THE PRACTICE AND PROGRESS OF GEELONG AS A LEARNING CITY

by

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BA, Dip Ed, M Ed

An exegesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by project.

Department of Industry, Professional and Adult Education

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September 2004
DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made the work is mine. 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.

[Signature]
Shanti Wong

Date: 6 April 2005
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Shanti Wong

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACE  Adult Community Education
ACFE  Adult, Community and Further Education. Also ACFEB, Adult, Community and Further Education Board.
ALCN  Australian Learning Communities Network
ANTA  Australian National Training Authority
BSW  Barwon South Western
CAE  Centre for Adult Education (formerly Council of Adult Education)
CAOS  Community Agents of Sustainability
CIA  'Communities in Action'
Cjp  Community Jobs Program
CoGG  City of Greater Geelong
CSF  Critical Success Factors
DfEE  Department for Education and Employment (UK)
DHS  Department of Human Services
DVC  Department for Victorian Communities
ELLI  European Lifelong Learning Initiative
ETTE  Office of Employment, Training and Tertiary Education (now known as OTTE, Office of Training and Tertiary Education).
G21  The Geelong Region Strategy
GATE  Geelong Adult Training and Education (GATE) Inc
GSAT  Geelong Science and Technology Centre
ICDL  International Computer Driver’s Licence
LLEN  Local Learning and Employment Network. Also SGR LLEN, SmartGeelong Region LLEN.
OECD  Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
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<td>Performance Measurement Implementation Customisation and Implementation</td>
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<td>RMIT</td>
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<td>SCH</td>
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<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Technical and Further Education</td>
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<td>VCE</td>
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<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
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THE PRACTICE AND PROGRESS OF GEELONG AS A LEARNING CITY
SUMMARY

This project aimed to demonstrate that a commitment by a community to improve access to lifelong learning opportunities as a Learning City enhances the quality of life of its citizens and improves its economic conditions through a more creative, stable and adaptable community.

In May 2000, the newly elected Labor Government in Victoria launched the Victorian ‘Learning Towns’ Program. Based on a United Kingdom (UK) model that had been developing since 1995 with demonstrable success, the nine (and later, ten) rural and regional cities and towns in the Victorian pilot program were the first in Australia to receive funding to support lifelong learning as an approach towards achieving sustainable economic development and social inclusiveness. This research focused on the practice and progress of SmartGeelong – The Learning City, one of the pilot programs. It presented an opportunity to evaluate the economic and social development of a community that has declared itself a Learning City by posing the following research questions:

1. What are the key characteristics of a Learning City and what determines these?
2. What are the value added outcomes? How can the depth and breadth of participation be entrenched?
3. What are the indicators of success and effectiveness in a Learning City?
Funded by the Victorian Government through the division of Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) for an initial period of three years, SmartGeelong – The Learning City provided a framework for establishing an action research approach that could consider the impact of a community commitment to using lifelong learning as a strategy for community strengthening. The Victorian Learning Towns were charged with improving engagement in learning through the development of cross sectoral partnerships. In common with the other funded Victorian Learning Towns, SmartGeelong – The Learning City was supported by an Advisory Group that represented key community sectors including education and training, local government, the business sector and community agencies.

The Advisory Group provided the infrastructure required for planning, managing, monitoring and evaluating the action research cycles. Commencing in October 2000, the project conducted three action research cycles over three years following an initial preparatory cycle. The cycles were subject to ongoing monitoring by the project management that included annual evaluation by the Advisory Group. In addition, all of the Victorian Learning Towns participated in a number of external evaluations that were a pilot project requirement.

Several opportunities for research and evaluation arose during the course of this research that added valuable insights and ideas to the development of SmartGeelong – The Learning City and the Victorian Learning Towns. Highlights included an ACFE research project awarded to me as the project manager of SmartGeelong – The Learning City, to document the progress of all of the Victorian Learning Towns after their first year of operation (2001) and a TAFE Traveling Scholarship to study five Learning Cities in Europe and the United Kingdom in 2002. Reports were written and published on both of these investigations and they form the significant component of Part B, the product of this research:


B2a: Accompanying Powerpoint presentation (Wong May 2002).

The other major report included in Part B is the report of the pilot of the ACFE funded Performance Measurement Framework for SmartGeelong – The Learning City. Developed during 2002 and trialed in all of the Victorian Learning Towns in 2003, this framework became a critical component of the data gathering, analysis and evaluation for this PhD:


Two Case Studies complete Part B:


B4a: Accompanying Powerpoint presentation (Wong Oct 2002b).


A Case Study prepared for Flexible Learning Week, August 2003.

The key findings of this PhD project included observing that it is possible to shift an emphasis on education and training to valuing learning (and lifelong learning) as a strategy for strengthening a community that is committed to developing itself as a learning community. That this shift can be driven by the Adult Community Education (ACE) sector brings particular strengths, especially in building partnerships.
Having made this observation however, the capacity for the cultural change in an ACE driven learning community to be sustainable is likely to be limited unless it engages local government in meaningful ways to ensure that those changes are long term. Currently, the contribution by local government to learning communities in Australia is varied and can be erratic. The experience in the UK supports the observation in Australian learning communities that where there is a commitment that is understood by local government, it is possible to improve social inclusion and local economic performance.

This research has concluded that its most significant finding is the effectiveness of the neutral space that a concept such as the Learning City provides. By providing a conceptual space that is non-threatening, non-competitive and belongs to the whole community rather than any one organisation, it is possible to develop cross sectoral partnerships among organisations that may be competitors in other environments, that add value to communities, overcome barriers and develop creative responses that address local issues and build community capacity.

The research describes the experience of building a learning community, of lessons learned and insights gained. Through example, it provides a foundation for other communities that may be interested in pursuing this concept. However, while it is possible to develop a learning community through the commitment and initiative of local leaders, it is made more difficult in the absence of a national policy commitment to lifelong learning. Despite this, the research concludes that through the careful development and nurturing of all partners, the process of developing a learning community is effective, sustainable and makes a positive impact.
1. THE CONCEPT

Lifelong learning will be essential for everyone as we move into the 21st century and has to be made accessible for all (OECD 1996:21).

If Australia is to remain prosperous and competitive, it must develop a culture that values ongoing learning in which everyone should be able, motivated and actively encouraged to learn throughout life (OECD 1996:21).

The Learning City concept is not new but received new impetus as a result of the Victorian Government’s demonstration program in ten rural and regional Victorian towns and cities. Launched in May 2000, the ‘Learning Towns’ program aimed to develop collaborative learning partnerships between education providers, business, local government and community activity and to integrate economic and social development (ACFEB March 2000).
It became apparent from the beginning that within the demonstration projects there was considerable diversity in interpretation of the purposes and direction of Learning Towns. Some had a more robust start than others and some projects required significant redirecting in order to operate within the parameters of the project funding. The concept was premised on local interpretation meeting local needs and there was opportunity to explore what made one approach 'fit' a particular context and not another.

The Victorian Learning Towns program was based very closely on the UK model that had been broadly accepted as being useful and successful in addressing complex issues around the integration of economic development with social inclusion (Beernaert 2003; Franson Sept 2000). However, there were significant cultural differences between the UK model and that being piloted in Victoria. For instance, the British national government provided policy commitment and funds for local government to employ staff to develop and maintain activity that created Learning Cities and Towns. In Victoria, the project was implemented through Adult Community Education (ACE) providers. This was based on the rationale that the ACE sector plays a lead role in turning everyday lifelong learning into beneficial social and economic outcomes (ACFEB March 2000).

The cities and towns in the Victorian pilot program were the first in Australia to receive funding to support lifelong learning as an approach towards achieving sustainable economic development and social inclusiveness. Through the implementation of SmartGeelong – The Learning City, one of the Victorian pilot projects, this PhD project employed an action research approach to observe and consider the outcomes of the Geelong experience (within the context of the Victorian, Australian and international experience) in order to determine and test the critical success factors for a Learning City.
As action research that could contribute to showing how ‘researchers improved their own learning and situations for the benefit of themselves and others’ (McNiff 2002), this PhD project proposed that it would be valuable to **evaluate the economic and social development of a community that has declared itself a Learning City by posing the following research questions:**

1. What are the key characteristics of a Learning City and what determines these?
2. What are the value added outcomes? How can the depth and breadth of participation be entrenched?
3. What are the indicators of success and effectiveness in a Learning City?

**2. PREMISE FOR THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

Education and training are dead. Knowledge and learning are alive and well.

(Learning City Glasgow 1999; Longworth 1999).

A true learning city is one that strives to learn how to renew itself in a period of extraordinary global change. In periods of such transition, learning becomes central to our future wellbeing (Department for Education and Employment UK 1998).

Learning Cities are a 21st Century response to age old dilemmas. As the pace of life escalates ever more rapidly and information technology becomes a primary means of communication in our societies, those people who were always at risk of being marginalised – the poorly educated, the unemployed and underemployed, people from a non English speaking background, people with disabilities and other minority groups – will have even greater difficulty in developing the skills to effectively participate in their community.
Lifelong learning is an ancient concept. Plato recognised ‘Dia Viou Paedeia’ – ‘the responsibility of every citizen to educate himself’ - as the means by which citizens could most constructively participate in daily life (Longworth 1999:17). Where people do not interact well with their community through networks and common interests, low levels of social inclusion may coexist with higher levels of disadvantage (Vinson 2004:34). The identification of lifelong learning as a strategy for improving social inclusion and in developing community responses to issues they currently face has been given new prominence through a series of initiatives and social movements that has merged in the concept of Learning Cities.

3. THE HISTORY OF ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

(Australia) needs the broad outlook to break down the spirit of intolerance, narrow prejudice and bigotry, which is a fatal bar to progress.


Adult education as a sector of educational provision developed throughout the 20th Century in many Western countries but there were forerunners to present day neighbourhood houses and community centres. The university settlement movement in the late 19th Century in England established settlement houses in low income areas that provided social programs for disadvantaged people and provided skill development opportunities for students. Local churches have also historically played the role of a community centre and this continues to this day (Ife 2002:164).
The opening of Sawston Village College in Cambridgeshire, UK, in the 1930s built in response to the vision of Henry Morris to demonstrate the ‘never ceasingness of education’ as a means of enriching and transforming the everyday reality of people, is regarded as seminal in developing the idea of lifelong learning for all (Smith 1996:3). At the same time, the Flint, Michigan, United States of America (USA), experiments were being conducted with a $6 000 grant from the Mott Foundation to support ‘greater utilisation of the school facilities (so) the community school concept was born’ (Smith 1996:4). The practice, ‘something of a movement’ in the USA by 1994, of using school buildings as ‘one-stop, collaborative institutions’ to provide services brought in by outside community agencies in conjunction with school personnel was described by Dryfoos (Smith 1996) as effective in engaging children, youth and families. The development of adult education in Australia was more directly influenced by the UK.

In the UK the Workers’ Education Association (WEA), founded in 1903, was and remains a key provider of organised adult education. Established to support the educational needs of working men and women, it remains committed to providing access to learning for people from all backgrounds and especially those who missed out on early education (WEA 2003). It is still active in the UK and began operating in Australia in 1913.

World War I, starting so soon after the establishment of the WEA, affected the adult education movement profoundly. Study circles and tutorial classes continued to develop as they provided forums for people to discuss issues raised by the war. Strongly expressed controversial views on issues such as conscription, polarised WEA supporters such as the unions and political groups. David Stewart, founding general secretary of the NSW WEA from 1913 – 1954, held firm to the principle of free speech.
Australia needs the idealism, the broad outlook, the inspiration and the faith in democracy of the WEA more than she ever did in her history (Whitelock 1974:185).

Despite tensions over educational techniques, the NSW WEA made modest progress between the wars, especially in developing the partnership Stewart had initiated in 1914 with Sydney University to deliver tutorial classes. By 1919, 24 classes were being delivered in Sydney and 16 in country centres. In 1921, 1640 students attended tutorial classes in NSW (Whitelock 1974:189). Sydney University had instigated a joint committee to organise these classes and this model was adopted by other states with or without the WEA. However, the tutorial classes had a limited reach and generally they ‘constituted only a marginal activity, well to the edge of both public and official vision’ (Whitelock 1974:200). Their ‘plodding, hand-to-mouth existence’ (Whitelock 1974:187) was restricted by university regulations, sporadic government grants and conflicts over principles.

While the concept of providing education for workers as a strategy for strengthening communities was not new, the approach of the WEA in insisting that working class people would participate on a equal footing with educational experts in providing and organising adult education certainly was new (Whitelock 1974:176). Armstrong describes the new ‘participation’ by the ‘lower rungs of the organisational ladder’ as a feature of community education that assisted people in being more involved in those political and economic structures that affect their lives (Armstrong 1977:103). This approach was recognised by the Victorian adult education sector that emerged in the post World War II period as being instrumental in developing the community directed and managed provision that is so well embedded in local communities today (ACFEB 1995a).
In addition to the now widely used ‘adult education’, ‘community education’ as a term had emerged in the UK by the early 1970s. This new aspect of adult education both stimulated the desire for change and imparted the skills to cope with the change (Armstrong 1977:101). Building on the much earlier model of the community schools that originated in Cambridgeshire in the 1930s, where local people could participate in educational and social activities, more urban institutions were developing that catered for large and diverse populations. Located in Educational Priority Areas, schools were regarded as powerhouses for the local community and additional resources were provided to encourage adult involvement in community education in order ‘to assist in the struggle for social, economic and political equality’ (Armstrong 1977:103).

3.1 The Australian Army Education Service

A parallel and equally influential adult education program that grew out of World War 11 was that of the Australian Army Education Service. A ‘full scale experiment in comprehensive adult education’ (Whitelock 1974:214), this program was properly led and resourced and again, was based on a British precedent. By the 1850s schools were established in all large army units and were revived during the stasis before and after the armistice of World War 1 to overcome the potential for mutiny that could arise from bored troops (Whitelock 1974:217).

As liberal adult education became more popular with the general population, the ‘ferment of participatory democracy’ that characterised participation in the army in World War 11 saw the development of ‘eager, do it yourself education’ (Calder 1974:219) through discussion groups and bulletins that eventually involved six out of every ten units (Calder 1974:220).
The earlier ‘Education Scheme’ that had been devised for Australian troops in World War 1 was modelled on its British predecessor. Established to address concerns about the length of the repatriation period for the 190 000 men of the First Australian Imperial Force, the Education Scheme was organised to encourage men who, jaded by war, welcomed the chance to use their minds and hands in the cause of peace. Despite difficulties encountered through haphazard organisation introduced too late and poorly resourced, the Education Scheme demonstrated that former soldiers welcomed continuing education that ‘richly repaid the nation’ (Calder 1974:222-223).

The Education Scheme was reintroduced to the Australian Army on 5 March 1941. This time the vocational focus of the World War 1 scheme was complemented by a more liberal approach that resulted in the Australian Army Education Service (Calder 1974:224). The time taken to establish the Education Scheme meant that when it was eventually approved it was as a special unit at army headquarters with a director, a budget of 150 000 pounds and an agreed charter (Calder 1974:227).

The scheme highlighted the dearth of experienced adult educators, eliciting interest from no more than a dozen people who had to develop and deliver a program to an audience that had no experience of adult education. Educators were recruited from all sections of the army and classes were delivered in 849 locations to 184 000 people in January 1942 (Calder 1974:230).

The official formation of the Australian Army Education Service on 29 October 1943 aimed to prepare soldiers for return to civilian life and the School of Army Education was established in 1943 to train full time instructors and administrators (Calder 1974:234).
Again, despite the chaos that returning soldiers and a dissolving army imposed, essayist Major L C Wilcher observed that the Education Service ‘enabled some 50 000 to 70 000 troops…to make definite progress by way of preparing themselves for post discharge training’ (Calder 1974:235).

After 1943, the Australian Army Education Service developed a degree of improvisation and informality that was new, in response to the conditions under which it had to operate. Smaller groups, informality and topical discussions ‘whetted mental appetites, threw fresh light on long held prejudices and were genuinely educative’ (Calder 1974:243).

The educational effort of the Australian Army Education Service was prodigious. It cost 3 million pounds and delivered 149 600 lectures to attendances of over 9 million at its height. Its most unexpected legacy though was the generation of ideas and liberal thinking and it provided an influential example for post war civilian education that was taken up at the 1944 conference on ‘The Future of Adult Education in Australia’ (Calder 1974:256).

The 1944 Duncan ‘Report on Adult Education in Australia Today’ was thus the first to recommend special Commonwealth grants to support adequate adult education provision that was recognised as an educational sector in its own right, ‘a way of living, not a preparation for life... education (that is) continuous and lifelong’ (Maunder 1980:81). These recommendations ‘slumped back into the languor of laissez-faire’ (Whitelock 1974:264) of the next two decades. The Australian Assistance Plan introduced by the Whitlam government in 1973 that aimed to involve local people in planning and social action suffered a similar fate through lack of anything more than lip service by the government (Victorian Council of Social Services 1975).
The climate of economic restraint that re emerged in the 1970s saw substantial achievement and growth in adult education once again as communities shook off the complacency of the prosperous post war decades (Maunders 1980).

3.2 ACE in Victoria – the past 50 years

The responses to developing adult education around Australia were not uniform. While the WEA still delivers adult education programs in NSW and South Australia and is committed to education as a contributor to creating a more democratic and just society (WEA 2003). In Victoria the WEA was replaced by the Council of Adult Education (CAE) as a result of advocacy and timing during the two year post war Labor Government by Colin Badger, a former WEA tutor and Committee member of the Australian Army Education Service. Legislated by its own Act of Parliament on 21 May 1947, the CAE was to transform the delivery of adult and community education in this state. Freed from the restrictive university environment, a model of community based adult education was established that is still regarded as exemplary in Australia and beyond (ACFEB 1995b; a; Bradshaw 1999; Rushbrook 2001:4; Gribble ND:3).

Under the directorship of Colin Badger, the CAE was eager from the beginning to take the delivery of a program of formal and informal adult education to community settings throughout Melbourne. As an organisation that had the potential to fulfill Badger’s desire to foster a love of learning in others, particularly those ‘who had missed the chance to learn in their early years’ (Rushbrook 2001:2) it championed the delivery of post school education away from mainstream educational institutions (Centre for Adult Education 2003).
It meant that people could engage in structured lifelong learning provision in community settings after formal schooling had finished.

While the initial recommendations for the establishment of the CAE included 'the development of strong local adult education centres based on ...schools' (Gribble ND:5) it was not until 1962 that the CAE initiated the first regional ACE centre in Wangaratta, 'The Centre' (Rushbrook 2001:5). Seconding a teacher from the Department of Education, The Centre began offering an adult education program that was quickly replicated in other parts of Victoria. Wangaratta was joined by Sale, Ballarat and Albury/Wodonga as the first ACE centres managed by locally elected committees of management known as Local Advisory Committees. My career in adult education began at Colac Adult and Community Education Inc in 1983, an organisation that is now 25 years old. Initially legislatively connected to the CAE through the Local Advisory Committees, the Victorian ACE centres were autonomous by the late 1980s. The recommendations of the Edgar Report (Edgar 1988) and the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Further Education resulted in new legislation that established the Victorian Adult, Community and Further Education Board (ACFEB) under the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Act in 1991 (Gribble ND:18). In 2004 there were over 500 registered ACE providers in Victoria (ACFEB 1995b) and community based providers delivered 22% of further education in Victoria in 2001 (ACFEB 2001 - 02:8).

The concept of community centres providing a central location for a variety of activities had been established for several decades (Ife 2002:165), but the scale on which the ACE centres were established as Local Advisory Committees of the CAE enabled them to develop with a consistent focus on meeting the adult education needs of each local community.
It established breadth of provision in rural and regional Victoria that is still not replicated elsewhere in Australia (Spierings 2003). One consequence of local determination was that the ACE centres did not establish themselves in schools, although sometimes disbanded school premises were used. The use of non-school settings has been generally observed to overcome the barriers to participation that a poor experience in school may present to many adult learners (Rushbrook 2001:5; Gribble ND:30).

3.3 National adult education policy

A thing of shreds and patches (Whitelock 1974:212).

Nationally however, adult education has been regarded as the poor relation in education - the 1991 Federal Inquiry into Adult Education was titled 'Come In Cinderella' (Senate Standing Committee on Employment 1991). While its proponents have always been convinced of the quality of ACE delivery, the development and general public awareness of this quality has been hindered by chronic under resourcing.

The erratic application of government policy that recognises the value of lifelong learning and supports it with resources has been a feature of Australian education at a national level and this remains a problem today (Sodoti 2003). Throughout the cyclic nature of commitment to adult education and community development in Australia at various points throughout the 20th Century and particularly with post war initiatives, adult educators were optimistic about reform and recognition, only to be disappointed by a lack of system and vision. The 1944 Sydney Conference on 'The Future of Adult Education in Australia' for example 'stagger(ed), unmourned, into limbo'(Whitelock 1974:212).
Lifelong education so strongly supported in the 1940s for its capacity to develop individuals and communities 'faded in the prosperous years of the fifties and sixties' and adult educators were urged to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the 1979 Melbourne Conference, 'Here Come the Eighties' to develop policy into a movement (Maunders 1980:226).

The resilience of adult education as valuable in building local communities has nevertheless ensured that it has 'coped with human weakness, shortsightedness and other failings' (Maunders 1980:228), 'sporadic practice' (Sodoti 2003) and 'the inconsistent policy frameworks, narrow approach to implementation and flawed accountability practices that are the main obstacles to partnerships' (Kellock 2004) and survived the withdrawal of resources and changes in policy. Its persistence has ensured that it has developed into a sector that has the skills to capitalise on opportunities as they arise with new policy initiatives.

3.4 The Victorian ACE sector in the 21st Century

While there is still no national ACE Policy that is accompanied by national resourcing, current recognition by policy makers has meant considerable opening up of opportunities that have had significant implications for ACE providers, requiring them to be active participants in a collaborative education system. The 1997 Senate Committee Report, 'Beyond Cinderella: Towards the Learning Society' commented on the increasing blurring of boundaries between education sectors and the capacity for strategic partnerships to open up lifelong learning opportunities for all (Senate Employment 1997; Kearns 1999b:21). Organised adult learning in community settings is now 'widespread in all local Australian communities' and the impact is 'strong and varied' (Clemans 2003:60).
As reporting of ACE outcomes is improved so it demonstrates that adult learning in community settings is valuable, then a clearly defined, well-organised and well-supported national sector will emerge (Curtain 2002; Clemans 2003:60).

The Victorian Government continued to lead the way in providing educational leadership (Spierings 2003; Kellock 2004) and funding for the ACE sector in various forms and this resulted in the increasing professionalisation of ACE in the 1980s and 1990s. It supported adult, community and further education ‘because of its substantial contribution to Victoria’s economic, social and cultural development’ (Gribble ND:31). The retention of community management ensured that volunteerism continued to coexist alongside the paid staff and ‘is a significant factor in the continued flexibility and responsiveness of adult, community and further education’ (Gribble ND:13).

4. HOW THE LEARNING CITY EMERGED IN THE CURRENT CLIMATE

4.1 The Learning City as a new response

We are in between stories. The old story, the account of how we fit into it (the world) is no longer effective. Yet we have not learned the new story.

Thomas Berry, The Dream of the Earth (Fricker 2001:1).
What are we trying to achieve? What outcomes do we expect?

The simple answer is that we want to change our neighbourhoods. We want to build communities where residents feel in control of their lives and that they have a role in making decisions that affect them. We want to see communities where barriers to participation are removed and where local residents feel a sense of community ownership. We want to see learning communities where every person feels that learning is important to them and relevant to their lives (Sivers 2002).

A Learning City is an example of an operating framework in ‘the new fused discourse’ (Fricker 2001:10) that brings different lexicons together such as community development, social capital and human capital, self determination, capacity building and community building. The combination of a new focus on lifelong learning to equip communities and their citizens to cope with unexpected changes such as the downturn of the shipping industry in Gothenburg and the steel industry in Glasgow during the 1990s, the demands for a workforce that is skilled in information technology to ensure communities remain economically competitive (Longworth 1999:19; Holm 2001; Maddocks 2001; Scottish Executive 2001; Wheeler 2001:13; Cruikshank 2003; Snelling 2003:5) and the OECD focus on lifelong learning have led to the rise of the concept of Learning Cities. A Learning City is one:

which develops by learning from its experiences and those of others…(The) key characteristic of the learning city is the ability to develop successfully in a rapidly changing socio-economic environment (Landry 2000:267).
Cities such as Gothenburg and Glasgow used the Learning City concept to ‘look at its resources in a far more comprehensive way…(to turn) weaknesses into strengths, (make) something out of nothing’ (Landry 2000:267).

So from the mid 1990s European Learning Cities developed rapidly. Gothenburg was the first designated Learning City and the newly elected Labour Government in the UK allocated funding support to cities that would develop partnerships across community sectors and would improve learning opportunities. There are now more than 100 cities and towns in the UK that designate themselves Learning Cities (Longworth 1999:111).

4.2 The Learning City emerges in Australia

The global effects of economic downturns impacted on Australia during the 1990s as well and here too, community development surfaced in different ways in attempts to provide a direction for the future in a prevailing political culture of economic rationalism that existed in State Governments and the Federal Government during this time. Kenny (Kenny 1994:xi), Goldsworthy (Goldsworthy 2001:1) and Packer comment that community strength had been damaged by ‘values of market efficiency and corporate growth’ (Packer 2001:2). In this climate, the economic imperatives of efficiency, productivity and unrestrained competition are regarded as the basis for progress (Kenny 1999; Goldsworthy 2001). As was the case in the UK in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Bryant attributed the demand for change to the ‘decline in confidence in the traditional channels of political reform’ (Bryant 1979:87), governments withdrew from interference in society and public health, education and welfare were starved of funds and controlled by an authoritarian government (Kenny 1994:xi).
It is no coincidence that the election of a Labor Government in Victoria in 2000 saw the implementation of many initiatives designed to improve social inclusion and the empowerment of local communities. The government seemed genuinely interested in testing strategies for developing stronger communities where local people determined and developed the options for their future. Models that creatively engaged individuals and communities and allowed more complete community participation were encouraged as Goldsworthy advocated at the 2001 International Community Development Conference in Rotorua, NZ (Goldsworthy 2001:8).

Her concern that the ‘climate of the new millennium may not be as amenable to this model as the 70s and 80s were’ has been challenged by the local, national and international interest in community capacity building that has become a feature of the early years of the 21st Century as the ‘link between strong communities and good economic outcomes has... caught the attention of governments internationally’ (Department for Victorian Communities 2002b). In Australia, as in the UK, Canada and the USA especially, learning was beginning to be more widely recognised as adding value to organisations, communities and individuals and a new means of economic and community renewal (Blackmore 2002:3).

Learning Towns and Cities were one of the strategies being piloted by the Victorian Government as a component of ‘Growing Victoria Together’ (Government of Victoria 2001). The development of learning communities was also supported by ‘Knowledge and Skills for the Innovation Economy’ (Kosky 2002), ‘Respect: The government’s vision for young people’ (Office for Youth 2002), the ‘Blueprint for Government Schools’ (Kosky 2003) and ‘Taking young people seriously’ (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria 2003).
The input of individuals and communities into ways to change and strengthen communities was also specifically requested by the Department for Victorian Communities through its demonstration projects in Community Building (Department for Victorian Communities 2002a) and the Department of Human Services Neighbourhood Renewal projects.

This aimed to ensure that ‘in the longer term the intent is to drive more fundamental service delivery reform across the public sector’ (Department for Victorian Communities 2002b; 2004a). It was echoed by the introduction of the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENS).

We can’t stick to old ways, or tolerate poor outcomes. We need to work in different ways, innovate… (Davis 2002:3).

This then was a more supportive environment to be experimenting with modern ways of engaging those who do not have the skills to participate effectively in our 21st Century communities by learning ‘about the dynamics of where they live and how it is changing’ (Landry 2000:267).

5. ACE AND THE VICTORIAN LEARNING TOWNS

We are first and foremost a bridge between isolation and connection with a bigger world.

Small metropolitan community organisation (Clemans 2003:31).
Launched in May 2000, the Victorian Learning Towns were to be managed by ACE providers in nine (later ten) rural and regional centres (Figure 1). ACE providers were regarded by the Victorian Government as being well placed through the development of Learning Towns and Cities to unite education and community. They were characterised as responsive to local needs, having close involvement with structures and strategies that support lifelong learning and having the ability to design and implement programs that reflect lifelong learning goals (ACFEB March 2000:3).

Figure 1. Map of Victorian Learning Towns (Wong April 2002).
Victoria’s Learning Towns pilot program aimed to:

- Develop collaborative learning partnerships by linking ACE providers, TAFE and other educational providers, industry, local government and community activity
- Integrate economic and social development

(ACFEB March 2000:3).

These aims centred on the connection between learning and economic development, social cohesion and personal fulfilment. These connections were seen to be supportive of each other in bringing about the change in culture needed for cities to be economically and socially successful.

The Victorian Government placed the ACE sector at the heart of the Learning Towns projects, extending their significant role as convenors of proactive education and training, community, local government and industry partnerships. Already well recognised for their effectiveness in achieving individual development outcomes that enhance self esteem and personal agency (Clemans 2003:31), ACE providers also ‘make an important contribution to developing cohesive communities’ through their skills in building connections and communicating (Falk 2000:ix).

The Victorian Learning Towns program commenced in June 2000 and was funded to December 2004. Geelong Adult Training and Education (GATE) Inc was successful in its application for one of the nine pilot projects.
Experience has shown that it is critical for the local community to be fully involved in the planning (Ife 2002:165).

GATE is unusual as an ACE provider in that it was created on the recommendation of a review conducted in 1994 by the Barwon South West (BSW) Regional Council of ACFE rather than from a community coalition of interested individuals and groups. Recognising that Geelong was significantly under serviced by ACE in comparison to delivery in other regional areas, the ACFE Regional Council adopted the recommendation from the report, 'Towards the Future' to consolidate the previously disparate provision through community centres and neighbourhood houses in Geelong (GATE 1996).

GATE was established under the leadership of Executive Officer, Christine Denmead, ‘to ensure the effective, efficient and cohesive provision of Adult, Community and Further Education in the community of Geelong’ (GATE 1997:1) and was officially opened by the Victorian Minister for Tertiary Education and Training, the Hon. Phillip Honeywood in July 1996 (GATE 1996:4).

As the largest provider of ACFE funded programs in Victoria, GATE quickly embarked on its charter to increase the provision of ACE in the region. In 1994, 176,000 student contact hours (SCH) had been delivered in Geelong by all ACE providers. In its first year GATE delivered between 80 and 100% of Geelong’s vocational and preparatory adult and community education and 21% of the general adult education, a total of over 186,000 student contact hours of the 213,000 delivered in the BSW region – Figure 2 (GATE 1996:3).
Figure 2. GATE’s SCII as a proportion of total BSW Region delivery 1996.

With a particular brief to liaise with the thirteen neighbourhood houses in the Geelong region, GATE was well connected with its community (GATE 1997:8). It demonstrated the capacity to implement program provision in areas of need as they were identified. This included increasing provision in the north western suburbs on the basis of the findings of the Northern Suburbs Needs Analysis (Brazier 1997; GATE 1997:8).

Although different methods of calculating student contact hours resulted in some fluctuation in the ensuing years, GATE continued to be the dominant provider of adult and community education in the region and in 2002 delivered 353 399 student contact hours (GATE 2002) - nearly twice as many as the next highest provider of ACFE programs in Victoria - ‘The Centre’, Wangaratta with 190 739 (ACFEB 2003:Item 2) and over half of the 665 201 student contact hours of ACFE delivery in the entire Barwon South Western ACFE Region – Figure 3 (ACFEB 2001 - 02:7).
Figure 3. GATE's SCH as a proportion of total BSW Region delivery 2002.

This amounted to 6.19% of the total Victorian ACFE delivery of 5,641,751 student contact hours (not including the CAE and Adult Migrant Education Services).— Figure 4 (ACFEB Sept 2003:Item 7).

Figure 4. GATE's SCH as a proportion of total ACFE delivery 2002.
In keeping with the pattern of ACE appealing to people with lower levels of educational attainment (Gribble ND:30), 79% of all ACFE students in 2002 in Geelong had an educational attainment level of Year 12 or below although this figure includes 20% of that 79% who did not state their educational attainment level (ACFEB Sept 2003:Item 7).

In 2003, GATE continued to demonstrate that it was fulfilling its charter to increase ACFE provision in Geelong. It delivered 566 276 student contact hours and in common with the general ACFE learner profile, 25% of GATE’s students were male students were and 75% were female – Figure 5 (GATE 2003:3).

![GATE Student Contact Hours](image)

**Figure 5.** GATE’s SCH delivery 1999 – 2003.

Located in Victoria’s largest regional city, GATE was able to attract management and sessional staff with significant experience in a diverse range of adult education provision so that its program included vocational education and training, adult literacy and basic education, access and preparatory programs and English as a Second Language as well as general adult education (GATE 2002). I joined the organisation in 1998 in the new position of Business Development Manager. My 15 years experience in the ACE sector as a manager and practitioner was considered a valuable addition to the developing organisation.
In meeting the challenge ‘to keep abreast of ... changes and look for the opportunities they present’ (GATE 1997:7) I assisted GATE in gaining substantial new contracts such as the Jobs Pathway Programme and Community Work Coordination of Work for the Dole. I also contributed to compiling a demonstrated record of piloting programs such as the ACFE Quality Management Framework (1998), Barwon Youth Options (1999) and an Alcohol and Other Drugs Recognition of Prior Learning project (2002). The organisation was therefore well positioned to apply for a Learning Towns project when the incoming Labor Government in Victoria announced the pilot in 2000.

7. GEELONG, VICTORIA

7.1 Location and area covered

Geelong’s Learning Towns project, ‘SmartGeelong - The Learning City’, covered the area known as Greater Geelong that included the major centres of Geelong, Ocean Grove, Lara, Leopold and also Queenscliff.

Geelong is located 75 km south west of Melbourne and covers an area of 1,240 square kilometres. The Geelong Region’s population in 2003 was 238 404 and population density was 152.54 per square km (City of Greater Geelong 2002-3; ACFEB Sept 2003:Item 4).
7.2 Industry and employment profile

Geelong has a strong manufacturing base (20%) with a specialisation in motor vehicles and their associated components, petroleum products, textiles and aluminium. The city is also a major commercial and residential centre with a rapidly emerging tourism and hospitality industry currently comprising 10% of local activity (City of Greater Geelong 2004).

With a labour force of 80,000, employment indicators have shown a steady decrease in unemployment levels. The unemployment rate in Geelong fell from 9.1% to 8.8% in the twelve months to July 1999 and continued to fall steadily to 5% by June 2003 compared with 5.7% for Victoria. The regional rate has dropped by 5.6% from 1998 – 2003 compared with 2.2% for Victoria (City of Greater Geelong 2002-3:5). In the period 1996 to 2001 employment in the Geelong region grew by 12% compared with the Victorian average growth of 10.3% (Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission 2003) and is predicted to continue to grow at 1.6% per annum (City of Greater Geelong 2002-3).

Employment growth was greatest among managers and administrators, professionals, associate professionals (now 49%) and support worker occupations of intermediate clerical sales and service workers (now 30%). Employment growth was also strong among the unskilled occupations in the services sector (City of Greater Geelong 2004).

Occupations in trades, which have the highest concentration of workers with vocational education and training qualifications, experienced an employment growth of 8.7%, well above the Victorian average of 4.1%. Strong employment growth in the construction sector has contributed to the growth of tradespeople and intermediate production and transport workers.
Employment among advanced clerical and services workers such as secretaries, personal assistants, insurance agents and bookkeepers has declined in line with the State trend (Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission 2003).

A regional report prepared by Monash University’s Centre of Policy Studies at the end of 2003 predicted robust growth for the Barwon Region for the next decade (City of Greater Geelong 2002-3:4).

### 7.3 Population projections

Greater Geelong has the largest population of all Local Government Areas in Victoria and growth is expected to remain strong. The population is expected to increase by 14 477 people between 2001 and 2011. This equals a growth rate of 6.3% in that time (ACFEB Sept 2003).

By 2021, households are expected to rise by 24.8% and change is also expected in the age structure over the next 20 years.

