President **</td>
<td>Example of concerns about developments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/09/04</td>
<td>President Report</td>
<td>Reflections and overview of the year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/09/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Example of difficulty of getting a quorum for AGM’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/09/04</td>
<td>Observation Notes</td>
<td>The President highlighted the fact that people are not interested in the administrative tasks in community organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/09/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator **</td>
<td>Discusses council letter requesting expressions of interest for community organisations to take over community facilities. (Community fought against use of facility for public use).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/09/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator **</td>
<td>Example of work being done with Bridgeworks and development activities that they could work on in the Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/09/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator **</td>
<td>Example of work on volunteer possibilities as well as assessing other community assets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/09/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Outiling volunteer interest and concerns with integrating with staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/09/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator **</td>
<td>Highlights participation in local event, examples of trying to develop future partnerships as well as example of resources we were able to get through the Bridgeworks program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/09/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Outlining examples of meeting contacts (Mercy) regarding the use of assets as well as volunteering and use of assets we had found (i.e. 22 seater bus).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/10/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Example of staff starting to take initiative with their own development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/10/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Outlining contacts for possible programs and concerns about attitude at the staff meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>TYPE OF DATA</td>
<td>REFERS TO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/10/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator to Committee **</td>
<td>Example of government not providing timely advice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/10/04</td>
<td>Email to State Member ** (asset)</td>
<td>Email requesting information about local theatre props and finding a location for theatre props that were to be thrown out by developers. These were eventually provided to the local high school theatre program with the assistance of local people to move the large props.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/10/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator **</td>
<td>Example of trying to get notes from bus trips from staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/10/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator **</td>
<td>Recognising available assets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/10/04</td>
<td>Email from President</td>
<td>Example of complexity of getting organised with new committee members. Also highlights basic business accountability problems, where the book keeper cannot sign cheques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/10/04</td>
<td>Email from State Member’s assistant **</td>
<td>Outlines the potential use of an unused asset at a train station for community activities, including theatre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/10/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator to President and me</td>
<td>Coordinator requesting to undertake training. Example of research that allowed for assessed training for $150 rather than $1000. (Time was more of an issue than cost).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/10/04</td>
<td>Email from President</td>
<td>Advising that she had located a lawyer to consult to the committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/10/04</td>
<td>Email from President</td>
<td>Email outlining meeting and requesting the committee read through information before the meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/11/04</td>
<td>Email from President</td>
<td>Email outlining change in approach to strategic planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/11/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Email highlighting staff issues about filling in the evaluation of the Coordinator because they felt that nothing was done with the Locum Coordinator.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** CYCLE THREE **

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TYPE OF DATA</th>
<th>REFERS TO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every Month</td>
<td>Minutes of Committee Meeting</td>
<td>A meeting was held every month and continued to inform meetings. Minutes for extraordinary meetings are noted. Example is provided within the data folder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/11/04</td>
<td>Email to Committee</td>
<td>Clarifying expectations of time to undertake strategic planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/11/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Talks about bus trip and change in price of local bus (asset discovered as part of asset audit). Highlighted how the change in charges have enabled the Centre to recoup funds to help promote more activities and cover postage in the new year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/11/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Highlights examples of how the group could be facilitated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/11/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Talks about ideas for the development of programs from the President and the family support area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/11/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Outlined follow up with volunteers and asking them to put forward their interests. Also highlights the development of a volunteer manual as developed at another Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/11/04</td>
<td>Strategic Planning Memorandum</td>
<td>Highlights reflections regarding Community Education and the need to improve the program to help strengthen the Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/11/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Examples of responses from volunteering brochure. Example of building from talents and interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/12/04</td>
<td>Submission for technology grant. **</td>
<td>“Enhancing Infrastructure to enable Virtual Community Hubs. Example of an outcome, where technology was identified as a key problem in the future development of the Centre. The</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>TYPE OF DATA</td>
<td>REFERS TO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/12/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Shift in one of the resistant staff members as a result of social Christmas occasion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/12/04</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Concern over issue of combining community centres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/01/05</td>
<td>Email form Coordinator to Committee **</td>
<td>Discusses the work on the new community education programs and the shift to charging for advertising in the calendar of events put in the newsletter to help strengthen the program and improve advertising capabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/01/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator to Committee</td>
<td>Example of notice for strategy planning meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/01/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Outlining lack of clarity around what a placement student would do. I suggested an asset inventory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31/01/05</td>
<td>Email to Committee from Coordinator and myself.</td>
<td>Due to rescheduling of strategic planning meeting, looking to change the normal committee meeting to include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/02/05</td>
<td>Email to Committee</td>
<td>Strategic Planning Meetings – Agenda provided outlining what will be covered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/02/05</td>
<td>Letter to Facilities Management Unit, Department of Child Safety **</td>
<td>Letter attempting to find out the current status of the lease with the Department for the Centre and the need to undergo changes to make the Centre accessible to people with disabilities. This was not responded to, until complaints were made and the response did not answer any of the questions highlighted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/02/05</td>
<td>Email to Communities representative</td>
<td>Email outlining the timeframes required to gain support for rental assistance for available site near the community centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/02/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator to Committee</td>
<td>Thanking committee for progress and informing of Education persons resignation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hi Everybody, thanks for a great meeting last night, we really seem to be powering ahead!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/02/05</td>
<td>Email from President</td>
<td>Presidents recognition of progress by Coordinator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/02/05</td>
<td>Email to Committee</td>
<td>Reflections on strategic planning meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/02/05</td>
<td>Email to Committee</td>
<td>Demonstrating frustration with getting basic administrative tasks organised with committee, including progressing strategic planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/02/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator **</td>
<td>Demonstrating the need to balance external work with internal development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/03/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Outlining contact from local council CD team in town to arrange a meeting at the New Farm Neighbourhood Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/03/05</td>
<td>Email from Secretary (05)</td>
<td>Email relinquishing responsibility of Secretary due to busy life. Further, I hope this is not too inconvenient but I feel the minute taking is just too much for me at this time so I will have to relinquish this job. My personal situation is that I have limited support and I have to rely on the same people to care for my boys when I’m committed to projects such as these. I am happy to be on the committee and help out where possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/03/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator **</td>
<td>Email outlining the session run by the local council with local community organisations, with relation to urban planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>TYPE OF DATA</td>
<td>REFERS TO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/04/05</td>
<td>Email from Family</td>
<td>Letter outlining concerns about moving office as part of the office redesign. The redesign was meant to factor in capacity for more revenue and streamline operations to maximise current capacity and space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support Worker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/04/2005</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Raises some small issues regarding the office move.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/04/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Outlining difficulty of getting cooperation and collaboration with one of the staff members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/04/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Talks about good to have smaller group on the Committee to get through things more efficiently. Also highlighted the need to stop and celebrate small wins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/04/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Example of committee member not performing basic administrative duties. Example of changes in Resource workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/04/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Example of changes in Departmental representative and lack of conclusion regarding Service Agreement for the Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/04/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Example of positive shift in staff interest in the development of the Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/04/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Outlines how Community education person threw out all the records required for reporting to the Department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/04/05</td>
<td>Phone Conversation</td>
<td>Outlined issues regarding the lack of respect received from the Community Resource Officer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with Coordinator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/04/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Discusses the requirement for resignation from two committee members due to their inability to coordinate forms and cards to allow the child care centre to continue operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/04/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Outlining the confusion and difficulty in getting advice regarding DGR status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/05/05</td>
<td>Committee Meeting Notes</td>
<td>The President highlighted the need to stay focused on strategic priorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/05/05</td>
<td>Email from Treasurer</td>
<td>Example of feelings of being left out. (President and I were doing so much because there was no Coordinator…the Treasurer was aware of this…didn’t know how to make her feel involved except to continually try to invite her in to help and have her say)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/05/2005</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Informing that the new technology has been installed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/05/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Informing the Committee regarding the Green Day participation and highlighting the lack of notice. We had only been given a couple of days notice so we weren’t feeling very well prepared. Also outlined new email addresses due to new technology set up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/05/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Letter informing of changes to LHC and positive responses received from users of the services. Talks about the Information night at the Centre to inform of changes and try to acquire interest in a separate committee for this service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/06/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Concerns about involvement of committee and staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/06/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Expression of frustration regarding finding committee members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/06/05</td>
<td>Email to Coordinator</td>
<td>Outlining community members interest in projects vs committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/07/05</td>
<td>Email from Admin Officer</td>
<td>Highlighting basic issues such as parking and disabled access. Highlights the fact that they were not interested in assisting with solutions and would require constant follow up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Officer **</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(He also noted it would get worse because another department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>TYPE OF DATA</td>
<td>REFERS TO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/07/2005</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>was taking this over and will use the site a lot more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/07/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Outline of concerns with current training called Developing strengths-Based Practice in an Organisational Context” Kyabra Community Association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/08/05</td>
<td>Committee Meeting Notes</td>
<td>Example of short notice of local events (opening new play area in park) run by local council. Advised 29/7 for 7/08/05.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/08/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Statement by Coordinator regarding not celebrating small achievements, such as the newsletter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/09/05</td>
<td>Email from Electorate Office</td>
<td>Engagement of a local person to undertake community education position. Demonstrated flexibility and interest in expanding project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/09/04</td>
<td>Letter from State Member</td>
<td>State member’s assistance to start discussions regarding the transport orientated development at a local train station that includes the Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/09/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Example of ideas that pop up due to funding information but it does not link into any planned direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/09/2005</td>
<td>Reflective Journal</td>
<td>Question posed to the group regarding implementation concerns and the feeling of being overwhelmed by how much we wanted to achieve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/11/05</td>
<td>Airport Link Consultation Notes</td>
<td>Outlines Centre’s involvement with consultation and the challenge of integrating traffic and transport initiatives with local area planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/12/05</td>
<td>Email from Coordinator</td>
<td>Outlining meeting with local council and explaining their reaction to strategic thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/12/05</td>
<td>Email from Department of Child safety</td>
<td>Outlining the lack of historical information available on community centres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/12/05</td>
<td>Email – Department of Communities</td>
<td>Provided an attachment of community centres (or similar) within Queensland.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who is conducting the research?