The 60 - 84 age group is expected to have the greatest net growth with the highest net loss in the 5 - 17 and 35 - 49 age groups (City of Greater Geelong 2000).

78.7% of the population is Australian born compared with 70.6% Australian born in Victoria (PMFIC Geelong Report 2003:6).
7.4 Implications for educational provision

In this region, 44.9% of residents have some type of qualification, compared to 46.3% in Victoria. Attaining higher qualifications and training levels became increasingly essential in the changing economy. People in the workforce have had to undertake significant re-skilling, whilst people entering the workforce increasingly need formal qualifications (Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission 2003). Other implications for education and training include increased demand for educational provision that meets the needs of older learners, especially in new learning technology (City of Greater Geelong 2000). The reduction in the 35 - 49 age group has implications for access to ongoing vocational education and training in an effort to retain this most productive sector of the workforce. ‘A second phase (of participation in education and training) is evident as a result of people reaching a career stage in their 30s and 40s where they require re-skilling to maximise their career opportunities’ (Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission 2003).

Youth unemployment rates have been higher than average in the Geelong region for a decade. Although they have dropped along with unemployment rates for all age groups in the region, the rate for 20 – 24 year olds was 13.8% in the Barwon Western Region in June 2003 (City of Greater Geelong 2002-3:11).

Along with the national figure of 13.8% of 15 – 24 year olds not in full time education or employment (Spierings 2003; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004), this indicated a pressing need for alternative educational provision that is better suited to the needs of these young learners than the ‘rigid hierarchies with top down power structure’ currently available (Martin 2004).
Newly emerging industry also required current and relevant training programs. These include tourism, airport related industry, transport systems, winegrowing, seafood and aquaculture and a shift in focus in the manufacturing industry to technology driven products (such as telecommunications) with an international market (City of Greater Geelong 2000; Murphy 2003b).

8. HOW A LEARNING CITY COULD DELIVER ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GEELONG

8.1 The situation in 1999

The proposal for SmartGeelong - The Learning City was developed as a key strategy to enhance Geelong's reputation as an educational, employment and lifestyle destination through cooperative action. In order to attract people to Geelong for its excellence in lifelong learning opportunities, educational choice in a learning community required more than the individual actions of educational providers. It had to be matched by the official and overt actions of those responsible for Geelong as a region. The City of Greater Geelong (CoGG – hereafter called the City Council) and organisations such as the Geelong Chamber of Commerce were important players in this process.

This meant more than just general expressions of support and encouragement. It required the pursuit of excellence in educational and learning opportunities to be embedded into the objectives and strategies of key bodies.
Geelong could be described at this stage as well networked (Figure 6) but as a Learning City it would need to use and enhance the networks and linkages available to actively establish Geelong in a leadership role in lifelong learning pursuits.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 6.** Assessment of Geelong’s position in 1999 in its development as a learning community (Martin 2002).

This focus on educational opportunity was assisted by other developments not specific to education, such as the careful management of Geelong’s lifestyle attractions. SmartGeelong - The Learning City built on the Geelong Smart Move campaign. Launched in 1997 to stimulate employment, Smart Move was extraordinarily successful in reversing a pervasively negative outlook in the region. As local government emerged from the ‘chaos’ of the ‘amazing upheaval’ of the late 1990s (Hill 2001:2) this campaign developed a renewed sense of energy and optimism in Geelong.
By August 1999, 'Geelong – Smart Move' reported that the campaign was achieving its aims of retaining existing residents and attracting new ones through a vigorous marketing campaign emphasising Geelong's lifestyle and business opportunities. Over 1000 families moved to Geelong during the lifespan of the campaign and Geelong's population began to grow for the first time in ten years. Most importantly, unemployment was slashed from 13.6% in September 1997 to less than 9% in 1999 (the State average). Geelong's unemployment rate fell more than three times faster than the State average in the 18 months to March 1999 (Withington 1999).

During the same period, youth unemployment was halved to below the State average although by 2001 this was still unacceptably high at 15.3%, compared to Victoria's 16.9% (Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission 2003). As a Learning City, Geelong aimed to extend educational pathways for this group that included and alternatives to VCE, literacy, numeracy and English as a Second Language support integrated with vocational education, and technology training.

9. DEFINITIONS

9.1 Learning

Learning is critical in the process of education but it is not the same. It is broader than judging achievement on the basis of quantitative measurement. Knowles provides an accessible definition of learning ‘as the process of gaining knowledge and/or expertise’ (Knowles 1998:17) which is rounded out by others:
The traditional meaning of the word learning is much deeper than just taking information in. It is about changing individuals so that they produce results they care about, accomplish things that are important to them (Senge 2001:610).

The adult (learner)...begins by giving attention to situations in which he finds himself, to problems which include obstacles to his self fulfilment (Gessner 1956:160).

The central dynamic of the learning process is the experience of the learner. Learning ‘is an internal process controlled by the learners and engaging their whole being’ (Knowles 1970:56). People are motivated to learn by feeling a need to learn to achieve personal goals (Knowles 1970; Knowles 1998; Lucas 2000; Senge 2001; Lucas March 2000).

9.2 Lifelong learning

Learning takes place around the clock and isn’t restricted to specific times. ‘That’s not life.’ (Horton 1990:160).

Lifelong learning is a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment in all roles, circumstances and environments (OECD 1994:5).

...in a world of accelerating change, learning must be a lifelong process. (Knowles 1970:19).
9.3 Participation

Better informed citizens, more questioning citizens make for a better society
(Clemans 2003:34).

People of all ages face periods of transition and many face these periods without assistance so
that they do not manage them as well as they might like. People who are active learners
develop a sense of wellbeing when they are able to learn new skills and knowledge that
ensures their meaningful engagement in rapidly changing environments (ACFEB 1995d;
Australian National Training Authority 2000; Adult Learners Week 2002; Harrison 2003;
Holdsworth 2003). People are recognised as being learners when they participate in non
formal activities as well as formal ones (Connell 2003) although these can be difficult to
define. Ways people might participate in learning include ‘attendance at community events;
membership of organised groups…and volunteering’ (Department for Victorian Communities
2004b:16), visiting museums and art galleries, ‘neighbourhood houses, Telecentres, evening
classes at local high schools, local library courses, book clubs, University of the Third Age,
community action groups, community safety or support groups, societies and hobby clubs,
religious organisations and charities, learning circles and other peer education groups, online
learning and private tutors’ (Adult Learners Week 2002).
9.4 The Learning City

Cities are not simply places where people live and work: they are also places where people experience leisure, culture, enterprise and education... A Learning City unites all the diverse providers of learning to meet the needs and aspirations of its citizens. Through the range of local resources they bring together, Learning Cities can provide local solutions to local challenges (Kearns 1999b:6).

A true Learning City ‘develops by learning from its experiences and those of others. It is a place that understands itself and reflects upon that understanding… (It has) the ability to develop successfully in a rapidly changing socio-economic environment' (Landry 2000:267).

9.5 A Learning Community

A Learning Community:

Is a city, town or region that goes beyond its statutory duty to provide education and training for those who require it

and instead

creates a vibrant, participative, culturally aware and economically buoyant environment through the provision, justification and active promotion of learning opportunities to enhance the potential of all of its citizens.

ELLI – European Lifelong Learning Initiative - Learning City definition

(Longworth 1999:112).
10. PREPARATION FOR SMARTGEELONG – THE LEARNING CITY

10.1 Preparatory Cycle: From Preparation to Awareness

(April 2000 – April 2001)

The Learning Towns project will provide an added dimension to Geelong’s educational, social and economic effort that focuses on its people and its enterprises as lifelong learners (SG Planning Group April 2000).

Building on the success of the Geelong - Smart Move campaign to stimulate the local economy (Withington 1999) the Victorian Government’s proposal in March 2000 to pilot Learning Towns in regional and rural communities presented Geelong with an opportunity to provide ‘a break through in harnessing the potential already available’ (Considine 2004:3).

By bringing together the key education and training players, the Learning Towns project would encourage them to work collaboratively on enhancing the already impressive scope of learning opportunities available in the region. Proposals were invited from ACE providers and GATE joined in a new partnership with the recently launched SmartGeelong Network Ltd (SGN) to support the implementation of a Learning Towns proposal for Geelong.
The proposal stated that Geelong’s Learning Towns project would focus on:

- Enhancing access to education and training opportunities by improving the articulation between existing educational pathways and implementing new pathways.
- Improving community-wide understanding of the social and economic vigour enabled by a commitment to lifelong learning (SG Planning Group April 2000:4).

10.2 The Learning Towns project proposal from Geelong – February 2000 (Table 1):

![SMART GEELONG The Learning City](image)

"Learn something new everyday"

Our Vision

'Shaping our future together through community learning partnerships'

Our Mission

Creating an appetite for learning.

Contributing to economic development through social inclusion.

Improving educational pathways through community partnerships

Table 1. Extract from the Business Plan of SmartGeelong – The Learning City (SG Advisory Group Dec 2000a).

10.3 Project Objectives

The objectives of the Victorian Learning Towns Program (SG Planning Group April 2000:7) were aligned with key dimensions of lifelong learning in a learning society described by Kearns (Kearns 1999b:9). They were detailed in the first Business Plan of SmartGeelong – The Learning City (SG Advisory Group Dec 2000a).
11.1 Project Management

The GATE Learning Towns proposal developed this model for the management of the project (Figure 7):

![Diagram showing the project management structure]

**Figure 7.** GATE’s Learning Town project management structure (SG Planning Group April 2000:5).

11.1.1 Learning Town model

The project used the model of a learning community described in the Australian National Training Authority’s (ANTA) National Marketing Strategy for Skills Acquisition and Lifelong Learning, Community Research Venues (Australian National Training Authority 1999) as a starting point.

In this model, GATE’s Learning Towns project built on the resources of SGN to provide the 'Resources/Research/Relationships' layer to its community.
Resources were provided by project funding and by the infrastructure support of GATE. In addition, significant resources in infrastructure and educational provision were presented by the membership of SGN.

Research and information was provided from the collective resources of SGN. In progressing the achievement of its stated objective, 'To develop a significant new information system,' (SmartGeelong Network 1999a) SGN had already established a skills and resources database and conducted profiles of members to determine alignment of strategies and capabilities.

Relationships were continuously enhanced by the formation of SGN and the inclusion of other networks and new members such as community organisations and businesses.

11.2 The proposal succeeds – June 2000

On receiving notification of the success of the proposal in June 2000, GATE employed me as the Learning Towns project manager. An Advisory Group was established on 6 November 2000 (SG Advisory Group Nov 2001b) in compliance with the project requirements and I reported to GATE through the Advisory Group on progress of the project. A consultation including a SWOT analysis was conducted with SGN to determine the early directions of the project and the first action plan was developed from this (SG Planning Group July 2000b; SG Advisory Group Nov 2000).
12. THE PRACTICE (ACTION)

12.1 The first event

Prior to the establishment of the Advisory Group, I embarked on initiatives with a small planning group. In addition to a series of consultations and presentations to key individuals and groups, such as the City Council meeting in September 2000 (SG Planning Group Sept 2000), the first official activity of Geelong’s Learning Towns project was the Geelong Learning Festival 2000.

Built on previous events held by GATE during Adult Learners’ Week (the first week in September each year), the Learning City invited potential partners to hold a joint ‘expo’ of local lifelong learning opportunities in Market Square, a major indoor shopping centre in the Geelong CBD. Focused on ‘Showcasing Geelong’s Learning Opportunities’ the week long Geelong Learning Festival attracted participation from 15 organisations including the Gordon Institute of TAFE, Deakin University and the BSW Regional Office of the Department of Education and Training (Geelong Advertiser 5 Sept 2000).

Feedback from the Geelong Learning Festival positively supported the initiative, indicated that new learners had been attracted and generated suggestions for the next year’s Festival (SG Geelong Learning Festival Steering Group Oct 2000).
12.2 It's official: SmartGeelong – The Learning City

On 19 December 2000 the Mayor of Geelong, Cr Michael Crutchfield, declared Geelong a Learning City as SmartGeelong – The Learning City. The Learning Towns project was officially launched by Ian Tresize MP, Member for Geelong at a function in City Hall attended by 60 community representatives (Geelong Advertiser 20 Dec 2000; SG SmartGeelong - The Learning City Launch Dec 2000).

13. MEASUREMENT OF THE PROJECT PERFORMANCE (EVALUATION)

Action Plans were developed, reported against and updated throughout the project. While it was anticipated that there would be overlap between the phases, the Preparatory Cycle was completed, reported on and evaluated in the February 2001 reporting process to ACFE (SG Advisory Group Dec 2000b).

The method by which all of the Victorian Learning Towns projects could demonstrate their impact was identified from the start as an area for new work. The traditional methods of measuring adult education outcomes such as Student Contact Hours and Module Completion Rates were recognised as inappropriate for this new community building initiative. The Victorian Learning Towns were charged with developing new ways of measuring community building outcomes and this was the subject of much focused debate and development from the beginning (VLTN 16 Nov 2001; Kearns July 2000; ACFEB March 2000).
Eventually the Performance Measurement Framework Implementation and Customisation (PMFIC – hereafter called the Performance Measurement Framework) project was trialed by the Victorian Learning Towns Network (VLTN) and this is described in subsequent chapters (PMFIC Geelong Report 2003). Consequently, SmartGeelong – The Learning City developed initial strategies and predicted anticipated outcomes in order to measure improvement over the life of the project:

13.1 Planned Project Outcomes (Table 2):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated Outcome</th>
<th>Key Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced educational pathways in regional and rural areas</td>
<td>High quality educational pathways already existed in Geelong but as a Learning City it would extend the reach of the awareness of those possibilities and access to them. The aim was to achieve this through the inclusion of community agencies and enhanced liaison with local government in Learning City activity. Articulation between educational institutions themselves (including schools) and between those institutions and community and private providers could be improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved access to good quality education, training and learning opportunities in rural and regional areas.</td>
<td>The city has the infrastructure to support large scale population influx and a community wide approach to promoting the city as attractive. This included promotion of the worldclass breadth of learning opportunities already available for its community (SmartGeelong Network 1999b). SmartGeelong - The Learning City would provide an additional dimension to that activity by developing the relationships between the key stakeholders to maximise the resources that are available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced understanding of the value of lifelong learning and increased community commitment to ensuring learning opportunities and outcomes continue to expand.</td>
<td>The collaboration facilitated by the learner centred ACE approach through the project would ensure that this critically important cultural outlook is embedded in Learning City activities with a particular emphasis on increasing learning opportunities in the workplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved collaborative relationships between key stakeholders involved in education, training and employment in regional and rural areas.</td>
<td>There were several established networks of the key stakeholders involved in education, training and employment in Geelong. SmartGeelong - The Learning City would increase the collaboration within and between those networks and increase the involvement of some of those stakeholders such as community agencies and employers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A broad range of cross sectoral educational outcomes for students assisted by the activities of the Learning City.</td>
<td>The proposed scope of activities of SmartGeelong - The Learning City was extensive. However, the already established networks and the groundwork commenced in identifying and implementing activities would ensure the achievement of a broad range of lifelong learning outcomes for all sectors of the community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. How SmartGeelong - The Learning City planned to achieve the expected outcomes of the Victorian Learning Towns Program (SG Planning Group April 2000:8; SG Advisory Group Dec 2000a).

### 13.2 Critical Success Factors

If the findings of this project against the anticipated outcomes were successful ones, they would provide information about the critical success factors for the development of Learning Cities and Towns. On the basis of the anticipated outcomes outlined above, a preliminary description of these included:
1. Seamless educational pathways between all educational sectors.

2. High levels of access to good quality education, training and learning opportunities.

3. Community understanding and commitment to the value of lifelong learning.

4. Active collaborative relationships between key stakeholders involved in education, training and employment ensuring the provision of a wide range of learning opportunities, especially in the workplace.

5. Numerous and significant cross sectoral partnerships.

6. A broad range of cross sectoral educational outcomes for the entire community.

7. New resources to support improved access to lifelong learning opportunities, especially for increasing the use of information and communication technologies (ACFEB March 2000; Landry 2000; Franson July 2000; Longworth 1999).

These critical success factors remained a backdrop throughout the cyclic project evaluations and case studies and would be tested at the end of the project for their ‘critical’ nature.

13.3 The PhD proposal – an opportunity for evaluation and reflection

It is not enough just to talk about these things (McNiff 2002).

The management of the pilot program, SmartGeelong - The Learning City, presented me with an opportunity to develop a proposal for a PhD. I had conducted a literature review to prepare the Learning Towns funding submission and to underpin the early action plans once the submission had been successful.
It seemed evident that there was an emerging body of literature on successful practices for establishing Learning Cities including the evaluations that were beginning to be conducted and published. This review provided the challenge that stimulated the interest in developing the intellectual investigation and the systematic research framework (Freire 1985:2) that a PhD would provide. The pilot nature of the project, the reasonable funding horizon and the support of my employer provided the necessary infrastructure to support my application.

The Learning City community in Australia was relatively compact in these early stages and I had established useful contacts through the first Australian Learning City Conference held in Albury/Wodonga in October 2000. These contacts included the Learning Cities Network in the UK and Australian researchers who had been involved in UK and Northern European evaluations of Learning Cities.

I established the scope of the study in consultation with my RMIT supervisor, policy makers and practitioners in the Victorian and Geelong projects as well as those involved in implementing and evaluating the UK experience in particular. Measures that reliably indicate benefits for Learning Cities needed to be established during this project.

It was anticipated that this would be done by using the literature and the proposed and actual indicators being implemented by SmartGeelong - The Learning City.

Subsequent consultation with Australian researchers who were instrumental in supporting the development of Learning Cities in this country assisted in developing questions that would contribute to providing evidence to demonstrate whether and how the formal decision to become a Learning City or Town makes a positive difference to local communities.
As a community development intervention, SmartGeelong - The Learning City could be expected to demonstrate characteristics of a Learning City that were distinctive. SmartGeelong - The Learning City was well positioned to facilitate the relationships between people and organisations using Winwood’s ‘educational model’ (Winwood 1977:64). It could be expected to enhance the information sharing and the learning potential that are features of this model in the development of new networks and collaborations.

An approach that integrated findings in literature and my practical experience as the project manager of SmartGeelong - The Learning City was expected to generate plentiful and relevant data for analysis. This would then provide valuable conclusions that could be used to encourage other communities throughout Australia to recognise the importance of developing a learning culture.

My career long experience in the ACE sector and previous experience in conducting research into the value of a community based approach to learning ensured that I was well prepared to undertake the evaluation of this new project.

I expected that this research would provide valuable models and conclusions about a highly innovative approach to elevating the status of lifelong learning as a strategy for positively managing the development of communities in the new century. It would provide those models and conclusions on the basis of evidence that could provide insights and exemplars for others.

I anticipated that the findings would be highly transferable to all communities in Victoria in particular - and probably more widely given the general homogeneity of Australian community values and the capacity for extensive localisation of Learning City activity.
Additionally, the action research methodology would lead to a refinement of definitions and the development of case knowledge and evaluative tools relevant to Learning City structures, professional practice and operational variables. This aimed to ensure that the project outcomes had relevance in the international context.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. THE THEORY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A parallel movement that has always been intertwined with the development of adult community education (ACE) in Victoria has been Community Development. The community owned and managed approach of ACE in Victoria is unique in Australia and it demonstrates strong community development characteristics. As a strategy for empowering marginalised groups and individuals, community development operates at the grass roots. It aims to support people in taking responsibility for improving the quality of their lives and this is demonstrated by ACE at several levels. The locally based management structure and the escalating committee responsibilities of employment, quality provision and legislative compliance have developed a model of community empowerment in action. In addition, the aims of ACE provision are to meet the needs of local people in local settings that enable them to participate more effectively in the decision making that affects their lives and their communities. It is a practical and successful demonstration of a key principle of community development - communities gaining control through changing structures and institutions and by transferring the power of determining the learning needs of a community from teachers and schools to the learners (Kenny 1994; 1999:16; Galbally 2004).
1.1 Community work creates community action

Take from the altar of the past the fire, not the ashes (Faris 2002).

Community work that became recognised as community development, supporting disadvantaged groups that were excluded from participation in established social systems, emerged in the years following 1968 in the UK.

Large numbers of new positions in new situations created for community workers in the established Social Work system of local and national government led to the rapid development of new trends in practice. This was in response to the 1968 and 1973 reports of the Gulbekian Study Group, ‘the most important single contribution to the creation of a new community work profession’ (Henderson 1981:12) that identified that new approaches were needed to address inefficiencies in welfare support. The apathy that followed the period of energetic post war rebuilding saw people opting out of coping with the requirements of bureaucracy that were necessary to participate in the established systems such as education, work, politics and culture.

The development of community work as a profession was attributed to the recognised professionalisation of social work by the late 1960s. Community work offered a form of experimentation within social work that was already recognised at this stage as an integral part of the social work profession in the USA (Henderson 1981:12). While the first Gulbenkian Report on community work (Gulbenkian Foundation 1968) had made little mention of community action, the second report (Gulbenkian Foundation 1973) included a full chapter on it (Holman 1974:87).
This was a period of radical activism in the UK - over Vietnam as well as student campaigns in working class areas to highlight issues of urban management and the conditions of the poor, spurred on by high profile community action in the USA by Martin Luther King and the Black Panthers. The creation of the new community work posts offered opportunities for activists to assume positions of some influence in local communities (Henderson 1981:13).

With an emphasis on working with groups rather than individual cases, the new community workers tended to come with experience other than education and social work (including town planning and media). They developed new approaches that were less directive than the earlier post war tendency to focus on developing a blueprint for good community living (Henderson 1981:14).

The target groups for this newly developed profession of community work were highly receptive to the intervention that was offered. It seems a paradox that the disadvantaged groups targeted by community work were nonetheless becoming more affluent, had more time available, fewer children and better educational opportunities and were therefore more likely to participate in community development activity. So while community work is dependent on people being disadvantaged, 'it is their consciousness of oppression that is crucial rather than the fact of oppression itself' that contributed to the favourable response to suggestions for community action (Webb 1966; Henderson 1981:15; Kahn 1994:55).

The 1970s and 1980s also saw a move away from community groups and activities being developed and run by outsiders to being self directed and self managed. Local people were no longer seen as recipients of community work but were engaged as campaigners and leaders in neighbourhood change (Henderson 1981:328).
Anti redevelopment movements also gained traction from the late sixties onwards and people who had voted governments in on the basis of their redevelopment plans became vocal in their opposition to that very redevelopment once it was seen to be unattractive and mitigated against the development of a sense of community.

In addition to these new constituencies for community work intervention, the acceptance of community action as legitimate was the other contributing factor. Emerging from a long tradition of autonomous organisations, as more groups came into existence, so it became easier for others to develop. As communities developed their local resources in this way, they also developed their self reliance and consequently became equipped to counteract the ‘welfare state’ way of thinking that weakened community structures (Henderson 1981:328). By minimising dependence on government funding, communities were better placed to make objective judgments about government policies and propose alternatives. ‘Self reliant communities are going to be in a much better position to cope with a future of uncertainty and crisis’ (Foucault in Ife 2002:213).

1.2 The importance of community work in empowering individuals

Community work as it developed in the UK focused on improving social relationships and achieving social justice. While not exclusive to community work, the need for increased participation was regarded as a constant feature of societies where a multitude of interest groups compete for resources. In complex societies, it is the least powerful and least articulate citizens who are neglected and while community action benefits all people, practical reality means that concern is focused on deprived social groups.
This does not mean however that community workers should focus exclusively on those groups as social change requires a broad cross section of community involvement including those with power and influence. Successful intervention requires the resources of governments and community workers therefore have a critical role in advocacy and relationship building in order to sustain their actions (Specht 1975:21).

Empowerment is a term that is used freely in everyday community work and while there is a danger that it loses ‘any substantive meaning’ (Foucault in Ife 2002:53) through overuse, it is central to community work and community workers. Ife provides a working definition that is useful:

Empowerment aims to increase the power of the disadvantaged

(Foucault in Ife 2002:53).

Empowerment is a process that community development strategies initiate and support. In assisting disadvantaged groups and individuals to gain some control over their future these strategies helped them develop skills in working more effectively with social, economic and political systems. Power can be widely dispersed and for true empowerment to occur, people need to have power over resources, relationships, decision making and information (Benn 1976:73; Foucault in Newman ND:254). This can happen on many levels such as learning to ‘play the game’ with people and systems that have power, by challenging the structures that disadvantage people such as ‘class, race and gender’ (Foucault in Ife 2002:55; Newman ND:255) and by challenging and changing ideas and language. It can be the creation of the conditions required to achieve individual and joint goals (Clements 2001:11).
People do not 'have' power implicitly; rather, power is a technique or action in which individuals can engage. Power is not possessed; it is exercised. And where there is power, there is always also resistance. Through changing discourses, power is defined and redefined and different realities are also defined and redefined ‘by different people in different contexts’ so that people can have a role in the construction of power relationships that affect them (Foucault in Ife 2002:115; Foucault in Gauntlett 2003).

1.3 The practice theory of community work

Kramer and Specht (1975) describe two propositions for a practice theory of community work – know how and know why. Know how propositions advise how to do community work. They provide guidelines for workers and can be learned on the job and through case studies in combination with more traditional study programs. The application of a process that develops skills in ‘knowing how’ provides a framework for the potentially unstructured environment in which the community worker operates (Henderson 1980:12). The community work process however can be flexible in its design and in its application to allow for the different styles of individual workers and the local situations that they encounter.

The ‘know why’ propositions are the ‘foundation knowledge...about social systems and structure’ that the community worker uses to understand why the people and the setting is functioning like it is (Henderson 1980:16). Knowing why is critical for the community worker to determine the need for change. The challenge for the worker is the application of knowing why in ways that are meaningful and relevant for the community.
Like Holman and Si Kahn who define community action as activity that aims for social reform in order to address the powerlessness of groups (Holman 1974:87; Kahn 1994:55), Specht says that community work aims to enfranchise the excluded in the ‘crucially important spheres of influence and consultation’ (Specht 1975:17). It provides a mechanism for facilitating the engagement of people with formal welfare bureaucracies. It acknowledges the ‘wisdom of the oppressed’ (Foucault in Ife 2002:88) and their right to define their own needs and to facilitate their expression in their own way.

It also capitalises on the knowledge that ‘few worthwhile (individual) achievements can be realised outside a social context and without the support and opportunities which society provides’ (Specht 1975:17) to meet the individual’s needs of ‘belonging, significance and security’ (Essenburg 2000).

1.4 Community work in a modern context

The promise of community (Ife 2002:14).

Like lifelong learning, community development is an ancient concept. We continue to aspire to the ideal that ‘humans can and must contribute collectively to the way a society is run, through participating in decision-making, feeling a sense of belonging to a group and having respect for all other human beings’ although it has never been fully achieved (Kenny 1994:11). This is probably even truer in the early years of the 21st Century than it was a decade earlier when Kenny wrote this.
The 1990 Community and Family Commission appointed in Western Australia conducted an inquiry into how people saw their society and what was missing. One of the strongest findings was that people felt the ‘loss of community’ and that people placed a high priority on rebuilding community structures. The power of the idea of community remained strong in this consultation and this is reflected in the continued use of the term in government policy and as a basis for the development of alternative social and economic structures.

There is value in age old concepts being applied in a 21st Century context (Gulbenkian Foundation 1973:41; Kretzmann 1993; Longworth 1999; Faris 2002). Faris describes the importance of a ‘sense of history and a sense of place’ in working with communities in an organic way, not in isolated segments. The multi disciplinary Learning City/Community model is a significant modern application that aims to ensure sustainable solutions to problems that have taken many years to develop. Faris says the ‘short termism’ approach of many government policies creates quick fixes but is ineffective in creating genuine social change. Short term solutions do not address big social problems and all that they do is teach people how to tackle little problems. Joined up solutions are needed for joined up problems and valuable leadership is developed as people learn that they can deal with the big issues (Horton 1990:3; Policy Action Team 17 2000; Franson July 2000).

2. ADDRESSING THE CONCEPT OF NEED

Modern community development initiatives are a valuable means of reaching people who are not well linked to existing social systems (Kretzmann 1993; Pearson 2002; Bragdon 2004).
The asset based approach to community building focuses on the positive aspects in communities as a more profoundly effective starting point for developing skills of the people in disadvantaged communities than the traditional ‘dead end’ of needs driven approaches to community development (Pearson 2002).

The practice of defining need has a disempowering effect. The expertise in defining needs that is vested in professionals rather than the people ‘supposedly experiencing them’ prevents empowerment (Ife 2002:57). Where multiple groups of people in power define the needs of local communities there is less likelihood of those needs being met.

Redressing the balance requires knowledge and access to education and information so that people are given the power to define their own needs. ‘Significant community development takes place only when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort’ (Kretzmann 1993:5). Community development can help communities define their needs and act so that they can be met, resolve problems and seize opportunities (Essenburg 2000; Foucault in Ife 2002:210; Pearson 2002; Hughes 2004).

The asset based approach confirms the value of local knowledge in effective community development. By assessing the availability of local expertise, community development initiatives become and remain relevant in specific community contexts. By persuading local people that they may have the necessary skills and knowledge to address their particular issues, the first steps in acting for change can be taken (Foucault in Ife 2002:211).
Fundamental then to community development is the importance of change – in the way groups of people relate to each other and to their environment. The traditional practice of community development has been to emphasise the place of relationships between people and organisations to promote understanding and harmony. The role of the community worker then is to act as a catalyst to create new groups or to bring existing groups together to enhance the quality of life (Winwood 1977:64).

The literature on the development of community work in the UK and the USA makes distinctions between various elements of this sector (Gulbenkian Foundation 1973:39; Henderson 1980:22) that do not seem as apparent in the Australian context. Terms such as community, empowerment, participatory and sustainability can be overused but despite this, they still represent powerful ideas (Kenny 1999:8; Ife 2002:xiii).

The terms seem to be interchangeable and in my experience in the Victorian ACE sector, ‘community development’ is often used as a generic term to encompass all aspects of community work. Ife makes a useful distinction though between ‘community development’ as the process of developing community structures and ‘community work’ as the practice of workers (Ife 2002:xiii).

So while community development initiatives in Australia are often small scale, they are based on creating a better and mutually enriching society (Kenny 1994:8; 1999). Community workers must guard against treating people as a means to an end, seeing them as ‘objects to be shaped or changed at the whim of the worker’ (Winwood 1977:64).
People’s attitudes must be changed above all else (Winwood 1977:65) and in common with Henderson and Thomas’s description of the new community development profession that emerged after 1968 in the UK (Henderson 1981:14) Kenny says that ‘Community development rests on the view that disadvantaged people can ultimately have full control of their own lives only when social structures and institutions are changed’ (Kenny 1994:16).

3. CHANGE AS THE CATALYST

The world we have created is no longer the world we once understood

(Fricker 2001:1).

A different dimension to the importance of change is the capacity to cope with a rapidly changing external environment. Disadvantaged groups and individuals are not skilled at coping with change because ‘they think of themselves and their neighbours as fundamentally deficient, victims incapable of taking charge of their lives and their community’s future’ (Kretzmann 1993:4).

The emerging adult education practice termed ‘community education’ in the mid 1970s in the UK, was identified as the strategy that would both stimulate the desire for change in communities and provide people with the skills necessary to cope with that change (Armstrong 1977:101).
Community action accelerated in the UK in the 1970s in keeping with the increased pace of social change. A more confident public expected improved levels of participation in social and economic decision making and community action groups were examples of learning systems (Armstrong 1977:104). Within these groups, now identified and described in the second Gulbenkian Report of 1973, participants were educated in technical skills, management and political tactics as well as the more qualitative aspects of attitudinal change and self esteem (Gulbenkian Foundation 1973). Poorly educated people, including people from low socio economic backgrounds were at greater risk of non participation and their poor self esteem and negative attitudes to learning impacted on the wellbeing of the wider community (Videotraining 1995; McKivney 1999; Steele 2001).

The emergence of renewed interest in lifelong learning as a means of strengthening communities was a response to the rapid pace of change. The accelerated pace of cultural change incorporated new knowledge, technological innovation, vocational displacement, population mobility and change in political, economic and social systems (Knowles 1970:41). Where change took place over several generations up until the 20th Century, knowledge gained now is obsolete in a few years. Information technology and the improved capacity to commute – locally and internationally – meant that increasing numbers of people had to develop skills to cope with a fast changing external environment.

Globalisation is the key factor in escalating the pace of change and impacts on the currency of vocational (and especially technological) skills (Longworth 1999; Clark 2001; Packer 2001; Snelling 2003). The globalisation of capital exacerbated ‘rising unemployment… falling real incomes, mass layoffs, cutbacks in public services…destruction of the environment, and loss of democratic control over…governments and societies’ (Packer 2001:1).
People risk becoming unproductive if they are not lifelong learners and especially if they are not proficient with technology. Even if technological skill development is done within the context of sustainability that focuses on a transformation of the existing order of ‘growth and capital accumulation’, (Ife 2002:42) it plays an essential role in our present and future communities.

Initial references to the development of the concept of a learning society arose with the 1970 UNESCO report of Paul Lengrand, ‘An introduction to lifelong learning’ (Longworth 1999:17). The Faure Commission report of 1972 was regarded as being ahead of its time with its proposed support for learning in everyday contexts so that people are able to cope with changes with competence and creativity. It also supported the involvement of the community in the learning process in positively managing conflict and in reconciling differences (Longworth 1999:18).

Community based initiatives (such as Learning Cities) provide necessary alternative modes of delivery of human services in an environment that can no longer sustain a welfare state. ‘The existing growth-oriented social, economic and political system...is clearly unsustainable’ (Ife 2002:9). As social structures change, so must the services that meet human needs.

Should people participate actively in their community? If people are happy as they are, why should a community worker or community initiative concentrate on getting them to join in? There are many things that need doing in a neighbourhood (or society) that will only get done by groups of people working together and some of this activity would benefit people who may not be noticed otherwise such as the elderly (Twelvetrees ND:79).
In an environment where resources provided by authorities are likely to be inadequate, ordinary people need to get organised to address community needs or nothing will get done (Clements 2001:9; Fricker 2001:6; Twelvetrees ND). By proceeding cautiously over long periods of time (Essenburg 2000) and not trying to impose the ‘best’ answer, people will develop locally sustainable solutions that are built on ‘a variety of accumulated wisdom’ (Ife 2002:44).

4. THE RISE OF LEARNING SYSTEMS

Fricker describes social change as occurring on three levels. At the structural level, a community must control the resources and power to effect change (Fricker 2001:6). A community that is poorly equipped to cope with change is an economic drain on that community. ‘An undereducated public, out of touch with technical progress, fearful of new ideas and opportunities and uncertain of its ability to cope with change can and will hold back the competitive development of industries and nations’ (Longworth 1999:90). As a Learning City, a community becomes a learning system that is committed to the development of well rounded individuals who can solve problems creatively and develop a strong sense of citizenship.

The shift from an emphasis on improved participation by individuals by better engagement in lifelong learning to the development of a renewed sense of community and the rise of learning systems seems to have emerged in the late 1980s and then more strongly in the mid 1990s.
Building on the Faure Commission report, key influences were the 1996 Delors report on Education in the 21st Century and its four pillars of learning, the OECD Conference on lifelong learning and the European Year of Lifelong Learning all in the same year (Longworth 1999:15-19). Learning had developed definitions that were now quite distinct from education and training and included a focus on the learner having the power to determine their own learning needs through being provided with the strategies and tools within a supportive learning system to do this. ‘Scarcely a … conference goes by without a mention of lifelong learning… Most major organisations and governments are incorporating its concepts into business plans, …strategies and …activities’ (Longworth 1999:19). As the public sector became more complex it followed the lead of the private sector in adopting the core principle of a learning organisation – responsive and creative problem solving - so that as a result, ‘(b)eing a learning organisation fuels a general interest in learning’ (Snelling 2003:6) and risk taking develops the entrepreneurship required for innovative solutions to complex social problems (Douglass 2002; Pearson 2002).

Learning Cities as a model for genuine cooperation and partnership between dissimilar organisations for their mutual benefit that comprises the second level where social change occurs (Fricker 2001:6) are a relevant strategy for coping with the current pace of change (Longworth 1999:7). In citing Delors, ‘The Treasure Within’, Longworth refers to the gulf opening up between those who can negotiate the changed environment and those who are at the mercy of events (Longworth 1999:15). Charles Handy also says that new responses are required to cope with rapid change because ‘the world is not in a stable state. We are seeing change that not only accelerates ever faster but is also discontinuous. Such change … follows no logical sequence’ (Longworth 1999:16).
By learning to understand and manage transformations, the Learning City assists communities to ‘live beyond the stable state’ that Schon describes (Schon 1973). It provides the environment in which institutions, networks and partnerships can be developed that are in themselves learning systems, ‘capable of bringing about their own continuing transformation’ (Landry 2000:266).

Clearly the pace of change carries implications for effective democratic participation as well as increasing risks of further social and economic exclusion for people who do not know how to learn new skills and strategies. Learning is required to create the third level of social sustainable change in individuals and in communities by creating new behaviour and performance (Fricker 2001:6) and a ‘place where individuals and communities are encouraged to learn about the dynamics of where they live and how it is changing’ (Landry 2000:267). Engagement in education and training helps people enhance their quality of life and that of the broader community (Australian Local Government Association 2001; Trewin 2004). ‘Today’s learners need to be able to process complex information, solve problems, make decisions against the background of uncertainty and relate their knowledge and skills to novel and ever changing situations’ (Longworth 1999:72).

5. THE THEORY OF ACE

The development of theories of adult education and its processes occurred alongside the development of community work models. Knowles devised a design for learning in 1972, based on the newly defined theoretical model known as Andragogy that incorporated adult learning principles, containing the following elements:
1. setting the physical and psychological climate
2. mutual planning
3. diagnosing needs
4. formulating programme objectives
5. planning a sequential design of learning activities
6. conducting the learning experiences

Knowles’ description of the adult education teacher is ‘analogous to that of the community worker’ (Henderson 1981:323) in fostering the self-directed inquiry of learners. The adult learning principles and techniques adopted and practised by adult and community education professionals in Victoria since the establishment of the Council for Adult Education (CAE) continued to be grounded in the elements devised by Knowles. While there has been a shift away from the emphasis on competency-based learning that he describes as a ‘new conception of the purpose of education’ that developed in the 1970s and 1980s, he is ambivalent about the term anyway and like Kretzmann, Armstrong and Longworth, focuses on the ‘drastic implications’ of adult education in producing people who can use their knowledge in times of rapid change. Adult education in Victoria has certainly been influential in shifting the focus from teaching to learning and in developing the role of the adult educator as the ‘facilitator of self-directed learning’ that Knowles encourages (Knowles 1970:18-19).

‘Conscientisation’ - placing the learner at the centre of the learning experience to achieve self transformation - is an essential criterion that Friere also identifies in effective adult learning. To learn effectively, the learner must adopt a critical attitude to learning through inward questioning that is transferable to ‘dealing with the world’ (Freire 1985:2).
The liberating effect of education assisted oppressed people to learn to realise their own value and challenge the oppressive systems that had kept them as passive recipients rather than active participants (Camilleri ND:4). Acknowledging that the learners feel a need to learn, that the learning should be relevant, that the environment is conducive to learning and that learners have responsibility for their own learning are critical conditions of adult learning (Knowles 1970; Mackie 1980:57) that have been adopted and practised by adult educators in Victoria since the CAE was founded. Training programs in adult learning principles have been conducted throughout the adult education sector since then (Centre for Adult Education 2003) and these principles have been increasingly recognised as being effective for other age groups – especially young learners who do not respond well to mainstream educational practice (Knowles 1970:43; Sanguinetti 2003).

5.1 Adult education and community action

The relationship between community work and adult education is recognised as differing from the adult education that focuses on the development of individuals (Armstrong 1977; Newman ND:246). Andrews noted the relationship between community action groups and learning systems in one of the early references to this concept (in 1973). The formal and informal learning that occurs in the process of participation in community action groups is wide ranging and incidental and the action groups have actually revived an interest in adult education (Armstrong 1977:105; Newman ND:247).
Community workers and student activists in the 1970s became involved with the emerging field of adult education through working with action groups. Adult education helped activists increase the understanding of the effectiveness of local effort to change power relationships. It also assisted them to develop the political skills of lobbying, organisation and representation (Lovett 1983:25; Newman ND:255). The rise of formal study programs in community action and adult education was a consequence of this development.

The increased awareness of social problems arising out of the significant immigration that started to occur in post war UK also contributed to new work for adult educators. Action in establishing literacy and language classes and the potential for adult education to bridge culture and encourage mutual understanding was recognised. By delineating a separate element of adult education as 'adult education in social action' (Lovett 1983:39; Newman ND:247) community education in its broadest sense would develop internal relationships and the strengths of minority groups (Armstrong 1977:106) so that they were better placed to change social structures and exert some control over how those social structures are formed.

In 'Skills in Neighbourhood Work', Henderson and Thomas refer to the new profession they first identified as community work as 'community social work', a practice that was integrated with social work to provide leverage to improve existing practice (Henderson 1994). The Learning City initiative is a modern response that has arisen out of the blending of the practices of community development and adult education. In the Victorian Learning Towns projects, the community development aspect was supported by performance agreements that did not require the forms of performance measurement that had become standard in ACFE such as Student Contact Hours and module completion rates.
Instead they encouraged an approach that ‘pushed the boundaries of... knowledge and expectation ...(and) was not afraid of the unconventional or hard to measure’ (Landry 2000:246).

5.2 Research into ACE

In Australia, the ACE sector, like other areas of education, changed and developed as a result of many influences including falling school retention rates and high levels of unemployment for young people. Victorian Government policy such as 'Knowledge and Skills for the Innovation Economy' (Kosky 2002), 'Growing Victoria Together' (Government of Victoria 2001), the Ministerial Declarations on Adult Community Education (Ministerial Council on Education 2002; Kosky 2004) and the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) (Department of Education Employment and Training 2001) emphasised ongoing education and training for the workforce and a heightened profile for lifelong learning as a complementary pathway to vocational education and training and university education.

Not what you might expect from a clever country (Spierings April 2001).

An emerging body of evidence indicated that current educational policy is failing the people who are already marginalised from mainstream learning opportunities. In commenting on the failure of the federal government to pay attention to the Eldridge report on revamping youth employment and education opportunities, Spierings expresses concern about the decline in school retention rates in Australia in the last decade.
More than 33% of early school leavers are unemployed (Spierings Oct 2000), a figure which
is supported by Kearns who says that around 30% of people in any community worldwide are
disengaged from lifelong learning (Kearns July 2000). For example, Victoria has an active
participation rate of 89.2% in the electoral system. This means 360 000 eligible people do not
vote (Victorian Electoral Commission 2002). In Australia, 21% of adults never return to
learning after leaving school (Australian National Training Authority 2000; Adult Learners
Week 2002).

Kearns and others describe members of this group as non learners and reduction in their
numbers has been the target of many strategies of Learning Cities including Glasgow and
Norwich (Duffen 2001; Wong April 2002:16,27). These ‘repressed’ people impose additional
barriers to emancipation as their disengagement is often perpetuated through their own
resistance to emancipatory forms of knowledge, especially when these forms challenge their
world view (Freire 1985:xx). ‘(They must) confront their own prejudices and change their
thinking’ (Guilliatt 2002:40).

Substantial numbers of young people are 'profoundly disengaged from the institutions of civil
society, with a quarter of 19 year olds...not in full time work or...education' (Spierings April
2001). Other indicators of distrust include low levels of voting enrolment - 82% of 18 – 24
year olds are enrolled in Victoria compared to 89.2% of all eligible voters (Victorian Electoral
Commission 2002) - high levels of mental illness, substance abuse and incarceration.
These characteristics of a strong correlation between education levels, employment and health are found in the general population here as in the UK (McKivney 1999; Steele 2001). This is supported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics experimental valuation of human capital for the first time in 2004. Australia’s human capital (based on lifetime labour income) increased 75% between 1981 and 2001, driven in part by a rise in the number of people with higher education qualifications (Trewin 2004:6). Victorian research shows that health problems and premature death are linked to lower educational levels and low socio economic status (Vinson 1999:27; Golding 2001; Holdsworth 2003; Smyth 2004; Vinson 2004; ACFEB June 2000) and in Australia, 46% of Australian adults (6.1 million) have inadequate literacy and numeracy skills to ‘cope in a sophisticated economy’ (Adult Learners Week 2002).

As in the Australasian College of Physicians report ‘For richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health’ (Packer 2001:2) that highlights the declining health status of those who have limited control over their own lives and a reduced sense of belonging, Vinson’s report suggests that people who are better educated have a better developed sense of personal control and associated problem solving abilities that contribute to more effective social and workplace participation.

6. ENGAGING THE DISENGAGED

The opening up of the post compulsory education and training system profoundly affected the ACE sector as it experienced an explosion in demand that reflected the concurrent development of lifelong learning and vocational education and training policy alongside the more confident expression of learning needs by local communities.
It provided the impetus for the reinvigoration of a sector that some observed had once again ‘become far too comfortable with itself’ that the cyclical nature of adult education previously demonstrated (Boughton 2000).

In 2001, the total number of learners in ACFE programs represented 4.3% of the Victorian population aged over 15 (ACFEB 2001 - 02:2). While the traditional constituency for ACE had been women (75%) and people with interrupted schooling (Clemans 1998; Bradshaw 1999; Adult Learners Week 2002:30; Gribble ND), the potential of ACE as an option for youth at risk was increasingly recognised by 2000 through inquiries of the incoming Labor Government in Victoria.

The Victorian Government’s ‘Knowledge and Skills for the Innovation Economy’ set targets that by 2005 young people in rural and regional Victoria engaged in education and training would increase by 6% and that by 2010, 90% of young people would complete Year 12 or equivalent (Kosky 2002; Department of Education and Training 2003:5). In February 2004 the Victorian Government announced the progress on the retention rates target. By August 2003, Year 7 – 12 retention rates had increased from 76.2% in 1999 to 81.4% (Victorian Electoral Commission 2002; Victorian Schools Innovation Commission 2002; Allen 2004).

The ‘Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training’ (Kirby 2000) commissioned by the Victorian Government and the Dusseldorp review of the federal Jobs Pathway Programme, ‘Regional and local government initiatives to support youth pathways: lessons from innovative communities’ (Spierings 2001) were recent examples of education policy development that included the ACE sector as a critical partner in addressing barriers that young people face in accessing appropriate learning opportunities.
The establishment of the LLENs in Victoria in 2001 was a direct result of the policy recommendations to develop an education system that could be accessed by all young people, produced people who could compete internationally and who could contribute to building communities (Kirby 2000:26; Davis 2002:3). The ACFE Division noted in its Annual Report of 2001 – 02 that ‘there was a significant increase in participation in ACE by early school leavers’ (ACFEB 2001 - 02:2) and commissioned several projects that explored the characteristics that make ACE successful in engaging marginalised groups such as ‘Generic Skills in ACE’ conducted in 2003 (Sanguinetti 2003).

These reports emphasised the flexible and responsive nature of the ACE sector as being successful in addressing barriers to learning and participation. It included a collaborative management and leadership style, staff involvement in change and development processes, innovative educational delivery, managed pathways into employment and further education, high levels of student satisfaction and effective networking.

Collaborative decision making was well established in the ACE sector and capitalised on the creative and innovative capacities and broader experience of participants. Students do not have to enrol in classes, they do not have to stay in them once they have enrolled and they are very capable of letting an organisation know when they are not happy. 'Choice contributes to intrinsic motivation' (Lander 1997:52) and the creation of this learning environment largely depended on the learner centred approach of ACE.
This approach has many benefits. Morale remains high and enthusiasm and ideas are generated because people - students and staff - know that their suggestions are valued (Mumford 1996). The flexible nature of the ACE sector means that good ideas can be trailed and implemented very quickly so that there is immediate reward and reinforcement. A climate that encourages others to share in the creativity also means that they share in the decision making and organisational ownership, reducing stress and developing many partnerships that are also able to share responsibility.

7. ACE AND INNOVATIVE PRACTICE

Collaboration and shared decision making generates a high level of innovative practice. A variety of approaches is apparent in a sector that has started to document its practice in publications such as 'Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities' (Bradshaw, 1999), '...But, who'll answer the phone?' (Clemans 1998) and 'Building Communities – ACE, Lifelong Learning and Social Capital' (Falk 2000). ACE providers seem to have particular skills in maintaining a balance between meeting community and government policy demands and testing new ideas (Gribble ND:32).

The sector has a history of piloting educational programs that have subsequently become mainstream such as the Certificate of General Education for Adults, the Certificate in Initial Adult Literacy and Numeracy, Adult VCE and alternative programs for young people who have left school early (Kirby 2000; Sanguinetti 2003; Gribble ND). This record of piloting programs has resulted in a sector that had developed a range of adaptable professional skills in managing risk (Landry 2000:243) that could be used to take advantage of opportunities such as Learning Towns.
8. RESEARCH INTO LEARNING CITIES

8.1 What is a Learning City?

In a global world there is a premium on being able to identify locally (Uzaraga 2002).

In a Learning City there is unity of action and purpose, built among the elements that contribute to community knowledge and understanding - schools, higher education institutions, vocational colleges, libraries, local media and community organisations.

Faris, Longworth, Franson and Yarnit, pioneers in the literature on Learning Cities, all emphasise the cross sectoral partnerships as a key feature of a Learning City. They also refer to other elements such as being outward rather than inward looking, integrated rather than fragmented, responsive rather than reactionary (Longworth 1999:103; Yarnit 2000; Faris 2002; Moore 2002; Franson July 2000).

Learning Cities/Towns/Suburbs are best developed locally with definable geographic boundaries.

Cities...are important because they attract the necessary combination of assets, people, resources and ideas. Cities are wellsprings of creativity, centres of learning, and centres of innovation that in turn depend on the rapid exchange of tacit knowledge. Cities also generate entrepreneurship and this depends on the support of networks and partnerships to succeed. One of the things that we have to do...is to move well beyond the idea of the entrepreneur as a kind of lone maverick. Most entrepreneurship these days in high-tech industries is partnership and team-based and it is the speed at which you can create those teams that really matters (DfEE 1998).
In the way that Morris stated in his early advocacy of lifelong learning provision through the Village College in the UK, Learning Cities have the ‘virtue of being local so that (they) would enhance the quality of actual life as it is lived from day to day’ (Smith 1996:3).

Community work based on a city wide area rather than a particular locality brings extended capacity to develop strong cross sectoral links that may benefit individual groups and institutions through a stronger community network of support (Specht 1975:21; Policy Action Team 17 2000; Moore 2002). Although the traditional view of ‘community’ was (and still can be) geographical, by the mid 1970s in the UK it meant ‘very large collections of people’ (Armstrong 1977:101).

On the other hand, D B Clarke argues that it is an oversimplification to define a community on the basis of its locality. Clarke says that the widening use of ‘community’ to describe everything from neighbourhoods to nations has led to confusion about what is actually meant by the term. The post war optimism in the UK that believed that geographically defined neighbourhoods would develop the ‘blueprints for good community living’ (Henderson 1981:14) had not materialised and Clarke accounts for this by the differences in social class, even if they are minor, that engender a reluctance to make anything more than a superficial contact with community facilities. However, Clarke does agree that place can influence community even though it may not define it.
It is possible though that the more homogeneous society in Australia that is in place in the early 21st Century may not encounter these barriers and therefore makes it more possible for communities based on locality to develop the ‘real depth’ and the intricacy and involvement that Clarke says characterises community (Clarke 1973:32).

Faris, Longworth and Yarnit describe characteristics that distinguish Learning Cities from Landry’s ‘unconcerned’ cities (Landry 2000:267). Action that aims to change the normal course of things includes learner driven programs, seamless systems that provide learning support regardless of age, an emphasis on how to think rather than what to think, creative new solutions rather than repeating past success and a focus on the future rather than meeting the needs of the present (Lovett 1983:75; Longworth 1999:105; Yarnit 2000; Australian National Training Authority 2001; Faris 2002).

Yarnit’s survey of UK Learning Towns and Cities concluded that reflexive learning is emerging as a third type of learning along with formal and informal learning. Reflexive learning adds the dimension of learning from what we have done and then trying to do it better. Self-evaluation by a reflexive Learning City (Landry 2000:267) is a component that changes everyday learning into research as Habermas identified – when reflection and discussion (that he calls communicative action) interrupts what we are doing (practical action) to ‘explore its nature, dynamics and worth’ (Kemmis 2000a:8). This important characteristic of learning communities helps in distinguishing them from conventional communities.
9. THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABILITY

Ife transfers the ecological principle of sustainability to the evaluation of the long term viability of changes to existing systems and their impact on other systems. He challenges the idea that many ‘new’ ways of doing things are sustainable. He points out the incongruity of the terms ‘sustainable development’ and ‘sustainable growth’ - ‘blatantly self-contradictory term(s)’ (Ife 2002:42). He says that this confusion allows the desirability of growth to go unchallenged. He believes that unbridled growth and unnecessary consumption are unacceptable. In advocating for development (including technological development) to occur for socially and economically determined reasons that transform the ‘existing, blatantly unsustainable order’ (Ife 2002:42) he supports the local evolution of systems that meet the needs of particular circumstances.

So in order to evaluate the sustainability of the Learning City, it will be necessary to consider whether it will require increasing levels of resources or whether it seeks more ‘steady-state’ solutions. Ife draws attention to the importance of recognising that continual change and restructuring is incompatible with sustainability but rather requires a change in existing practice to ways that have not even been considered (Ife 2002:75).
10. THE NEED FOR AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH

In ‘Lifelong Learning, VET in the Learning Age’, Kearns et al concluded that the achievement of a learning culture in Australia would require a concerted effort that was not apparent in current policy and strategic development. Insufficient numbers of people were engaging in learning activities beyond school and the rhetoric about an emerging knowledge based economy was not matched by the resources and policies required (Kearns 1999b; a; c).

The authors identified a range of research needs in the development of Australian learning communities, one of which was 'addressing in particular the question of learning community development in...Australia...through research and development projects' (Kearns 1999a:72).

In addition to the Victorian Learning Towns that are now widely recognised as the engine room of the development of Australian learning communities (Kearns 2002; Longworth 2003a), ANTA conducted pilot programs in 2001 with ten communities throughout Australia (Australian National Training Authority 2001; Carpenter 2002). The lessons that were learned from pilot projects added to the store of information available to guide learning community development throughout Australia (Moore 2002).

The report of Kearns et al placed the Australian situation in an international context and drew on the evaluations of the UK and European Union based Learning City movement that was supported by policy development and the accompanying resources during the 1990s. These initiatives recognised the role of lifelong learning in supporting the social, employment and economic objectives of knowledge and information based societies.
Volume 2 of the report included international as well as Australian case studies and continued to conclude that in a world of 'blur', mainstream educational delivery is inappropriate to meet the needs of individuals who have to adapt constantly to change and have to have a highly developed capacity for lifelong learning (Kearns 2002).

The case studies indicated that a flexible, learner centred approach is highly successful in overcoming barriers to lifelong learning and leads to successful learning outcomes. The report found that they demonstrated that new definitions are required about what creates a successful learning environment.

The documented experiences of the UK Learning Cities in particular provided some valuable lessons as Australia embarked on its own Learning City development. The early trend of the Australian learning community movement indicated strong (in some instances, critical) involvement of community organisations locally (Campbell 2000; Candy 2000a; b; Kearns 2000; McNulty 2000; Ralph 2000; Baczells 2002; Dymock 2002a). In the UK, the development of learning communities was driven much more strongly by government policy through local government and mainstream educational institutions (Lucas 1999) and Yamit refers to the need to enhance the minimal involvement of the community sector (Yamit 2000).

Many of the problems that faced the Learning Cities in the UK that Yamit identified stem from this – the plethora of initiatives and networks and the lack of clarity about the status of local learning partnerships contribute to a fragmented approach, dilution of resources and lack of trust between partners in some instances. Erratic application of funding, overlapping public policies and lack of accountability posed serious concerns about the sustainability and viability of this new learning system that operated at the margins of mainstream education.
Those issues are issues in Australia as well, and Clemans et al report that the participation of ACE agencies in their research for ‘ACE Outcomes’ ‘testifies to their desire to achieve increase(ed) recognition for...ACE and the outcomes it achieves’ so that it creates a better understanding of the contribution of adult learning in community settings (Clemans 2003:60). However, the resilience of the ACE sector despite the lack of national policy indicated that there may be some strength in the community driven base of our learning communities that may make them harder to dislodge and this provides a rich area for ongoing research.

11. THE INFLUENCE OF THE LITERATURE ON THE METHODOLOGY

In advocating locally driven educational research, Kemmis argues that 'there is a pressing need for such contributions... education faces unresolved crises of policy, theory and practice... (Innovative action research) studies... may offer new approaches to the problems we now confront' (Kemmis 1995:44). Such contributions can ensure that the education system constantly adapts and develops its capacity to develop curious and inquiring learners, critical thinkers, innovative, participatory citizens and skilful, literate communicators.

The flexible, learner centred approach characteristic of the ACE sector, recognised and supported by changes in policy and funding and now increasingly adopted by other education sectors has influenced understanding of what creates an effective learning environment and is an example of 'shap(ing) the plans' that Kemmis advocates (Kemmis 1995:4). ‘ACE makes a major contribution to the discourse of government and citizenship’ (Clemans 2003:24).
Collaborative action research is a strategy that can challenge the relative autonomy of systems that function ‘according to their own rules and procedures…in a disinterested manner indifferent to the unique personalities and interests of the individuals inhabiting them’ (Kemmis 2000a:12). It was the methodology that aligned naturally with the Learning City project with its focus on participation, action learning and exploration of new ways of achieving improved engagement in communities. It also validated the incorporation of qualitative as well as quantitative data and clarified the roles of all of the potential participants (Tesch 1995).

Action research had demonstrated that self organised groups could be successful in bringing about changes in systems through indirect means, by sensitising systems to unnoticed effects and by withdrawing legitimacy from conventionally accepted operations (Kemmis 2000a:14). It could show that the ecological principles of sustainability and diversity underpin progress and successful community change. Local solutions developed by local people through action research may be more modest but with a greater likelihood of being locally relevant and absorbed (Ife 2002:42; Trewin 2004).
11.1 How a Learning City can overcome barriers

Adult education was shown to be an effective way of developing social capital resources such as networks, trust, confidence and social cohesion through ten Victorian case studies (Falk 2000). Participation in ongoing learning is a strategy for addressing continuing changes in communities and the workplace. Individuals need to have self confidence and a capacity to meet change and retain a sense of security in uncertain times. Workers need to be able to acquire new skills and adapt to changing jobs more frequently as casual employment in Australia increases to one of the highest rates among OECD countries (ACFEB 2001 - 02).

‘When firms, educationalists and households interact at the local or regional level and engage in the process of collective learning, they create one of the critical preconditions for competitiveness – and that is the transformation of local tacit and externally derived knowledge into new products and services’ (National Economics 1999:16)

The absence of a catalyst to bring stakeholders together for joint action is one of the barriers to achieving lifelong learning for all (Kellock 2004). It is a characteristic of Landry’s ‘unconcerned city (that) flounders by trying to repeat past successes for far too long’ (Landry 2000:267). Kearns cites the example of Devonport, Tasmania, where a catalyst to forge strategic partnerships was identified as a required strategy to overcome the pervasive sense of competition that dissipated community resources to overcome the challenges of high unemployment and low levels of education (Kearns 1999a:67).
A true Learning City develops by learning from its experiences. ‘It is a place that understands itself and reflects upon that understanding’ (Landry 2000:267). A community driven project such as SmartGeelong - The Learning City, specifically allocated to organisations that sprang from a grass roots movement, possessed the necessary characteristics to adopt a participatory and collaborative action research study that could challenge the approaches of established systems in providing learning opportunities as well as challenge the established perceptions of learners and learning.

The SmartGeelong – The Learning City project had the potential to emancipate people at different levels. It could emancipate people ‘from determination by habit, custom, illusion and coercion which sometimes frame and constrain social and educational practice’ (Kemmis 2000a:4) through the stated Learning Towns program aim of enhancing the understanding of the value of lifelong learning through the development of new community partnerships (ACFEB March 2000).

The project could also be a strategy for emancipating people who are disengaged from the learning process when the established system produces effects contrary to those expected (Kemmis 2000a:4) and results in ‘cultural forms that function to effectively silence people’ (Freire 1985:xix). Such a strategy would support the achievement of the second Learning Towns aim to integrate economic development with improved social inclusion (ACFEB March 2000).
Finally, SmartGeelong - The Learning City provided an opportunity to capitalise on creative approaches to achieving transformation. It provided a framework in which to ‘reflect on and respond to achievements and obstacles’ (Landry 2000:266). While the development of new frameworks such as Learning Cities are not sufficiently robust here yet to advocate the elimination of welfare states (Smyth 2004), times of confusion and reduced welfare provision can provide the environment where people can be their most innovative. When people are being urged to ‘do more with less’ Australian communities ‘have been finding creative alternatives to the increasingly complex effects of globalisation’ (Packer 2001:2). Developing social enterprises rather than depending on social welfare enables people to exploit their native talents and passions. By engaging them in real economic life people who have been dependent on welfare can change their outlook and develop ‘skill, pride, purpose, a sense of fulfillment, dignity and hope’ (Pearson 2002). Recovering a sense playfulness is important in order to reinvigorate collaboration and a shared sense of participating in creating positive change (Kemmis 2000a:17). There is value in imagining the 'the world -as-it-is-now...as a world-as-it-otherwise-might-be' (Wadsworth 1984:10). Consequently, the Action Plans of SmartGeelong - The Learning City were based on engaging, collaborative activities that were enjoyable for the partners to develop and enjoyable for the participants to engage in (SG Advisory Group Dec 2002a; Nov 2000).
11.2 Documenting the experience of the Victorian Learning Towns

...when there is a need for people to continuously acquire new knowledge throughout their lives, then it is assumed that...everyone has the right to expect the society...to provide learning opportunities.

(Sheed 2001).

There are more Learning Cities and Towns per capita in Victoria than anywhere else in the world (Longworth 2003a). As an innovation, the practice and progress of the Victorian Learning Towns was of considerable interest to a range of research and development projects. It became apparent as the program operated over four years that it had developed its own characteristics and made its own contribution to the national and international body of thought on Learning Cities. This included an evaluation of the Learning Towns program conducted by Sheed and Bottrell of La Trobe University in late 2001 and case study reports on each of the ten Learning Towns for the ACFE Division of the Victorian Government that I wrote at the end of 2001(Wong Dec 2001). The La Trobe evaluation concluded that ‘Learning Towns...is a significant innovation directed towards building a learning culture through at least four to five years of sustained effort’ (Sheed 2001:4). The progress of the Victorian Learning Towns continued to be recorded in further reports such as 'The Victorian Learning Towns' (Wong Oct 2002a), the 'Learning Town Evaluation Framework' (Cavaye 2002a), 'The Experience So Far' (McCullough 2003), 'Progress, Partners and Projects' (Carolane 2003) and 'Learning Communities – Making a Difference' (VLCN 2004).
The progress of many of the Learning Towns and the Victorian model has been described in other reports such as 'Learning Around Town' (Adult Learning Australia 2000), 'making the connection' (Adult Learning Australia 2001), 'Some History and a Little Prophecy: The Progress of Learning Communities in Australia' (Kearns 2002) and 'The Role of the Victorian Government in Community Capacity Building' (Cavaye 2003c). References also appeared in international publications (Faris 2001; Longworth 2003a).

A distinctive Australian model started to emerge. In the action based Australian culture, the Victorian Learning Cities and Towns trailed a wide range of initiatives that contributed to the shift from an education and training paradigm to a learning paradigm. This was identified by Kearns as a driver in building social and human capital that has an impact on economic outcomes (Kearns 2001a; 2002).

Building on examples of learning outside school walls described in 'The School Without Walls' case study from Philadelphia, USA (Bremer 1971) and the Highlander Workshops in Tennessee (Lovett 1983:75; Horton 1990), learning that occurs 'outside the walls' was acknowledged as a successful 21st Century Australian response to the learning needs of individuals and communities (Kearns 2002; Snelling 2003:17; VLTN 2003; Martin 2004). By experimenting with new approaches, the Learning Towns demonstrated a capacity to engage reluctant learners and to adapt to the demands of communities that were challenged by the escalating pace of change.
The Victorian Learning Towns were also proactively engaged in supporting a whole of government approach to developing sustainable communities (Kearns 2002; Kosky 2004). Initiatives that increased access to Information Technology, Neighbourhood Renewal Projects and Community Building Programs were examples of whole of government explorations that started to bring the framework of a learning community into the discourse of mainstream social, cultural and economic development.

It also became evident as the Learning Towns initiatives became more widespread that the early literature dated very quickly. As Learning Cities grappled with promoting lifelong learning as a strategy for community regeneration, the early strategies suggested by the Department for Education and Employment for the UK Learning Cities and by Longworth for example have not proved effective (DfEE 1998; Longworth 1999). The Employee Development Programs and Learning Accounts to support workplace learning did not work as anticipated and have been abandoned. The predicted strong institutional base of schools, universities and colleges has also been superseded by the growth of programs in unlikely community settings such as pubs and clubs, laundromats and coffee shops (McNulty 2003b).

Longworth's intention of using Learning Cities in creating a generation of super learners had elitist overtones that did not sit well in an Australian context. Even in the UK the massive problems faced by cities such as Glasgow and Great Yarmouth - where up to 60% of the population are still identified as non learners (Clark 2001; Wong April 2002:16,31) - needed strategies that acknowledged that some people would choose not to be aspirational and not to engage in learning.
Locally, Kearns' first report on lifelong learning was in the vocational education and training context (Kearns 1999a) whereas his more recent papers are embedded firmly in the progress of the Learning Cities themselves (Kearns 2001b; 2002). Kearns' work however always contained case studies that provided practical examples for aspiring learning communities. Longworth's writing is not based on the experience of a practitioner so while his work was useful on the origins and the theory of Learning Cities, local material contributed more significantly to the development of Australian Learning Cities.

It was important then that the Victorian Learning Towns documented their own experiences and this body of work has started to be cited in the literature of Learning Cities in Australia and internationally (Faris 2001; Kenneally 2003; Snelling 2003).

12. IMPACT OF THE LITERATURE ON THIS RESEARCH

12.1 Establishing the context and the project

As an innovative project, SmartGeelong – The Learning City required developing at several different levels – the conceptual, the strategic and the operational. The initial research into the UK Learning Cities was significant in developing and clarifying the new concept of learning communities. I based the original application for the Learning Towns project funding on the structures and reports such as the Learning City Toolkit (Learning City Network 2000) that were available at that time.
The literature provided the strong conceptual and theoretical framework for an action research project. It clarified the roles of the key participants including the Advisory Group, the Steering Groups and my employer. It especially explained and guided my role as the project manager and the project researcher. It validated the placing of ‘I’ at the centre of the research and provided guidelines for doing this. As the project developed and the interactions among the participants, other partners and the wider community evolved, the literature explained the processes and provided me with strategies to enhance the project outcomes. In particular, the literature on action research and reflective practice assisted me and the key stakeholders to remain objective about the practice and progress of the project, to regard all outcomes as learning experiences and to incorporate them into future directions.

The strategic importance of an Advisory Group that represented key community sectors and counteracted any perception that this was an initiative that was driven by the self interest of a single enterprise was apparent through this early research and confirmed from the very first stages of the development of SmartGeelong – The Learning City.

The first Australian Learning Communities Conference in 2000 introduced me to other practitioners who provided operational experience, research and suggestions that developed the confidence and the networks of Geelong’s project. It enabled the project to move quickly from its tentative early formation to developing a sense of leadership. It provided early notice that the Learning Cities were potentially a movement rather than just a project and as such, the national and international connections consolidated the local project effort.
The action research approach provided the impetus for developing a strong strategic planning and evaluation framework so that the research was ‘reasonably systematic and rigorous’ (McNiff 2002). The roles of all key partners were always clarified at the start of their involvement and monitoring and evaluation were built in to all aspects of project activity. Documentation of all kinds was regarded as valuable including reports, memos, emails, records of conversations and formal feedback processes.

12.2 Developing the project

As this project evolved, my engagement with the literature changed as it too evolved. While there was some material that was used as the basis for developing the project in its early stages, the development of Learning Cities was a relatively new concept and early work (from the 1990s, such as Longworth and the UK Learning City website) dated quite rapidly.

The links back to the OECD Conferences of the 1970s proved important in establishing the credibility of the concept. As OECD Conferences have continued to enlarge on the early ideas, gather the experience of practitioners, document the findings and influence government policy, the resilience of Learning Cities has been demonstrated and recognised as an effective strategy in community building.

The documented UK and to a lesser extent, the European experience was more influential than that of the USA on the research. The adult education and community development sectors in which SmartGeelong – The Learning City has been embedded spring more directly from UK models that have been subsequently reshaped to fit Australian circumstances.
Movements with some alignment in the USA such as the community schools and virtual learning communities, based on interest rather than locality, seemed not to have such directly transferable experience for this research. Some case studies such as ‘This old shack’ (Guilliatt 2002) about community renewal projects were helpful for planning ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ in Geelong’s disadvantaged northern suburbs and inspired some ideas for specific project activity. The reliance on the UK and European experience however appeared to be confirmed in the writing of other Australian reports and case studies that cited international models as exemplars such as Community Strengthening and the Role of Local Government (Considine 2004) and regional and local government initiatives to support youth pathways (Spierings 2001). Exploration of the USA experience would be an area worthy of further investigation and researchers such as Kearns and Landry would be able to contribute to building local knowledge of the current work there on aligned initiatives there such as creative cities.

As SmartGeelong – The Learning City developed through piloting ideas and initiatives I was able to underpin my practice with the experiences and ideas of others who were writing new work and documenting case studies. As the project progressed, I believe that I became more adept at determining what literature would be personally relevant and also what would stimulate my thinking. Yarnit’s survey and case studies for example were particularly relevant in designing the study tour to the UK and Europe (Yarnit 2000). Kearns’ work has been important in developing and linking this project into Australian research.
Even writers whose work I believed was out of date with the reality of everyday practice when I started this project, such as Longworth, have written new work that took into account the experiences of practitioners and became more useful for supporting the design of 21st Century learning communities (Longworth 2003b).

12.3 New sources lead to new insights

The literature on community development opened new opportunities for the project. As it became apparent that Learning Towns were more complex than a mainstream adult education initiative, the field of community development provided the complementary research that explained the community building capacity of Learning Towns. Some of the most interesting and stimulating ideas for developing SmartGeelong – The Learning City came from the community development field. Kretzmann and Faris for example have powerful examples of innovative practice with hard to reach groups such as the First People (Native Americans) and homeless people in American cities that have sown the seeds of some of the most engaging initiatives for SmartGeelong – The Learning City.

I was introduced to the writing of Charles Landry quite late in the project (August 2003) but found his insights and description of characteristics of learning cities and creative cities extremely useful and they illuminated my experiences and findings significantly.
The literature also provided the opportunity to compare and contrast what was happening locally with what was happening elsewhere. The very existence of a body of literature on the concept provided SmartGeelong – The Learning City with the confidence to recognise that it could and should develop and record the unique aspects of its experience as well as the common ones. The Advisory Group in particular but also sometimes the members of Steering Groups would request information about similar initiatives that might have been implemented elsewhere and then take that information and customise it to suit local conditions. The Geelong Learning Festival and ‘Cafe.com’ were examples of locally adapted initiatives.

The writing and personal communications with leaders in the field whom I came to know such as David McNulty and Peter Kearns continued to be a source of the most helpful insights and their capacity to compare and comment on the progress of SmartGeelong – The Learning City as a participant in the international learning community movement provided support and affirmation as well as ideas for further development.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

1. EPISODE: Interpretivist

The post modernist interpretivist approach is the most appropriate epistemology for this action research project in that it studies changes in how the subject/s and the world interact. Interpretivism acknowledges a different kind of objectivity – of openness and transparency – to more traditional approaches where facts and values are separated and the case needs to be proved (Usher 2001). An interpretivist epistemology supports the indeterminate nature of an action research approach that may mean that there is no final explanation – or that there are several or even contradictory explanations. Unlike a scientific enquiry, the social enquiry is not predictable or linear and it develops in order to address ‘tricky’ and ambiguous situations (Cherry 1999; Usher 2001).