**Senior Investigator**
- Name: John Fien
- School: RMIT
- Contact Phone: (07) 3875 6716
- Contact Email: john.fien@rmit.edu.au

**Senior Investigator**
- Name: Jenny Cameron
- School: School of Environmental Planning, Griffith University
- Contact Phone: (07) 375 7155
- Contact Email: Jenny.Cameron@griffith.edu.au

**Postgraduate**
- Name: Sharon Bryant
- School: RMIT
- Contact Phone: (07) 3315 0356
- Contact Email: mindstream@optusnet.com.au

Why is the research being conducted?

This research is being conducted:

> Identify and assess the factors that influence the journey a community organisation takes in transitioning from a needs based approach to an asset based approach to sustainable community development.

This research is being conducted to fulfil requirements for a PhD.

What you will be asked to do

You may be asked to be involved in one or all of the following activities as part of this process. This includes being requested to:

(a) Participate in interviews (phone, email, face-to-face).
(b) Participation in meetings and workshops with may include audio-visual recording.
(c) Participation in anonymous questionnaires or surveys.
(d) Validate my notes, minutes, observation and/or evaluation from the above activities.
(e) Analyse any final results of my findings within the PhD.
The basis by which participants will be selected or screened

People who represent both the Wooloowin Community Centre in various form and those who represent the organisations involved in the Community Centre network have been identified as the target group.

The expected benefits of the research

Some of the benefits of the research will include:

(a) A collective vision, plan and action towards initiating change for the community centre through community networks within the area and experience of what is involved in bringing about this change process within a community organisation.
(b) Build from the good work currently being undertaken by community organisations with a particular focus on sustainable community development.
(c) Benefits to disadvantaged community members as a result of collective action by representatives of organisations who work with this target group.

Risks to you

I have attempted to minimise any risks to you by ensuring you are offered and encouraged to review my notes and perspectives of our meetings, interviews, etc and to provide feedback on issues such as:

(a) What you believe should be included or excluded.
(b) Requesting any additional information that you believe has been omitted which would change the context of your perspective.
(c) A final review of my findings will also be offered through a presentation.

Further efforts to deal with privacy and confidentiality are provided in the next section.

Your confidentiality

Although identifiable data will be collected, participants will not be identifiable in any publications or reporting. Furthermore, to ensure privacy and confidentiality is maintained with regard to data that is collected, all information will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and then will be transferred to Griffith University for secure storage for a period of 5 years.

You have the right to choose not be recorded by tape recorder or video camera. Consent options are available with relation to the use of audio-visual recordings for individual and group session. If consent is not given to utilise these recordings, all recordings will be destroyed after the data has been transcribed by me for the purposes of the research.
As stated above, you have the right to choose to participate or not to participate in this study throughout the entire study (i.e. you are free to withdraw at any stage). In addition, you are assured that any decisions made by you during the research will in no way impact upon the relationship with the organisation you work for and with other organisations you will choose to work with.

Questions / further information
If you wish to ask further questions or clarify any issues regarding my research you are encouraged to contact me on the number provided on page one of this document.

The ethical conduct of this research
Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans. If potential participants have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project they should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3875 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Feedback to you
As highlighted earlier, due to the participatory nature of my research you will be encouraged to provide feedback on my notes, minutes and the findings of my research. If you believe you have not received this feedback, do not hesitate to contact me directly and I will ensure that I will rectify the situation immediately.

Thank You
I sincerely thank you for considering participation in this research and look forward to working with you in the future. Please note that if you do not consent to participate in the research, your honesty is also appreciated. Once again, if you have any concerns about my ethical approach to this research do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Kind Regards

Sharon Bryant
COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

Building Capacity within Community Organisations to Strengthen the Quest for Sustainable Community

CONSENT FORM

Researcher
Name:  Sharon Bryant
School:  RMIT (formerly Griffith University)
Contact Phone:  (07) 3315 0356
Contact Email:  mindstream@optusnet.com.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

☐ I understand that my involvement in this research will include (include a short summary of what their participation will involve – eg the completion of a set of four cognitive tests, on a weekly basis, for three weeks);

☐ I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;

☐ I understand the risks involved;

☐ I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research.

☐ I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary

☐ I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;

☐ I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;

☐ I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3875 5585 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and

☐ I agree to participate in the project.

Audio-Visual Recording

The following table lists items to consent to with relation to audio-visual recording. It would be appreciated if you could please initial those items that you agree with or give consent for:
(1) I consent to being recorded by tape-recorder during my involvement in the research.

(2) I consent to being recorded by a video-recorder during my involvement in the research.

(3) I understand and support that all recordings will be destroyed after their contents have been transcribed.

(4) I acknowledge that I will be asked later to consent to the use of audio-visual material involving me should the research team wish to use that material for purposes beyond the present research (e.g., in an educational documentary).

(5) I consent to participating in the project but do not consent to any audio-visual recordings.

(6) I consent to being involved in group sessions but request that further discussions are undertaken with me to ensure that the most appropriate methods to exclude me from the audio-visual recording is undertaken.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEMS OF CONSENT</th>
<th>INITIAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) I consent to being recorded by tape-recorder during my involvement in the research.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) I consent to being recorded by a video-recorder during my involvement in the research.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) I understand and support that all recordings will be destroyed after their contents have been transcribed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) I acknowledge that I will be asked later to consent to the use of audio-visual material involving me should the research team wish to use that material for purposes beyond the present research (e.g., in an educational documentary).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) I consent to participating in the project but do not consent to any audio-visual recordings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) I consent to being involved in group sessions but request that further discussions are undertaken with me to ensure that the most appropriate methods to exclude me from the audio-visual recording is undertaken.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Name

____________________________________________________

Signature

____________________________________________________

Date    /    /

______   ______   ______
APPENDIX 6

Community Centre Audit

(Attached)
# APPENDIX 6 – Community Centre Audit

**REPORT FOR COMMUNITY CENTRE**

**AUDIT OF COMMUNITY ASSETS**  
**SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW FINDINGS & DOCUMENTATION**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. **WHAT SORT OF COMMUNITY ARE WE?** ........................................1
2. **WHOM DO WE SERVICE** ...............................................................4
   2.1. Geographic boundaries of the community .....................................4
   2.2. Community History and Changing Priorities .................................4
   2.3. Key People and Leaders in the Community .................................5
   2.4. Issues of Most Concern to the Community .................................5
   2.5. Community Morale and Involvement Levels ...............................7
3. **WHO OR WHAT ELSE IS OF IMPORTANCE TO YOUR COMMUNITY?**  
   3.1. Stakeholders ..............................................................................9
   3.2. Organisations Currently Partnering with Centre .........................9
   3.3. Competition ...............................................................................9
   3.4. Community leaders ...................................................................10
   3.5. Gatekeepers ............................................................................10
   3.6. Philanthropic & Government Funding .......................................11
   3.7. What Other Not-for-profit Organisations Exist? .........................13
   3.8. Possible Private Sector Contacts in the Area ............................13
   3.9. What Media Sources Exist in the Area? ....................................13
4. **SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY CENTRE DOCUMENTATION** ..........14
5. **SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW FINDINGS** ........................................18
6. **CONCLUSION** ............................................................................24
**COMMUNITY ASSET AUDIT**

1. **What Sort of Community Are We?**

*What Sort of Community Are We?* Although it is proposed that this question needs to be answered by the wider community, the following section offers a snapshot of some of the perspectives identified from ABS data and summaries developed by Brisbane City Council on the Inner North-East Region of Brisbane.

It is difficult, in this case, to match the boundaries specified through ABS data based on suburbs versus what could be suggested as artificial boundaries that occur as a result of roads, various hubs, transport etc. Therefore, it is important to note that the information provided below incorporates the full areas of Clayfield and Albion, although only a portion of this area may be considered as being part of the “designated area”. Other areas which have not been included are Wavell Heights and Kedron, although these areas may need to be considered at later stages.

From the ABS data, the total number of residents living in the collection of suburbs is approximately 19,601 people. The following table provides the population profile of these suburbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Profile (numbers)</th>
<th>Estimated resident population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alton</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clayfield</td>
<td>1,399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutwyche</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooloowin</td>
<td>984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regardless of the population within the area, it could be confidently stated that the community the Centre is seeking to work “with” includes over 15,000 people within the inner north-east region of Brisbane, of which over 5,500 live within the suburb of Wooloowin, where the Community Centre is currently located.

The designated area is predominantly made up of young couples (median age 34) with a relatively even split between couples with families (with young children).
and couples without. One exception identified was the Wooloowin area, which possesses more couples with families (young children) than any other area within Brisbane's Inner North-East. The table below provide a more visual snapshot of family types:

![Family types, Inner North East Region](chart1)

Although seniors make up over one quarter (1/4) of the population, this appears to be declining, (especially over 65 age group). Furthermore, a high level (75%) of the adult population are working (refer to marketing plan). A clearer snapshot of population changes is provided in the following graph:

![Population change, 1996 to 2001, Inner North East Region](chart2)
Other overall trends within the Inner North-East Region of Brisbane which may be of interest to the Community Centre is provided in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Houses v Units</th>
<th>70% vs 30%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Unemployment</td>
<td>14% (8% higher than general population of the region).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak another language</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated or divorced</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>2385 people of all age groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Education & Qualifications**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualified people</th>
<th>High proportion 1943 people did study in society and culture 2316 people did study in business.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currently studying</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Attendance</td>
<td>50% Public 50% Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left school between ages of 15-16</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information specifically highlighted regarding specific suburbs includes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albion</td>
<td>Over 10% group households Over 50% couples without children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutwyche</td>
<td>Lowest proportion of young people (12.5%) Highest proportion of ‘working age’ (75.1%) (15-64) Lowest proportions of family households Over 10% group households. Relatively even number of couples with and without children. Highest area of one parent families within the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooloowin</td>
<td>Highest proportion of young people (17.9%) Higher proportion of couples with children (predominantly young).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was little information provided on Clayfield and some of the other core suburbs within the designated area, although some of the information specified within Wooloowin, may also be applicable within the Wooloowin side of Clayfield.
All of the insights provide examples of both needs and strengths within the local designated area. One example includes addressing youth unemployment through innovative programs that enlist qualified people within the area for mentoring and education.