The interpretivist epistemology provides the context in which practice based research can take place in order to better understand and to improve a particular situation in which the subjects are also the participants. Validity can be recognised in a non positivist paradigm where results are not predictable but arise as the practice evolves. The researcher achieves validity and rigour by describing and explaining the situation as it is perceived. Multiple and dynamic variables are taken on board as they arise (Zuber-Skerritt 2001:Ch1, p5). The dimension of perspective can be added to achieve validity by telling the truth while recognising that it this will always be a personal view (Reason & Rowan in Zuber-Skerritt 2001:Ch 1, p 5; Zuber-Skerritt 2001).
Post modernism provides the framework for alternative research methodologies such as action research by seeking different, non linear models which value multiple realities characterised by multiple discourses, fragmented meanings and continual simultaneous redefinitions (Denzin 1994; Ife 2002). ‘The postmodernist position is able to incorporate social movements and new ways of thinking about the world, how it works and the place of humanity within it’ (Ife 2002:37). It adds texture to theoretical notions and provides a way of dealing with complexity (Kock ND:6). Ife cites the importance of Capra’s call for a new paradigm in ‘The Turning Point’ (1982) in emphasising a holistic approach that values balance rather than the traditional linear thinking (Ife 2002:38).

Post modernism therefore supports research that questions ‘top down’ perspectives and encourages change from below. It emphasises the possibility of rich and multiple ‘realities’ in a fragmented and diverse world rather than trying to make everything fit together logically (Richardson 1997; English 2001a; Ife 2002:115). Within post modernism, Ife describes ‘affirmative postmodernism’ as the paradigm that celebrates difference and emancipation of the voices of those who are marginalised.

2. METHODOLOGY: Action Research

2.1 Emancipatory action research

In developing my experience in my field of practice, I sought new insights into improving this practice. Rather than solving problems, I found myself in the midst of complexity as I conducted my research. This research did not come with neat conclusions that can be replicated, because the project is based in a unique context (Delong 1997; Winter 2000:29).
The paradigm of reflexive rationality where action research is located provided a model where solutions are developed inside the context in which the problems arise and in which the practitioner is crucial. While these solutions and experiences may not be replicable the lessons learned can be made accessible and available to others as examples and as hypotheses for testing in other settings (Brearley 2001; Zuber-Skerritt 2001:Ch 1, p4; McNiff 2002).

'(S)omething is useful if it opens an avenue of exploration for someone else, if it triggers a new way of looking at an issue’ (Brearley 2001).

This project used action research that is described as critical or emancipatory (Masters 1995b:3; Lamoski 1997; Kemmis 2000b:5; Mezirow ND:253). It provided the framework for the ‘systematic critical attitude and intellectual discipline’ that will foster the inquisitive spirit and creativity that supports the transformation of people who have been victims of traditional educational practice (Freire 1985:2-14). This research approach supports bottom up change and opens up the possibilities for people to take action to meet needs that they have defined themselves (Ife 2002:116). As a project, SmartGeelong – The Learning City was an example of a ‘mixed and matched’ operating framework characteristic of community development in the 21st Century. It provided a strategic opportunity for action to challenge ‘existing dominant power structures’ although it did this through collaboration rather than through the coercive elements of activism (Fricker 2001:13).

There were also elements of a practical form of action research in that the projected outcomes informed the practical decision making of practitioners (McNiff 2002; SG Interview with the Mayor July 2003) in identifying problems, their underlying causes and possible interventions (Masters 1995b:4).
Primarily though, SmartGeelong - The Learning City aimed to intervene in the everyday processes to 'reconstruct the practice, the practitioner and the practice setting' (Kemmis 2000b:5). It built on the experiences of the practical inquiry to use existing social structures and systems to aim for far reaching transformational change (Kemmis 1995; Kemmis 2000b; Young 2001; Newman ND).

While it would have been unrealistic to expect that a single initiative such as SmartGeelong - The Learning City would be able to achieve this scale of change singlehandedly, it did have 'more modest empowerment aims' (Ife 2002:209). Any increase in empowerment of disadvantaged sections of the community would help to bring about a more just society and the focus in the plans of SmartGeelong – The Learning City on initiatives determined and directed by local community participation was in keeping with this intention.

SmartGeelong – The Learning City assisted with determining the incorporation of community development strategies such as consciousness raising and ensuring that ‘the voices of the oppressed’ were heard, acknowledged and valued (Ife 2002:88). To be truly transformational, properly understood and practised ‘critical modes of inquiry...means critique is never taken as a personal attack...but accepted as a necessary condition for ...change’ (Zuber-Skerritt 2001:9) so emancipatory action research provided an approach that depersonalised the experience and the outcomes (Masters 1995b:3; Hatten 1997:4; Kock ND:6). Reflection and suggestions for improvement were regarded as essential for change and innovation. Mistakes and failure were catalysts for learning and the participants were able to grow and learn as well (Zuber-Skerritt 2001).
The focus on changes in practice also contributed to the potential for sustainability. Ife clarifies the concept of sustainability as an approach that maintains and conserves existing resources through ‘radical transformation from existing practice’ (Ife 2002:75). Rather than developing an initiative that would require increasing resources, the Learning City project built sustainability strategies into its plans that focused on strong partnerships and a holistic perspective.

Consequently this research project was conducted in an environment that is conducive to collaborative inquiry and problem solving (Wadsworth 1984; Masters 1995b:3; Hatten 1997:2; Zuber-Skerritt 2001:Ch 1, p9). It aimed to conduct collaborative research and action to 'overcome felt dissatisfactions (and) alienation' (Kemmis 2000b:5), as stated in the aims of SmartGeelong - The Learning City by contributing to economic development through social inclusion and improving educational pathways through community partnerships (SG Advisory Group Dec 2000a).

Other defining features were evident in this action research. It was highly participatory with organisations, groups and individuals involved at a range of levels but with a shared commitment to SmartGeelong - The Learning City and its aims. It provided a framework in which to ask Revans’ fresh questions, to learn through discussion, to learn by doing, to understand thinking and values and to encourage reflective practice (Schon 1991; Wadsworth 1991; Ward 1993; Wadsworth 1998; Reason 2001b; Zuber-Skerritt 2001:Ch 1, pp12-13; Mezirow ND; Newman ND:253).
The range of strategic partnerships and cross sectoral participation emphasised a practical and collaborative approach to developing an understanding of the value of lifelong learning for all. The project participants 'do things' together - projects, meetings, publicity - the planning, the organising and the evaluating (Wadsworth 1984). They worked in an environment that supported collaboration rather than competition and were provided with the opportunity to develop alternative structures, 'premised on cooperation rather than conflict' (Ife 2002:220).

In addition, SmartGeelong – The Learning City included some case studies. The Victorian Government's Learning Towns program was piloted in nine other cities and towns including Ballarat, Wangaratta and Albury/Wodonga. There were useful comparative findings from my research report (Wong Dec 2001) on these cities that added value to the findings from the Geelong project. As instrumental case studies they assisted in determining the critical success factors for the development of learning communities (Stake 1994).

The element of reflection and the consequent potential to transform theory and practice was incorporated into this project. By developing skills in 'meta awareness', participants learned to see themselves seeing the world and developed an understanding of what makes people take the actions they do (Argyris 1974; Cherry 1999; Reason 2001b; Newman ND:253). Too often it is the element that is overlooked. 'One can easily become so 'busy' that there is no time and space for critical reflection' (Ife 2002:229). This was acknowledged by ACFE by its early implementation of research into the Victorian Learning Towns in August 2001.

Research into the practice and progress of SmartGeelong - The Learning City and the other Learning Towns suggested new developments in practice as well as policy that were grounded in experience and 'have arisen from trying to make a practical difference' (Cherry 1999:23).
The Learning Towns projects were regularly reviewed and consulted and over time they became engaged in joint projects that trialed innovative practice.

2.2 The action research approach for this project

Strategically principled and tactically flexible (Landry 2000:270).

This project aimed to demonstrate that a commitment by a community to improve access to lifelong learning opportunities as a Learning Town or City contributes to enhancing the quality of life of its citizens and improvement its economic conditions through a more creative, stable and adaptable community. In proposing to demonstrate that such improvements occur, the SmartGeelong – The Learning City adopted an approach that encompassed the aims that are necessary and sufficient for action research (Grundy in Masters 1995:3; Dick in Cherry 1998:8):

- An action aim, ‘tactically flexible’ (Landry 2000:270), to contribute to enhancing the quality of life of its citizens and improvement of economic conditions;

- A research aim, ‘strategically principled’ (Landry 2000:270), to demonstrate that a community commitment to lifelong learning contributes to this improvement and

- A learning aim identified by some as a strategy for sustainability. By learning, both the researcher and others become more self sufficient in the future (Grundy in Masters 1995:3; Revans 1982 in Cherry 1998; Ife 2002; McNulty Aug 2003c).

3.1 A change in the situation for the ‘others’

and

**Improved understanding of the processes of change**

By its very nature, the development of a community into a Learning City must be collaborative. There must be broad active development of the awareness and understanding of the intrinsic value of engaging in lifelong learning in order to effect social change. All sections of a community must become involved in improving participation in lifelong learning and in developing the consequent capacity to engender large scale changes to existing systems that perpetuate disengagement from learning.

All action research must involve the participants (Revans 1982:493 in Cherry 1998:11; Wadsworth 1998; Henry 2002:3) and this project recognised that it must have wide participation to challenge current ways of doing things. The impact of the development of a Learning City can be seen as a ‘fuzzy’ research question (Revans 1982:493 in Cherry 1998). It is inevitable that uncertainty accompanies practice based research. ‘Situations of practice are not problems to be solved but problematic situations characterised by uncertainty, disorder and indeterminacy’ (Schon 1991:15). Ife draws on ecological principles to develop his model of community development, including diversity to support the development of a range of responses rather than ‘one right way of doing things’ (Ife 2002:43).
Diversity achieves more modest outcomes that are more likely to be sustainable because people learn from their experience and the experiences of others. By valuing diversity, Ife says that people are able to find their own way of doing things that suit their local context. One of the many tensions in action research is that the critical success factors and outcomes from project activity may only be determined by sustained activity over a long period of time (Cherry 1998; Young 2001). ‘(N)o evaluation process can be true or complete…at the best it can give an indication of part of what is happening’ (Landry 2000:246). ‘(T)he community itself must determine the pace at which development occurs’ (Ife 2002:221). New insights however can come very quickly. Action research provides the project with a methodology that can capture the early learnings, respond to the unpredictable events that will create shifts in project emphasis, values a range of data including the ‘data of experience’ and encourages learning from all project experiences, predicted or otherwise (Hatten 1997:5; Cherry 1999).

Action learning has also become increasingly important as a strategy for coping with the escalating pace of change. As the world becomes more complex, people need to be able to learn faster and more creatively (Masters 1995a; Longworth 1999:19; Zuber-Skerritt 2001:Ch 1, p13). It is important to not only develop the skills of individuals as active learners who might change their minds on the basis of new information, but to also use that learning to develop new skills and new behaviour so that people can effectively continue to manage change and solve new problems (Kemmis 1988:6; McNiff 2002).
3.2 Additions to the store of knowledge and theory

The practice itself is a source of renewal (Schon 1991:299).

Alongside the changes to the way people and groups understand the value of incorporating learning into everyday activity, are the changes to practice that can initiate and maintain a learning culture by professionals and practitioners. This includes teachers and trainers, community workers, youth workers, people in local government and employers. SmartGeelong – The Learning City incorporated plans and actions that aimed to transform practice and the understanding of practitioners – encouraging them to ask why they are doing things the way they are.

The encouragement to transform educational practice so that it does not fail those 30% of people who can be described as non learners (Kearns July 2000) including those who are leaving school early has been given considerable impetus by innovative approaches such as those recommended by the Ministerial ‘Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training’ in Victoria (Kirby 2000). These recommendations represented a paradigm shift in the way the learning experience for the 15-19 year old cohort is managed and delivered and strongly endorsed the flexible, collaborative, learner centred, integrated and innovative approaches demonstrated by the ACE sector.

The opportunity to ‘mix and match’ discourses such as social capital, lifelong learning and community building that SmartGeelong - The Learning City presented offered fertile ground for the development of innovative strategies to ensure that they became ‘legitimate concerns for public policy and business development’(Fricker 2001:11).
These discourses themselves involved the fusion of approaches such inclusion, empowerment and the accumulation of social assets that were well suited to the collaboration that underpinned the Learning City.

3.3 ‘Praxis’

Advocates of action learning recommend its application more widely to transform practice by learning through discussion and questioning insights. Practice based research can create new knowledge by recognising and reflecting on action learning so that it becomes captured as action research and forms the basis of changed behaviour and attitudes (Masters 1995b:6; Cherry 1998; Zuber-Skerritt 2001:Ch 1, p 13). The Marxist view that ‘to understand the system you need first to try to change it’ is used by Ife to support his contention that from action we derive understanding (Ife 2002:229) as does Fricker in exhorting community sector organisations to ‘avoid capture by the state or market’ by launching challenges to everyday subjugation and concentrations of power (Fricker 2001:12). Ife defines ‘praxis’ as successful practice that involves learning and doing at the same time. Praxis is a constant cycle of doing, learning and critical reflection that sits well with the action research cycles of project based interventions.
3.4 Development in the competence of the researcher

When a practitioner becomes a researcher into his own practice, he engages in a continuing process of self education (Schon 1991:299).

An action research approach also clarified my role as the researcher as a participant in the project and overcame this potentially problematic issue that could arise if other methodologies were applied. In action research, the researcher is an active participant in collaborative action that is carried out by groups of people who are the ‘others’(Delong 1997; Hatten 1997:4; Revans 1982:493 in Cherry 1998:8; Cherry 1999:17; Kock ND:6). Action research allows the researcher and ‘others’ to explore the researcher’s personal constructs and to develop and change their ideas on the basis of disconfirming as well as confirming evidence (Sankaran 2001:Ch 1, p8), to ‘unlearn’ as well as learn.

The role of the project researcher will change according to evolving circumstances and may include that of manager, consultant and catalyst as well as researcher. Ackoff adds that in addition to analytic technique, the practitioner must have the ‘active skill of designing a desirable future and inventing ways of bringing it about’ (Schon 1991:16) so that the ‘governing variables’ are questioned and subjected to critical scrutiny (Smith 2001a). The membership of the ‘others’ assisted in this process.
Emancipatory action research empowers the ‘others’. It can provide them with the ability to create new theory grounded in experience and practice. SmartGeelong – The Learning City provided the ‘others’ with the essential conditions necessary for this to happen - the equality of all participants, the collaborative activity and the opportunity to be innovative in their problem solving strategies (Zuber-Skerritt 2001:Ch 1, p15). By employing self reflection, thinking was transformed so that personal perspectives changed and others were better understood (Covey 1998:124; Newman ND:255).

Continuity is provided for the ‘others’ by the project Advisory Group. SmartGeelong – The Learning City followed the method for its first stage described by Landry in establishing a partnership between the stakeholders ‘defined as those who can affect or are affected’ by the desire to become a Learning City (Landry 2000:241). This partnership was the core and was seen as semi permanent. Members of this group were involved actively across the range of project activity.

The action research spiral of planning, acting and observing, reflecting and revising was monitored by the Advisory Group (McNiff 2002). This Advisory Group included representation from ACFE as the funding body, education providers, business representatives, local government and my employer, GATE. This also ensured that my role and objectives were not developed in isolation but within GATE’s declared policies and functions (Henderson 1981:18; Kock ND:3).
The practices of ‘double loop learning’ and reflection in action were employed as guidelines for developing skills in dealing well with situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict (Schon 1987; Argyris 1990; Schon 1991:50; 1995; Hatten 1997:6; Smith 2001a; McNiff 2002; Merz 2002). By developing a capacity to think about what I was doing I aligned the reflection on the development of my practice with the reflection on the action research cycles – to criticise, restructure and embody these new understandings in further action (Lovett 1983:72; Schon 1991:50; Masters 1995a:2; Revans 1982:493 in Cherry 1998:17). It also validated and clarified my role as an action researcher – it put the ‘I’ into the centre of my research (Delong 1997).

As a practitioner, my own skills as an action researcher were developed through Schon’s strategy of reflection in action – paying attention to phenomena and surfacing intuitive understandings based on my extensive prior practical experience in adult education and community development (Schon 1991; Delong 1997). SmartGeelong – The Learning City provided the opportunity to experiment with these intuitive findings to create a positive social change that could transform existing situations into something better (Schon 1991:147; Seymour-Rolls 1995:1) and to ‘make informed decisions in rapidly changing and often uncertain contexts’ (Smith 2001a).

My experience as an adult educator assisted in resolving any dilemmas about working with people as they arrived at decisions to take action as long as that action lead to further learning (Newman ND:259). By appreciating things in a situation that go beyond initial perceptions of a problem, I was in a position to pose new problems and with it, new models of the phenomena which could be treated as a hypothesis to be tested (Schon 1991:148; Merz 2002).
3.4.1 The non directive approach

As SmartGeelong – The Learning City evolved and established the model of using project Steering Groups for particular initiatives, I implemented a non directive community work approach in anticipation of contributing to the successful development of Geelong as a Learning City. I hoped to observe that this approach would create the 'sufficiently favourable conditions for successful group action' that would:

1. contribute to group autonomy and group empowerment
2. engage participants so that their collaborative decisions were creative and innovative
3. foster the sustainability of project initiatives so that they would continue after my involvement finished (Henderson 1981:108).

In order to achieve these goals, I applied the strategies of a non directive approach when I facilitated the development and operation of each of the project Steering Groups so that they achieved the desired outcomes of this approach in:

1. Strengthening the incentives for people to work together
2. Providing information about other relevant initiatives
3. Helping participants deal with problems systematically
4. Providing advice and assistance with getting additional resources and materials
5. Mediating any difficulties that arose within the group

Consequently, I focused on developing my skills in coaching - in questioning, rather than providing answers when I established the Steering Groups (Dattner 2004). I developed skills in learning not to carry the 'burden of responsibility for organisation and action... (but... provided) encouragement and support for those who do' (Henderson 1981:110).

As SmartGeelong – The Learning City developed, a range of action and experience developed the awareness, understanding and commitment of broad sections of the community to building a learning culture. Particular emphasis was placed in Cycles 2 and 3 on the engagement of people and organisations that had the capacity to influence, such as educational partners, peak employer organisations, the media and local government.

3.4.2 The role of the researcher as a change agent

I found as the Learning City project progressed that there was a lack of distinction between the role of a local leader and the role of a change agent. The Victorian Learning Towns claimed and were acknowledged as being agents of change in their communities (Kosky Oct 2002). My research clarified for me however that the roles are different. The role of leader and change agent has been blurred in the context of community work and this is in part attributed to the belief that intervention is carried out by professionals rather than local participants (Bryant 1972:84; Martin 2002).
McNulty also distinguished between external change agents who were brought in to instigate and implement change and those people who belonged to the local community who were innovators and leaders and who presented a much better prospect of sustainability for the improved participation in learning that initiatives such as Learning Cities were aiming for (McNulty Aug 2003c).

3.5 Ongoing reflection and evaluation

Observing, evaluating and reflecting from the cycles occurred at the same time as the planning to implement the next cycle and was used to inform this planning (Kemmis 1988; Cherry 1998). It was guided by questions, issues and a ‘search for patterns’ (Patton 1987:15), as they arose from ongoing observation. Regular and frequent formal and informal meetings between ‘critical friends’ largely represented but not confined to the project Advisory Group and me as the researcher, ensured that reflective learning was built into the daily activity of the project. This meant that small scale adjustments could be made continuously to retain the focus of the project and capitalise on opportunities as they arose, such as new funding prospects or new partners for projects.

In addition to extensive written reporting for a range of audiences, I also kept a journal to support and retain the reflection. This was a new experience for me but proved to be a strategy that provided me with valuable recollections of observations that others had made, of insights I gained and of dilemmas that I encountered (Hughes 1999; English 2001b; a). It certainly demonstrated progress both in the development of Geelong as a Learning City and in my personal and professional development as a project manager (Webb 1966:89).
I also employed the technique of ‘memos to myself’ – notes and comments on other reports and papers I was reading or writing – and found this was an efficient way of capturing the insights that occur unexpectedly before they disappear in the busy everyday world of the manager and researcher (Sankaran 1997).

4. DEVELOPING THE ACTION RESEARCH PLAN

This research project employed the two guidelines for effective action research:

1. Spirals of repeated cycles to clarify the findings, integrate theory and practice and create understanding and action that informs the next cycle and


4.1 Spirals of repeated cycles

This project undertook four cycles of the action research spiral (including the preparatory cycle) over four years that were based on action plans that were reported, evaluated and revised (Kemmis 1988; SG Advisory Group Dec 2002a; Nov 2000). The preparatory cycle was conducted between April 2000 and April 2001. This cycle initiated preliminary action, the first strand of action research (Grundy in Masters 1995:5; Cherry 1998; Dick 2002; Kock ND).
This PhD proposal was developed on the basis of the experience of the preparatory cycle. The research questions that were proposed reflected the shift in understanding that is regarded as ‘knowing’, the second strand. They represented a deeper understanding of the potential of learning communities and more detailed research that consolidated the project context (Grundy in Masters 1995:6; Kock ND:7).

Cycle 1, the first formal action research cycle incorporated the PhD proposal as the ‘Attending, Noticing, Focusing’ stage (Revans 1982:493 in Cherry 1998). The preparation of the proposal was based on experience, practice, research and consultation. This generated baseline qualitative data such as the results of meetings, briefings and presentations with key stakeholders who became ‘critical friends’ of the project (Tesch 1995; McNiff 2002) as well as quantitative data such as demographic, employment and educational participation statistics.

### 4.2 Multiple sources of information

The theory emerges from the data... (Patton 1987:158).

The proposal aimed to explore whether a community that has declared itself a Learning City will demonstrate measurable improvements in its social and economic development over time. It aimed to discover if lifelong learning can be used as a method for achieving sustainable economic development and social inclusiveness.
Several episodes of action planning were undertaken by the ‘others’ represented by the project Advisory Group and their delegates. A key strategy for collecting data, solving problems and implementing ideas was the establishment of Steering Groups for initiatives of SmartGeelong – The Learning City. As a result, each of the individual demonstration projects that was established by SmartGeelong – The Learning City was structured as an action research cycle within the annual meta cycles.

This element comprised the third strand of action research, the ‘learning’, identified as a successful approach through the preparatory cycle. It ensured that the action research approach was practised and reinforced by the ‘early adopters’ (Robinson 2004:2) and aligned the findings and the experience with SmartGeelong – The Learning City’s strategic development. It confirmed and disconfirmed insights (Sankaran 2001) so that the theory developed through practical experience (Reason 2001a; Reason 2001b) found that the involvement of ‘others’ through the Steering Groups was effective because:

1. People who represent ‘others’ are engaged for one specific activity at a time and the effort and time required is clearly finite
2. Key stakeholders can be represented by different people, sharing the workload and sharing the ownership
3. Awareness, understanding and commitment is spread widely
4. Rich sources of data, experience and skill contribute to the individual characteristics of each project activity (SG Advisory Group Nov 2001a).
5. WHY BECOME A LEARNING CITY?

Learning Cities have developed learning as a key tool in preparing their citizens for a new era (McNulty Sept 2004).

Cities which succeed economically in the 21st Century will have a diverse economy, strong links with knowledge-based organisations and a well-educated workforce. They can provide a vision for the community, survey the community’s learning needs, unite diverse learning opportunities, recognise learning achievements and be an example to others. ‘Australia, I don’t believe, spends enough on education...we have to have a highly skilled workforce that is able to compete...Australia needs to understand that it is an investment in the future’(Turner 2004:14).

5.1 The Learning City as action research

The development of a local community as a Learning City provides the action research framework for addressing the ‘feelings of risk and uncertainty’ Anthony Giddens states we encounter by living in a rapidly changing world (Kemmis 1995:4). The ‘chronic revision’ of our educational institutions requires the innovative approaches of new project activity to encourage the contributions of those with whom we share our ‘lifeworlds’ – our colleagues, the participants in our programs and our communities (Kemmis 1995:4).
If people are to improve their participation in decision making, they need to be informed about issues and the consequences of their decisions. People need a level of awareness and education higher than that which currently exists. Without enhanced education, participatory democracy can reinforce ‘prejudice, scapegoating, stereotyping and ignorance’ and Ife cites the citizens’ initiated referendums as an example (Ife 2002:129).

By collaborative project activity, we can construct an environment that supports participative action research that will have an impact on changing systems and making them more responsive. Action research can help educators become more articulate and offer new ways of thinking about the tensions between systems and lifeworld experienced in education (Kemmis 1995:44).

Other research refers to the barriers that systems place to achieving lifelong learning for all in our community. Kearns refers to a 'substantial set of barriers' including tensions between system(s) and local community needs. He cites systemic barriers in Albury/Wodonga as an example where local aspirations to manage their educational resources are frustrated by government policy (Kearns 1999b:34).

Inflexible and unresponsive education systems in Australia are ‘largely abstract…too often about power, control, economy and efficiency’ rather than the innovative, creative participative systems that ‘futures thinking’ indicates will open up better options for making choices (Martin 2004).
Becker also cautions against the tendency for the influence of systems to produce predictable results in educational research at the expense of local needs. Systems can produce exactly the results we are after, often with an emphasis on redesigning the system rather than looking at local and individual variation. However, we accumulate knowledge by finding out the things that are tied to local circumstances, finding the peculiarities and building them into our studies (Becker 1998:39).

The evaluation process itself can be seen to demonstrate that a Learning City is one. By practising reflexive learning, the ongoing evaluation process employed by SmartGeelong – The Learning City ‘push(ed) the boundaries of its knowledge and expectation.’ By ensuring that ‘others’ are included in the evaluation, a Learning City ‘will see evaluation as a fundamental part of its development and will welcome the involvement of all sectors and outsiders’ (Landry 2000:246).

5.2 Implementing a partnership model

The new focus on partnerships that permeated Victorian Government policy and practice was well supported by a Learning City. Traditional economic and political structures meant that organisations that ‘have a lot of competition in our recent history’ (Davis 2002:38) had been denied community access to the ‘channels of power, resources, communication and participation’ (Packer 2001:2). ‘Learning to be partners will take patience, determination, commitment and effort’ (Davis 2002:38) but more inclusive community partnerships that developed creative and innovative approaches based on equality of participation would minimise the effect of these structures (Tett 2002).
The requirement in the Learning Towns project brief to develop partnerships across sectors recognised that 'different sectors of society have access to different resources and channels of power' (Packer 2001:2). By focusing on links with all community sectors, this partnership model had the potential to increase community capacity to attract and mobilise resources through the development of new relationships.

These injunctions to seek alternative ways to engage and strengthen communities and feed this information back to legislators provided an opportunity to overcome the barriers that often traditionally impeded the development of progressive approaches to community work that accompany government funding (Ife 2002:165).


6.1 Preparatory Cycle

From Preparation to Awareness (April 2000 - April 2001)

This cycle included identifying potential partners in planning the project proposal with the project proponent, GATE, submitting the proposal to ACFE and then succeeding with the application in May 2000 (Geelong Advertiser 20 May 2000).

The preparatory cycle then included a preliminary environmental scan with the SmartGeelong Network (SGN) and the development of a project action plan and project goals (SG Planning Group July 2000a; SG Advisory Group Nov 2000).
This cycle implemented from the start an approach that deployed operational and strategic initiatives simultaneously, grounded in action research methodology. The first event of the project, The Geelong Learning Festival, was held in September 2000. At the same time, the project Advisory Group embarked on a process of engagement with the City Council that included a presentation to Councillors in September (SG Planning Group Sept 2000) and culminated in the formal declaration by Council of SmartGeelong – The Learning City in December (Geelong Advertiser 20 Dec 2000).

6.2 Cycle 1

From Awareness to Involvement (April 2001 - December 2001)

This cycle succeeded the preparatory cycle and its period of intense activity that established the Advisory Group in November 2000, implemented a review and reflection process by evaluating the first event - The Geelong Learning Festival - and embarked on a process of engagement with potential partners identified through the planning process (Harrington 2000; SG Advisory Group Nov 2000; SG Geelong Learning Festival Steering Group Oct 2000).

Steering Groups were established for each of the individual demonstration projects initiated through this planning process including the Geelong Learning Guarantee, The Training Network, Focus Ed and the Community Forums, in addition to next The Geelong Learning Festival. Action research cycles were developed for each of these projects that were managed and monitored by the Steering Groups and reported back to the Advisory Group.
By Cycle 1, SmartGeelong – The Learning City along with the other Victorian Learning Towns projects had also formed the Victorian Learning Towns Network (VLTN). The progress of the Learning Towns and the VLTN would provide supplementary action research that would illuminate and inform the development of Geelong’s project through instrumental case studies, triangulation and comparison (Stake 1994:237).

6.3 Cycle 2

*From Involvement to Understanding* (October 2001 - December 2002)

Overlapping with Cycle 1, Cycle 2 implemented and consolidated the specific initiatives of SmartGeelong – The Learning City. The action research cycles developed by the Steering Groups to manage individual initiatives (including the new project of Cafe.com) proved successful and were employed as a strategy to develop the understanding and commitment by sharing the ownership and developing new leadership as people began to understand their new partners (Cope 2002:144).

This effectively managed the workload and ensured that action research cycles that included planning, monitoring, evaluation and reflection were implemented through all stages of each activity (SG ICDL Feb 2002; June 2001; June 2002; Sept 2001).

Evaluation of the progress of the action research cycles of the individual demonstration projects and the broader impact of SmartGeelong – The Learning City and the Victorian Learning Towns pilot projects was carried out in several research projects towards the end of 2001 (Sheed 2001; Wong Dec 2001; SG Advisory Group Oct 2001).
Despite findings that the Learning Towns were proving innovative and were making an impact, the ACFE Board significantly amended the requirements of the Learning Towns in renegotiating their contracts for 2002 and focused on project plans for specific project activity within each Learning Town rather than broader cultural change (ACFEB 2001 - 02; SG Advisory Group April 2002). At the end of 2002 a further review was conducted but this time it was with the intention of developing a Performance Measurement Framework that would more appropriately capture the progress of the Learning Towns (Cavaye 2002a).

6.4 Cycle 3

From Understanding to Commitment (January – December 2003)

This final action research cycle aimed to embed the practice and concept of a Learning City in the community. By being alert, SmartGeelong – The Learning City was able to capitalise on several significant opportunities to do this in addition to continuing to manage its own demonstration projects. The ACFE Board allocated project funds the VLTN to develop the Performance Measurement Framework that had been developed through the consultation and review of the Learning Towns at the end of 2002.

This occurred simultaneously with the development of evaluation strategies for ‘Communities in Action’, Geelong’s Community Building and Neighbourhood Renewal projects and the Performance Measurement Framework was incorporated into this. In addition, the City Council established G21 (the Geelong Region Strategy) in November 2002, a strategic planning framework for Geelong and four surrounding municipalities (G21 Nov 2002).
The SmartGeelong Network (SGN), the SmartGeelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network (SGR LLEN) supported by SmartGeelong – The Learning City took on a joint leadership role to develop a Lifelong Learning Pillar Plan that formed a critical component of this strategy.

The simultaneous emergence of these strategic initiatives were indications of a changed climate that valued learning and education as essential components of community development (SG Interview with the Mayor July 2003; G21 Nov 2002). The identification of distinctive characteristics in these initiatives that had been identified through SmartGeelong – The Learning City indicated the possible development of a new model of social change that ensured a promising platform for the future development of Geelong as a learning community.

6.5 Supplementary Cycles

In the background of the Action Research Cycles, other cycles occurred that provided insights and observations that supported the findings of SmartGeelong – The Learning City or stimulated other ways of thinking. The collective and individual experiences of the Victorian Learning Towns were important in this regard, as were the experiences and insights of other Australian and international learning communities with whom relationships were established. The impact on SmartGeelong – The Learning City is documented through supplementary cycles labeled 1a, 2a and 3a.
7. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The action research methodology permitted a repertoire of evaluation methods including qualitative methods. Qualitative data enabled the research to attempt to address questions and issues that emerged as the project developed. The process of generating indicators to assess project activity such as the Learning City is ‘simple, flexible and logical’ (Landry 2000:239). These indicators are unlikely to be completely objective but this does not mean they should not strive to be. Subjective data such as measuring how included people feel can only be assessed and judged rather than quantified and measured (Landry 2000:240).

Qualitative measures are valuable in that they emphasise the importance of understanding the meanings of behaviour and their context (Patton 1987:20) and they accommodate unforeseen outcomes (Landry 2000:241). Quantitative and qualitative data was built in to the Business Plan of SmartGeelong – The Learning City (SG Advisory Group Dec 2000a) and was collected and analysed for this project during the Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy (see 9.1 below).

7.1 Sources of quantitative data included:

1. Existing information such as local economic indicators, employment statistics, demographic statistics and school retention rates.

2. Findings from current research.

3. Quantitative data collected through the action research process from SmartGeelong – The Learning City events and activities such as the number of new partnerships, number and range of suggestions for new programs and initiatives and alignment of new programs with gaps identified from surveys.
7.2 Sources of qualitative data included:

1. Initial SWOT analysis (SG Planning Group July 2000b) and subsequent planning with key stakeholders conducted as part of the meta action research cycles (SG Advisory Group Dec 2002a; Nov 2000).

2. Qualitative data from the individual demonstration project action research cycles including surveys such as the New Learner Survey to determine levels of participation in learning (SG New Learner Survey April 2002; SG New Learner Survey Sept 2003b) and surveys to gain feedback and suggest new strategies for engagement in lifelong learning (SG Geelong Learning Festival 2001). A Needs Analysis to determine professional development priorities for educational practitioners was also conducted and updated during each cycle (SG Focus Ed Business Group April 2001; June 2001).

3. Briefings, meetings and workshops with key stakeholders such as local government, Geelong Chamber of Commerce, community groups and other educational providers (SG Advisory Group Feb 2001; SG Planning Group Sept 2000).

4. Activities of the Victorian Learning Towns Network such as Conferences, Case Studies and Reports.

5. Focus groups and interviews to determine:

   Gaps in provision

   Strategies for extending participation in learning

   The impact of the project.
8. DETERMINING THE FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

During the final Action Research Cycle of SmartGeelong – The Learning City for this PhD, action research strategies such as focus groups, ‘Informal Conversational Interviews’ (Patton 1987:110) ‘Community Conversations’ and ‘Informed Person Feedback’ (Cavaye 2003b) were used to determine the effectiveness of project initiatives. They were conducted to determine the extent to which there is a ‘consistent, shared view’ (Patton 1987:135) of the project and its impact. They provided the forums that increased the number of disagreements that ‘fueled the drive towards a deeper understanding’ of what was actually agreed (Dick 2000:2). In using each of these methods, there was a clear understanding that the discussions were deliberately targeted and views were not representative of the whole community.

Coinciding with this final cycle, other consultations and evaluations were implemented that assisted and were incorporated into the findings for this PhD (Table 3). While the consultations were public forums, the potential use of material gathered for this research was made explicit and permission was gained from those leading the processes such as the G21 Lifelong Learning Pillar Leader and The Mayor.
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**Key:** G21 (The Geelong Region Strategy)

PMFIC – SGLC (Performance Measurement Framework Implementation and Consultation – SmartGeelong – The Learning City)

PMFIC – VLTN (Performance Measurement Framework Implementation and Customisation - VLTN)

**Table 3.** Timeline of the key evaluation strategies.

The two major consultations were for ‘G21’ and the ‘SmartGeelong – The Learning City Performance Measurement Framework’ project. Additional research and evaluations occurred at the same time that included the first phase of ‘Communities in Action’, the joint Neighbourhood Renewal and Community Building strategy in Geelong’s northern suburbs.


This report is attached as Part B3.
The Performance Measurement Framework was also being trialed in all of the Victorian Learning Towns at this time, prior to its trial in selected Regional ACFE Councils including BSW. I supported the initial implementation of the Performance Measurement Framework in the BSW ACFE Council and the ten individual Learning Towns Performance Measurement Framework reports were consolidated into a joint report presented to ACFEB in May 2004 (Cavaye 2004).