The following section seeks to further enhance our knowledge of the designated area and further refine what this could mean for the future strategic choices of the Wooloowin Community Centre.

Reference: The tables provided in this section can be located at
http://wic001lc.server-web.com/statistical_portrait/inner_north_east/population_growth/
2. Whom Do We Service

2.1. Geographic boundaries of the community

(1) **Local Area Plan:** Boundaries of Kalinga Park, Sandgate Rd, Northern end of Albion, Lutwyche Rd, southern end of Kedron.

(2) **Electorate Boundary:** This includes the suburbs of Albion, Hamilton, Ascot, Clayfield, Wooloowin, Hendra and Pinkenbah, as well as parts of Nundah and Wavell Heights. The electorate includes Eagle Farm and Doomben racecourses, as well as Brisbane Airport and the industrial and port areas along the northern bank of the Brisbane River.

(3) **Community Centre Geographic Boundary:** This included the above areas as well as Alderly and Lutwyche

As a result of initial research findings, a review of the maps (discussed above) and input received from management and staff interviews, the “natural boundaries” for the Community Centre appear to be:

- Wooloowin
- Clayfield (Wooloowin side of Sandgate Road)
- Kalinga
- Lutwyche (Wooloowin side of Lutwyche Road)
- Kedron (Wooloowin side of Lutwyche Road)
- Wavell Heights

Although some members and committee members are from Nundah and Wavell Heights, this area would more likely be covered by the Nundah Community Centre. Some parts of Wavell Heights could be included depending on the “hubs” that may be identified by the Community Centre for community events.

**ACTION:** (We need to check map – take a digital photo of it to compare and insert a map for each, including the drawn boundaries for the proposed area we seek to work in).

2.2. Community History and Changing Priorities

Staff perception of the areas history mapped out a trend of families within the area that have now grown and moved, creating a significant elderly population.
Young families shifting back to these areas are slowly replacing this elderly population trend.

**Priorities and how they have changed over time.**

Within most Brisbane communities, there has been a clear shift from the “welfare state” of thinking to an individualist and money centred approach to community. Some argue that people want to feel more connected within their communities, but also highly regard their need for privacy.

Traditionally, the “hub” of the community was considered the church, but over the last 15-20 years, this trend has changed and new hubs or “no” hubs have been created to replace them.

For example, schools and children’s sporting clubs appear to play an important community building role for families with school age children, however for people with younger children or no children, there are limited activities in which to connect within this area. Shopping centres have also attempted to take on this role, with the growth in consumerism.

The area possess a great array of parks within some parts, and then little green space in others. The parks are still a usable hub, although there are more health and safety issues, especially with relation to children within these areas.

**2.3. Key People and Leaders in the Community**

Refer to Appendix One of this document

**2.4. Issues of Most Concern to the Community.**

*Issues identified by Government*

The only collection of community perspectives that has been able to be acquired (in a historical sense) is the Local Area Plan for the area of Clayfield (which included the designated area highlighted).
Within this plan, three key focuses have been identified as potential roles for the Community Centre in the future and should, at a minimum be considered as part of the strategic planning process. These include:

- Fostering better neighbourhoods and communities
- Promoting employment and economic development
- Protecting environmental quality.

After discussions with a senior planner, community development worker and senior officials within the Brisbane City Council, it became clear that the Local Area Plan is treated as, what was referred to one very senior official as, an “aspirational” document. This is further supported by the acknowledgement that, many/if not most of the 6 areas have been addressed over the last 6 years.

This is a problematic process implemented by the Council with relation to the behaviours and trends of the community and their participation practices. The communities efforts and timeframes to gain input from a wide spectrum of the community was not undertaken and there was community organisations and representatives did not view this process as an empowering process where they had some control and ownership with relation to implementing such a plan.

Regardless of this, it was considered worthwhile to highlight some of the ideas that were introduced within the Local Area Plan and consider these ideas with relation to the role and potential future strategies for the Community Centre. This plan did not emphasise community development as a priority and use the Community Centre and Shaw Sports as examples of this development happening.

In summary, some of these include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Area Plan</th>
<th>Relevance to Community Centre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish a community committee to focus on getting the community to do things together.</td>
<td>Could this be something that is created through a “volunteer” arrangement through restructuring the way the community centre operates. Could this gain greater funding to perform such a role with other community organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiate with local schools and community facilities to</td>
<td>An asset audit and community networking to better utilize these assets is a community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify assets that could be used for recreation, sport, etc by the broader community. (asset audit)</td>
<td>Development project that could receive funding and could be “owned” and/or housed by the Centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the integration and celebration of diverse, ethnic, social and cultural communities in the area.</td>
<td>The Centre’s strategic plan identifies festivals or events that should be undertaken. There is also interest in other community organisations to do the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote local employment opportunities</td>
<td>Community organisations around the world are gaining recognition for their creative socio-economic solutions to address local employment issues (in this case youth unemployment is significant compared to other parts of Brisbane).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the local community to protect the environment in particular, rehabilitate Kedron Brook</td>
<td>Partnerships and work with the Kedron Brook Catchment Group could lead to some innovative ideas that address social isolation and local employment opportunities and better inform residents about environmental care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan for better use and improvements to connected Parkways</td>
<td>Better usage of parks can link into linking people to people to green spaces in order to connect with the environment as well as reduce social isolation within the area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Issues identified by the Community Centre, Management Committee and Staff**

From the interviews it became apparent that the underlying issue in this community is social isolation. It was also mentioned on a number of occasions that there seems to be a number of disadvantaged people living in the area amongst a more affluent group. It was also suggested that there are a number of women in the area with young children who are looking for outlets and activities. Separation, divorce and widowhood were also issues raised as well as a fall in the number of elderly people.

Social isolation was also re-emphasised by a number of other community organisations who have been networking with the centre.

**2.5. Community Morale and Involvement Levels**

Citizen participation and involvement appears to be very low. This is due to three factors:

- there is no established process within the Centre, which was raised in most interviews with the staff.
• Staff are already pressed for time and resources delivering to the “service” requirements specified within grants, etc.

• Most of the “services” delivered are quite specialized or within very specific timeframes which may not match with the availability or strengths within the community.

Further exploration of volunteerism and projects within the Centre is recommended as a result of these findings.
3. Who or what else is of importance to your community?

3.1. Stakeholders

From the interviews it would seen that there is a limited number of members of the community centre (approximately 90). It is also apparent that the regular users and visitors of the centre are often not members of the Centre, including using services such as the limited hours childcare, counseling and training.

3.2. Organisations Currently Partnering with Centre

From the interviews it seems that there are a small number of organisations that have a connection with the Centre, these include:

- Wooloowin primary school,
- Auscare.
- WomenSpace.
- Catholic parish.
- Stafford and Nundah Community Centers.
- Disability Services Queensland.
- Brisbane City Council.
- Department of Families.
- Qbuild
- Contact House
- Project Circuit Breaker (young people)
- Child Health Service
- Parent Aid Unit

3.3. Competition

Other community centres and other organisations seeking funding for similar activities could be identified as competition, although, these community/neighbourhood centres should operate more in a collaborative model. Other child care centres, training courses, counseling services could also be
included, although the demand for some of these services potentially outweigh the need to compete.

3.4. Community leaders

The following table outlines the people in office at the three levels of government.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>In-Office</th>
<th>Opposing Parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>Wayne Swan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Liddy Clarke</td>
<td>Sally Hannah – Liberal Member for Clayfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Tim Nicholls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, collecting information about who is running for the various seats was incredibly difficult. There seemed to be little information given by the Australian Electoral Commission and the Brisbane City Council who both could not provide this information. This was primarily due to:

- Candidates not declaring they are running until the last minute.
- Unless they are high profile candidates, most do not have the funding to run for these positions until the election is called.

This highlights some of the problems within civil society and the voting process. Furthermore, this speaks to a potential role that the community centre and other organisations may play in ensuring the community is more informed about their choices in the future.

The parties’ official websites listed the candidates who already existed in office and despite searching through the sites a list of who was running against them could not be found.

An inquiry to the local newspaper also was uninformative in regard to who would be running in the next elections at all levels. We were informed that many candidates were still in the process of registering and therefore no official list was available yet.

3.5. Gatekeepers

Are there people or organisations that have traditionally limited and constrained the organisations and what behaviours do we need to be aware of.
3.6. Philanthropic & Government Funding

A great proportion of funding is focused on “projects” or external activities within communities, with minimal emphasis on funding for internal capacity building. This makes internal capacity building or organisational development difficult as a result of the need to get staff, committees and volunteers together at the same time to work together on the future of the Centre.

As part of our audit, we came across OurCommunity.com. This site appears to offer considerable information and assistance in the area of grants for community organisations. It is recommended further investigation is undertaken with relation to becoming a member of this group (free for the Centre), utilising some of their “how to” guides and purchasing a number of their services (such as Grants Aid).

OurCommunity.com have also provided some funds and websites that may be able to assist the centre with building capacity internally, these include:

- **Gambling Community Benefit Fund:** Max $30,000 To assist Qld Based community organisations to provide services and activities within their local communities.

- **Regional Partnerships:** Max $25,000 (but can get approval beyond this). May be worthwhile if we look at Eagle Junction. To work in partnership with communities, government and the private sector to foster the development of self-reliant communities and regions.

- **Community Assistance Initiative:** Microsoft software. To provide Microsoft software to assist with the operation of as many non-profit human service organisations throughout Australia as possible.

- **Community Skills Development Program in Information and Communication Technology (CSDP):** To enable community groups to provide on-site training for the organisation’s members to develop information and communications technology skills which will be useful for that organisation’s operations and possibly the wider community.
The following table provides some examples of grants that may be of interest and available to the Community Centre and other community organisation for projects within the area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEDERAL</th>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>LOCAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stronger Families and Communities</td>
<td>Arts Queensland (variety of Grants)</td>
<td>Active Brisbane City Grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festivals Australia</td>
<td>Dept of Employment &amp; Training</td>
<td>Local Arts, cultural and Festival Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Management Program</td>
<td>Adult Learners’ Week grants</td>
<td>Performing Arts Fellowships for Young Brisbane Artists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Corps</td>
<td>Community Employment Assistance Program</td>
<td>Community Development Assistance Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bushcare</td>
<td>Community Jobs Plan</td>
<td>Senior Citizens Funding Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Responsive Training Program</td>
<td>Local History Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Training Partnerships</td>
<td>Environmental Grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Youth Week grants</td>
<td>Community Support Funding Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Sector Employment Program</td>
<td>Private Boarding House Support Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skill centre grants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth participation grants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dept of Employment &amp; Training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funding for training organisations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adult Learners’ Week grants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apprenticeship and traineeship training (User Choice 2003-2004)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic Priority Purchasing Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth Access Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dept of Families (number of areas).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteer Queensland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the other projects that are currently occurring at the local level that could be considered includes:

- Artforce 2003
- Brisbane Communities Online
- Greening Brisbane Naturally
- Habitat Brisbane
- Living Villages (strengthening village development and community spirit)
- Waterways (Kedron Brook Catchment may have this).
Potential awards that could be considered in building capacity externally include the Prime Minister’s Awards for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships. Each winning partnership can be awarded $10,000 for their community partner. Grants are one source of resourcing, however, other means to resource activities should also be initially emphasized.

These grants are suggested in the context we consider building capacity and use these grants as potential ways to build relationships for community development purposes.

3.7. What Other Not-for-profit Organisations Exist?

Refer to audit in Appendix A

3.8. Possible Private Sector Contacts in the Area

Refer to audit in Appendix A.

3.9. What Media Sources Exist in the Area?

As a result of observations and comments received by staff, the Community Centre’s profile needs further attention. One source discussed was the North-West News. Some of the capacity building activities could link into how we improve our relationship with the media in order to raise the profile of the Centre as well as improve its relevance to the community.
4. Summary of Community Centre Documentation

The three plans that have been located as part of this audit includes:

- Strategic and Operational Plan
- Marketing Plan
- Other significant documentation

Many of the staff highlighted how strategic planning days are good, but the plan never seems to go anywhere. The length of these plans has resulted in them being disregarded by many participants during the year and potentially “clouding” the role and key priorities of the Centre.

The following table provides some insight into potential questions with regard to the strategic plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>My Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vision: Services and Education</td>
<td>This is not a vision and does not give a picture of the future direction of the Centre. Need to question what the future role of the community centre could or should be. It is recommended by practitioners that this should include members of the community, as well as staff to build ownership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to achieve the vision</td>
<td>Highlighted the need for strategic partnerships/networks. This is a crucial area identified within the literature and practice with relation to building social capital. We need to determine how to escalate and understand people’s needs while also building capacity to develop ideas that haven’t even been considered yet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission</td>
<td>Strong focus on supporting and enriching the community through education and services. In light of the interviews, the role of the Centre requires greater discussion, particularly with a wider group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of intent:</td>
<td>Support EEO and Innovation. Note that the first three programs are happening and really come under the banner of community development. Program four needs greater prioritization and should be highlighted as priority one as that is the vehicle that allows the community centre to realise its potential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>What behaviours support the values? Will they be espoused values? The area that I perceive will be most tested in a change process is the challenge to encourage and support participation. If the community centre can become confident in their capabilities and feel empowered to make the change they will obviously prove these values as being correct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td>A greater understanding of current and future stakeholders is required. This became very clear in the interview process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Program One:  
Family Support | This is operating well and appears to have a vision for building a support model through networks and building capacity. |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Program Two:  
Community Education | What does the community need?  
What are the future things that they might need to know but don’t realise it yet with relation to issues such as healthy and safe communities (and sustainable development)?  
How could other community organisations and members contribute?  
This area has significant potential within the Centre, but is obviously currently restricted by resourcing. |
| Program Three:  
Limited Hours Care | Need to understand the future needs to make this a leading centre in its area.  
Need to understand the constraints with regards to growth and how that could be managed by the centre to ensure a viable, safe and equitable service can be provided in the future. |
| Program Four:  
Community Development | It would be recommended that this section receives greater attention, especially in addressing an issue such as social isolation. This requires consideration of how to build social capital through networks and empowering citizens living within the area.  
A potential option is to come back to determining the future vision and actions for “what the community centre could be”, but looking at it with a different lens with a wide range of stakeholders.  
We need to define this with potential partners. |
| Program Five – Eight – Internal management issues | To ensure we can address these external concerns, considerable attention is required with relation to organizational development. It is difficult to build capacity externally without considering how we need to grow internally. This should be a lead priority, however external activities should be used to build relationships externally.  
How will there be financial growth of 20%?  
What submissions are being completed?  
This could be considered as part of Program Four.  

Two points of interest.  
There is a very strong internal focus in the plan (and I would perceive the centre itself). This needs much stronger emphasis on balancing this with the external as the balance of both is what will offer success.  
There is too much to do many of the staff. This may be contributing to the interview findings where there is a limited understanding of the Centre’s role, vision and key priorities for the year.  
The purpose for increasing formal membership is questioned at this point. It was highlighted in interviews that most people who access many of the services are not members. This is more about increasing our connections and relevance to the community, then the perspective on membership could be reviewed. |
| What other orgs want/need in the community. | There needs to be an understanding of what other organisations vision, needs and contributions could be towards defining the future of the Centre. This includes, government and non-government. |
What is the question

We need to determine – what are we going to speak to from a community development perspective: what questions need answering the most? What are the key priorities.

OPERATIONAL PLAN SUMMARY

As highlighted in the strategic plan, the following provides a brief review of the Operational Plan.

Goal 1.3 To Maintain Strong Networks with Local and Wider community

This would obviously be informed by a stronger community development strategy.

Education:

Great opportunity here: Research shows that 70% of what children learn is not in a formal school system. How can we speak to the other 70%?

PR

There is a strong focus on the PR side of things, but limited focus on what the community really wants. How much success has been achieved through past campaigns. Who actually has the time and resources to assist with this? Need to form a relationship with the local paper.

Marketing

Most staff discussed the Centre’s limited profile. A further exploration of how this could be improved through CD could be considered.

Child Care

Links to early childhood appear to be good, although mothers with young babies could be an opportunity for the Centre. What is clearly missing is a program for children and youth above this age group.

Maintain existing community development projects

What is the career transition pilot Friendship group (in progress) Festival and community Art Project? ESL with schools.

What is emerging from interviews and assessing the plan is the hours of the Centre and its ability to achieve some of the outcomes noted within the plan. Especially connecting with other community organisation and citizens.

The second question emerging from the review is, are we willing to review our vision, mission (role) and clarify two strategic outcomes that we could work on with stakeholders to connect with the society and increase our relevance.

The third question emerging is, what would have to be done internally to allow these priorities to be achieved and support the potential for growth of the Centre.
The community development program holds the most opportunity for change for the centre, however, it cannot be conducted in isolation of the organizational development strategy. The focus on community development projects, establishing links with local groups in the community, locating assets and addressing some of the issues within the area are all important considerations for the new year.

It is recommended that the staff and its stakeholders come up with its own list of questions about the future sustainability, vision, role and priorities for the year.
5. Summary of Interview Findings

Some of the core themes from the staff and management committee interviews are provided in a summary format below:

The Individual

This section sought to learn more about the staff members who make up the Centre, their involvement, motivations and choices to work at the Wooloowin Community Centre. Secondly, it seeks to determine whom staff are currently working with, who they think they should be working with in the future, the capacity of members and users of the Centre and gain some insight into volunteer views and practices within the Centre.

A summary of these findings is offered below:

- Staff employment ranges from 1 to 13 years.
- Only one staff member is from the local area, the majority of staff travel over 25 minutes per day to work at the Centre.
- There appears to be three distinct groups: Business Operations and Management (including Training), Family Support (counseling) and Limited Hours Childcare.
- Most staff chose to work at the Centre initially for the role and also due to their interest in community work.
- All staff noted how much they enjoyed working with other staff at the Centre, but most highlighted the unpleasantness of the physical environment.
- Resources are limited and demand is increasing in some areas of the Centre.
- Most staff work with non-members of the community centre including young families, over 60’s and a few women with school age children and a few unemployed members. The counselling is more diverse.
- Two categories of people access specific services such as counseling, these include disadvantaged (eg domestic violent, young children, etc) and life transition
- One staff member described the job as 40% relationship, 15% techniques and 35% networks. This may be an interesting balance to consider within the organisation development framework.
The issue of volunteers

- The Centre has had to turn volunteers and other services (like the Gordon Park respite) away because of either, no formal volunteer structure and the inability to service these groups.
- The majority of staff would not be open to volunteers working within the centre unless a more structured approach was put in place. Their experiences with volunteers, has resulted in a large drain of time and resources. As the Centre is currently structured, there would be limited opportunities to build from community strengths, apart from within the training portion. Volunteerism would need to be “project” based.
- The differing hours of operation of the Centre married to the demographic also makes it difficult for the management of volunteers.
- The majority of staff agreed that this should be project based and have an organised structure if volunteers are to work with the Centre.

The Community

The second set of questions focused on the community in which the Centre is located. It seeks to understand staff perceptions of the people, places and assets, community information available and how this impacts the role of the Community Centre.