Finally, each of the individual demonstration projects of SmartGeelong – The Learning City were reported on using an action research framework and the findings of those initiatives were also analysed and used to inform further planning.

All of these initiatives provided valuable sources of data for the evaluation of SmartGeelong – The Learning City and also acted as triangulation, assisting in developing and confirming the themes that I was observing, identifying the ‘idiosyncratic information’ that could be discarded (Dick 2000:2), providing ‘multiple perceptions to clarify meaning (and) verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation’ (Stake 1994:241).

### 8.1 G21 (The Geelong Region Strategy)

G21 (The Geelong Region Strategy) – was implemented during 2003 by the City Council in partnership with the four surrounding local government areas. Developed through a ‘Pillar’ strategy, this process commenced in November 2002 and the initial phase concluded with the launch of the G21 Plan, ‘Our Region – Your Future’ in November 2003 (G21 Nov 2003).
SmartGeelong – The Learning City assumed a leadership role in supporting the SGR LLEN to conduct the community consultation that developed the plan for G21’s Lifelong Learning Pillar (G21 June 2003).

8.2 The Performance Measurement Framework

The inappropriateness of existing measures employed by ACFE to gauge the impact of the Victorian Learning Towns had been identified from the time of the initial project proposal (ACFEB March 2000). The Learning Towns consistently engaged with the development of new ways of measuring the impact of community building initiatives (VLTN 3 Dec 2001; 16 Nov 2001; 19 May 2003; Sheed 2001). During 2002, the ACFE Board supported the VLTN in the development of a new framework for measuring progress and resulted in the Learning Towns Evaluation Framework (Cavaye 2002a). A range of methods to capture information about the progress and impact of the Victorian Learning Towns was developed as the Performance Measurement Framework Project by Cavaye in consultation with the VLTN and subsequently trialed by the Learning Towns in 2003 (Cavaye 2004).

8.2.1 The Performance Measurement Framework Performance Indicators

The Performance Measurement Framework Project jointly managed by the VLTN and conducted throughout 2003 provided the Learning Towns with the opportunity they had long advocated of developing their own methodology and indicators of performance that accurately reflected their outcomes.
It provided the Advisory Group of SmartGeelong – The Learning City with the forum for them to ‘agree a series of indicators...having identified the areas to be evaluated in relation to their own definition of what their city is trying to achieve through its creative processes’ (Landry 2000:241).

The Performance Measurement Framework allowed SmartGeelong - The Learning City to develop those simple indicators of awareness and participation that are the most effective by being readily understood. It also provided the framework for ongoing data collection and analysis at regular intervals by trained people (Landry 2000; Cavaye 2003b). Its reporting format was first presented to the Advisory Group - the ‘stakeholder partnership’ (Landry 2000:242) - and then contrasted with data from the other Learning Towns and changes made in future plans as a result (SG Advisory Group May 2003a).

Training in developing an Indicators and Measurement Matrix that was customised for each Learning Town and in using the Performance Measurement Framework data collection methods to measure each criterion was conducted for the Learning Towns Project Managers (Cavaye 2003b). The matrix for SmartGeelong – The Learning City was developed by its Performance Measurement Framework project team (SG PMFIC Oct 2003a). These ‘others’ who volunteered to conduct the Performance Measurement Framework research were trained in the data collection methods at a community workshop (Cavaye 2003a).
8.3 Focus Groups and Interviews

Focus groups and interviews were conducted from February to June 2003 for G21 (The Geelong Region Strategy) and from May to September 2003 for the Performance Measurement Framework. Additional information was collected throughout the Action Research Cycles of SmartGeelong – The Learning City for this PhD.

8.3.1 Numbers of people consulted

G21 conducted an initial workshop and then eleven focus groups with a total of 200 participants.

The Performance Measurement Framework incorporated nine focus groups, ten individual interviews and numerous informal ‘Community Conversations’ – a total of at least 75 people.

Additional information was provided for SmartGeelong – The Learning City and this PhD through surveys, interviews and evaluations with at least a further 200 people throughout the project.

8.3.2 Focus Groups

Focus groups are quick and flexible and issues can be explored through personal interaction and discussion (Cavaye 2003b). All of the focus groups conducted throughout the project have been designed according to recommended methods.
They usually consisted of five to ten people who were similar to each other in their particular experience in SmartGeelong – The Learning City projects such as the Advisory Group and project Steering Groups. Focus groups selected for G21 were also groups of people who were similar to each other such as school Principals, U3A members or people who represented local government. Participants were invited to take part and volunteered to do so.

Some were conducted by me and some by others (Krueger 1988:25-28; Cavaye 2003b). They produced insights and observations that added different dimensions to the information that was gathered by individual interviews and by other data (Krueger 1988:42). Common themes emerged from groups that had a diversity of experiences and perceptions (Krueger 1988:109). While participants may not represent community feeling, and personal power and group dynamics may influence the opinions expressed, themes are useful as ‘knots in the web of experience, around which certain experiences are spun and experienced as meaningful wholes’ (Ellis 2001).

8.3.3 Informed Person Feedback

Interviews with ‘informed people’ are a technique developed by Cavaye for the development of the Performance Measurement Framework. They are ‘people who know enough about Learning Towns to make an informed comment but they were not necessarily closely involved in the program’ (Cavaye 2002a:6). Interviewers discuss issues with a relatively small number of local people who are well informed about community issues and attitudes.

Advantages of the Informed Person technique include its efficiency - it doesn’t burden the community with surveying - and allows considerable qualitative information and detail.
It can also be used to build broader community involvement (Webb 1966:114; Cavaye 2003b). It is deliberately non representative and it forms a component of the overall picture that is drawn from a range of research methods.

8.4 Group Collaboration Charting (Cavaye 2003b)

Group collaboration charting was trialed through the Performance Measurement Framework and has proved to be one of the performance measures that captured significant interest. The method assesses the development of collaborative relationships between groups and individuals over time.

The Advisory Group of SmartGeelong – The Learning City identified groups for which collaboration was important. Using this method, these could be very specific such as particular community groups or general sectors such as the business sector or local government. The Advisory Group then developed a collaboration chart using the ‘strength’ of relationships on a scale as follows:

0  No relationship  No line
1  Communication
2  Communication and/or some collaborative activities
3  Frequent communication and/or active collaboration

The Advisory Group developed a chart by consensus where there was open discussion and agreement on the strength of relationships between groups and the contribution of SmartGeelong – The Learning City towards them.
Each relationship was scored and an aggregate score calculated. Drawing a chart annually started to show changes in relationships (PMFIC Geelong Report 2003; SG Collaboration Chart 3b 2004; SG Collaboration Chart 4b 2004). SmartGeelong – The Learning City adapted the technique devised by Cavaye and received positive feedback on this innovation (Cavaye Nov 2003).

9. INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The interpretation of data was carried out through:

9.1 An ongoing monitoring and evaluation strategy

A reflective monitoring and evaluation strategy that included the provision of regular feedback to the community and six monthly assessment of progress with the Advisory Group and funding bodies was implemented throughout the project, demonstrating a key characteristic required of a Learning City itself – to ‘develop by learning from its experiences and those of others’ (Landry 2000:267) that led to critically informed further action (Hatten 1997:2).

A cyclic evaluation strategy ensured that continuous learning, improvement and value adding became integral to the development of Geelong as a Learning City. ‘Such communities invest in the intellect and creativity of their citizens, provide opportunities for deepened personal fulfillment and contribute to building Australia as a learning society’ (Kearns 1998).
9.2 Use of quantitative and qualitative measures

9.2.1 Quantitative measures

Quantitative measures that demonstrated the successful achievement of outcomes included:

1. **New partnerships** demonstrated through the Performance Measurement Framework Report for SmartGeelong – The Learning City indicated increased cross sectoral partnerships, increased number of businesses involved in Learning City activity, increased number of individuals involved in learning activities and an increased range of learning opportunities (PMFIC Geelong Report 2003).

2. **Learning community characteristics** such as increased retention rates in schools (Allen 2004), increased lifelong learning provision, increased range of learning providers engaged with local communities and increased use of information technology (PMFIC Geelong Report 2003).

9.2.2 Qualitative measures

Qualitative measures identified by the Performance Measurement Framework Report for SmartGeelong – The Learning City and the G21 Lifelong Learning Pillar Consultations that demonstrated the successful achievement of outcomes included changed attitudes to learning, improved work-readiness skills, new learners, innovative strategies for engaging people in lifelong learning, leverage of additional funds and initiatives and new networks (PMFIC Geelong Report 2003; G21 July 2003).
9.3 Analysis of reports

Reports were prepared by SmartGeelong – The Learning City Steering Groups and by me as the Project Manager and researcher, for the Advisory Group, for funding bodies and for my employer among others.

All reporting was against project goals and local goals were aligned with those of the ACFE Board in the Business Plan, Action Plans and reports of SmartGeelong – The Learning City (SG Advisory Group Dec 2000a; Dec 2002a; b; May 2003b; Nov 2000). The outcomes were analysed using a range of methods to determine the validity of the findings. These included regular reports from Steering Groups managing Learning City events and activities and group discussion at meetings (referenced as ‘Internal Documents’ and coded with the prefix SG for ‘SmartGeelong’) that followed an action research cycle and measured the outcomes against the aims, determined reasons for success, determined reasons for any misalignment of aims and outcomes, documented learnings gained from the event or activity and made recommendations for improvement (Zuber-Skerritt 1995:13).

During the data collection for this PhD, for the Performance Measurement Framework and G21 people were asked ‘prompt questions’ relating to Geelong’s strategy for and commitment to lifelong learning (G21 April 2003; SG PMFIC Oct 2003b). These questions were intended to ‘prompt’ responses within a consistent framework for the interviews. Notes were written during interviews or group discussion. Themes were identified and anonymous verbatim quotes from interviewees illustrated themes.
I chose to emphasise certain themes and 'de emphasise others on the basis of my subjective judgement about their capacity to evoke aspects of the experience...which may be useful to others engaging in this work' (Brearley 2001:124). The themes were summarised under sections in:

1. 'SmartGeelong – The Learning City Performance Measurement Framework Report' (PMFIC Geelong Report 2003);

2. G21 'Lifelong Learning Pillar Plan' (G21 June 2003)

and subsequently in:


10. OTHER RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Local relevance is paramount – global relevance is a bonus (Dick, 2003).

Two opportunities for broader research arose during the course of this PhD that added new, external research to the findings of this project and contributed to the development of Geelong as a Learning City:

10.1 ACFE Research Project on the Victorian Learning Towns

The ACFE Division engaged me to prepare a research report on the Victorian Learning Towns project in late 2001 by preparing case studies on each of them in order to advance our 'understanding of something else' (Stake 1994:237).
My strategy was to conduct interviews with the managers of each of the projects, write up case studies on each Learning Town from those interviews and present them to each project for amendment and addition before they were submitted as the 2001 progress report. A blend of the intrinsic and instrumental case study, this approach aimed to capture the richness of project activity that was not always reflected in written reports and was a valuable source of qualitative and comparative data for Geelong’s project as well as the other towns and cities participating in the pilot project (Stake 1994).

The report, ‘Learning Towns – Making the Difference’ (Wong Dec 2001) attached as Part B1, has since been extensively used by the Victorian Learning Towns, the ACFE Division and others as a briefing paper and research paper. It has also been used to inform further development of government policy such as resource allocation to the Learning Towns and contributed to the development of the Performance Measurement Framework conducted by the VLTN during 2002/3 (Cavaye 2002a).

10.2 Travelling Scholarship

I was also awarded a travelling scholarship by the Office of Employment, Training and Tertiary Education (ETTE) in June 2001 to study the outcomes and learnings of five Learning Cities in the UK and Northern Europe. This scholarship was taken up in early 2002 and was awarded because of the capacity of the study tour to capitalise on the work being done by this PhD and the ACFE Learning Towns. This study tour provided significant qualitative and quantitative data for comparison with Victoria’s projects, for recommendations and for predicting trends.
The report 'Building 21st Century Communities through Lifelong Learning' (Wong April 2002) attached as Part B2, is available on websites (www.vta.vic.edu.au) and has been widely disseminated. Numerous presentations have also been made to a range of audiences including local, national and international forums (Kyabram 2002; Northern Metropolitan Regional Council 2002; RMIT 2003; Wong May 2002).

10.3 Other presentations

Other opportunities for influencing the development of learning communities occurred as a result of these experiences and included being engaged by the VLTN to prepare and present a Case Study, 'The Victorian Learning Towns', attached as Part B4, to the first OECD Conference in the Southern Hemisphere on 'Learning Cities, Towns and Regions', Melbourne October 2002 (OECD 2002; Wong Oct 2002a). Part B4a is the companying Powerpoint presentation (Wong Oct 2002b).

I co presented 'The Victorian Learning Towns 2003' - on the progress of the VLTN - to the incoming Director of ETTE in April 2003 (VLCN 2003). I have written articles and made presentations on SmartGeelong – The Learning City and the Victorian Learning Towns that still continue (Wong 2002; White 2004b; Wong Aug 2003; July 2002).
PART A2 SmartGeelong – The Learning City: The Action Research Cycles

Cycle 1
Cycle 2
Cycle 3

Chapter 4

CYCLE 1: From Awareness to Involvement (April 2001 – December 2001)

1. CONTEXT - GETTING STARTED

A true learning city is one that strives to learn how to renew itself in a period of extraordinary global change. In periods of such transition, learning becomes central to our future wellbeing (DfEE 1998).

As Geelong was so well provided for with educational opportunity it was decided from the start by the Advisory Group that the emphasis of developing Geelong as a Learning City would be on improving pathways between providers and extending participation in learning rather than increasing educational provision. With several major educational institutions and many community based organisations as well as 27 secondary colleges, it was seen to be important to develop the relationships among these from the beginning.
Many networks already existed although their interaction could be improved. There were also existing initiatives that could be built on such as the newly formed SmartGeelong Network Ltd (SGN) and the Jobs Pathway Programme managed by GATE that operated in all of Geelong’s secondary schools.

2. PLANNING

2.1 The significant partnerships

2.1.1 The SmartGeelong Network Ltd (SGN)

The SGN was a network launched in December 1999 by the Geelong Chamber of Commerce and comprised representation from all of Geelong’s educational and research institutions. While its principal aim was to grow the business of its members, particularly through collaborative major projects, it was seen as an appropriate body to support the development of Geelong as a Learning City with GATE as the lead agency. Many important linkages were already in place through SGN including the 600 members of the Geelong Chamber of Commerce. The Board of the Chamber was a committed supporter of SmartGeelong - The Learning City from its inception and reports were made to its monthly meetings by members of the Advisory Group (Lyons 2000; Geelong Chamber of Commerce 2002).

Other key relationships were seen as the City Council and the Geelong Science and Technology Centre (GSAT). The involvement of the City Council developed throughout the life of the project and showed substantial increased commitment as the relationships formed with key Council officers and Councillors.
From the start, the City Council endorsed the project with the formal declaration of Geelong as a Learning City. In March 2001 nine new Councillors were elected out of a total of 12 and several demonstrated interest in SmartGeelong – The Learning City activity from the beginning, regularly attending functions, chairing and opening events and responding to requests for advice, support and endorsement.

GSAT was an unusual education provider, established in the mid 1990s by the Victorian Department of Education to specialise in the provision of Information Technology training, especially to teachers but to the general public as well. It proved to be a committed partner in developing Geelong as a Learning City and has provided a depth of Information Technology expertise to project activity that was invaluable.

2.1.2 The Project Advisory Group

One of the issues confronting the project team was the sheer size of the Geelong community (population 210 000) to be reached by the project aims. Consequently, the Advisory Group was recruited strategically to encompass broad representation and with the skills to effectively provide the advice required to contribute to the action research (Cherry 1999; McNiff 2002). It included SGN, the Geelong Chamber of Commerce, the Barwon South Western (BSW) Department of Education and Training, GSAT, the City Council, a private enterprise owner, the Gordon Institute of TAFE, Deakin University and the BSW Regional ACFE Council. A State Member of Parliament was also a member. The Advisory Group was chaired by a member of the GATE Committee of Management.
As several members represented more than one organisation, the Advisory Group was quite compact and membership was stable from the start, attendance at the approximately quarterly meetings was comprehensive and all members were also involved in at least one major SmartGeelong – The Learning City initiative (SG Advisory Group Dec 2002b).

2.1.3 Project Steering Groups

SmartGeelong - The Learning City trialed a model of Steering Groups from the beginning that ensured that Advisory Group representation was directly related to project outcomes. The Steering Groups faithfully reflected the membership of the Advisory Group and SGN but with different people engaged in each project. This model enabled the project to maintain its aims but provided a multilayered effect whereby the workload was spread and clearly defined for each member of a Steering Group. Members knew that they were involved for the life of the activity and no further, making it easier to recruit participants from all the key stakeholders. It also capitalised on the creativity and innovation brought by individuals to each project. Most importantly, this model strategically spread the understanding of SmartGeelong - The Learning City and its aims among people who could influence others in their immediate environment.

2.2 Strategic/business plan (SG Advisory Group Dec 2000a)

The Advisory Group of SmartGeelong – The Learning City developed its strategic and business plan during the first six months of the project (by December 2000) and aligned it with the goals of the government.
The planning process commenced with an analysis of the gaps in provision of learning opportunities in Geelong and the opportunities that were presented by the planned partnerships. It was at this stage that the first choices that Cherry describes as characterising action research were made (Cherry 2001). Short term goals were developed and were used throughout the project for reporting against both to the Advisory Group and to ACFE (Table 4):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Goals (July 2000)</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conduct an awareness raising program (leading to improved pathways).</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a wide range of age appropriate learning.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain a particular focus on raising awareness of the Learning City and educational innovation opportunities with local government.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain a better understanding of the change Geelong is experiencing from an industrial and agricultural base to the services, tourism and Information Technology industries.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop the awareness and use of Information Technology in business, especially Small to Medium Enterprises.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create opportunities for educationally and socially disadvantaged people to have positive experiences in education and work.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the sharing of resources and skills among:</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• educational providers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 The significant projects

The Strategic and Business Plan was updated annually. An operational Project Action Plan was also developed that aligned the cycles of the project, the goals, the strategies and the possible outcomes with timelines (SG Advisory Group Nov 2000).

Projects that were developed through the planning process during 2001 included:

1. The Geelong Learning Guarantee
2. The Geelong Learning Festival
3. Focus Ed – an integrated professional development program for all teachers in the Geelong region
4. The Training Network
5. Community Forums
6. The SmartGeelong Diary (Craven 2001a).

Participation by individual Advisory Group members in projects was high as was attendance at all functions. Advisory Group members were also important in establishing relationships with new supporters of SmartGeelong - The Learning City such as individual business people, local government, other government departments such as the Department of Human Services, the Committee for Geelong, the SGR LLEN, The Geelong Trades Hall Council and the Geelong Manufacturing Council.
3. THE PRACTICE (ACTION)

3.1 Strategy for achieving the project goals

The project developed a layered approach to implementing strategies to achieve the principle aim of extending participation in learning. By presenting alternative ways of providing information and support in innovative and accessible ways new audiences were being reached with particular emphasis on people who were marginalised from traditional sources of information about education and learning.

Some of these audiences included young people who have left school early, women returning to work and study, older people, people with disabilities, people with a first language other than English and unemployed people. The activities focused on offering different ways of achieving the government goals of:

- Developing community wide coalitions
- Promoting and supporting the value of learning
- Creating and maintaining strategic linkages establishing cross sectoral educational opportunities
- Improving access to good quality education
- Enhancing the portability of learning
- Providing broad education, training and employment options
- Engaging industry as a partner
- Reinforcing the role of local government
Improving the coordination and integration of education, social and economic planning (ACFEB March 2000).

3.2 Developing the role of local government (Geelong Advertiser 20 Dec 2000; SG SmartGeelong - The Learning City Launch Dec 2000)

The declaration of Geelong as a Learning City was an important symbolic event early in the life of the project and proved a valuable building block in the relationship with the City Council. Since then, the Council made its venues available free of charge to SmartGeelong - The Learning City for events and this was not done for activities that were not seen to be part of the Council’s operation.

SmartGeelong – The Learning City received increasing support from the City Council through the transition to a new Mayor and new councillors. The City Council reviewed its participation on Committees in 2001 and formally continued to commit its representative to SmartGeelong - The Learning City Advisory Group. It did not automatically provide representation on all committees that make requests and the City Council representative was designated as the contact for SmartGeelong – The Learning City within Council and provided briefings to the Mayor, Councillors and senior officers as requested.
The UK Learning Cities program indicated that the declaration of a community as a Learning City or Town was a measure of success in the development of learning communities (TELS 1999). Ideally, the declaration would be by the local council. In Geelong, it gave a status to SmartGeelong - The Learning City that provoked local interest and provided a legitimate starting point in forming partnerships and gathering resources that was invaluable (Wong April 2001). It demonstrated the impact of a collaborative, community wide approach in promoting strategies for increasing participation in lifelong learning among enterprises that might otherwise see each other as competitors.

3.2.1 Project 2001.1: Community Forums

A practical way to engage the City Council proved to be the revival of community forums which met with an unexpected response from a wide range of participants. These sessions were organised in response to requests from a wide range of individuals and groups and there was positive feedback about the value of holding such forums with a specific topic at accessible times and venues. The City Council provided the venue for community forums and worked with SmartGeelong – The Learning City in arranging quarterly forums that included:
3.2.1.1 Building a Learning Culture with Peter Kearns

(Kearns July 2000).

At two sessions attended by a total of 70 people, Peter Kearns introduced community and business leaders to the concept of a Learning City. Kearns commented on the value of learning networks and commended the formation of The Training Network to encourage the development of a learning culture in business. ‘Learning makes a difference to economic outcomes in a region’ Kearns said, not the least reason being that participation in lifelong learning is needed because of the pace of change (Craven 2001b).

3.2.1.2 Community Building – Social Capital with Ben Bodna

(Bodna 2001).

In addressing the importance of local communities in building social capital, Ben Bodna, former Public Advocate, Chair of the ‘People Together’ project and Chair of the Australian Association of Philanthropy aimed to develop an understanding of how voluntary and community activity could contribute to the development of a dynamic and sustainable society in Geelong. ‘Social capital is created from the everyday interactions between people. It originates with people forming social connections and networks based on trust and mutual benefit to increase productivity and wellbeing’ (SG Community Forum advertisement Aug 2002).
This forum was arranged in partnership with the Barwon Network of Neighbourhood Houses as well as the City Council and saw over forty people from a new range of organisations attending. These included groups such as the Red Cross, and the Committee for Geelong, government departments that had not been involved in Learning City events previously such as the Department of Human Services, the Office of Housing, social researchers and students from Deakin and the Gordon TAFE.

3.3 Achieving the project goals using technology

3.3.1 Project 2001.2: The Geelong Learning Guarantee

Learn your way to your future (SG Geelong Learning Guarantee 2001).

The Geelong Learning Guarantee aimed to promote ongoing learning in the workplace. The focus of the strategy was to increase the number of people in the Geelong workforce who have basic information technology skills. The project commenced by conducting benchmarking surveys to establish levels of current computer qualifications in schools, training providers and industry and promoting the International Computer Driver’s Licence (ICDL) as the desired standard for basic computer training (SG ICDL Working Party Feb 2002).
Through the ICDL the project aimed to ensure an ongoing commitment from the Geelong business community to providing basic information technology training so that:

- The Geelong community works together to achieve social inclusion and business excellence by providing a basic qualification that allows all people to be part of the Information Society.
- Geelong businesses lead the way in ensuring that the workforce has the skills to meet the economic and social demands of the 21st Century.
- Individuals are provided with opportunities that enrich their personal as well as their working lives (SG Geelong Learning Guarantee 2001).

3.3.1.1 Implementation

Surveys on the level of information technology skills of students in ten secondary schools conducted by the Community Jobs Program (Cjp) (see Table 7 - p 170) indicated an interest in finding out more about the ICDL as a possible accredited program for a range of year levels. These surveys also elicited an interest in using the program for developing the information technology skills of teachers. Registered training organisations indicated an interest in providing the program as a professional development program for staff as well as a fee for service program for clients. The response from private enterprise on the levels of computer skills in industry was limited and did not provide enough information to draw conclusions (SG ICDL Working Party Feb 2002).

The Steering Group of the Geelong Learning Guarantee implemented a trial of the ICDL in a range of organisations that included schools, training providers and enterprises (Appendix A).
Twenty organisations trialed different commercial products and their feedback assisted in making a decision about which product to use. It also confirmed interest in the initiative:

The best part was the amount I have learnt. This form of education is heaps better for me than any learning I have done from a book (Education consultant) (SG ICDL Sept 2001).

Even though I am an advanced user I still picked up hints on how to do things that I didn’t know about (Industry participant) (SG ICDL Sept 2001).

Commercial arrangements for the purchase of individual licences and school licenses were made with the preferred supplier, Ed Online. GSAT was engaged as the host for the online licences. SmartGeelong – The Learning City launched this project as Cycle 1 concluded, in October 2001 at the Smart Movers’ Business Breakfast with guest speaker, Professor Terry Laidler from RMIT (Geelong Advertiser 23 Oct 2001; Laidler 2001; Mayne 2001c; Southern 2001b). By the end of the cycle, twenty individual licences had been sold and Geelong High School was the first school to purchase a school licence.

3.3.1.2 Test Centres

SmartGeelong - The Learning City arranged for assessment for accreditation of the ICDL to be available at GATE and GSAT. Deakin University and the Gordon Institute of TAFE chose not to become test centres at this stage.
The purchase of the individual licenses was supported by sponsorship from Ed Online, the Australian Computer Society and ACFE (SG Advisory Group Sept 2001).

3.3.1.3 Impact of the Geelong Learning Guarantee

There was early enthusiasm for this initiative but the actual sale of licences started slowly. People who attended the launch commended the concept and said that they were interested. At the launch, Councillor Barbara Abley suggested that it should become part of the Council’s staff development program. In addition to the twenty people already enrolled by the end of 2001, a further group of twenty participants in GATE’s Community Jobs Program enrolled in February 2002.

3.3.1.4 What was learned at this stage?

It was clear that this initiative would require project management as there was considerable work in marketing the project, selling the licences and supporting users in getting started. A project plan was developed (SG ICDL Feb 2002) and SGN offered to manage this project. GATE made arrangements for the fees from the purchase of the licences to go to SGN. A project manager was appointed to manage the allocation of the licences as well as market the product.

There were many stumbling blocks in this early phase including outdated technology that resulted in lengthy delays in using the program online. Ed Online closed in January 2002 and the agreement with SGN and the Learning City took some time to renegotiate with the new owners. The project management by SGN also proved to be insufficient.
The project manager was competent in getting people started on the ICDL but had no capacity in her workload to carry out any marketing of the product.

Feedback was sought from the early users of the ICDL. Their comments indicated that the concept and the product were excellent and that they were learning new skills by undertaking the licence (SG ICDL June 2002). However, there were complaints about the slowness of using the product online and people were finding it difficult to either find time or discipline themselves into making time to work through the program.

As Cycle 1 concluded the ICDL had stagnated and a working group was set up to manage the development of the Geelong Learning Guarantee and the promotion of the ICDL (SG ICDL Working Party Sept 2002). This small group comprised representatives of the Advisory Group including staff from GSAT and GATE who took on the responsibility for supporting and testing ICDL users. It had become apparent that there were varying levels of understanding about the product and the project by Ed Online's replacement company, the SGN project manager, the staff representatives from GSAT and GATE and the Advisory Group. Issues arose around responsibility for supporting people who had paid for licences, people who were sitting for testing and allocation of payments for these services. In addition, Deakin University and the Gordon Institute of TAFE had indicated interest in becoming test centres but had not progressed their applications for this.
The working group started to meet during the later part of this Cycle to work through these issues and dealt with it using an action learning approach (SG ICDL Working Party Nov 2002). Double loop learning was being implemented as the members recognised that they were practising new forms of collaboration (Smith 2001a) that required them to spend time working through this new partnership when there was no obvious expectation of remuneration or even commercial benefit to their employers.

3.4 Achieving the project goals through celebration

3.4.1 Project 2001.3: The Geelong Learning Festival

As the first activity of SmartGeelong – The Learning City in 2000, the Geelong Learning Festival generated sufficient commitment to stage it again in 2001 with increased participation by organisations (40 compared with 15 in 2000) but with minimal changes to the format. The evaluation process from 2000 generated the membership of the Steering Group for 2001 that met regularly from March until the Festival in Adult Learners’ Week, September 2001. Membership of the Steering Group reflected educational and community group participants and importantly, also included the two new ACE clusters, NCEN (Northern Community Educators Network) and BEACON (Bellarine Education and Community Organisation Network).
Extension to the program saw the Learning Festival being staged in Corio Village as well as Market Square in 2001, a strategic decision by NCEN to reach people in the northern suburbs who are reluctant to travel into Geelong. BEACON represented community centres in the Bellarine Peninsula and again, people tend to remain in local areas so Open Days were planned in those centres.

'Tafe frontiers' was an enthusiastic member of the Steering Group and brought an innovative approach combined with technological expertise that included engaging a mobile Computer Gym to visit community centres where people may not have travelled into the major shopping centres – sites included Corio Village, Lara and Anglesea. While uptake of the Gym's facilities was limited, feedback from the Steering Committee and participants indicated that this was due to insufficient publicity.

'Tafe frontiers' assisted in the development of a webpage specifically to promote the Festival and provided interactive technology for people to use at Market Square.

3.4.1.1 International guest – ‘Switching people back on to learning’ (Mayne 2001b; Lucas September 2001)

A highlight of the 2001 Geelong Learning Festival was the presentation by Bill Lucas, Chair of the UK Campaign for Learning who was the guest of Adult Learning Australia for Adult Learners' Week. This event was Lucas's only stopover in Victoria and Geelong was specifically chosen because it was a declared Learning City.
The presentation provided SmartGeelong – The Learning City with an opportunity to stage a high profile event that attracted a lunchtime audience of over 80 representing the business community, local government, community organisations, educational providers and the general public (Southern 2001a). Deakin made its venue available for no cost, Work for the Dole participants did the catering and the Mayor hosted the event, confirming the importance of Geelong as a Learning City in his remarks:

Geelong is committed to supporting lifelong learning for everyone. People who are learning are people who will cope with change. They are also people who will contribute strongly to our community (Kontelj 2002).

3.4.1.2 Innovative strategies to engage learners

The Geelong Learning Festival had a focus on extending participation in learning by providing information in settings where people were already, rather than relying on individuals to make decisions about finding out about formal educational provision. It was done in a way that celebrated learning by presenting engaging, fun activities such as Tai Chi, choirs and bands, dance groups and beauty treatments. Computers were available for hands on introduction and expert advice and information was available in an informal environment.

The Geelong Learning Festival was also a strategy that promoted lifelong learning without undue strain on project resources. Schools were enthusiastic participants in the Festival, sending groups along to conduct science experiments, stage performances and display their school’s programs alongside TAFE College and ACE class demonstrations.
3.4.1.3 Feedback from the participants

Geelong Learning Festival participants responded with feedback (19/40 organisations) on their experience in the event (Appendix B). Of these, 14/19 respondents indicated that they would participate again in 2002. Of the remainder, two said they would not participate again and three were unsure. The respondents commented positively on the event, the organisation and the venues. ‘This was an excellent opportunity for us to get new enrolments in our courses.’ ‘By being in Market Square we talked to people who would not have made enquiries about our programs otherwise.’ ‘Thank you to everyone who organised the Festival. It was great to be part of a larger group of people.’ The overwhelming suggestion for improvement was for higher profile publicity in the media and at the actual venues (SG Geelong Learning Festival Oct 2001).

3.5 Achieving the project goals by improving the practice of key practitioners

3.5.1 Project 2001.4: Focus Ed ‘Enhancing skills in education’

Focus Ed is an integrated professional development program for all teachers in the Geelong region (SG Focus Ed Feb 2001). This project provided the most powerful illustration during this cycle of the effectiveness of SmartGeelong - The Learning City in overcoming barriers among providers. GATE and the BSW Department of Education and Training had been developing a pilot program of integrated professional development for teachers in the Geelong region since 1998, based on the successful ‘Gourmet PD’ program developed in Gippsland (Harrington 2000).
Response from the schools to the initial programs was always encouraging but the numerous attempts to involve other partners in the provision of the program were unsuccessful – some responses were not just uncooperative but actually hostile. The highly competitive environment of the 1990s, characterised by the withdrawal of government resources and policy support for community development and education had eroded trust among organisations as they struggled to ensure their survival (Kenny 1999). Approaches by GATE to prospective partners to join in developing Focus Ed were rebuffed as ‘empire building’ and as an attempt to poach potential customers.

SmartGeelong - The Learning City presented an opportunity to revisit this project. An invitation was issued at the initial SWOT analysis for SmartGeelong - The Learning City. GSAT and the Queenscliff Marine and Freshwater Research Institute (MAFRI) responded and attended some planning meetings with GATE and the Department of Education and Training in October 2000. By November 2000, a Steering Group had been formed with membership again reflecting SGN. The ‘Gourmet PD’ coordinator from Gippsland attended and assisted the group in determining to plan and practise the joint professional development program throughout 2001. A comprehensive program was planned for 2002.

The pilot program of Focus Ed was launched in June 2001 (Geelong Advertiser 15 June 2001; Sproull 2001; SG Focus Ed July 2001; SG Focus Ed pilot launch June 2001) at Deakin University, and over 100 principals and teachers attended. Mr Don Tyrer who led the Victorian Government’s establishment of a Victorian Institute of Teaching was the keynote speaker and the function presented an opportunity for the Steering Group to explain and promote the development of Focus Ed.
Ownership by end users of Focus Ed was demonstrated by the Chairing of the Committee by the Principals’ Consultant of BSW Department of Education and Training and by the active involvement of representatives of the primary and post primary Professional Development Coordinators of the local schools. Marketing and Programming Committees met regularly and the pilot program in 2001 included contributions by six providers. A Needs Analysis was conducted in the first half of 2001 with 43 % (ie 59) of the 135 schools responding to the survey (Appendix C). The results were collated and analysed (Table 5). The validity and reliability of the Needs Analysis responses was strengthened by follow up waves that included reminder emails, presentations by Focus Ed committee members at cluster meetings of Professional Development teachers and phone calls (MacKenzie 2001). Eventually, responses were received from 83 schools altogether (61%).

The assessment of the areas of high demand was then triangulated with information held by the BSW Office of the Department of Education and Training and incorporated into the planning of the Programming Committee (SG Focus Ed Program July 2001).

All project activity remained on target with the launch of the new 2002 program on 8 November 2001. Deakin Management Centre, now an active participant in the project, sponsored the launch (Mayne 2001a; SG Focus Ed Nov 2001). This project facilitated local determination by teachers of their professional development and contributed to improving the practice of our key educational practitioners as recommended by the Victorian Government’s Review of Post Compulsory Education (Kirby 2000). It was an example of intervention in the everyday processes to 'reconstruct the practice, the practitioner and the practice setting' (Kemmis 2000a).
Feedback from the launch was reported as ‘very positive...the providers delivered professional presentations and the attendees found it beneficial’ (SG Deakin University representative at Focus Ed Steering Group Nov 2002).

The scope for Focus Ed was considerable – there are 135 schools in the Geelong region. This project resolved to include non government schools in its ambit and specific information sessions were held for those schools. Non teaching staff were also included and unexpected partners emerged as the project developed. These included requests to include Colac in the scope of the program as well as the Geelong Kindergarten Association. The ACFE evaluation conducted by La Trobe University cited both these examples as demonstrating the extension of participation in learning to isolated groups (Sheed 2001). Their isolation was not immediately apparent, but both reported limited professional development opportunities for their communities and a lack of information about what might be available.

The Marine and Freshwater Research Institute (Queenscliff) and the Geelong Performing Arts Centre were examples of organisations that ran specialised professional development for teachers that were largely unknown beyond their particular community of participants but which were enthusiastic about the opportunity to promote their programs more widely (SG Focus Ed Program Feb 2002).
The needs of teachers in ACE and the TAFE College who were working with young people who have left school early also emerged as this sector of educational provision expanded rapidly. At this time there were an estimated 700 young people aged 15 – 19 years who were not in the school system or employment in the Geelong region (Maheas 2001b; a; SmartGeelong Local Learning and Employment Network Inc 2001) so there was increasing demand for alternative educational programs often delivered by people who were often left out of the mainstream professional development loop.