Our Perceptions of People and Place

- The overriding issue within the area is perceived to be social isolation.
- Statements were made or implied that we do not know our community, but need to find ways together to reconnect with the community with an outreach model. This would involve linking into networks, finding community “seeds” and building from them.
- There was a greater “sense of community” for people who have been in this sector for a considerable period of time. This was often due to areas requiring development within the community from a clean slate. This no longer exists.
- The current perceptions were identified about the community include the area possessing greater affluence, an increase in young families, a large Italian community (COAZA). There is a shift from old to young. Aboriginal people were highlighted as a group to potentially work with in the future due to the history of the where the Centre is located. Also identified a great deal of people with skills and knowledge that could be tapped into.
• There are pockets of disadvantaged (ie six packs within the area), there is significant divorce, separation and domestic violence, custody issues, child behavioural issues. Financial insecurity is another.
• There was no sense of young people within the area.
• Women from interstate moved to the area.
• Large proportion of people work in the area but the Centre provides no services and flexibility for these people.

Our Perceptions of Assets
• Shopping centre (space, brochures, promotions, place for people to meet).
• Media such as the local paper.
• Kalinga and associated parkland
• Untapped potential for volunteers, particularly women.
• Most staff were unsure of who they would or should work with in the future.
  This links well with the issue of the need to better define the role of the Centre in the future.

Impact on Community Role
• One of the core issues identified by almost every staff member was the issue of social isolation. Other community groups the Co-ordinator has met with also raised this issue. Most staff believed that this was a key priority for the Centre to address.

Information available
• Strategic, Operational and Marketing Plan
• Community survey from the past
• Most staff agreed there was little data made available about the community.

The Community Centre

This section seeks to identify staff perception of the role, performance and key priorities for the next year. Furthermore, it seeks to understand the vision and ideas for improvement of the Centre and the staff’s flexibility to change, specifically asking what staff “would not” like to see at the Centre. Lastly, it seeks to understand staff perceptions and expectations of the management committee in their supporting role of the Centre.
Role and Performance

- It was clear from all of the interviews that the vision, mission and role of the community centre within the Community Centre is unclear. Furthermore, there has been little input from stakeholders within the community about this role. However, one staff member did speak to the Centre being a service provider and the community yeast (building capacity through connections).
- It is a place where you can build relationships although it is structured more about delivering services (probably due to funding) and staff interests.
- Most staff felt it should be a significant hub within the area, however, the venue was unattractive and limiting for development, although highly suitable for the Limited Hours Childcare, the service from which the Centre originated. If we were to move, it would need to consider public transport, be close to schools and maybe shopping centres.
- There is a perception that the Centre is only there for people at the lower end of the earning scale while another felt it was serving the higher end of the community.
- The community does not know if we are performing the role because the Centre is quite disconnected from the community. However, the staff do provide the highest level of service possible within their resource constraints.
- Some felt that the culture is focused on the “problem” and continue to pour cold water on good ideas. Many people at the centre are always looking at and supporting the limitation to development.

Key priorities over the next year include:
- Community development – improve connections with the community, (bring together the “haves” and “have-nots”).
- Develop a vision of the Centre, clarify our role within the community.
- Develop joint projects building on community strengths.
- Volunteer management.
- Putting more time and energy into people who are disadvantaged.
- Promotion of the Centre
- Build internal capacity to expand our external role and visability.
- Building networks with other community organisations.
- Some viewed the need to maintain the status quo until the Co-ordinator returned, while the majority of staff would like to see things begin because change takes a significant period of time.
Vision and Ideas for Improvement

- A community of workers and citizens that own their Community Centre.
- Vibrant and alive intersection points.
- Visual and identifiable events that lift the Centre’s profile.
- Move the centre to places that we can build our vision. Some staff would like to see the Centre move before it expanded.
- Good levels of communication
- Work hard to flatten structures – empower staff to work more horizontally than vertically.
- Developing ownership of the Centre with the community.
- Link between programs and projects.
- Build from what already exists, improve services and expand networks and projects.
- Restructuring how we work would be good.
- Community café’s and other projects
- We all put in an hour a week to help with the development.

Expectations of Management Committee

- Build relationships at an individual and group level with staff, members and users of the Centre.
- Learn and get involved with staff and open lines of communication to the management committee
- Increase membership/participation.
- Network with the community
- Don't be a management committee on paper.
- Make decisions in very informed ways.
- Work on projects together over a longer time period not just get together for ½ day to do strategic planning.

Would not like to see:

- Krusty management committee that micro manages.
- People not treated fairly.
- Would not like to see the Limited Hours Childcare closed down. (heart of the organisation).
- Wouldn't want family support to be disbanded.
**Our Understanding of Community Development**

This last section seeks to understand staff members knowledge of community development. It was clear from the interviews that the influence of the two key staff members who do possess a sound knowledge of this area have started to invite this perspective into people’s roles, however, the level of understanding of the potential of the Centre as a collective has not been addressed from a vision, mission and planning perspective. Of the few staff who were able to speak to this section they offered the following understanding of community development:

- To build from small relationships
- To try to continue to locate at the most local point
- To build relationships in all directions
- Always bring it back to the group
- Resolve conflict and use it as an opportunity to grow.

**Management Committee**

May need to come back with questions as had to rush these in the early stages however some of the key themes included:

- The majority of information collected from the management committee (minus Sharon who is conducting the interviews) is incorporated in the staff responses.
- The only additional item that is to be added is the risks the committee perceives, these include: managing the financial risks and increasing political and community support to maintain and grow the centre.

There was genuine interest in getting more involved in the Centre and working with staff to achieve this.
6. Conclusion

It is not the purpose of this report to provide recommendations but rather inform a potential group process about how we utilise this knowledge to build capacity within the organisation and the community. As this process seeks to be as participatory as possible, the next stages need to be defined by a wider group.

As highlighted within the ethics documentation provided to all staff, feedback with relation to the interpretation of data is welcome and encouraged.
APPENDIX 7 – Organisational Development Plan

PLAN OF ACTION FOR COMMUNITY CENTRE

Best of the past to take into the future.

Plan for the future:

(a) What is the latest information that we need to be across to inform our vision, direction, purpose and key challenges.
(b) Sharing and dialogue on this information.
(c) what that means for our future
(d) define the future role and purpose
(e) what does this mean for the centre
(f) strategies and tactics
(g) operationalisation of the plan
(h) follow up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Key Questions</th>
<th>Who Involved</th>
<th>Additional Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One – June</td>
<td>Broader context</td>
<td>What is sustainability and sustainable development?</td>
<td>Mgt Committee &amp; Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What are the leading issues within inner-urban communities (local and global)? (wider group).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What are the leading issues facing community organisations within Australia?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two – July</td>
<td>Community Development Audit Feedback</td>
<td>Overview of latest community development focus (and focus on delivery of services) for community health and safety. Go through key findings out of the Audit and add to these findings.</td>
<td>Mgt Committee &amp; Staff</td>
<td>management is about doing things right while leadership is about doing the right things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Governance and Structure</td>
<td>Assess the current approach to governance. Put in plan of action for change.</td>
<td>Mgt Committee</td>
<td>Research suggests that changes in governance provide the greatest leverage for transformation toward sustainability. Sustainable governance systems have five dominant characteristics: (See 3) How do we shift away from a patriarchal view of governance?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See (3)
| Three - August | Purpose and Vision | What is the purpose of our community organisation? What should we look like in the future? What would our org look like in a completely sustainable condition 5, 10 or 25 years in the future? How would we operate? What type of products/services would be on offer? How would we work with the community? What would employees say about our organisation? What would stakeholders say? | Mgt Committee & Staff and maybe wider stakeholder groups. | (Exemplary orgs are exceptionally clear about their purpose. Most fail because of this lack of clarity around purpose. Needs to be informed by a wider stakeholder group). Refer (1) descriptors of our role. Most orgs spend far too little time crafting clear visions. Usually this is the result of a poor understanding of what vision is. It’s not a mission statement or the hodgepodge of objectives, strategies and value statements. None of this clarifies the future direction or decision-making process of the enterprise. Refer to (2) |
| Four – September | Guiding principles and frameworks | What do we value in mgt committee and staff? How will we communicate internally and externally? Decision making principles and practices | Mgt Committee & Staff and maybe wider stakeholder groups. | Refer to (2) |
| Five – October | Strategies and Tactics | How sustainable are we now? How sustainable do we want to be in the future? How do we get there? How do we measure progress? | Mgt Committee & Staff and maybe wider stakeholder groups. | Refer to (2) |
| Six - November | Implementation and Action Plans | How will we implement our ideas? How will we measure what we are implementing? What process will we put in place to ensure we are working towards our common vision and goals? | To be developed and prepared for Jan/Feb | |
| Seven - January | Start implementing | Focus on community engagement. | Mgt Committee & Staff and maybe wider stakeholder groups. | |
Leading questions to ask:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Question</th>
<th>Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why do we exist?</td>
<td>Decide on your purpose and core values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are we striving to achieve</td>
<td>Create an inspiring vision of the ideal desired state of sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will we achieve our vision?</td>
<td>Develop operational and governance change strategies to achieve the ideal state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which actions will we take?</td>
<td>Identify the tactics used to implement the strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When, where, should the actions take place?</td>
<td>Describe the rationale and sequence of actions used to implement the tactics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From what will we learn?</td>
<td>Outline how the organisation or team will deepen its understanding of how to achieve its vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where will we make the new approach stick?</td>
<td>Depict how the new approach will be embedded in sustainable operations and policies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GOVERNANCE**

(f) They follow a vision and an inviolate set of principles focused on conserving the environmental and enhancing socioeconomic wellbeing.

(g) They continually produce and widely distribute information necessary for expanding the knowledge-base and measuring progress toward the core purposes.

(h) They engage all those affected by the activities of the organisation.

(i) They equitably share the resources and wealth generated by the organisation.

(j) They provide people with the freedom and authority to act within an agreed upon framework.

**STRUCTURAL ALIGNMENT**

(k) In what ways will the org need to be restructured to align itself with the operational and governance-change strategies?

(l) What is the most effective structure for getting the work done? As teams? Whole units/individually?

(m) What type of structure is best for enhancing individual, team and organisational learning?

(n) What types of reporting relationships are needed to ensure accountability?

(o) What type of physical layout of workspaces will best facilitate learning and implementation?

(p) What type of structure is needed to generate and share the info needed to enhance performance toward the visions and goals?

(q) What structure is needed to empower employees and stakeholders to participate in planning and decision-making?

(r) How will power and authority relationships change if the proposed restructuring were to occur?
SESSION ONE: INFORMING THE VISION

The purpose of this session is to:

1. Initiate learning and dialogue about the “purpose” of the Centre.
2. Build relationships within the team through gaining understanding of why we joined the Centre.
3. Introduce information that can help to inform the purpose of the Centre focusing on community strengths.
4. Share ideas about the purpose of the community centre.
5. Provide input for follow up sessions with the Centre.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Who</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.00pm – 4.10pm</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Pot-luck</td>
<td>Donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10pm-4.30pm</td>
<td>Open and Check In</td>
<td>Welcome, Overview of session, New Co-ordinator, Check-in – why we joined, Everything is possible with dialogue and time.</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.30pm-5.00pm</td>
<td>Some background</td>
<td>Feedback on Audit, Video on Strengths-based CD, Discussion on strengths vs needs, Short Discussion</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.00pm – 5.30pm</td>
<td>The Community Game</td>
<td>A card game that speaks to the purpose of the Centre in light of the earlier session.</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.30pm – 5.50pm</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Discuss card game and link to what this means for the Centre, Next Meeting – What to do?</td>
<td>Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.50pm</td>
<td>Thank you and Check-out</td>
<td>Go through future sessions proposed Check-out</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Small cards
- Butchers paper and pens
- Whiteboard (or similar)

HOMEWORK BEFORE THE MEETING

- Feedback on future proposed agenda items.
- Preparation for individual presentations on visions for sections.
- Offers for volunteers to prepare field trip with Kylie
APPENDIX 9 – Agenda Workshop Two

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE/STAFF DEVELOPMENT MEETING
PROPOSED AGENDA – 28 JUNE 2004

Everything is possible with dialogue and time.

SESSION TWO: INFORMING THE COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

The purpose of this session is to:

2. Presentation about the “visions” and their roles” within the Centre.
3. Provide input for follow up sessions with the Centre.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Who</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.00pm – 4.10pm</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Pot-luck&lt;br&gt;Could we have a few volunteers each time we meet to prepare some food.</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10pm - 4.20pm</td>
<td>Open and Check In</td>
<td>Welcome&lt;br&gt;Overview of session&lt;br&gt;Check-in – why we joined&lt;br&gt;New Co-ordinator – “Early Days”</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.20pm - 4.35pm</td>
<td>Staff presentations</td>
<td>Support Team</td>
<td>Admin Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.35pm – 4.50pm</td>
<td>Family Support:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Family Support Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.50pm – 5.05pm</td>
<td>Education:</td>
<td></td>
<td>Community Education Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.05pm – 5.20pm</td>
<td>LHC:</td>
<td></td>
<td>LHC Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.20pm – 5.35pm</td>
<td>Reflections</td>
<td>Comments and Ideas from Presentations.</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.50pm</td>
<td>Thank you and Check-out</td>
<td>Go through future sessions proposed Check-out</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MATERIALS REQUIRED
Whatever each person needs for their presentation.
Whiteboard (or similar)

HOMEWORK BEFORE THE MEETING
- Feedback on future proposed agenda items.
- Preparation for individual presentations on visions for sections.
Hi All,
In carrying out the strategic planning for the Centre, I thought it might be helpful to provide different information about the area and the developments of community centres within our region and an example overseas.

Please find attached the following information:

- **Pages 42 to 48 of the South East Queensland Draft Regional Plan**: I believe that this information is important to understand the State/Local government view on “stronger communities” to assist us strengthen our position and potential role in the future.

- **Northern News Survey Results October 28, 2004**: This provides information carried out within our area (and surrounding areas) by the local newspaper that helps highlight some of the views of people living within the area. Obviously this was an informal survey and the accuracy is questionable, however, it is still somewhat informative.

- **Northern News Article on growing population**: Information about Albion being targeted as an urban renewal zone.

- **Courier Mail Article entitled “Rejoin the Community”**: This provides the views of Hugh Mackay, a social researcher, and his views about community. It
think it is brief article that might help spark some thoughts about our role in the future.

- **North Lakes Times:** This information provides an example of the type of community centre that can be created through partnerships between business (in this case developers) and the government. While we are in a different type of category, partnerships with government and other organisations could provide potential scope for growth in the future. These should be used as examples of where investment is occurring in the outer suburbs where there is new urban design and limited funding within established urban areas.

- **Kyabracadabra:** This is an example of a very successful community centre on the South side of Brisbane that has worked from a asset-based approach to community development (i.e. building on the assets and strengths of their local community).

- **Riley Park Recreation Complex:** An example of a community centre in Vancouver Canada. This shows a mix of arts, recreation, education, etc.

I hope that this information provides you with some “food for thought” before our strategic planning session. Please feel free to send other information that you might feel is relevant before the planning evening.

Kind Regards

Sharon
mindstream@optusnet.com.au
Ph: 3315 0356
APPENDIX 11 – Example of Old and New Brand

New Brand & Name

Old Brand

Growing Together
APPENDIX 12 – Example of Staff Update

Wooloowin Community Centre

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE – MARCH 2004

To improve communication within the Centre between the Committee and Staff we will update you monthly information.

Rosie’s Return
The “big question” on everybody’s lips is “when is the past Coordinator coming back?”. The President has followed up with the past Coordinator and has confirmed her return for mid May 2004 (an exact date is still being discussed). We are planning to have a welcome back morning tea on her first day. On this note the Committee would like to thank Julian for his efforts in the position of Co-ordinator and his contribution to our Community over the last year.

Working “with” staff
The Committee is trying to improve their knowledge of the Centre and staff as part of their role. As you may also be aware, we are also inviting staff to come to Committee meetings to ensure we have time to better understand your roles, issues and ideas.

We are all excited about the potential of the Centre’s future and the role we can all play. This takes a commitment to good communication and a general respect for each other in our everyday work. We have recognised that this can be challenging during times of change. However, these policies and procedures can provide a guide to how we work and how we can treat each other in a respectful way. They provide a common understanding and hopefully a way for you to feel secure in your work and your environment. These policies are created through staff and management working together and can continue to be improved through this collaboration.

Organisation Development Sub-committee
The President and Secretary have invited the Co-ordinator and a staff member to create an organisational development sub-committee to address Program Eight of the Centre’s Strategic Plan. We hope to work with you all in the future to improve the development of the organisation and appreciate any input that you have provided to date through Sharon’s research. We look forward to discussing this with you further.

Most important is a big thank you for all of your efforts throughout 2003.

We hope we can make 2004 even better.

Cheers

Management Committee

Growing Together
APPENDIX 13 – New (Draft) Strategic Plan

(Attached)
Community organisations have the power to tangibly improve population health. In this case, what’s good for individuals and what’s good for the community is the same thing. Those with the most social connectedness, i.e. who have a high level of participation in social and community organisation and networks, have lower mortality rates…Community groups are the engines that drive our ability to change behaviour, reduce morbidity, expand life-expectancy and innovate change”.

Professor Berkman of Harvard University
Communities in Control Conference:
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................................................................ 2
  1.1. Who Are We? ................................................................................................................................................................................. 2
  1.2. What Is Our Core Purpose? *Mission Statement* ................................................................................................................................. 2
  1.3. Where Are We Headed? (Vision) .................................................................................................................................................... 3
  1.4. What Is Our Future Role in Our Community? ................................................................................................................................. 4
  1.5. Our Collective Values ..................................................................................................................................................................... 5

2.0 KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2006/2007 ................................................................................................................................. 6

OVERVIEW OF BUSINESS PLAN............................................................................................................................................................. 11

4.0 FINANCIAL PLAN............................................................................................................................................................................. 14

3.0 ACCOUNTABILITY .......................................................................................................................................................................... 12
  2.1. Committee Members Roles and Responsibilities ................................................................................................................................. 12
  2.2. Community Evaluation Framework ............................................................................................................................................... 13
1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Who Are We?

We create places where individuals across generations can come together throughout different stages of their lives to meet, share, learn and enhance themselves, others and the community, in a way that enhances our health and the common good of society.

1.2. What Is Our Core Purpose? Mission Statement

We seek to enhance and expand our social, cultural and community well being to foster an ongoing connected, inclusive and responsive community that future generations will want to inherit.
1.3. **Where Are We Headed? (Vision)**

The Community Committee has a dual vision that encompasses medium to longer-term outcomes for the future growth of the Centre. These include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short-Medium Term Vision (3 years)</th>
<th>COMMUNITY CENTRE WITHOUT WALLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asset based community development that develops activities, projects and programs building on underutilised and available assets, talents and skills located within the local area.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual community established through use of technology to streamline marketing, communications and coordination.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebrand the Centre to reflect the demographics of the area we serve and make our presence be felt within a broad spectrum of the community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance financial sustainability of organisation through the development of functions such as education.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium to Long Term Vision (3-5 years)</th>
<th>PARTNERSHIPS FOR CENTRE EXPANSION &amp; COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhance local partnerships to improve community governance on local level issues and plans.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a mutually respectful partnership with Brisbane City Council working on the Urban Renewal and Local Area Planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance community awareness, input, participation and action in local area issues encouraging self-reliance at a community level.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate and co-ordinate apolitical environment for community issues to be discussed encouraging a collaborative environment across different perspectives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long Term Vision (5-10 years)</th>
<th>CREATING THE COMMUNITY PLACE Multi-purpose facility with partners.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To own and operate a multi-purpose physical premises close to public transport hub(s) that brings together a multitude of different community-based activities and organisations including for and not for profit organisations, community leaders and government organisations. This hub would create activities for multiple ages, abilities and cover areas such as information, education, recreation, lifestyle and social services.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.4. **What Is Our Future Role in Our Community?**