Focus Ed demonstrated the success of a collaborative approach to developing an innovative major activity that was not possible by any one organisation. There had to be broad active development of the awareness and understanding of the intrinsic value of engaging in lifelong learning in order to effect social change. The ownership of the activity clearly shifted from SmartGeelong – The Learning City personnel to Cherry’s ‘others’, the users of the program (Cherry 1998). However, this program had its beginnings three years prior and this may demonstrate the length of time required to embed this kind of ownership in a community (Lovett 1983:73; Essenburg 2000).

Future issues that were identified for consideration at the end of Cycle 1 revolved around the sustainability of the project and a Business Group was formed to investigate possible sources of funding. While it was not envisaged that it would require substantial amounts of money, the Focus Ed program did need to be developed, collated and distributed, needs analysis had to be ongoing and the transition to a web based program was planned. A membership fee structure was developed and uptake of this and ongoing participation in the program would provide measures of the impact.
3.5.2 Project 2001.5: The Training Network

This Network was set up using the model of a Learning Network described by Peter Kearns at the first meeting of the VLTN in July 2000 and the first Australian Learning City Conference in Albury/Wodonga (Kearns 2000; July 2000). In collaboration with 'DavRoss' a private enterprise that specialised in recruitment services, SmartGeelong - The Learning City established an informal network of training managers in industry as well as private training consultants.

DavRoss was responding to the need expressed by the people it worked with in industry - trainers were often isolated and did not get the opportunity to meet with other people in the same job roles. Program managers from Registered Training Organisations also attended and it was clear that there were useful linkages to be made across these areas of service delivery.

The Training Network was launched to an audience of forty with a presentation by the National Training Manager of Target (Target 2001; SG The Training Network April 2001). This was followed by Peter Kearns who set some challenges for participants in The Training Network focused on moving their enterprises from a training paradigm to a learning paradigm (Kearns 2001a). Participants developed a survey on the expectations of The Training Network and a code of practice was presented at the third meeting in October 2001 that confirmed the aims of the network as:
To enable the sharing of knowledge and expertise among people with similar roles in managing and delivering training to industry;

To generate ideas and provide support while developing skills that members identify as important and desirable (SG The Training Network Jan 2002).

Like Focus Ed, this demonstrated that the ownership of The Training Network moved quite quickly to the participants. Through the subsequent involvement in other activities of SmartGeelong – The Learning City, such as the Geelong Learning Festival, The Training Network provided opportunities for participants to extend the sections of a community who must become involved in improving participation in lifelong learning to develop the consequent capacity to engender large scale changes to existing systems that perpetuate disengagement from learning (Cherry 1999; Kemmis 2000a).

At this time The Training Network was meeting the needs of a group of people who were isolated from others in their professional practice. One regular participant said,

As a life coach, I am in an emerging industry and I have very little collegiate support. Through The Training Network I am able to develop my ideas and my business with other people who are interested and supportive (Janssen A in Van Klaveren 2002).
The Training Network received ongoing requests for information from others as the network was publicised by those who had been attending (Job Network Case Manager 2002). It also provided a link with business and industry for SmartGeelong – The Learning City as the participants forwarded information about events such as forums, the Geelong Learning Festival and the Geelong Learning Guarantee to other sections of their enterprises. Trials for the ICDL were held in five enterprises and industries where contact was established through participants in The Training Network.

3.6 Achieving the project goals through research

SmartGeelong – The Learning City engaged in research to establish attitudes to learning and learning needs and the impact of Learning City initiatives. These included:

3.6.1 Project 2001.6: Community Jobs Program (Cjp)

Through GATE, SmartGeelong - The Learning City successfully submitted for a Victorian Government Community Jobs Program (Cjp) that engaged the participants in conducting social research in a range of areas that provided information for SmartGeelong - The Learning City. Developed from experiences reported by the Campaign for Learning in the UK Learning Cities (Campaign for Learning 2000), these surveys included the New Learner Survey to determine the extent of participation in learning of a sample of the general community and a survey on the levels of information technology skills of students in 10 secondary schools (SG ICDL Working Party Feb 2002).
3.6.1.1 New Learner Survey (SG New Learner Survey April 2002)

The New Learner Survey (Appendix D) was adapted from a survey that was developed for use in the Learning Shop in Norwich UK and brought back through the study tour (Greany 1998; Breckenridge 2002). The survey was used in a range of SmartGeelong – The Learning City events and the information elicited was used for local research, to gain feedback, and to plan programs. It was designed to be implemented by Cjp participants who surveyed local residents so that it provided useful information for the Cjp project and SmartGeelong - The Learning City in the manner described by Ife (Ife 2002:252).

The Cjp participants selected a total of 42 people who attended their various workplaces to complete the first New Learner Survey (Table 6).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of respondents to sections of the question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When did you last take part in training or learning?</td>
<td>During the last 2 years.</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;2 years ago.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;5 years ago</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not since leaving school.</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you have been involved in learning in the last 5 years, what type of learning was it?</td>
<td>Art &amp; craft</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you have not been involved in any learning for more than 5 years, what has stopped you?</td>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No transport</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No childcare</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No interest</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age group</td>
<td>16-19</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of birth</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Extract from results of the New Learner Survey, Cjp 2002 (SG New Learner Survey July 2002a).
In addition to these questions, 83% of those surveyed knew about classes within the community, 46% indicated that they hadn’t attended classes in the past year and 54% of those said it was because they were not interested.

### 3.6.1.2 Survey on access to Information Technology training

Respondents to the New Learner Survey were also asked about their use of computers and of the people surveyed, 78% had access to a computer and the majority used one at home, at work or both. Use of the computer was mostly for word processing and the Internet.

Ten schools were surveyed about their information technology training provision and all indicated that all of their students participate in information technology training, ensuring that the future workforce is trained in the use of computers (Appendix E). However, the percentage of students exiting school with a recognised credential in information technology was no higher that 25% and in some cases was as low as 5% - Table 7. This provided a useful starting point for introducing the ICDL as a possible credential for schools to issue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do all students in your school have access to IT training as part of their program?</td>
<td>Yes 10, No 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What types of IT training are available at your school?</td>
<td>VET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction to Computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What percentage of your students exits school with a recognised credential in IT?</td>
<td>Range varied from 5 - 25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7:** Extract from Information Technology Training Survey (schools) Report, February 2001 (SG ICDL Working Party Feb 2002; SG New Learner Survey July 2002a).
4. THE PROGRESS OF CYCLE 1 (EVALUATION)

4.1 How far into the community did the project reach at the end of Cycle 1?

The extent of impact in the community was difficult to gauge at this stage. The model of extending awareness and participation was deliberately focused on organisations in this first phase of the project as a strategy for penetrating a large population. However, activities were initiated to develop the awareness and participation of individuals that would provide measures over time. These included the editorial features in the ‘Geelong Advertiser’s’ quarterly Community Education Supplement (Wylie April 2001; July 2001; October 2001) that directly targeted individuals in their homes.

At the end of Cycle 1 all government and specific project goals and strategies were aligned to planning activity and in reporting and all activities were underway or completed (SG Advisory Group Dec 2002b). The flexible nature of the project allowed for innovative and creative responses to project goals that initially seemed daunting. These included operational goals such as the establishment of the website and more emancipatory goals such as the extension of learning opportunities in hard to reach communities through Cjp and the Geelong Learning Festival. Initial effort received positive feedback that the multi layered strategies were supported by key partners.

The lack of indicative funding was an impediment to strategic planning (Kirby 2001). While at the end of this cycle GATE made a commitment to continue its support of SmartGeelong - The Learning City regardless of funding (SG Advisory Group Oct 2001) it did stifle planning substantial activities and made it difficult to respond to requests for new involvement.
4.2 What happened that would not have happened without SmartGeelong - The Learning City?

4.2.1 Emancipation through the neutral space

The Learning Community is a model for genuine cooperation and partnership between dissimilar organisations for their mutual benefit (Longworth 1999).

At this stage, the key achievement was overcoming barriers to collaboration between traditionally competitive organisations, particularly educational providers. Focus Ed, the Geelong Learning Guarantee, the community forums and the Geelong Learning Festival would not have been possible without the framework of SmartGeelong - The Learning City. SmartGeelong – The Learning City began to develop the concept of a neutral space. There was something attractive and safe about SmartGeelong – The Learning City that made it possible for organisations that had operated as competitors, displaying territorial and sometimes ‘empire building’ behaviour, to come together in joint endeavours. SmartGeelong – The Learning City neutralised this competitiveness and enabled the collaborative behaviour to surface.

Feedback from participants indicated that collaboration was a more instinctive way of operating for many organisations. For those that had highly developed competitive approaches, honed in the economic rationalist conditions that had prevailed in the previous decade, SmartGeelong – The Learning City provided the mechanism by which collaboration could flourish once again.
It demonstrated a model of cooperative behaviour that delivered positive outcomes and could be observed and practised by participants. It appeared to liberate individuals and organisational culture that had been constrained by competition and commercial imperative.

The neutral space is not the same as a neutral broker. It is a space that is the whole community where organisations can safely come together to collaborate on joint community activity in a genuine partnership of equals. The equality of partners is critical for effective partnerships (Ohmae 1990). In addition to providing the conceptual space in which collaborative behaviour could be practised and refined, the neutral space addressed the problem of the absence of a catalyst to bring stakeholders together for joint action that was one of the barriers to achieving lifelong learning for all identified by Kearns (Kearns 1999b). It was encouraging for me to see that earlier examples of active resistance to joint activity were easily overcome through SmartGeelong - The Learning City. Organisations that had resisted working in partnership on community projects came together around the SmartGeelong – The Learning City table. Many of the Victorian Learning Towns were reporting this phenomenon and not only were specific initiatives of the Learning Towns (such as Focus Ed) now planned cooperatively, but the relationships made in the neutral space led to other collaborations. Learning Towns reported for example that principals of some schools in their communities were being introduced to each other for the first time. Schools started working with U3A members as mentors in their programs. School students started visiting programs to Aged Care homes through introductions that occurred in the neutral space of Learning Towns (Wong Dec 2001).
4.2.2 Defining ‘neutral space’

Consequently, based on the experiences of the effectiveness of the neutral space in overcoming existing or potential conflict and dismantling barriers to collaboration that enabled the development of initiatives of SmartGeelong – The Learning City such as the Geelong Learning Festival and Focus Ed, consistent characteristics of the neutral space emerged that included the key elements of:

A skilled neutral facilitator who ensures that adequate preparation is carried out;
Clarity of purpose that reflects the value of collaboration;
A focus on the ‘common good’ and positive social change;
An action learning approach that values and respects all contributions;
Equality of all participants in influencing the agenda and process, regardless of the resources they bring;
A mindset that is open to change;
A dynamic and engaging environment that supports innovation and creativity;
A willingness to share responsibility and honour commitments;
Visible results that can be analysed and reflected on.
(Tett 2002; Robinson 2004:45; Moyer 1987; Cope 2002; Carolane 2003; Wong Oct 2002a).

The capacity of those occupying the neutral space to influence change is also critical and suggests that local government is well placed to provide leadership in driving effective social change. The emphasis on skilled neutral facilitation is essential however, to ensure that whoever assumes this role, the focus does not revert back to one where the neutral space becomes, for example, just another local government program or service.
Individuals and groups that may not have power and influence must also be able to create neutral space in order to effect change and therefore, the participation by local government or other neutral facilitator who represents community leadership should not be mandatory in any definition of neutral space.

The new relationships generated through the creation of neutral space were the first indication that the action research was emancipatory in that the power relations had been transformed into partnerships of equals and systems based on competition were changing. Bottom up change was occurring and it opened up the possibilities for people to take action to meet needs that they have defined themselves (Ife 2002:116).

It is one of the surprising observations for me that organisations and individuals have been so willing to collaborate and the Learning City has provided an opportunity that perhaps meets a fundamental need to cooperate rather than compete (SG Advisory Group Nov 2001a).

4.2.3 The effectiveness of the Steering Groups

I found that the model of using Steering Groups that reflected the key stakeholders in SmartGeelong – The Learning City suggested by Peter Kearns at the Australian Learning Cities Conference worked extremely well (Kearns July 2000). People were able to focus on one particular project, people were chosen for their interest and/or skill and consequently, ownership of SmartGeelong - The Learning City was spread widely. Again, emancipatory action research was evident in providing new ways of operating for people who had been victims of traditional educational practice (Freire 1985:2-14).
By applying action research methodology to the operation of each Steering Group, participants could neutralise their competitive approaches and make objective observations about processes and outcomes. It proved to be a mechanism for changing the situation of ‘others’ (Cherry 1998). Geelong was fortunate in that it had the existing infrastructure to provide many different people for different activities and this strategy was an effective way of disseminating awareness and understanding broadly. It provided me with many networking and relationship building opportunities that strengthened the support base for the project as well as my other responsibilities in GATE. The Steering Groups proved to be an effective forum for debate and dialogue in which people could develop new working cultures and learn more about each other and what they could contribute to a changed, collaborative environment (Cope 2002:144).

At the end of this first full year, I found that the wholehearted support of the Geelong Chamber of Commerce and through it, access to the SGN was important and provided powerful allies for SmartGeelong – The Learning City from the start. It immediately aligned the business community with the project and provided many avenues for the promotion of lifelong learning as a strategy in building communities. The challenge for the project now was to continue to build on the commitment of individual businesses to cascade everyday learning into the culture of the wider business community – especially small business.

At times the sheer scale of developing Geelong as a Learning City overwhelmed me, especially as the project resources were so limited. However, the support of the Advisory Group and my employer were stabilising influences. Schon’s technique of reflection in action provided a strategy for coping ‘with the troublesome ‘divergent’ situations of practice’ (Schon 1987:5; 1991:61).
This too is where SmartGeelong - The Learning City’s action research methodology was reassuring. ‘It can be a relief for individuals not to have to solve problems on their own’ (Cherry 2001). The recognition by the Advisory Group of the practical limitations of what could be achieved were reinforced by realistic expectations in the Action Plans, their ready endorsement of project initiatives by the key stakeholder organisations they represented and by their injunction to ‘concentrate on developing a few initiatives well rather than implement too many ideas without adequate plans and resources’ (SG Arthur J GSAT at Advisory Group meeting 2001).
4.3 What indicated that SmartGeelong – The Learning City was being successful?

On a local level, project feedback indicated that strategies such as the Geelong Learning Festival, Focus Ed and the community forums had increased participation in learning. Organisations reported new enrolments from new sources – both the Gordon Institute of TAFE and Deakin University reported that they had enrolled people in programs through the Geelong Learning Festival. Deakin and GSAT in particular reported that they were reaching a different client group (such as older learners and people returning to study) through being in Market Square (SG Geelong Learning Festival Oct 2002). The Gordon, GSAT and GATE provided programs to teachers through Focus Ed and reported increased participation by this cohort. Individual businesses such as Davross, Art Concepts and Toolbox for Life demonstrated strategic involvement with SmartGeelong - The Learning City through participation in the development of The Training Network as well as extending learning opportunities in the workplace.

The increasing involvement of the City Council was testament to a gradual awareness building campaign that was identified in the initial action plans. Individual councillors were forthcoming in their endorsement and participation (Geelong Advertiser 20 Dec 2000).

The recognition of Geelong as a Learning City brought requests for information, partnership and preliminary findings from national and international sources including Port Augusta and Marion in South Australia. Requests came from India and the Philippines for information about Geelong’s project plan (Dones 2001).
SmartGeelong – The Learning City was also used for case studies in projects at the Queensland University of Technology and Sunraysia TAFE (Crawley 2000) and was included as a case study in Peter Kearns’ revision of ‘VET in the Learning Age’ (Kearns 1999b) as part of the ANTA Learning Communities project.

5. CYCLE 1A – THE VICTORIAN LEARNING TOWNS

5.1 Evaluation of the VLTN

At the end of the first full year of the Victorian Learning Towns program an evaluation was conducted for ACFE by Dr Jennifer Sheed and Chris Bottrell in November 2001 that resulted in their report, ‘Learning Towns Network Program Evaluation’ (Sheed 2001).

In addition, my two research projects (Wong April 2002; Dec 2001) were conducted over the same period. The strategic effectiveness of the neutral space that I found so powerful in developing partnerships was a common observation of other Victorian Learning Towns. Many examples were cited during the research project on the progress of the Learning Towns that I conducted for ACFE at the end of this cycle.

The Learning Towns have provided an impartial focal point for all learning opportunities. All projects indicate that the collaboration between local organisations would not have happened without the Learning Town providing the opportunity for key community leaders to meet regularly and develop their relationship with each other… Learning Towns has proved to be an attractive framework for developing networking skills and new partnerships (Wong Oct 2002a).
Learning Towns was a very effective strategy for elevating ACE providers into the mainstream of educational and community activity. It generated a positive response from all partners and the networking skills of ACE providers were demonstrably effective in bringing disparate groups together. ACE providers also ensured that the focus on people who are marginalised from learning opportunities was not lost and they became skilled at using networking resources to make things happen.

The funding provided through Learning Towns brought a capacity to pay for advertising, catering and guest speakers as well as adding value to the contribution made by people working together to achieve what they could not do on their own (Geelong Advertiser 6 Sept 2001; SG Advisory Group Aug 2001). ACE providers were able to maximise scarce resources and this project enabled the development of a range of strategies that had depth and sustainability and addressed the government’s and the community’s goals to become more cohesive and dynamic through the development of human capital.

The ACE approach ensured that these strategies were implemented in a comparatively short period of time but they had yet to become wholly owned by the community. The building of human capital requires an investment of ten to fifteen years (Lovett 1983:73; Essenburg 2000; Trewin 2004) and this is supported by observations that the building of a learning culture would take at least five years according the UK experience and the research conducted by people such Peter Kearns (Fryer 1998; Kearns 2000), the Dusseldorp Skills Forum (Spierings 2001; Kellock 2004) and the Commonwealth Youth Task Force report, ‘Footprints to the Future’ (Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce 2001).
At the VLTN meeting in November 2001, all of the Victorian Learning Towns reported that their initiatives would need someone to drive it for at least two more years (VLTN 16 Nov 2001) but the experience of Focus Ed indicated that in time, others would take ownership of the strategies.

The interest demonstrated by interstate and international communities endorsed the focused development of the Victorian Learning Towns through the government project and indicated that communities were willing to learn from the experience of others. Within Victoria, there were expressions of interest in supporting and encouraging the development of new Learning Towns although it was unlikely that this would happen without the injection of some seeding funding. The pilot project communities were in an ideal position to mentor the development of emerging communities and all were willing to do this.

6. THE PERSONAL LEARNING (REFLECTION)

I found that I moved between the roles of enabler, facilitator, planner and negotiator. It was difficult (and probably unnecessary) to remain in any one role for any considerable length of time and I moved in and out of these roles (Gulbenkian Foundation 1973:25; Henderson 1981:18; Ife 2002:230). I found that when I was planning that I needed to concentrate on that role without distraction until the bulk of the work was completed but the other roles were often carried out simultaneously.

The arena largely determined the roles that I adopted (Henderson 1981:146) and I was supported by the techniques and skills described by the second Gulbenkian report (Gulbenkian Foundation 1973:24):
1. transactions with local people (such as the Geelong Learning Festival)
2. transactions between the group and other systems (such as the Advisory Group and local government)
3. transactions about the group within my own agency (GATE) and between the worker and other agencies (such as the SGN).

My style was more naturally suited to employing skills in non directiveness and in supporting the essence of community work in empowering others to undertake activity of which they are capable. By assuming the role of ‘encourager’ (Henderson 1981), I tried to strengthen the incentives people had for working together through initiatives such as Focus Ed. By providing the systematic support for groups to come together to develop a program that would be beneficial for the school community in particular and by inference, the local community more broadly as a consequence, I found that people were willing and in fact even eager to find reasons to work together.

By facilitating forums for people to come together – such as the initial exploratory meetings for Focus Ed and the Geelong Learning Festival – I carried out the functions of encouraging organisation, nourishing good interpersonal relationships and emphasising common objectives (SG Planning Group July 2000a; SG Focus Ed July 2001) that are characteristic of non directive community encouragers (Gulbenkian Foundation 1973; Henderson 1981:147).
I found that the concept of ‘praxis’ was well suited to my approach and aligned well with the action research cycles of SmartGeelong - The Learning City. By reminding myself that by applying double loop learning, the project activity became an action learning experience in itself, I was able to accept all findings and experiences as part of the learning process (Cherry 1999; Smith 2001a; b). It was only by action that I was able to understand (Reason 2001a; Ife 2002:229) and it was this framework that gave me the courage to try new approaches and attempt to establish new initiatives with new partners.

I applied Schon’s technique of reflecting in action to the emerging effectiveness the ‘neutral space’ provided. In my effort to understand why initiatives were now being supported where before they had been resisted, I was able to remain open to the ‘discovery of phenomena incongruent with the initial problem setting’ (Schon 1991:268). My surprise at the willingness to cooperate caused me to frame new approaches to the development of initiatives that would test the hypotheses that ‘the Learning City has provided an opportunity that... meets a fundamental need to cooperate rather than compete’ (SG Advisory Group Nov 2001a).

By incorporating critical reflection into SmartGeelong – The Learning City, others were also involved with me in the process that then led to collaborative planning activity for the next stages in the action research cycles. In this way, community members developed the new approaches to practice so that critical reflection and revised plans belonged to the community rather than to SmartGeelong - The Learning City or to me.
7. PREPARATION FOR CYCLE 2 (PLANNING)

On 26 October 2001, the Victorian Government announced future funding arrangements for the Learning Towns projects as follows:

1. Extension of the program with six months funding until end of June 2002
2. Further funding to be contingent on the preparation of an acceptable Strategic Plan by the end of January 2002 (Kosky 2001).

The Advisory Group conducted a scheduled planning session in October 2001 as these arrangements were announced, to check its progress against the plan and to plan in detail for the next stages of the project. Emerging insight indicated the importance of engaging all of the members of the Advisory Group. As not all Advisory Group members were involved in the initial needs analysis and development of project goals, it was important for them in their role as the validation group of the action research approach to have input into the future directions of the project (McNiff 2002). An external facilitator was engaged for this session, John Shugg, Executive Officer of ACE Vic. Through his familiarity with the Victorian Learning Towns, Shugg was also able to act as a critical friend and assist us in developing and confirming the priorities for the next six months and the next three years.
It was at this stage that the next choices were made. The Advisory Group discussed the insight it had gained through conducting the first action research cycle of the project and in recognising the limited resources that were available for this project, decided on a model that demonstrated innovation. They resolved to ‘bite off a few chunks and do them well’ (SG Arthur J GSAT at Advisory Group meeting 2001) in a ‘patient, gradual, “nibbling away” at an entrenched culture’ (Maddocks 2001) rather than embark on many initiatives that could not be sustained.

Immediate priorities focused on extending participation in learning by building on current initiatives:

1. The Geelong Learning Guarantee and the ICDL
2. Support of the Learning Networks (The Training Network and Focus Ed)
3. Geelong Learning Festival

The need to extend the partners engaged in the project and to support the conceptual development of a learning community resulted in a plan to increase the focus on marketing strategies. Promotion of the profile of SmartGeelong - The Learning City was identified as a priority to continue throughout the next phases of the project.

In reviewing the Project Plan at this stage, The Advisory Group confirmed that all initial goals had been achieved or were underway. There was not any aspect of either the government goals or the specific project goals that had not been addressed or seen as relevant to the project activity (SG Advisory Group Oct 2001).
In facilitating the Advisory Group planning, Shugg commented that the Learning Towns Network Program Evaluation (Sheed 2001) noted several of Geelong’s initiatives as innovative and effective and indicated that this project was regarded by the ACFE Division as exemplary (SG Advisory Group Oct 2001).
Chapter 5

CYCLE 2: From Involvement to Understanding (October 2001 – December 2002)

1. HOW DID THE LEARNING FROM CYCLE 1 AFFECT THE PLANNING OF CYCLE 2?

1.1 The stability of the significant partnerships

Membership of the Advisory Group to SmartGeelong – The Learning City remained virtually the same in 2002. The ongoing commitment of the members was important in stabilising the project in the local community and everyone developed their understanding of what is possible through partnership. As the relationships between the key organisations represented on the Advisory Group developed, so did the activity and the awareness of the importance of lifelong learning.

Represented on the Advisory Group, the Department of Education and Training continued to take a key role in the development of Focus Ed, the professional development program for the school community in Geelong. The involvement and support of the Gordon Institute of TAFE and Deakin University in projects such as the Geelong Learning Festival and Focus Ed lent high profile support as well as expertise to these community wide initiatives.
The support of the City Council entered a new phase during this cycle. The incoming Mayor had a long standing relationship with the stakeholders in SmartGeelong – The Learning City and continued her previous support as a councillor into heightened Council support by her participation as Mayor. She instigated monthly meetings with me as Project Manager of SmartGeelong - The Learning City and launched the Geelong Learning Festival and Focus Ed Events.

The City Council continued to host initiatives such as the Community Forums and escalated its support by hosting the launch of the Geelong Learning Festival and promoting SmartGeelong - The Learning City on the Community Billboard (Figure 8), a high profile location in North Geelong on the road to Melbourne (SG Geelong Learning Festival Aug 2002).

Figure 8: Community Billboard
The Geelong Chamber of Commerce and SGN continued their representation on the Advisory Group and were important partners in SmartGeelong - The Learning City in ensuring that the business community was kept informed about the importance of broader learning in the workplace (Mackay 2001). Bill Lucas commented in his report of his visit to Australia that he was ‘underwhelmed by the involvement of business in the debate’ (Adult Learning Australia 2001:12) and the Chamber’s involvement indicated, against the trend, that SmartGeelong - The Learning City had this crucial support.

Nevertheless, the meaningful engagement of individual businesses remained the great challenge, one that was shared not only in Victoria but internationally (ACFEB 1995c; Fryer 1998; NCVER 2002; Postma 2002). ‘Small business (in particular) remains the last frontier’ said Peter Kearns when he visited Geelong in 2001 and challenged us to tackle it (Kearns 2001a). The proposal led by the Geelong Science and Technology Centre (GSAT) to develop the next phase of the Geelong Learning Guarantee, a new workplace learning program that promoted lifelong learning, was designed as a concerted effort to take up this challenge. Known as ‘Learning Pays’, this program was developed using the Focus Ed model. A Steering Group that consisted of the partnerships developed through Focus Ed designed a program for workplaces that would focus on generic skill development. It also incorporated Information Technology programs including the ICDL, OHS and other legislative compliance programs as well as programs that would develop skills to assist employee participation in workplace activity such as union meetings and enterprise negotiations (SG Learning Pays Dec 2002).
1.2 The strategic importance of SGN as G21 (The Geelong Region Strategy) emerges

New impetus was given to SGN as it became primarily responsible for the development of the Education and Research Pillar of G21. G21 was the new Geelong Region Strategy, created to ‘Bring... together agencies and community groups to develop strategies, plans and policies to drive the economic, social and environmental future of the region’ (SmartGeelong 2002:1).

The development of G21, the Geelong Region Strategy, was a community process that started in November 2001 at a meeting of Geelong organisations and stakeholders convened by the City Council and the Geelong Development Board with the support of other regional municipal councils and stakeholder organisations such as Geelong Chamber of Commerce, SGN, Barwon Health, Deakin University, the Gordon Institute of TAFE and the Committee for Geelong (G21 Nov 2002). Based on a concept of strategic pillars, it relied on the whole community developing and agreeing on the strategy that would then be owned and supported by all regional stakeholders.

The final strategy was to become a key planning and lobbying tool for the Geelong region that identified pillar projects with measurable outcomes. The pillar process was launched at the start of 2003.
1.3 Project Steering Groups

SmartGeelong – The Learning City’s Steering Groups trialed during Cycle 1 were formally confirmed as an effective strategy that ensured that Advisory Group representation related directly to project outcomes (SG Advisory Group Nov 2001a). Steering Groups were formed for all major project activities in 2002.

2. THE PRACTICE AND PROGRESS OF KEY PROJECTS (ACTION AND EVALUATION)

The key strategies in 2002 confirmed through the strategic planning conducted by the Advisory Group in October 2001 included:

1. Development of current initiatives
2. Enhanced marketing

2.1 Project 2002.1: Geelong Learning Guarantee and the ICDL

Promotion of the ICDL as the desired standard for basic computer training was implemented through the media (Geelong Advertiser Oct 2002). However progress was slower than expected for several reasons including ongoing technical difficulties with Internet speed, lack of understanding of the initiative by the new owner of the company that sold the licences and the limited allocation of project management time to the initiative (SG ICDL June 2002; SG ICDL Working Party Sept 2002).
These difficulties notwithstanding, the ICDL was being purchased and used. During this cycle, forty individuals were enrolled and three schools purchased school licences.

Several GATE staff undertook the ICDL and provided the ICDL Project Manager with valuable feedback on the program that led to improvements such as:

1. Faster download through the Internet host
2. Issuing of CDs instead of online licences to participants who had smaller capacity computers at home
3. Engaging of GSAT to manage the school licences that included technical support with the purchase price.

Eight people undertook ICDL tests and again, GATE staff trialed the testing process to ensure that any problems in the testing were eliminated before members of the public undertook tests.

2.1.1 Next stages

GATE and GSAT instigated a meeting with SGN (Hurley 2002) in November 2002 to address the problems that had been encountered and to extend takeup of the ICDL. Planning included the development of a differential pricing strategy that incorporated an introductory training session by either GSAT or GATE. Additional promotion including a brochure and media advertising commenced in early 2003 (SG ICDL April 2003; Geelong Advertiser Feb 2003). The school licences were affected by the introduction of free access to the software online through the TAFE VC (Last 2002b).
However, early information indicated that the costs associated with downloading the software for large numbers of people in any one school would cost more than the one off cost of purchasing a perpetual licence. People who accessed the free software still had to pay for any testing and SmartGeelong - The Learning City’s price package remained highly competitive in this environment.

**2.2 Project 2002.2: The Geelong Learning Festival 2002**

The third Geelong Learning Festival (2002) was held in Adult Learners’ Week in September (SG Geelong Learning Festival 2002). The principal recommendation for improvement from the previous year was to enhance the marketing, which aligned with this focus by SmartGeelong - The Learning City as a whole (SG Advisory Group Oct 2001; SG Geelong Learning Festival Oct 2001).

The Steering Group convened in May, somewhat later than the previous year. St Laurence joined as a new partner and other new participants in the Geelong Learning Festival itself included Langs Business College, Rosewall Community Centre and Rosewall Primary School. The format altered slightly in 2002 – Market Square was unavailable, but Corio Village could still be used. Ideas from reviews of Learning Festivals in Norwich, UK, contained in the study tour report, resulted in the trialing of a format of rotating around venues that included Rosewall Neighbourhood Centre, South Barwon Community Centre and Geelong West Town Hall (Norwich 2000; 2001; Geelong Advertiser June 2003).
Promotional strategies were significantly assisted by the support of the City Council in mounting the Community Billboard and hosting the launch (Tsiantis 2002). The launch was held on the morning of the first day of the Festival at City Hall and was attended by seventy educational, business and community leaders. Following the opening of the Geelong Learning Festival by the Mayor, Cr Abley, guest speaker Frank Costa, President of the Geelong Football Club, supported the theme of Adult Learners’ Week – ‘It’s never too late to learn’ (Van Klaveren 2002b; City of Greater Geelong 2003). Feedback commended the launch. A suggestion for next year was to have a series of launches in communities that could be attended by local residents (SG Geelong Learning Festival Oct 2002).

Feedback from the thirteen Geelong Learning Festival organisations that responded to the evaluation survey indicated that all respondents thought that participation was useful for their organisation. Some indicated that although they may not have had many enquiries, their presence in the Festival was positive and they were pleased to be part of a collaborative venture.

All comments on the publicity and promotion were very favourable, several reporting that they thought it was excellent - Table 8. This had been the major suggestion for improvement in the evaluations from 2001.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was the Festival beneficial for your organisation?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Any publicity is good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Allowed us to 'showcase'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Was great to be part of a bigger community event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frank Costa was an impressive guest speaker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Launch was well organised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you participate again next year?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Organisation was terrific.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Dedicated website would be an advantage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased promotion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some venues worked better than others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What improvements can you suggest?</td>
<td>See comments column.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you participate on the Steering Group?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8.** Extract from evaluation report of Geelong Learning Festival 2002

(SG Geelong Learning Festival Oct 2002).

### 2.2.1 Impact of the Festival

Respondents also ‘indicated that they had reached many new participants in their Learning Festival activities and that the promotions at Corio Village in particular but also at Geelong West Town Hall provided participants with new information, new partnership possibilities and new learners’ (SG Geelong Learning Festival Oct 2002).
Corio Bay Senior College participants said they were 'inundated' with people at their 'come and try' sessions at the College during the Geelong Learning Festival. The Australian Multicultural Education Service (AMES) said the Festival provided their own students with new opportunities to find out about other learning programs.

Clearly there was potential for this initiative to develop throughout Geelong. Planning for 2003 started to explore the idea of asking enterprises to identify themselves as learning sites. They would be encouraged to participate in the Geelong Learning Festival by being open to the public and demonstrating their engagement with lifelong learning. Limitations as always, were imposed by the resources of SmartGeelong - The Learning City to cascade this initiative throughout a community the size of Geelong. The harnessing of significant partners such as the City Council and the major educational institutions was of critical importance but was still not at a level that would ensure a Geelong wide event.

2.3 Project 2002.3: Focus Ed

The 2002 program showed considerable development from the pilot programs run in the previous two years. Solid and wide ranging partnerships were evident in both the provision of programs and the membership (SG Focus Ed Program Feb 2002; July 2002). Over 60 schools paid memberships and this gave the project some capital to pay for publication, distribution and clerical support (SG Focus Ed Aug 2002). Significant contributions were made however by project partners including Deakin School of Management, GSAT, the Department of Education and Training, the Gordon Institute of TAFE and GATE.
The program was evaluated (Appendix F) by the Steering Group during September and October 2002 (SG Focus Ed Steering Group 15 Aug 2002; 24 Oct 2002). Key findings included an erratic uptake of courses offered by providers – some did not run and others were over subscribed. However, there was a generally solid uptake of programs offered by the Department of Education and Training (usually offered at no cost). The programs that did run received excellent evaluations from participants (Last 2002a). There was also evidence of increasing awareness of Focus Ed through the requests for the publication from schools where they had not been delivered or where extra copies were required.

The informal ‘Events’ proved to be a highly successful strategy with an enthusiastic response to these generic professional development activities that had broad general appeal and enable networking between people from different schools. The first Event for 2002, ‘Innovation in schools – Learning from Geelong’ also saw the launch of SmartGeelong – The Learning City’s publication, ‘A History of Education Innovation in Geelong’ (O’Callaghan 2002). This had been a project suggestion from the first planning session for SmartGeelong -- The Learning City held by SGN in 2000 (SG Planning Group July 2000a). The second Event, ‘Reading can be fun’ with children’s author Margaret Clark, attracted an appreciative audience of seventy (SG Focus Ed Event 202 Aug 2002). ‘Margaret Clark was a fascinating speaker, very informative and her display of novels quite impressive’ (SG Deakin University representative at Focus Ed Steering Group Nov 2002).

A key recommendation made by the professional development coordinator representatives on Focus Ed and at a consequent focus group of Professional Development coordinators held in December was to offer to develop programs in schools rather than run programs outside the school – Table 9.
It was increasingly difficult for teachers to find time to participate in professional development outside the school and there were cost implications in replacing teachers as well (SG Focus Ed Dec 2002b; a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What programs are needed?</th>
<th>When is the best time?</th>
<th>What are the priorities for 2003?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle Years Numeracy/Literacy.</td>
<td>Not at high stress times.</td>
<td>Thinking oriented curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management strategies.</td>
<td></td>
<td>MIPs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAV and other subject associations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Early Years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– programs in Geelong.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking oriented curriculum.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET, VCAL.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff welfare.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive disciplining.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifted students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring beginning teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                                                      |                                   |                                                      |
|                                                      |                                   | Offer to run programs at the request of individual schools. |

**Table 9.** Summary of responses from Professional Development coordinators consultation (SG Focus Ed Dec 2002b).

At the same time, the Department of Education and Training representatives indicated that they would ‘not be able to offer the number and variety of courses they have been in 2003’ and there would be opportunities for the other partners in Focus Ed to offer programs to fill this gap (SG Focus Ed Steering Group 26 Sept 2002).
‘New programming strategies for 2003 include:

1. Reducing the number of courses offered

2. A new needs assessment was conducted in December 2002 by consultation with PD coordinators

3. Allocating each Provider a half page advertisement in the 2003 booklet listing their generic courses, specialist courses and their ability to cater for in house training to suit the school’s needs’ (SG Focus Ed Steering Group 24 Oct 2002).