Our role is to be a leader in the development of our local community, particularly building on the social aspects of community life. This involves a number of key elements to support the core role.

| **Networking** | Across multiple organisations, groups and individuals on different aspects of the community. |
| **Communications and Connections** | Make aware through education and images the benefits of investing in the local community (i.e. make it cool to connect at the local level including volunteering and participation in our communities future). |
| **Creative Resourcing** | Ensuring that resources meant for communities reach them through finding and connecting assets and individual strengths ensuring maximum availability and accessibility of activities, programs, events and services. |
| **Community Support (Improvement and Expansion of Services)** | Breaking down isolation and enabling people from a wide diversity of backgrounds to join up and join in; Family support services including counselling and respite for families. Individual/Personal Development and Family Development Emotional well-being |
| **Lifelong Learning** | Creating environments and opportunities to expand knowledge for families and individuals. |
| **Sustainable Infrastructure** | Ensure that we have the capacity to support these activities with the local community. |
### 1.5. Our Collective Values

What are the values that are important to us during our involvement with the Centre. What do we feel is important to express to others as a core base from which we work. How will we ensure we display these values to others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WE VALUE &amp; ENCOURAGE</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fantastic Attitudes</td>
<td>Positive Approach to Work, Life and Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposeful, Proud &amp; Professional Behaviours</td>
<td>Encourage each other to work towards a broader purpose. See that everything we do links to our longer term perspective of what we want to be. Be proud of our small achievements that bring us closer to this vision. Demonstrate pride in what we do and how we do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive relationship and collaborative team work</td>
<td>Equity of access and participation Equal rights for all and dignity and respect of individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Things First</td>
<td>We can’t be everything to everybody. Maintain clarity around purpose, role and priorities to ensure we can create positive change in a way that we don’t burn out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>View our community from a perspective of Abundance. Make the most of what we have with what we have got.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment and learning</td>
<td>We need to continue to challenge our understanding of the community and our organisation to ensure we take the community on this journey also.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge &amp; Change</td>
<td>We understand that obstacles will only be learning blocks on our path to our vision. We seek to continually improve what we have in a positive way.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 2.0 KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2006/2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1  | Internal Infrastructure Improvement | **(a) FINANCIAL SYSTEMS**  
- Undertake a financial review of the Centre’s systems.  
- Establish a new budgeting system based on allocations to business areas.  
- Develop a future financial plan.  
- Investigate and implement potential financial structures to enhance the Centre’s ability to receiving funding from sources other than government. (i.e. DGR status and other ideas that may arise).  
- Enlist a “consultant” Financial Person for Committee (i.e. Maury might be an option). |     |           |
|    | **(b) INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**    |  
- Development of the web portal – use online presence to enhance all aspects of our organisation and program development. |     |           |
<p>|    | <strong>(c.) ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS</strong>   |                                                                 |     |           |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>Partnering for Future Capacity Building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Partnering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Partnerships with other organisations &amp; linking to assets to expand presence and delivery.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coordinator &amp; Committee to meet with leaders within the community to determine partnering possibilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Government Partnerships &amp; Public/Private Partnerships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New Facility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop a Community Leaders advisory group that meets quarterly to assist, guide and implement our strategic priorities and mobilise relationships with key</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| (d) Human Resource Management          |
| • Strengthen the clarity around roles and how they support the Coordinator. Review Centre functions and the impact on how the Centre will function in the future. |
| • Coordinator to ensure performance reviews and development plans are created in conjunction with each staff member. Staff to develop the plan. |

• Identify and update systems and procedures and review policies to ensure we manage risk and run the most effective organisation possible.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>Marketing &amp; Communications</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Improvement and Expansion of Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(a) Planning</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>(a) Operational Planning</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop a marketing and communication plan</td>
<td>• Develop a strategic direction for each program, followed by an operational plan with proposed budget requirements that demonstrates potential growth or sustainability of the program (wherever possible)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(b) Rebranding</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Investigate rebranding the Centre to reflect the regional nature of our work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(c.) Communications Network</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Technology, print and events for 2006/2007</td>
<td>• Web portal is a lead tactic with relation to this priority.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Local Asset Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community Centre without walls</td>
<td>• Stakeholders (ie Government, private enterprise)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Audits**

- Develop an asset audit
- Determine training needs & sites through asset audit & partnerships.

**Operational Planning**

- Develop a strategic direction for each program, followed by an operational plan with proposed budget requirements that demonstrates potential growth or sustainability of the program (wherever possible)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(b) Program Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) Community Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Family Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Limited Hours Childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c.) Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Service Agreement – Quarterly Performance Reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Strengthening Non Government Organisations Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Improve current systems of reporting and recording.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Develop accountability for outcomes by the committee and determine structure of operational v/s developmental priorities within current meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Implement 3 collective staff meetings a year focussed on relationship building, organisational development &amp; celebrations of joint success.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resourcing for Future Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Investigate business/community partnerships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Grant writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Self sustaining program development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant applications in areas that meet our strategic priorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising strategy to be developed for 2006 events.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL RESOURCING REQUIREMENT**
OVERVIEW OF BUSINESS PLAN

This diagram provides a helpful overview of the core focus of the business plan for 2005. The purpose of this diagram is to highlight the complex environment in which we need to address. The following plan expands on each of these core areas highlighting short, medium and long term considerations to help achieve our vision.
3.0 ACCOUNTABILITY

Committee Members Roles and Responsibilities

The following table notes the community committee positions, the people assigned to those positions and the committee and sub-committee tasks that they have considered in their role.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Role Description</th>
<th>Sub-committee Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-president</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that these roles and responsibilities may change during the year to reflect changes in ideas and interests by committee members. Committee members are welcome to sit on other sub-committees.
# Community Evaluation Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGM</th>
<th>1 Year</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>Legislative Requirement</th>
<th>Elect Committee</th>
<th>Reflection of achievements and update on future direction</th>
<th>AGM report to members and guests</th>
<th>This incorporates any reporting back to the Department of Communities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Leadership Forums</strong></td>
<td>3 per year</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Community Committee and Coordinator invites politicians, community leaders (i.e. schools, other community organisations) to discuss our direction and how we can work better together. Also to develop assets and work on collective activities (where possible)</td>
<td>2 x 2 hours</td>
<td>July</td>
<td>1 x ½ day</td>
<td>November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Committee Meetings</strong></td>
<td>12 per year</td>
<td>1 hr operational</td>
<td>Legislative requirement</td>
<td>Each functional area attend 2 meetings per year (part of meeting only)</td>
<td>1 hr development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Committee &amp; Staff Meetings</strong></td>
<td>2 per year</td>
<td>Months to be decided</td>
<td>Developmental meetings to discuss plans and their progress. This does not include the AGM. Other meetings can be scheduled where required.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff Meeting</strong></td>
<td>11 per year</td>
<td>1 hour (min)</td>
<td>Feedback from other meetings</td>
<td>Discuss projects and operational issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.0 FINANCIAL PLAN

NOT INCLUDED DUE TO CONFIDENTIALITY REASONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing and Projected Financials In (Existing and projected)</th>
<th>Existing and Projected Money Out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Grants</td>
<td>• What is Committed to date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Membership fees</td>
<td>• What do we want to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fundraising/donations</td>
<td>able to spend (as per the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Special event income</td>
<td>plan outcomes).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sale of goods/services</td>
<td>• Include previous year's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sponsorship</td>
<td>actual figures and next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interest Received</td>
<td>year's projected figures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Grants</td>
<td>Key assumptions should be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other Income</td>
<td>flagged as footnotes. The</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other resources</td>
<td>budget is its own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>performance indicator.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 14 – New (Draft) Marketing Plan

(Attached)
## APPENDIX 14 – (Draft) Marketing Plan

### WOOLOOWIN COMMUNITY CENTRE

**MARKETING PLAN**

**2005/6**

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0  INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................2
2.0  MARKETING OVERVIEW ........................................................................2
3.0  PRODUCTS AND SERVICES .....................................................................3
4.0  CUSTOMERS AND PROSPECTS ..............................................................4
5.0  COMPETITOR ANALYSIS .......................................................................5
6.0  Price, Place and Sales Practices ............................................................5
7.0  SWOT .......................................................................................................6
8.0  COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY ..............................................................7
9.0  IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION ..................................................8

10.0 APPENDIX ONE: ..................................................................................9

DEMOGRAPHICS ..........................................................................................9
1.0 Introduction

Wooloowin Community Centre seeks to create places where individuals across generations can come together throughout different stages over their lives to meet, share, learn and enhance themselves, others and the community, in a way that enhances our health and the common good of society.

2.0 Marketing Overview

As WCC is a non-profit organisation focussed on developing positive community initiatives and services, the products/services that are currently offered have traditionally not been established to create revenue. The Centre has only recently clarified its focus on community development and is still endeavouring to understand products and services that might be offered in the future.

As a great deal of community development is around people, our products are primarily based around human services. Our existing products and target markets include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Target Group</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited Hours Child Care</td>
<td>Families with Children between the ages of 1 and 3</td>
<td>21 places Looking to expand some of the operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>All age groups</td>
<td>Currently only targeting people during work hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling and Support</td>
<td>Targeting families with children</td>
<td>Further investigation required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>Major event which addresses marketing, community development and fundraising requirements</td>
<td>Resourcing required (predominantly volunteers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising and Marketing Space</td>
<td>Through newsletters and magazines to community catchment.</td>
<td>Costly, partner required.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do the funding arrangements and non-profit nature of our business, the profit goals in the first year for all the programs will be focussed on expanding the hours or service where possible in a way that can be self sustaining. Year two, it is anticipated that a significant amount of funding can be gained from Education, Advertising, Community Events and through partnering.
Some of the constraints to achieving these goals is the limited resourcing that can be injected to help make this occur, the time it takes to change the focus of existing programs and existing structural arrangements.