Focus Ed also committed to planning for its own website to be linked to various websites such as BSW Department of Education and Training and SmartGeelong – The Learning City.

By the end of December 2002, over 30 schools had paid their membership fees for 2003 – a strong endorsement of the value of the program (SG Focus Ed March 2003).

Beyond Geelong, Focus Ed had featured as a model of community partnership in the November 2001 edition of the ACE Vic newsletter (Sproull 2001) and as a result, requests for information about the initiative came from other communities that included Horsham, Albury/Wodonga and Lithgow, NSW (Best 2002; Hetherington 2002a; Saleeba 2002a).

2.4 Project 2002.4: The Training Network

Consisting of training consultants, training organisations and training managers in enterprises, this network developed some sustainability during this cycle. It had operated for fifteen months and had an e-mail mailing list of 64.
Attendance at monthly meetings during this period fluctuated between six and twenty but there was a robustness about these meetings now that was demonstrated by regular attendance by some participants, new participants at every meeting and quality presentations by network members that resulted in lively debate and enjoyment with participants often staying on after presentations to develop relationships.

A survey was conducted with the 64 people on the e-mail list in May 2002 (Appendix G). This included 30 who had attended previous meetings of The Training Network but had not come to any of the three meetings in 2002 - Table 10.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Summary of Responses</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To attendees in 2002:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you come to meetings of The Training Network?</td>
<td>It helps my business.</td>
<td>Total of 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For personal development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To network.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To non attendees in 2002:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why haven’t you come to meetings of The Training Network this year?</td>
<td>Unsuitable time/day.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No longer working there.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too far to travel after work.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not relevant.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Too many other commitments.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To non attendees in 2002:</td>
<td>Change day/time.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do we need to change so that you might attend in the future?</td>
<td>Email meeting notes so non attendees can still benefit.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Will try and find someone else to attend if they are too busy.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No criticism of the network, just a clash of commitments.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 10.** Extract from The Training Network Survey report, May 2002

(SG The Training Network May 2002a; b).

Thirty-five individuals had attended meetings in 2002 up to the point of the survey (53% of those who had ever attended) and they indicated that they attended meetings for business and personal development.
There were a number of participants who joined after being made redundant in a significant business reduction carried out by Target in mid 2001. These people developed new careers in private consultancy, including the new industries of coaching (including life coaching) and mentoring. They attested to the support that the network provided. ‘The network is the only chance I get to meet others who are doing similar work to me.’ ‘I have already learned so much from these meetings.’ ‘It provides one point of contact for all training information’ (Van Klaveren 2002c).

Those who hadn’t attended were supportive of the network but clashes in commitments prevented them from attending. ‘There is too much on.’ ‘There are too many choices of meetings to attend.’ (SG The Training Network May 2002b). Over a third (37%) of those who had attended previously who were able to be contacted were no longer working in the same place. In several instances people expressed renewed interest and said they would try to come again.

Although The Training Network’s code of conduct guarded against soliciting work from members (SG The Training Network Jan 2002), increasing awareness about the capacity of individual participants led to referrals and attendees indicated that they were getting new work through their participation in the network.

The Training Network has enabled me to talk to others about what I do and I have gained business through the contacts I have made through the network (Janssen A in Van Klaveren 2002).
In addition to monthly meetings, the network set up an online group in October through My Connected Community (www.mc2.vicnet.net.au). Eleven members joined this group and eight of them were people who never or rarely attend meetings, indicating that there was another group of people interested in networking electronically (Job Network Case Manager 2002).

The other information technology based initiative was the establishment of a database of local training capacity. To be incorporated on the updated website of the SGN, twenty five people responded to the invitation to be registered on this database. Participants in The Training Network indicated that while there were websites in other countries (such as www.guru.com in the USA) that provided information about training opportunities and training resources, including human resources, there was no such website in Australia (SG The Training Network 21 Oct 2002; SG The Training Network Steering Group Nov 2002). They were keen to support the SGN initiative and use it as a pilot project to determine the potential for this method to develop business locally, nationally and in the surrounding Asia Pacific region.

2.5 Project 2002.5: ‘Cafe.com’

An unexpected success story for SmartGeelong – The Learning City was the development of ‘Cafe.com’, the Internet cafe at Karingal.

Extending access to learning opportunities through information technology was the primary aim of ‘Cafe.com’, launched during the Geelong Learning Festival in Adult Learners’ Week on 4 September 2002 (SG cafe.com launch Sept 2002).
'Cafe.com' aimed to extend participation in learning and this project was the culmination of enthusiastic community partnerships that had combined their resources and skills to establish the facility (SG cafe.com 2002).

Karingal Inc was a centre that provided programs and services for people with intellectual disability for over 50 years in the Geelong community. It worked in close partnership with a range of community organisations to deliver exciting and innovative programs for its clients and 'Cafe.com' came about as a result of Karingal's participation in the development of SmartGeelong - The Learning City and grew out of a presentation on the TAFE travelling scholarship on e learning initiatives in Rotterdam, Glasgow, Blackburn and Norwich (Wong May 2002).

With the support of GATE and the Rural Access program of the City Council the project acquired computers and furniture to set up 'Cafe.com' in Karingal's 'Geelong Central' site, a location that was readily accessible in the Geelong CBD. Karingal allocated two scholarships to staff to undertake the ICDL so that staff were ready to assist users of the cafe in developing their information technology skills.

As the resources were gathered, new partners joined the project including the information technology department of the Gordon Institute of TAFE and information technology specialists from Alcoa who set up the hardware and the facility so that it was readily accessible for people with disabilities. The Leopold Lions Club provided furniture and made improvements to the site so that it became a welcoming and attractive environment for people who lacked confidence in accessing more traditional educational institutions for assistance in using computers.
Alcoa Australia donated computers and provided supplies for the kitchen so that users of ‘Cafe.com’ could have refreshments while they were using the facility.

‘Cafe.com’ was available free of charge to Karingal clients and members of the public with a health care card and it opened for fifteen hours a week. The project partners developed a volunteer program so that there were people on hand to provide specialist guidance in using computers and in accessing the Internet. Importantly, volunteers provided friendship and support for users of the cafe.

2.5.1 ‘Cafe.com’ as emancipatory action research

This was a unique program that aimed to develop an appetite for learning in groups of people who were often marginalised from the usual opportunities available. While the numbers who were able to access it at this stage were restricted to about 40 in any week because of the limited opening hours, it achieved this aim. Three groups of people with intellectual disability or poor literacy skills used ‘Cafe.com’ each week for classes. Other members of the public who started using the facility for their own self directed learning said that it provided them with the supportive and welcoming environment that they needed to feel comfortable and ‘act with more security in the world’ that is an outcome of ‘transformative literacy’ (Freire 1985:14).

I would never go into an internet café in the main street, but at ‘Cafe.com’ I get the understanding and support that I need to learn at my own pace. I have learned more than I ever thought I could (SG cafe.com user Sept 2003).
'Rosemary' claims that using the computers at 'Cafe.com' is extremely enjoyable and it gives her opportunities to expand her life that she didn’t have (SG cafe.com presentation kit Sept 2003).

'Cafe.com' was only possible through the combined resources of the project partners and was achieved with minimal funding support. It demonstrated that innovative approaches can lead to new opportunities and the project was closely monitored so that the learning from it could be used for further innovation.

The project demonstrated the capacity of SmartGeelong - The Learning City to leverage support and in addition to the substantial donations of equipment and time, was successful in its application for ACFE funding through 'Connected ACE' to have information technology infrastructure installed (value $10 000), a City Council Community Development Grant of $7 000 and a grant from the Ian Potter Foundation ($5 000) to assist with project implementation.

Jacinta Allen MP, Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs, opened 'Cafe.com' to the public in March 2003 and in addition to free access to the Internet, it provided free tuition and information technology skill development through GATE’s Skills.net and My Connected Community programs (SG cafe.com March 2003).
2.6 Project 2002.6: ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’

Community leaders in Rosewall, in Geelong’s disadvantaged northern suburbs, expressed interest in piloting its development as a learning community. Initial consultations with the Primary School and the Neighbourhood House elicited interest in exploring the concept (SG New Learner Survey July 2002b). The potential for the initiative to extend to neighbouring communities was given impetus by other government initiatives that identified Geelong’s northern suburbs as appropriate for neighbourhood renewal projects.

Two major government projects were launched in August 2002 that focused on this locality – The Community Building project, funded by the Department for Victorian Communities and the Neighbourhood Renewal project, funded by the Department of Human Services. The joint project activity became locally called ‘Communities in Action’. Through the Victorian Government’s ‘Growing Victoria Together’ Policy, each of these projects was charged with uniting community effort and engaging local people to develop a ‘joined up’ government approach to community strengthening ‘so that communities feel more involved, more in control and less constrained by red tape’ (Government of Victoria 2001). It provided an opportunity to reverse the fragmentation and isolation that research for ‘Growing Victoria Together’ had identified as characteristic of the disadvantaged northern suburbs of Geelong (Brazier 1997; Department of Premier and Cabinet 2002) and aimed for community building that strengthened social interaction and brought people together to communicate with each other ((Ife 2002:139).
‘Communities in Action’ was community social work – it was work in the neighbourhood rather than for the neighbourhood. ‘Communities in Action’ clarified its local role through the initial consultation for the Community Action Plans that would be drafted and developed in partnership with local residents. A local site was established, networks and groups were identified and new relationships were initiated between workers and local residents through the planning process and local project activity (Henderson 1980:8). People were encouraged to take control of projects themselves so that they became ‘their’ projects and the people involved would be presented with the opportunity to be empowered by the process (Ife 2002:209).

SmartGeelong – The Learning City participated in every stage of the development of ‘Communities in Action’ and its initiatives from initial briefings held at the City Council in November 2001, through community consultations during 2002 and the project launch at Rosewall in December 2002 (Communities in Action Dec 2002).

As its first practical participation in ‘Communities in Action’ SmartGeelong - The Learning City was engaged to manage a new Community Jobs Program (Cjp) team of ten community development assistants from January 2003. To be known as ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ the Cjp was allocated to SmartGeelong - The Learning City because it was seen to belong to the whole community and again proved to be an example of how to overcome the potential for competitiveness that may have arisen if the program had been awarded to a training provider in the locality (SG Cjp Oct 2002). The employment of participants as Community Development Assistants was an innovative approach to Cjp where people were more usually employed in administrative and clerical roles or in practical roles such as renovation, painting and gardening.
Plans were implemented to employ the Community Development Assistants full time by GATE for 13 weeks until the end of April 2003. Host organisations were recruited throughout the northern suburbs and a range of community development activities were developed for their host employers, for the ‘Communities in Action’ and for SmartGeelong – The Learning City.

Again, new partners emerged as a result of this project. The SGR LLEN youth worker, Corio Community Health Service and the Northern Community Educators’ Network all assisted with the recruitment and selection process and the identification of appropriate community development projects for participants (Newman 2003a; SG Cjp Dec 2002).

2.6.1 New Learner Survey

A New Learner Survey was conducted with all 22 attendees at a community open day that was held in Corio in July 2002 as an awareness raising event for the implementation of ‘Communities in Action’ - Table 11 (SG New Learner Survey July 2002b).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of respondents to sections of the question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When did you last take part in training or learning?</td>
<td>During the last 2 years.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;2 years ago.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 5 years ago</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not since leaving school.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you have been involved in learning in the last 5 years, what type of learning was it?</td>
<td>Art &amp; craft</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you have not been involved in any learning for more than 5 years, what has stopped you?</td>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No transport</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No childcare</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No interest</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age group</td>
<td>16-19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of birth</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of individual respondents</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
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The survey indicated that 27% of the respondents had not participated in learning for more than five years and 45% indicated they had ‘never (participated in learning) since leaving school’. Barriers to participation in learning were identified as cost (18%), no transport (13%) and no childcare (40%). Learning that would be of interest was identified as practical skills, financial skills, computers and work preparation.

The process indicated that ‘a proactive, personal approach was effective in engaging people in discussion’ and consent for individual follow up to discuss improving engagement in learning was freely given (SG New Learner Survey July 2002b). This survey and the discussion that it generated with community organisations gave useful baseline information for the education and training providers in Corio and Rosewall that could be followed up quickly (SG New Learner Survey July 2002b).

Treading a path through all of the effort that was suddenly focused on the northern suburbs in late 2002 presented a challenge for SmartGeelong – The Learning City. However, it was not alone in this and all stakeholders saw the involvement of SmartGeelong - The Learning City as positive and appropriate. The identification of learning needs and the support of the skill development of the communities so that they were in charge of their own futures was recognised as a desired outcome of all of the initiatives. The allocation of the funding for ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ provided the resources and clarified the role of SmartGeelong - The Learning City. It ‘allowed Neighbourhood Renewal to be linked to SmartGeelong – The Learning City, a broader project looking at strengthening the skills and knowledge of the workforce’ (Communities in Action Mar 2003a).
‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ provided strong community input on various levels by employing local residents, placing them in local organisations, assisting the organisational development of their host employers and giving a voice to members of communities that were regarded as disadvantaged.

3. CYCLE 2A – THE VICTORIAN LEARNING TOWNS

3.1 Geelong as an international Learning City

What we are beginning to see is communities recognising the significance of the learning dimension as central to many of the big strategic issues with which they are grappling – urban planning and management, sustainable economic and investment base for high skill jobs, cleaner environments, reducing poverty and social exclusion (Australian National Training Authority 1999).

The opportunity presented by the TAFE travelling scholarship study tour to Learning Cities overseas had a significant influence on the recognition of Geelong as a Learning City in 2002 (Craven 2001c; 2002; Wong 2002; Mar 2002a). ‘In December 2000 the City of Greater Geelong declared itself a ‘Learning City’. It is with pride and purpose that the City made this declaration in the context of the importance that lifelong education plays in taking Geelong into the future’ (Kontelj 2001). It was also perhaps unexpectedly influential in the Victorian context as the opportunities and requests for the report and presentations about the trip occurred on a scale that had not been anticipated (Carstensen 2002a; Geiselhart 2002; Hebert 2002b; Knobel 2002; Shugg 2002b):
Your very professional and passionate commitment to community based learning captured Regional Council's attention and was greatly appreciated by all. You will be pleased to note that the (Northern Metropolitan Region) will be implementing some of the approaches you outlined (Hebert 2002a).

I have had a number of people indicating that your particular presentation was great. It has provided food for thought (Carstensen 2002b).

Any information, conference papers, key contacts ... would be most helpful as we are going to do a similar path in the Pine Rivers Shire (Knobel 2002).

Ms Wong is playing a significant role in leading Geelong's direction as a 'Learning City' and this is recognised both locally and throughout Victoria (Kontelj 2001).

Probably the most significant insight from the study tour for Geelong's project was that it was truly part of an international movement. Every city visited was asked how they knew that being a Learning City made a difference and responses varied from concrete examples to a generally accepted belief that lifelong learning was intrinsically valuable. Specific performance indicators, however, included new programs such as the lifelong learning programs provided for employees in businesses and industries throughout Gothenberg, new facilities through urban regeneration projects such as the riverside precinct in Norwich and the e centres in Rotterdam and new learners such as the taxi drivers in Blackburn.
In the Learning Cities visited (Figure 9), there seems to be a widespread acceptance and understanding of the concept of lifelong learning and its value to individuals, communities and countries (Wong April 2002).

Figure 9. Study tour destinations (Wong May 2002).

The observations and findings of the study tour are written up in detail in my report (Part B2), 'Learning Cities – Building 21st Century Communities through Lifelong Learning' (Wong April 2002).
Dr Ron Faris, a Canadian Community Development expert, provided further confirmation of the international emergence of Learning Cities on his visit to Victoria in June 2002. He discussed many of the factors that influence community development, and said that change will only happen if learning occurred. He also said that the major kind of learning is non-formal and takes place over the garden fence, or in the pub, or on the Internet. Dr Faris endorsed the value of people working together in partnership to develop the human and social capital of their communities that would in turn contribute to economic prosperity.

Behind every robust community is a set of individuals and groups who work in partnership with each other. They are willing to share their trust, resources and talents and delight in learning new things (Faris 2002).

An additional element of the international development of Learning Cities that had implications for their rapid growth and future sustainability was their operation within a policy framework. As a result, funds flowed from the government to local agencies (usually local government in the case of the study tour destinations) to support lifelong learning initiatives. Policy in Australia continued to focus on education and training rather than learning (Maunders 1980; Adult Learning Australia 2001; Australian National Training Authority 2003b; Clemans 2003) so while the Victorian Learning Towns developed some capacity to innovate, the resources to support those innovations remained scarce.

All of the (UK) Learning Cities are operating within a national policy framework that supports and encourages lifelong learning and the value of initiatives that extend participation has already been researched and confirmed in these national policies (Wong April 2002:33).
3.2 Progress of the Victorian Learning Towns

3.2.1 The challenge of apathy...

Dr Bill Lucas, Chief Executive of the UK Campaign for Learning, who visited Geelong in 2001 as the guest of SmartGeelong – The Learning City for the Geelong Learning Festival reinforced this observation. He said that he increasingly wanted to know ‘what the big picture for all this activity was…when I questioned many policy makers, including two ministers, about the need for a national strategy, I frequently encountered variations on a theme of ‘No worries, Bill’ (Adult Learning Australia 2001:12).

While an achievement in this area in 2002 was the release of a national Adult and Community Education Policy, attempts to gain a commitment for a lifelong learning policy were unsuccessful. ‘It is hard to move (lifelong learning) higher up in the national priorities, particularly when you are working against entrenched ideologies’ (Stott Despoja Sept 2004). Dr Faris supported a delegation from the newly formed Australian Learning Communities Network (ALCN) to the national Minister for Education that did not result in a commitment to such a policy and continued the history of apathy toward lifelong learning in the national arena that had been apparent for decades (Maunders 1980; Sodoti 2003).

3.2.2 …and ‘top down’ community development

The Chair of the ACFE Board, Mr Peter Kirby, addressed ‘Learning Towns – Growing Communities’, the first conference held by the VLTN in Hepburn Springs in December 2001.
He introduced a new set of performance indicators that would be used to measure the progress of the Victorian Learning Towns that would require significant revision of previously accepted strategic plans. A consultancy had been engaged by the ACFE Division to develop the strategic plans required for contract extension for the Learning Towns and the consultants commented that it was not unusual for governments to become nervous about radical programs and attempt to mould them into a more traditionally understood format (Wong Dec 2002).

The radical changes to the previously accepted strategic plans developed between December 2001 and April 2002 resulted in some tension between the VLTN and the ACFE Board and subsequent protracted renegotiation of the funding agreements with each of the Learning Towns (VLTN 22 April 2002).

Throughout his term as Chair of the ACFE Board, Kirby advocated for the expansion of support for the Victorian Learning Towns but at this time he indicated an emerging concern with the outcomes of the Learning Towns that were not seen as sufficiently robust by the Board. The strategic planning consultants who worked with the project managers in Daylesford had encouraged them to 'ride it out' until the cycle would move into a more supportive phase again (VLTN Dec 2002). The slow pace of sustainable community development is 'often frustrating for community workers and can be even more so for...politicians and bureaucrats who want to see results (and preferably 'measurable' ones)' (Ife 2002:222). The source of the frustration was the shift from the 'bottom up' development that ACFE policy and performance agreements with the Learning Towns charged them with trialing (Government of Victoria 2001; ACFEB March 2000) to a 'top down' approach.
Through these agreements, the dual role of the Learning Towns Project Managers and Advisory Boards as practitioners and community leaders who could reflect on and comment on what was happening in order to assist the government develop new approaches had been developed. With this intervention they had lost their voice as informers of policy and were being regarded solely as development practitioners (Einhorn 2003; Jeuch 2003).

This was disappointing as the members of the VLTN felt that they had more than fulfilled their commitment to the pilot projects and the ACFE Board’s Annual Report of 2001–02 stated that Sheed’s report had confirmed that ‘Learning Towns had developed community wide coalitions and partnerships with a range of stakeholders...and had raised the profile of ...education generally within their communities’ (ACFEB 2001 - 02:11). The Annual Report went on to comment that the findings of the evaluation ‘support the continuation of the Learning Town model’ as appropriate for strategic intervention where additional support is required to promote lifelong learning.

The action learning approach, however, noted by the ACFE Board Annual Report, ensured that the Learning Towns were able to view these new developments as part of the cycle of the projects and they were able to negotiate a compromise with the Board. This resulted in some modification to the contract project plan requirements so that the flexible and proactive nature of the initiative was not lost and the effect of the ‘top down’ intervention was mitigated although it never really disappeared (SG Advisory Group April 2002).
3.3 The development of Australian Learning Community Network (ALCN)

However, the advocacy continued and was enhanced in 2002 in various ways. The VLTN developed into a cohesive group that met regularly and showed initiative. Membership expanded to include learning communities that were not funded projects, one of the most powerful performance indicators at this stage. These communities identified lifelong learning as a strategy for community regeneration without the incentive of government funding and demonstrated characteristics of partnership, collaboration and innovation similar to the Learning Towns projects. The VLTN developed into an effective group for these communities to join and provided an avenue for mentoring.

The VLTN was allocated an ACFE project to investigate the progress of the Victorian Learning Towns by conducting research with each funded project (Cavaye 2002b) that then described and evaluated the local model that emerged. This report, 'An Evaluation Framework for the Victorian Learning Towns' (Cavaye 2002a) was completed for presentation to the ACFE Board in March 2003.

The Australian Learning Community Network (ALCN) was in its infancy and at this stage had a national membership of about fifty. Its capacity to advocate was demonstrated early on when a delegation of members, in which I participated, met with representatives of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) in Sydney in March 2002. This meeting was to explore avenues for lobbying local governments more effectively and resulted in the short term in a commitment from the ALGA to continue to heighten the awareness of the link between well educated communities and better social and economic outcomes (Australian Local Government Association 2001; Snelling 2003:5).
These communities were well represented at the second Australian Learning Communities Conference in Ballarat in late October 2002, a milestone in marking the timeliness and viability of Learning Cities (Australian Learning Communities Network Sept 2002).

Peter Kearns presented the Conference keynote address, ‘Some History and a Little Prophecy’. Kearns had kept a keen eye on Geelong’s progress as a Learning City. ‘I have followed your progress with great interest and appreciation of the splendid achievements in Geelong’ (Kearns 2001c). He observed that the activities of the Australian Learning Cities were starting to bring the framework of a learning community into mainstream social, cultural and economic development (Kearns 2002). Case studies at the Conference clearly demonstrated that the Learning Cities were emerging as leaders in their communities. They demonstrated new ways of learning (Kearns Sept 2002), they were engaging new learners and they were starting to have an impact on the quality of life in their communities (Dymock 2002b; Martin 2002).

3.4 The OECD Conference

Perhaps the most significant event, however emerged unexpectedly – the OECD Conference ‘Learning Cities, Towns and Regions’, 14 – 15 October 2002 in Melbourne (OECD 2002). Hosted by the Victorian Government, it confirmed the government’s commitment to the development of learning communities (Kosky Oct 2002) and again, it presented an opportunity for the concept of a learning community to be placed in an international context. I undertook to prepare an application to present a Case Study on behalf of the VLTN.
Feedback from ACFE and the members of the VLTN indicated that they regarded the successful submission for a Case Study as an achievement (Carolane 2002; Dickson 2002; Fry 2002; Hetherington 2002c; McCullough 2002; Saleeba 2002b).

This is fantastic news for you, GATE and the Learning Towns (Denmead 2002).

I was subsequently engaged by the VLTN to prepare the Case Study, ‘The Victorian Learning Towns’, on the progress of the Victorian Learning Towns and I co presented it at the Conference (Wong Oct 2002a).

4. IMPACT ON THE NEXT CYCLE (EVALUATION)

While 2002 saw SmartGeelong – The Learning City continue to innovate and consolidate its place in the local, regional and international community, this in itself identified the limitations that the level of resourcing placed on the project. As the concept and the various initiatives gathered momentum, there was an escalating demand to expand the participation by SmartGeelong - The Learning City in community activities and to increase the number of initiatives.

The Advisory Group had determined in its strategic planning exercise in October 2001 to focus on a manageable number of projects and do them well, but this restricted the capacity to extend the penetration of the understanding of the importance of lifelong learning. Despite the acceptance of these limitations, there was a parallel sense of a requirement to demonstrate that the community in general embraced Geelong as a Learning City.
The participation, commitment and contribution by project partners needed to become more substantial if this was to occur.

4.1 ‘Is this it?’ (Reflection) (Wong - Reflective Journal 2000 - 4:30.01.03)

Small realities and large hopes (Specht 1975:23).

As this cycle closed I was unsure of how effective my work in SmartGeelong - The Learning City would be in the broader development of Geelong as a Learning City. The VLTN Learning Town Evaluation Framework acknowledged that general community awareness may be the realistic outcome (Cavaye 2002a:15) and certainly the early phases of awareness and partnership building in Geelong met with success but the capacity of one project worker to achieve that penetration of the wider community was limited. The tension between the need for short term outcomes and longer term processes was apparent in the Learning Towns projects, reinforcing the reasons for the negative effect that the ‘top down’ development approach of the ACFE Board had when it tried to direct the projects operationally and circumvent their potential for influencing systemic change (Einhorn 2003; Jeuch 2003). In contrast, Cavaye and Harrington noted the crucial role of the project coordinators and that Learning Towns depend on ‘managing the demands on coordinators’ to sustain the initiatives (Cavaye 2002a:39; Harrington 2002).

I reinvigorated my confidence by referring again to Schon’s strategies for the reflective practitioner. By thinking about what I was doing I posed the questions he suggested: what do I notice when I do this, what are the criteria by which I make judgements and what procedures am I enacting when I do these things? (Schon 1987:5; 1991:50).
I applied new skills in reflection on ‘knowing in practice’ to ‘think back on (the) project…and explore the understandings…in a deliberate effort to prepare…for future cases’ (Schon 1987:61). By trying to make sense of it, the observations of Cavaye and my readings for this research put my responses in perspective. It was at this point that my journal became critical as a strategy for articulating my confusion and later, to demonstrate that progress had been made. This was Glaze’s ‘Enlightenment Stage’ when I began to ‘lift the level’ and ‘enlarge the map’ (Cope 2002:82) and began to refine my writing and my skills as a Project Manager through heightened awareness of the process I was engaged in (Hughes 1999; English 2001a; Glaze 2001:159).

For example, work at the local level can only operate in a limited way and the sense of insignificance in what is achieved is ‘more a problem of community workers than group participants’ (Specht 1975:23). While people who are disadvantaged do feel oppressed, they do not feel the sense of being overwhelmed that is expressed by community workers and that I experienced. ‘(I)t is not sufficiently recognised by community workers that community work at the local level can bring about social change, but only by means of the issues and programs that are of significance at the local level; that is, by joining the small realities and large hopes’(Specht 1975:23). Similarly, community workers need to understand the purposeful nature of their work. By referring back to the ‘intentionality and direction’ that strategic and action plans provide, I realised that practitioners could overcome the sense of being caught in the ‘turbulent environment of community activities with little immediate sense of where their work is leading them’ (Henderson 1980:24).
More widely, the opportunity was ripe for the Victorian Learning Towns to assume a leadership role that was based on relationship development and trust (Martin 2002). ‘Demand is growing for information from interstate and overseas about the Victorian Learning Towns experience... Learning Towns now has the opportunity to proactively engage (with others) as a ‘teacher’ rather than a ‘student’” (Cavaye 2002a:39).

4.2 Reflection on changes as a result of Cycle 2

Developing the role of advocate and my skills in relationship building saw the improved involvement of local government. These skills are critical for successful intervention in order to ensure the necessary financial and political support for project initiatives and develop their sustainability. ‘...community workers ... must cultivate their bonds and organisational ties beyond the small local community.’ (Specht 1975:21).

4.2.1 The importance of local government support

While I drew reassurance from the study tour and from the interest of other communities that the concept of a Learning City was sound, I came to the conclusion that the substantial support of a neutral and well resourced body like local government was critical to the meaningful development of lifelong learning as a community development strategy. In my report ‘Building 21st Century Communities through Lifelong Learning’, I noted that the leverage of funding that local government was able to achieve had an impact on the scale of the activity that Learning Cities could initiate:
Whether a Learning City is driven by local government or by adult and community education (ACE) providers (as in Victoria) did not seem to make a critical difference, although the ability of local government to access government funds is considerable. The critical success factor seems to be the partnerships that are developed (Wong April 2002:30).

Local bodies need to be cautious about going off and ‘doing their own thing’ (Ife 2002:44) as this may affect others negatively and dissipate the effort. Locally devolved community work requires coordination and local government is the best placed enterprise in our communities to do this.

My reflections in my journal at the end of this cycle indicated a stronger view that Learning Cities that are led through the initiative of local government demonstrate a capacity to reach their entire community more effectively:

Other cities sometimes seem more interested in becoming a learning community than our own (Wong - Reflective Journal 2000 - 4:30.01.03).

The interest from other communities to hear about the study tour and the development of the Victorian Learning Towns demonstrated that there could be a level of initiative that is community and local government led that was not necessarily evident in a community designated a learning city just because it received project funding.
Learning Cities that choose to become learning cities are doing so to regenerate from a crisis. Local councils are also leading them (Wong - Reflective Journal 2000 - 4:13.11.02).

Reports tabled at the end of this cycle also observed that local government was crucial and that the objectives of Learning Towns actually assist local government in achieving their social capital goals (Australian Local Government Association 2001; Campbell 2002; Cavaye 2002a; Dalheim 2002; Dymock 2002a; Snelling 2003). Some local governments were perceiving their role as ‘strategic, working with local education providers to ensure that young people...have the best possible start in life’ (Snelling 2003:8).

A key priority is engaging with local government...local government is a crucial potential facilitator...and the community benefits of a learning culture relate very closely to local government’s objectives for economic, social and environmental improvement (Cavaye 2002a:39).

With this insight, I planned with the Advisory Group in December 2002 to renew the focus on enhancing local government engagement in the development of SmartGeelong - The Learning City (SG Advisory Group Dec 2002a).
4.2.2 Importance of maintaining the neutral space

The other tension that arose was the balance between the opportunity that SmartGeelong - The Learning City afforded for promotion of the ACE organisation that was my employer and the success that was derived from in fact subsuming any organisational identification with the concept. Naturally GATE saw the project's potential to market the organisation. "(T)here is no easy answer...for dealing with such situations but the fact that they occur sought to be discussed between the worker and the group" (Henderson 1980:149). Ife's definition of the 'community focused professional' also touched on this dilemma. SmartGeelong - The Learning City was not my original job role in GATE and required a shift in the way I operated and the way others saw me. As a community focused professional, I incorporated community development into my practice but it could be argued that I used community development to deliver a different type of service (Ife 2002:268) – that is, adult education – for which I was originally employed. By applying double loop learning I was able to advocate my own goals and inquire into the goals of others (Schon 1991:234) by identifying that the tension arose as a result of the established routines and practice of the organisation that would require modification of the underlying 'norms, policies and objectives' to resolve (Smith 2001a).

At the end of this cycle there had been considerable progress in developing the concept of Geelong as a Learning City and I believed that this would only continue if it was seen as an idea that did not belong to any particular organisation. Cavaye identified this dilemma from his interviews with the Learning Towns.
While needing to be ‘behind the scenes helping the community to build its own capacity... Learning Towns had to create a deliberate profile for itself...to create awareness and action’ (Cavaye 2002a:31). This also can create dilemmas for the worker in the dual accountabilities to the employing agency and the project that the worker has to manage (Henderson 1994; Harrington 2002).

The value of the neutral space was now more widely observed. The value of the Learning Town’s ‘perceived neutrality gave it the authority to organise opportunities for collaboration’ (Cavaye 2002a:32). The Victorian Minister for Education, Hon Lynne Kosky quoted from my report (Wong Dec 2001) in her address to the OECD Conference in Melbourne when she said that a key outcome for Learning Towns was the provision of an impartial focal point for all learning opportunities and the collaboration between local organisations would not have happened without the Learning Towns.

4.3 Personal reflection


The PhD process required me to apply a level of rigour to my reflection that would not be required otherwise. I found that I analysed the processes and outcomes of initiatives more keenly (Smith 2001a). This included the operational level, such as the feedback session on the Geelong Learning Festival as well as the strategic level such as the negotiations with the ACFE Board about the 2002 funding agreement. It also included the international perspective that I was able to gain through the study tour where I could apply insights gained locally to observations of Learning City progress overseas.
The study tour certainly enabled me to develop confidence that the concept of a Learning City had some resilience and potential for sustainability that had not been there earlier. Through discussion with my international colleagues I was able to again reinforce my skills in action learning that assisted me in regarding all of the project turbulence as a developmental process that in some cases was only to be expected. For example, the experience cited by the project managers in Rotterdam of local council retracting from its position of supporting experimentation with the e centres to an insistence on conventional outcomes that focused on numbers of users and hours of training delivery replicated the ‘top down’ intervention that the Victorian Learning Towns had experienced (Wong April 2002).

Armed with these insights, SmartGeelong - The Learning City provided me with a means to develop the skills essential for good practice in community development. I was able to recognise that my everyday practice and critical reflection was a valid way to build my skills (McNulty Duncan & Barrett 1996:333). The unpredictable nature of community work requires practitioners to be intuitive and creative but these skills can only be developed through experience (Argyris 1990; Cherry 1999; Ife 2002:259). In valuing intuition, I practised reflection in action and examined the sources of that intuition through my journal and so was able to also develop my self awareness (Hughes 1999; English 2001b; a; Jarvis 2001:85). This self awareness assisted me to articulate my personal style and confirm those strategies that tended to work best for me (Morrison 2001:319).

My personal style tended towards the employment of bargaining strategies rather than confrontational or oppositional ones. In employing a ‘debate style’ toward effecting change, I supported a process of sharing and working together that enabled people to understand what value their new partners could contribute (Cope 2002:144).
The success of the concept of the Learning City in presenting community agents with a neutral space created the necessary environment of negotiation between the various interests. SmartGeelong - The Learning City initiatives and the model of using Steering Groups were based on the recognised bargaining tactics of lobbying and advocacy of influential public figures and information and publicity campaigns (Bryant 1979:84; Clements 2001).

In balancing the tension between enhancing the profile of the ACE organisation in the community and preserving the neutral space the Learning City afforded, I continued to enhance my skills in partnership development and maintenance. I learned not to focus so much on ‘the balancing act’ but on bargaining openly to clarify the goals of others (Schon 1991:234). I learned the value of persistence, as demonstrated by the project initiatives such as Focus Ed and the Geelong Learning Festival that developed from relationships that had been built over many years. I also continued to develop my negotiation and networking skills and was still surprised at the generosity of project partners in their participation and their contribution to initiatives.
Chapter 6

**CYCLE 3: From Understanding to Commitment** (January 2003 – December 2003)

SmartGeelong – The Learning City is not a Learning City in name only…it is demonstrating the size, complexity, infrastructure and leadership of a model for other learning communities (SG Cavaye J at Advisory Group meeting May 2003).

1. **PLANNING**

As a result of the development of an Evaluation Framework in 2002, the VLTN was allocated further ACFE funding to test the Performance Measurement Framework in all of the Victorian Learning Towns. The Advisory Group of SmartGeelong – The Learning City met in May 2003 to update their plan and prepare for the implementation of the Performance Measurement Framework Implementation and Customisation project aiming to identify the contribution to improved community capacity of projects like the Learning City.