The marketing budget to support these programs is sourced from a number of sources identified within the strategic plan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rebranding</td>
<td>$5000</td>
<td>To reflect future direction and broader outreach than one suburb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing and Communications</td>
<td>$5000</td>
<td>To enhance profile and ignite local community awareness and pride.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Portal</td>
<td>$15000</td>
<td>To expand technology capability for cost effective and timely outreach. (primarily funded through grant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Modifications</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>Front of house changes, alterations to rentable rooms and accessibility changes for children and people with disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>$3000</td>
<td>Seed funding for yearly events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Improvement</td>
<td>$8000</td>
<td>To be apportioned across existing programs for expansion and improvement. To be self funded in year 2.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total $56000 $25,000 sought in grant funding (minimum)

The marketing budget will be further supplemented through grants and as a result of business partnerships currently being discussed. To help enhance our capability to receive funds, some financial restructuring may need to be considered, in particular, the establishment of a trust account. From a marketing perspective, community awareness and involvement is a significant aim and is a key driver for many of the marketing activities over the next year.

### 3.0 PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Our products and services can be offered at a minimal price in a way that produce cost recovery. They can be offered to a wide range of people within the community catchment.

The socially responsible aspects linked to our business is a key selling point. The image of the Community Centre, although requiring some updating through branding, does appear to hold a positive link to ethical business practices. This is particularly important when discussing business partnerships.

The Unique selling point of some of the specific programs include:

<p>| Limited Hours Child Care | Respite for families who do not want full time childcare, or cannot afford a place within the existing infrastructure. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Flexible, broad delivery options for a broad group of people within the community. Potential sliding scale pricing that can ensure access.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counselling and Support</td>
<td>Family counselling which is inclusive of children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two areas have been identified as the better contributors to the organisations overhead and profits. In particular, education has great potential to provide a return to the Centre through course coordination, asset management and advertising. Secondly, events show some potential to bring in money for the Centre.

The other programs as they stand still require further investigation with relation to becoming more self sustaining in the future. Furthermore, some of these programs will continue to need family support funding (i.e. Counselling). However, there is scope to expand or alter practices to provide greater flexibility in funding projects undertaken by these areas.

**4.0 CUSTOMERS AND PROSPECTS**

While the entire community can be seen as customers of the Centre, it has been identified that this is a broad target and due to existing resource limitations, some more focussed marketing efforts will be required.

In particular, due to the family focussed nature of the funding, local schools may prove to be a useful target in the first instance. Other assets like churches, bowling clubs and shopping centres may prove to be another good source to expand our product offering.

The buying habits of people are very much linked to issues of cost and convenience. This community has two extremes of people who are significant consumers and others who are struggling financially or socially. One of the most difficult assets to gain within the area at this point is people’s time. Life is busy and therefore, involvement in the Centre needs to be fun, practical and convenient.

Who are your best customers and prospects? Families have been identified as a significant target group due to the funding of the Centre and the potential scope for outreach with the local schools. However, other groups will be considered through partnerships that are developed. Demographic information is provided in Appendix ? of this document.
5.0 COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

Although we are not competitive in the traditional sense, some of our competition includes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertising and Marketing Space</th>
<th>Local newspapers and magazines (Northern News, Ascot Clayfield Magazine and The Brisbane News (for starters).)</th>
<th>Major area to expand communication and information through web and print. Potential area for revenue raising, however how much is unknown.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>TAFE&lt;br&gt;Local education bodies. Other community organisations offering training.</td>
<td>Major area of growth and revenue for the Centre. Separate plan to be developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>Government and other organisations offering events.</td>
<td>Potential are for revenue raising but unknown. Partnership injection required to expand capacity in this area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Hours Child Care</td>
<td>Other childcare facilities&lt;br&gt;Other short term activities for children in places like shopping centres, etc.</td>
<td>Current strategy in place to address viability of this service. Issues are more in policy development, structure and cost saving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling and Support</td>
<td>Other counselling services</td>
<td>Early investigations of how to expand or run this service in the future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.0 Price, Place and Sales Practices

This is a small operation and price, positioning and sales have not been at the forefront of decision making. However, there are some considerations with relation to this:

All pricing over the next year (wherever possible) needs to focus on cost recovery to enhance the sustainability and viability of these services in 2006/7. There will always be some services that will not have pricing attached (i.e. some of the counselling), however, pricing strategies will need to be considered in each area. All project costs need to include a 20% administration fee, whether through grants or partnerships.

The current location is not suitable for the future vision of the Centre and the location has proven, at times problematic, except for the Limited Hours Childcare who have a site which is of a high standard. This is problematic as the Centre does not receive funds for rent and is a long way from understanding where and how revenue can be
created to sustain this type of cost. Strategies to address this issue are highlighted within the Vision of the Strategic Plan.

Community events and education are most affected by the current size and space of the Centre and as a result, an asset audit and furthering partnerships in the area needs to be escalated to expand this area of the business. Specifically, schools, bowling clubs, church halls, are just some of the assets that will need to be considered.

Furthermore, the current layout of the Centre has been difficult from a “customer service” perspective. Current plans have been put into place to improve the physical appearance of the Centre.

The awareness raising and information dissemination elements of the business are currently expanding. Specifically, we are seeking to create a publication and virtual portal site which can help enhance the presence of the Centre and create the future capability to expand our marketing across the community collaboration. This will be achieved through partnerships and advertising. An expansion of the marketing role will need to occur as part of this strategy.

7.0 SWOT

Regionalisation of Community Centres (work on developing a joint brand with locational outcomes.

Existing building is limiting growth of some of the products, services and projects within the Centre.

Hours of staff and available resources limit growth.

Etc.
### 8.0 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The following table offers some of the communications strategies that have been considered for the Centre. Key strategies include:

- Rebranding and developing a new up to date image for the Centre.
- Web portal to increase outreach to people on line and increase timely information.
- Publication that is self funded over time.
- Events (and product sales) that promote the health and well being of the community and creates an awareness of the Centre.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Funds Out</th>
<th>Funds In</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rebranding</td>
<td>Centre that embraces the wider community catchment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Logo: $750</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Name, logo and byline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cards: $1500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business cards, stationery, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stationery/ or Brochure: $1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other: $250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signage</td>
<td>To determine where.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print</td>
<td>Newsletter/Magazine</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 – 4 publications per year (A3 x 2) to 30,000 households.</td>
<td>$20,000 year (approx)</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Existing papers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No cost</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brochures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>Web Portal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Link to Other websites</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks</td>
<td>Other newsletters and information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>1 large and 1 smaller fundraising event per year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Products for sale</td>
<td>Potential sale of products, shirts, etc through events.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
<td>Obviously can’t be discounted.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No cost</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.0 IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

Implementation of this plan is still quite constrained by the limited resourcing and skills within the Centre. It is hoped that a small group of volunteers can assist escalate the marketing and communications activities listed within this plan.

Evaluation of the plan will occur at the different meeting points specified within the Strategic Plan. In particular, the Community Leaders Forum.

It is also recommended that the minutes of the meetings of the Committee and Staff add marketing as an item to be reviewed and discussed each week.
10.0 APPENDIX ONE:

DEMOGRAPHICS

What Sort of Community Are We? Although it is proposed that this question needs to be answered by the wider community, the following section offers a snapshot of some of the perspectives identified from ABS data and summaries developed by Brisbane City Council on the Inner North-East Region of Brisbane.

It is difficult, in this case, to match the boundaries specified through ABS data based on suburbs versus what could be suggested as artificial boundaries that occur as a result of roads, various hubs, transport etc. Therefore, it is important to note that the information provided below incorporates the full areas of Clayfield and Albion, although only a portion of this area may be considered as being part of the “designated area”. Other areas, which have not been included, are Wavell Heights and Kedron, although these areas may need to be considered at later stages.

From the ABS data, the total number of residents living in the collection of suburbs is approximately 19,601 people. The following table provides the population profile of these suburbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Profile (numbers)</th>
<th>Estimated resident population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-14 No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albion</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clayfield</td>
<td>1,399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutwyche</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wooloowin</td>
<td>984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 1310 Brisbane</td>
<td>3,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>161,695</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regardless of the population within the area, it could be confidently stated that the community the Centre is seeking to work “with” includes over 15,000 people within the inner north-east region of Brisbane, of which over 5,500 live within the suburb of Wooloowin, where the Community Centre is currently located.

The designated area is predominantly made up of young couples (median age 34) with a relatively even split between couples with families (with young children) and couples without. One exception identified was the Wooloowin area, which possesses more couples with families (young children) than any other area within Brisbane’s Inner North-East. The table below provide a more visual snapshot of family types:
Although seniors make up over one quarter (1/4) of the population, this appears to be declining, especially over 65 age group. Furthermore, a high level (75%) of the adult population are working (refer to marketing plan). A clearer snapshot of population changes is provided in the following graph:

Other overall trends within the Inner North-East Region of Brisbane which may be of interest to the Community Centre is provided in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>70% vs 30%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Houses v Units</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Unemployment</td>
<td>14% (8% higher than general population of the region).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak another language</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated or divorced</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>2385 people of all age groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Education & Qualifications

| Qualified people | High proportion
1943 people did study in society and culture
2316 people did study in business. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currently studying</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| School Attendance | 50% Public
50% Private |
| Left school between ages of 15-16 | 30% |

Information specifically highlighted regarding specific suburbs includes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Albion | Over 10% group households
Over 50% couples without children |
| Lutwyche | Lowest proportion of young people (12.5%)
Highest proportion of ‘working age’ (75.1%) (15-64)
Lowest proportions of family households
Over 10% group households.
Relatively even number of couples with and without children.
Highest area of one parent families within the region. |
| Wooloowin | Highest proportion of young people (17.9%)
Higher proportion of couples with children (predominantly young). |

There was little information provided on Clayfield and some of the other core suburbs within the designated area, although some of the information specified within Wooloowin, may also be applicable within the Wooloowin side of Clayfield.