The planning session confirmed that there were now opportunities for sustainability that had emerged as a direct result of the advocacy and involvement of SmartGeelong – The Learning City in region wide strategies. ‘As a Learning City, Geelong is able to capitalise on other initiatives such as Community Building and Neighbourhood Renewal. It adds value to them by the strength of the partnerships that are already in place’ (SG Advisory Group May 2003a). Consequently, effort was to be directed into supporting these regional strategies (SG Advisory Group May 2003c).
1.1 G21 (The Geelong Region Strategy) and Strategic Development

The formation of the Education and Training Pillar within G21 quickly proved to be a significant initiative for Geelong’s development as a Learning City. Charged with the goal of enhancing ‘the Geelong Region’s position and reputation as a leading centre for education, training and research’ the Education and Training Pillar was developed throughout 2003 through SGN and SmartGeelong - the Learning City had strong involvement in the Education and Training Pillar Steering Group (G21 Nov 2002).

The Education and Training Pillar held a workshop in February 2003 to determine the strategic directions for education and training in the Geelong Region. The forty workshop participants represented key stakeholders in education, training and lifelong learning and they identified the ongoing development of Geelong as a Learning City as a key direction for the Pillar. Within that, there were robust proposals for a Learning Shop and the establishment of a Learning Precinct that capitalised on cross sectoral partnerships and included industry as well as learning providers (G21 Feb 2003; G21 Pillar Workshop Report Feb 2003).

The Education and Training Pillar Steering Group was led by Anne-Marie Ryan, Executive Officer of the SGR LLEN. It continued to refine the recommendations from this workshop. Rob Hurley (Director of the Geelong Science and Technology Centre (GSAT) and Learning City Advisory Group member) and I were delegated as deputy Pillar leaders by the Steering Group to work with Ms Ryan on conducting focus groups to survey a wider audience to add information to that gathered at the workshop. We conducted eleven focus groups during May and June with education and training stakeholders in Geelong and its adjoining local government areas.
The focus groups included teachers and principals (G21 Principals 24 June 2003), the Geelong Kindergarten Association, U3A (G21 U3A 5 June 2003), neighbourhood houses, ACE providers and parents, councillors and some health care representatives (G21 North Geelong 12 May 2003; G21 Surf Coast 16 May 2003; G21 Golden Plains 18 June 2003), a primary and a secondary school student forum (G21 Youth Forums 20 June 2003) and The Training Network (G21 The Training Network 16 June 2003). In all, 200 people participated in these consultations and their input formulated the Education and Training Pillar Plan (G21 July 2003; June 2003). During the process, the name of the pillar itself was changed to ‘Lifelong Learning’ in response the input of focus group participants (G21 U3A 5 June 2003).

1.2 Local government support

The support of the City Council was strengthened through the pillar process. The establishment of a Lifelong Learning Pillar was the result of diligent advocacy by many members of the Advisory Group of SmartGeelong - The Learning City, the Geelong Chamber of Commerce and SGN (SG Advisory Group May 2003a). It enabled informed community consultation to commence and the concept of a Learning City to be broadly understood and supported by people beyond those engaged in SmartGeelong – The Learning City. The role of SGN became more strategic as a result of the pillar development and the relationship between SmartGeelong - The Learning City and the SGR LLEN was given impetus by the joint project activity that emerged from the pillar consultation process.
The Mayor provided ongoing support at many levels. She was instrumental in the allocation of an Education Portfolio to a Councillor after the 2003 Mayoral election. This was first suggested by SmartGeelong – The Learning City at its presentation to Council in September 2000 (SG Planning Group Sept 2000).

The external environment was also changing. ‘Local government can and should play a creative role in fostering active community based learning programs’ (National Economics 1999:160). The 2002 VLGA Local Government and Education Survey that found that 84% of local governments believed they had a role to play in education (Snelling 2003:8). The Mayor understood the strategic role that local government could play in enhancing the role of education and learning in all aspects of community development as Snelling discovered in her consultations.

By maintaining her enthusiastic support of initiatives of SmartGeelong – The Learning City, such as attending Focus Ed Events and opening the Geelong Learning Festival (Geelong Advertiser 3 Sept 2002; SG Focus Ed Event 102 March 2002), the Mayor effectively assisted in ‘transforming (the) barriers to positives’ (Packer 2001:7) that would overcome the previously held view that local government support of education would mean that it would have a financial implication for council in taking on educational provision (Snelling 2003:8).
My observation at the end of 2002 that the leadership by local government would become crucial to the sustainability of Learning Cities was now supported by Kearns (Kearns 2004a) and Considine in his discussion paper when he described the ‘impressive record of achievement in the field of community strengthening (by governments in Australia), perhaps because the unique patterns of urban concentration and rural distance often require active intervention by government to support local resilience’ (Considine 2004:3).
Figure 10


- Communities in Action: Project Officer, Planning, cjp, Evaluation
- Café com: Steering Group
- VLTN/ALCN/ACFE: Meetings, 2 x projects, Conferences
- Focus Ed: Steering Group
  2 working parties
  60 members
  120 schools
- Geelong Learning Guarantee: ICDL Learning Pays
- The Training Network: Planning Group/Monthly meetings
- G21 Education and Training Pillar: Learning Precinct/Shop
- Community Forums
- Geelong Learning Festival: Steering Group

Learning City
Project Manager: Advisory Group/GATE

The Practice and Progress of Geelong as a Learning City/Exegesis
2. THE PRACTICE AND PROGRESS OF KEY PROJECTS (Figure 10, above)

(ACTION AND EVALUATION)

2.1 Project 2003.1: Geelong Learning Guarantee and the ICDL

The management of the ICDL was moved entirely to GSAT. In a handover managed by the ICDL Steering Group that took place over a few months, GSAT had already worked with the schools that expressed interest in the licence. Interest came from Geelong and beyond and two more schools were in the trial stages of the licence. Over fifty individuals were now signed up and one or two were nearing completion of the entire licence.

The availability of the ICDL online free to the education sector had an impact but SmartGeelong – The Learning City’s new pricing structure was implemented so that people could buy individual licences only instead of the entire package. Advertising was conducted in educational publications and in the Community Education Supplement of the ‘Geelong Advertiser’ (Geelong Advertiser Feb 2003; Oct 2002) and the brochure was distributed in the Geelong Chamber of Commerce July 2003 newsletter.

This initiative took a long time to become established. The support from the licensing company remained erratic. It was useful to have relatively few people signed up while the difficulties were worked through and participants were very patient in assisting the project while it was established.
During discussion at the Advisory Group planning session in May 2004, members identified that the commercial imperative that accompanied this initiative had clouded the capacity for its effectiveness. Using this insight they resolved to focus on facilitating 'big ideas rather than project manage initiatives' (SG Advisory Group May 2003a) and not undertake further projects at this stage that required the generation of income as a prerequisite for its impact.

2.2 Project 2003.2: The Geelong Learning Festival 2003

The Geelong Learning Festival Steering Group of interested partners met to build on the framework that had developed in the past three years. New approaches in 2003 included a change of time to Flexible Learning Week and incorporation of the joint Open Days of the local tertiary institutions. This was a strategic decision to encourage the participation of Deakin University in particular. Feedback from Deakin University after the 2002 Geelong Learning Festival indicated that participation was not worthwhile because there were no direct benefits. However, the University and the Gordon Institute of TAFE responded enthusiastically to aligning the 2003 Geelong Learning Festival with activity that was already planned – their Open Days (SG Geelong Learning Festival July 2003) - and as a result Deakin hosted the launch of the Learning Festival during its Open Day on 17 August.

Another innovation was to have a series of Open Days around the community in those enterprises that had identified themselves as learning sites, hosting a day of events each during the Geelong Learning Festival (Wong Aug 2003; Geelong Advertiser June 2003). This attracted ten new organisations as participants.
The Geelong Learning Festival also continued to develop new learning environments - ‘Learning outside the walls’ - first described by McClellan at the May 2003 meeting of the VLTN (VLTN 2003). Perhaps building on variations of this concept such as 1971 ‘The School Without Walls’ case study from Philadelphia, USA (Bremer 1971) and the Highlander Workshops in Tennessee (Lovett 1983; Horton 1990), this was acknowledged as a key feature of the Victorian Learning Towns in the VLGA survey (Snelling 2003:17).

2.2.1 ‘Training’ – an example of ‘Learning outside the walls’

The innovative ‘Training’ was a Geelong Learning Festival learning program run on the Melbourne -Warrnambool train for two return journeys during the Festival week. ‘Training’ was successful in attracting two community grants to support the cost of hiring the restaurant carriage to run this program. Forty-two people were accommodated on each journey that included a visit to the whale watching platform at Logan’s Beach in Warrnambool. Ivan Hawthorn, a Natural History lecturer and member of U3A, was engaged to present a session on the whales on the train that included multimedia material. A session on taking outdoor photos was included during the journey. After the whale watching, the participants attended a presentation on the research into the local Blue Whales at Deakin University’s Warrnambool campus. This initiative was written up as ‘Training’, a Case Study for Flexible Learning Week (Wong Sept 2003). It is available on the ‘Tafe frontiers’ website (www.tafefrontiers.com.au) and on CD (Tafe frontiers 2003).

The Case Study is attached as Part B5.
Feedback conducted by ‘Tafe frontiers’ on the initiative was highly positive and indicated that it had engaged people from diverse backgrounds – Table 12, (Appendix H). This activity included eight people (19%) who indicated in the New Learner Survey, Geelong Learning Festival 2003 that they had not been engaged in a learning activity for at least five years (see Table 13). It also included fifteen people from a non English speaking background (35%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Sample Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have gained new knowledge from this activity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Excellent organisation, many thanks (15 respondents).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in this activity will have a positive effect on my work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>A wonderful contribution to community education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have increased my interest in ...learning from participating in this activity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Excellent presenters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know more about my ...learning options from participating in this activity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.2 Strengthening the international links

Once again the Geelong Learning Festival featured an international guest, Dr David McNulty. Dr McNulty was Assistant Director of Lifelong Learning in the borough of Blackburn with Darwen (UK). He was a keynote speaker at the first Australian Learning Communities Conference in Albury/Wodonga in 2001 and this was his second visit to Geelong. It provided the Geelong Learning Festival with some opportunities for community events on the day of his visit, 25 August 2003.

Dr McNulty addressed a meeting of the SGR LLEN at Deakin University: ‘Learning Networks’ (McNulty 2003a), a Community Forum: ‘Smart Thinking’ (McNulty Aug 2003b) and a forum hosted by The Training Network: ‘Learning Pays’ (McNulty Aug 2003a; SG The Training Network Aug 2003). Altogether over 100 people attended these events and feedback indicated that people had been encouraged to think in new ways about lifelong learning:

I hadn’t thought about consulting with the community about what they would like to see happen in their neighbourhoods (Industry Network Director) (PMFIC Geelong Report 2003).

I haven’t been exposed to that kind of thinking before (Industry training manager) (PMFIC Geelong Report 2003).
It makes sense to take the learning programs to where people are, rather than expect
them to come in to programs in colleges and universities (City Council Officer)

Dr McNulty noted that Geelong had made considerable progress as a Learning City since his
first visit in October 2000. He said that the people who attended the forums were people of
influence and that there was energy and a sense of purpose in the groups. He said that the
questions that were asked indicated that people understood the importance of lifelong learning
and were in a position to use the ideas he gave them to develop locally relevant initiatives. He
noticed the evidence of sustainability of SmartGeelong - The Learning City that was
demonstrated by the heightened involvement of the City Council and the role of initiatives
such as the SGR LLEN and G21 (McNulty Aug 2003b).

The New Learner Survey was again conducted at events throughout the Geelong Learning
Festival 2003 – Table 13. The 70 respondents indicated that 70% of them had engaged in
learning during the last two years, reflecting the background of people who were more likely
to participate in such activities during the Geelong Learning Festival. However, 24% had not
engaged in learning for at least five years and eleven of these (15%) were people who were
encouraged to participate with the support of the ‘Communities in Action’ team or
neighbourhood houses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of respondents to sections of the question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When did you last take part in training or learning?</td>
<td>During the last 2 years.</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;2 years ago.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 5 years ago</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not since leaving school.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you have been involved in learning in the last 5 years, what type of learning was it?</td>
<td>Art &amp; craft</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you have not been involved in any learning for more than 5 years, what has stopped you?</td>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No transport</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No childcare</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age group</td>
<td>16-19</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of birth</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of individual respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once again the survey provided useful information for planning programs in ACE and TAFE providers, emphasising the demand for practical skills development and training in information technology. It also indicated that enjoyable activities could provide access to people who had been disengaged from learning. This survey included more people from a non English speaking background and this is an area that would benefit from further investigation about learning needs.

2.3 Project 2003.3: Focus Ed

The membership subscription to Focus Ed continued to be particularly strong – 60 out of 97 Geelong district schools subscribed (SG Focus Ed March 2003) and they received discounted course fees and free attendance at Focus Ed Events. Five hundred copies of the Semester 1 program were distributed to district government and non government schools (SG Focus Ed Program Feb 2003). The level of membership renewal was the first real test of the impact of the project and the high level confirmed the value of Focus Ed to schools. Because of the fee base that was generated, the Focus Ed Steering Group planned additional Events in 2003 and worked on establishing Focus Ed on the web through GSAT.

A Focus Ed Event on Community Building with Dr Don Edgar in March 2003 was well attended with 95 people turning up. Dr Edgar spoke about Geelong’s demonstration of its Learning City characteristics through its commitment to the community building work in the northern suburbs (Edgar 2003). The event was supported by the City Council as part of its commitment to developing broad community awareness about community building and the role of lifelong learning.
The costs of this event were entirely met by sponsorship from the City Council and Focus Ed membership and feedback was highly positive. ‘I didn’t realise that so much was going on in Corio.’ ‘Dr Edgar was a wonderful speaker. It was great to have him come to Geelong.’ ‘We really appreciate the opportunity to hear about things that are happening outside of schools’ (SG Focus Ed Event 103 March 2003).

The Focus Ed Steering Group continued to monitor and adapt the provision of professional development in order to build a culture of lifelong learning in our key educational practitioners. A focus group for school Professional Development coordinators was held on 5 June 2003 and feedback provided suggestions for ongoing improvement to the program including increased use of email to remind schools about upcoming programs – Table 14. The provision of programs on a dedicated Focus Ed website was also supported and www.geelonglearningcity/focused was officially launched at Focus Ed Event 303 on 4 September 2003 (SG Focus Ed Event 303 Sept 2003).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful programs in Semester</th>
<th>Suggestions for improvements to Focus Ed.</th>
<th>Current issues for PD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Email reminders.</td>
<td>Cost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys’ education.</td>
<td>Planner for staff rooms.</td>
<td>Time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking skills.</td>
<td>Website.</td>
<td>Quality and content of programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comedy skills.</td>
<td>Make it easier to find specific programs in the program guide.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning and returning teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covey’s 7 Habits.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 Project 2003.4: The Training Network

Attendance at The Training Network increased during 2003. Around twenty people attended each of the monthly meetings with new as well as long standing members coming along. Presentations in 2003 were made by participants and included the topics of ‘Life Coaching’, a local ‘Skills Showcase’, ‘Marketing’ and the consultation for the G21 Lifelong Learning Pillar (G21 The Training Network 16 June 2003; SG The Training Network 18 May 2003; 21 Mar 2003).

The Training Network maintained the online group through My Connected Community. This group enabled participants to communicate with each other, send shared files and promote employment opportunities. Members of The Training Network found work for each other and built a valuable collective capability where they were able to make suitable referrals to business clients.

2.4.1 People 21

The Training Network was invited to join with two regional Human Resources networks in creating a strategic alliance that became known as People 21. At the initial meeting of representatives of the three networks on 12 June 2003 it was agreed to develop a joint Statement of Intent between the Australian Human Resources Network, the Gordon Institute of TAFE and The Training Network that included:

The three parties agreed to formalise the relationship and approach all key stakeholders for endorsement, including the membership of The Training Network.
The three parties agreed to work cooperatively to offer diverse, comprehensive and innovative learning and development forums and networking opportunities to the human resources practitioners in the region.

Each member of the alliance will maintain their identity to represent a diversity of expertise and involvement across the HR sector (Ferrie June 2003).

The alliance, People 21, was launched on 29 July 2003 at the Gordon Institute of TAFE and the Statement of Intent was signed by all three parties (Ferrie July 2003). An annual program was established with a range of events sponsored and promoted by the alliance. These included:

- Presentations
- Workshops
- Networking opportunities
- Discussion forums, and
- Other events to serve the needs of the membership (Ferrie 2003).

2.5 Project 2003.5: ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’

SmartGeelong - The Learning City’s Community Jobs Program (Cjp), ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’, in the northern suburbs ran from January to April 2003 and was extremely successful in achieving employment and educational outcomes.
Integrating their work as Community Development Assistants in a range of host employers in Corio, Norlane, Rosewall, North Shore and Cloverdale, the ten participants worked with the combined ‘Communities in Action’ initiatives.

During their employment, Cjp participants participated in the Office of Housing’s ‘Housing Week’, which included several Community Centre Open Days and photographic displays. They also assisted in community initiatives such the Multicultural Festival, Youth Week, Rosewall Primary School Breakfast Club and the Walking School Bus. They attended ‘Communities in Action’ Meetings and some attended conferences and seminars. One participant conducted pottery classes at Rosewall Neighbourhood Centre and continued to do so once Cjp finished.

The Cjp team conducted research that included business mapping and surveys of Geelong’s northern suburbs residents. A ‘speak out tent’ set up during the Multicultural Festival in Corio on 16 March 2003 was staffed by Cjp participants who conducted community surveys with residents. Themes that arose from resident responses included concern about public safety with examples of cars speeding at night, lack of street lighting and fear of contacting the police. ‘People know who is responsible but are too scared to tell the police’. A lack of entertainment, especially for young people, was identified. Responses included ‘A need for somewhere to hang out’, somewhere with food and recreation facilities. ‘When I am bored I drink, there is nothing else to do’ (Communities in Action Mar 2003b). The consultation also identified local people who were willing to become involved. ‘A lot of young people have skills but nobody sees that.’ ‘Some of the people we met on the day have enthusiastically offered their support to a range of projects that will be included in the Neighbourhood Plan’ (Communities in Action 16 Mar 2003; Mar 2003b).
This was an example of the local application of the ‘widely used effective strategy...the
development of Learning Champions, committed participants in communities, businesses and
projects, who promote and encourage their cohort to become lifelong learners’ (Wong April
2002:32), that cities such as Glasgow and Norwich in the UK had implemented.

‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ participants hosted a visit from the Minister for Employment,
Jacinta Allen in March 2003. The Minister spent time talking with each participant about their
work and their aspirations and she commented along with others on the innovative application
of this project in using Cjp for community development work. ‘This was better than just
building or gardening projects’ (SG Cjp 24 April 2003).

At the conclusion of Cjp, five of the ten participants went on to employment and one into full
time further education.

2.5.1 Community Action Plans

(Communities in Action Mar 2003a; Nov 2002).

The community consultation that was conducted by the Cjp participants and other partners in
‘Communities in Action’ resulted in the first Community Action Plan (Communities in
Action Nov 2002). The work of SmartGeelong - The Learning City and the Cjp team was
documented throughout the plan. As there was so much activity in this region, the
publications and reports that were generated were designed to capture all of the outcomes so
that the reporting requirements of all projects were met by the same documents.
2.5.2 Impact of Cjp and resulting change

A focus group conducted on 24 April 2003 at the conclusion of ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ provided feedback from all of the stakeholders that it was highly positive (SG Cjp April 2003). ‘So much got done’ (Neighbourhood House Coordinator). ‘It achieved everything that we hoped for and more’ (Government Department officer). Activity based outcomes included the implementation of a community newsletter in Rosewall and a school breakfast program at Rosewall Primary School on two days a week. One Cjp participant started a Walking School Bus with two parents and seven children. Another established a dance program at Rosewall Primary School. A third established a woodworking workshop at the local high school for parents.

Process outcomes provided yet another example of breaking down the barriers among potential rivals. Neighbourhood House staff noted the new organisational relationships that ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ had fostered. ‘The Primary School went around the corner to meet with the people in the Neighbourhood House for the first time.’ ‘The Neighbourhood Houses are working together really well now. We want to keep the meetings going even though Cjp has finished’ (Neighbourhood House Coordinator) (SG Cjp 24 April 2003).

Like the 2002 Cjp program, participants conducted the New Learner Surveys in the host employer organisations – Table 15 (SG New Learner Survey Sept 2003a). Of the thirty five people who responded to the survey, 85% had taken part in training or learning in the last two years, perhaps reflecting the survey population that attends the Neighbourhood Houses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of respondents to sections of the question</th>
<th>Total responses to the question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When did you last take part in training or learning?</td>
<td>During the last 2 years.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 2 years ago.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 5 years ago</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not since leaving school.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you have been involved in learning in the last 5 years, what type of learning was it?</td>
<td>Art &amp; craft</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st Aid</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you have not been involved in any learning for more than 5 years, what has stopped you?</td>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No interest</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age group</td>
<td>16-19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of birth</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of respondents</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 15. New Learner Survey, Geelong 2003*
The survey also indicated areas of high interest for education programs (practical skills, budgeting and computers) and the results were used for program planning in Rosewall, Cloverdale and Norlane Neighbourhood Houses.

The personal reflections of the Cjp participants at the end of the program demonstrated the shifts in power structures that characterise emancipatory action research and demonstrate sustainability indicators. All participants were interviewed at the conclusion of their employment with Cjp and there were no negative comments except to ‘Just make the program longer’ (SG Cjp April 2003). While this was a microcosm of community activity, ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ intervened in the lives of the participants and changed the way they responded to systems and the external environment. For example, several of the participants were the subject of an error in the waiving of rent by Centrelink while they were in Cjp. They tackled the error individually and in groups to achieve outcomes that were acceptable to them including phased repayment of the waived rent.

Participants confirmed that ‘there are superior conditions of learning’ (Knowles 1970:57) and that ‘learners …will be able increasingly to act with more security in the world’ (Freire 1985:14) that result from the development of the self directed learner. Action led to further learning (Newman ND) as participants commented that they had learned ‘…how to become an independent learner’ and how to use ‘my initiative to find things to do when it was quiet at work.’ They had also learned skills in participation. ‘I was not doing anything before Cjp. Now I am on committees and events. I am able to cope with large groups.’ ‘Dealing with people’s lives was scary at first. Now I am a Parent Liaison Officer and I can’t wait to get to work.’ They reported improvement in self esteem through their experience in the workplace. ‘We didn’t get treated any differently to any of the other staff.’
‘Our opinion was listened to. I’m not used to that. Now if I think that what I have to say will make a difference, then I’ll say it’ (SG Cjp April 2003).

Follow up with the participants throughout 2003 indicated that the short, intensive intervention that Cjp provided led to long term changes in the lives of the participants. Two more people entered full time employment to join the five who remained in work. The two participants who entered casual employment and volunteer arrangements with their host employers continued in these roles and became involved in other ‘Communities in Action’ projects such as the establishment of a performing arts group at Rosewall Primary School that introduced that highly disengaged community to arts and cultural activity.

These outcomes demonstrated that ‘the community knows best’ that is the ‘change from below’ that is at the heart of effective community development (Ife 2002:104). While empowerment was not the principal stated aim of Cjp, it was clearly a byproduct of the skills development process that is a typical outcome of community development programs (Ife 2002:209). In this case, the valuing of local culture and practices contributed to the empowerment of the participants in ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ that in turn increased the likelihood of the sustainability of the initiatives that they undertook.
2.5.3 Reclaiming the concept of ‘Community’

If the concept of community is dead, it stubbornly refuses to lie down

(Clarke 1973:32).

‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ and the wider activity of ‘Communities in Action’ were an example of the possibility of developing a sense of ‘Community as Locality’ that Clarke questions. Clarke’s 1973 paper questioned the extraordinary tenacity of the belief ‘that community is a phenomenon which can be physically engineered’ (Clarke 1973:32) and said that distinctions in social class mitigate against the capacity to develop communities of any depth on the basis of geographical location. Yet Rosewall in particular could be defined as an ‘engineered community’ - a purpose built, distinctly geographically defined public housing estate. It is developing a strong sense of community that was driven by the Neighbourhood House and the Primary School and their strong participation in ‘Communities in Action’ and SmartGeelong - The Learning City. ‘We can absorb all of the project activity that is being showered on Rosewall at the moment and it still would be only a beginning’ (Communities in Action Dec 2002).

The much more homogenous society that operates in modern Australia is a factor that counteracts the reluctance that Clarke observed for people in neighbourhoods to work together to improve their everyday lives. ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ also developed local community ‘champions’ who can drive the self directed community change that characterises ‘radical community work intervention’ (Henderson 1981:14).
‘Communities in Action’ itself continued to display the characteristics of the practice of ‘community social work’. Workers were skilled in really listening to the ‘felt and expressed need’ of local people (Henderson 1981:10) through activities such as the ‘speak out’ tents they held at local events such as the Corio Multicultural Festival 2003 and the Geelong Learning Festival 2003. Feedback from respondents was used to determine new directions and initiatives such as ‘Curtaining the Neighbourhood’ - a project to make or remake curtains for the many houses that were curtainless in the northern suburbs (Communities in Action 16 Mar 2003; Mar 2003b).

Informal networks, another fundamental ingredient of effective community social work, were established through Community Agents of Sustainability (CAOS). These included the ‘Walking School Buses’ and the older persons’ network established at Rosewall Neighbourhood House in 2003. The strategies employed to gather community feedback and the support of informal networks satisfied the requirement of participation by local residents that is characteristic of engagement with the community (Henderson 1981:11). The Steering Group for ‘Communities in Action’ remained active and diligent in its purpose of supporting the joint project activity by meeting regularly, documenting its progress and actions and engaging in strategic planning (Communities in Action 11 Mar 2003; Newman 2003b; Communities in Action July 2003).

The other characteristics of practice capability that ‘Communities in Action’ displayed included local awareness and the localisation of the team through the setting up of its office in a house in Coolidge Street, Rosewall, officially opened by Hon John Thwaites, Deputy Premier of Victoria on 16 May 2003.
Local residents attended this function and after the formalities, the Minister spent the rest of his time at Coolidge Street in consultation with them, rather than the other invited guests.

Given that in 1973 Clarke was discussing arguments to abandon the term ‘community’ altogether (such as Stacey who described it as a ‘non-concept’ and Pahl who stated that it was more confusing than illuminating) (Clarke 1973:32) it was interesting to see how Victoria in particular has reclaimed the term and embedded it in our language, from Government Policy (‘Department for Victorian Communities’) to regions (Victorian Learning Communities Network) to neighbourhoods (‘Communities in Action’). Nationally, ANTA has included a focus on community in its VET plans and its research proposals that was not evident previously and the work of the Victorian and other Australian Learning Communities is being referred to in this development (Australian National Training Authority 2003a; Adult Learning Australia 2004). ‘Community has become one of the catch cries of our time…it is predominant in its claim to represent what is good in our society’ (James 2004). This augured well for sustainable change to result from initiatives such as ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ that were implemented in an environment that is more supportive of the social capital indicators of networking and community strengthening than the economic rationalist environment of the early 1990s that community workers found so inhospitable (Kenny 1994; Goldsworthy 2001).
A presentation on SmartGeelong – The Learning City was made in February 2003 at Kangan Batman TAFE for Hume City Council prior to the opening of their Global Learning Village (Kangan Batman 2003). This session included a keynote address by Norman Longworth (UK) whose work had been used in the planning and development of SmartGeelong – The Learning City. Material from the study tour has been used in his latest book (Longworth 2003b). Further presentations took place at the VALBEC (Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council) Conference on 30 May 2003 and a Community Engagement forum at RMIT on 5 September 2003 (RMIT 2003).

Requests for copies of *Building 21st Century Communities through Lifelong Learning* and for information on specific initiatives such as Learning Shops, the ICDL and ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ also continued. SmartGeelong – The Learning City was approached by other Victorian communities such as Hamilton, Yarra Ranges and Melton and other Australian towns and cities such as Albury/Wodonga, ‘I was hoping to pick your brains about both your UK and Geelong experience’ (Learning Connections 2002), Port Augusta, Toowoomba, Newcastle and Lithgow. In addition to providing information to emerging learning communities in Australia such as Pine Rivers, Queensland (Knobel 2002) and Joondalup, Western Australia (Uzaraga Sept 2002), SmartGeelong - The Learning City also communicated with UK and Canadian Learning Cities and cities in India and the Philippines (Dones 2001).
4. CYCLE 3A – THE VICTORIAN LEARNING TOWNS

4.1 The progress of the VLTN

The VLTN continued to strengthen as it managed projects in its own right and made presentations in a range of forums:

The VLTN met in Geelong in February, when it decided to change its name to the Victorian Learning Communities Network - VLCN - (VLCN Feb 2003), in Wycheproof in May and in Melbourne in June 2003. I co presented for the VLCN to Mr Jim Davidson, the new Director of the Office of Training and Tertiary Education (VLCN 2003).

The Performance Measurement Framework developed by the VLTN in 2002 with Dr Jim Cavaye was accepted by the ACFE Board in March 2003 (Cavaye 2002a). ACFE then provided further funding in 2003 to develop the framework as a measurement strategy in our own projects and then test it beyond that with other organisations in the ACE sector. The Barwon South West Regional ACFE Council agreed to be one of the pilot regions.

In addition to members of the Advisory Group of SmartGeelong – The Learning City participating in training to implement the Performance Measurement Framework, I also represented the VLCN on ACFE’s Performance Measurement Framework Project Steering Group.
I was also engaged to manage an ACFE project for the VLCN that investigated ways of ensuring the ongoing sustainability of Learning Towns. Selected because SmartGeelong – The Learning City was seen as being successful in this area, I worked with Ms Rhonda Galbally (currently CEO of ‘Our Community’) to develop tools and strategies to assist in leveraging further funding through Learning Towns projects (SG Sustainability of Learning Towns April 2003).

4.1.1 The VLCN as an international model

The VLCN and the ALCN began to be cited as exemplars in papers and conference presentations. VLCN projects and case studies were cited as an example of the ‘flurry of major reports and studies on lifelong learning’ and their role in ‘the concept (gaining) greater impetus in (Australia) was recognised’ (Faris 2001; Kearns 2002; Thomas 2002).

Presentations at the 2002 ALCN Conference and the 2002 Australian Catholic University Conference (both in Ballarat), the Case Study for the OECD Conference in October 2002, and the Australian Learning Association Conference in December 2003 all exposed the work of the VLCN to international audiences. At the request of Dr McNulty (McNulty Oct 2002) I co-presented with Leone Wheeler (RMIT) for a video that featured in Blackburn with Darwen’s entry in a national competition for council teamwork in the UK that they subsequently won (Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council 2003; Wong S & Wheeler L 2003; McNulty Nov 2002).
4.1.2 Reflection on the progress of the VLCN

While the members of the VLCN had previously noted that they wanted to move away from being regarded as ‘pilot projects’ to becoming mainstream (VLTN Oct 2002), the experience in the UK and of the VLCN members themselves confirmed that the Learning Towns were initiating cultural change that inevitably must take place over a long period of time for it to be sustainable.

The Victorian Learning Towns showed that they could facilitate the discussion and provide direction and context within which groups and individuals could make their own decisions. Cavaye found that ‘Learning Towns was seen as one of the few catalysts for bringing together influential people and organisations’ (Cavaye 2002a:35) even though it is still ‘early days’. Sheed also concluded that ‘Learning Towns…is a significant innovation directed towards building a learning culture at the local level…However…the establishment of a learning culture involves at least four to five years of sustained effort’ (Sheed 2001:4).

5. PERSONAL REFLECTION

Cities show a variety of ways in which communities are using learning to regenerate themselves or to face the future (Learning City Network 2000).

Just as things seem to go quiet, new energy comes

As Cycle 3 drew to a close, I reflected with some confidence that the action research process supported the demonstration of positive effects through commitment to enhanced lifelong learning opportunities and increased awareness of its importance. The three year time span of the project and the action research cycles provided the ‘sustained exposure…over a long period of time’ that defined and documented the progress of the central issues (Cherry 1998:11). By this stage, the development of SmartGeelong – The Learning City was following the pattern of the ‘Innovation Curve’ – starting slowly but gradually taking hold and then developing rapidly (Hansen 2002; Department of Education and Training Dec 2003).

The feedback provided through the focus groups about initiatives of SmartGeelong – The Learning City such as the Geelong Learning Festival and ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ surprised me with their comprehensive endorsement of the experiences of the participants. As a Project Manager I recognised that not everything had gone to plan and yet members of the community were appreciative of the opportunities that had been presented through the project. I was also concerned that the scant resources would limit the impact of the initiatives but it seemed that they effectively demonstrated that as with Glasgow’s ‘patient’ gradual “nibbling away” at an entrenched culture’ (Maddocks 2001; Young 2001), it was possible to develop new ways of engaging people.

I found new energy from the interest by other communities in the work of SmartGeelong – The Learning City that continued unabated and provided another means of influencing the development of community strategies to engage non learners. The case studies and the report and presentations on the travelling scholarship triggered new ways of looking at issues.
They were a means by which the lessons learned could be made accessible and available to others as examples and as hypotheses for testing in other settings (Brearley 2001; Zuber-Skerritt 2001:Ch 1, p4; McNiff 2002).

It seemed that the role of the Advisory Group and the Steering Groups was even more effective and important that I had first anticipated. They provided the forums for the ‘supportive work-in-progress discussions’ that assisted all of us in developing the project and its initiatives (Kemmis 1988:26). They were often the conduit for the positive feedback that SmartGeelong - The Learning City received through the multiple evaluation processes that occurred during this cycle. In this, they accepted the responsibility for the outcomes that had been achieved to date, but they were also reinforced by the positive nature of the responses. They became the partnership model that was the means of empowering the community to determine the direction of the project (Tett 2002). They were the Learning City in practice. By this stage I believe that I had supported the participants in developing their skills in learning and reflecting on their practice together so that the groups could become the strategy that would ensure the sustainability of the Learning City (Blackmore 2002:13).

My ongoing literature research enabled me to recognise the phases that the project went through and provided me with a sound basis from which to manage the tensions that were inevitable (and necessary) for action research to be productive. In applying action learning, I was able to appreciate the difficult conversations (such as those with the ACFE Board when they implemented a ‘top down’ approach) and the things that did not work as planned (such as the ICDL) as contributors to evolutionary change, the ‘framebreaking’ agents that consciously created discomfort and chaos that subsequently shifted practice and led to new learning (Cherry 2001).
Findings and analysis
Final reflection

Chapter 7

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

1. EVALUATION

Evaluating the economic and social development of a community that has declared itself a Learning City through determining the impact of SmartGeelong – The Learning City.

1.1 The evaluation model

Various methods were used to gain feedback on SmartGeelong – The Learning City community impacts. Focus groups and individual interviews with ‘prompt questions’ that provided a consistent framework for interviews (Cavaye 2003b), informal conversations and surveys were conducted in a wide range of situations.
The Performance Measurement Framework applied a tiered evaluation model (Cavaye 2002a) that included:

**Input/Output Evaluation** that accounted for the funding and measured the impact of specific activities such as the feedback from the Geelong Learning Festivals.

**Process Evaluation** that ‘assesses the effectiveness of the processes of how Learning Towns interact with their communities’ (Cavaye 2002a:5). Examples of outcomes for this activity for SmartGeelong – The Learning City are indicated in Figures 11 and 12.

**Capacity Evaluation** assesses the extent to which communities are more functional and capable. While it was more difficult to gauge this extent with any confidence, the responses to questions about social changes are indicated in Figure 13.

Information about the impact of SmartGeelong – The Learning City was collected in various ways:

**1.2 ‘Informed people’** (Cavaye 2003b):

‘Informed people’ are those people sufficiently involved with SmartGeelong – The Learning City to have an informed opinion (Cavaye 2003b). The research for the Performance Measurement Framework included a total of 40 ‘informed people’ who completed surveys and participated in interviews and focus groups:
The ‘informed people’ included:

10 participants in Learning City projects (such as Cjp and the Geelong Learning Festival)
5 from affiliated networks (‘Communities in Action’, SGRLEN, Neighbourhood Houses),
5 representatives of the business community
3 from government departments, teachers, the youth sector,
1 from the Area Consultative Committee
2 from the Geelong Chamber of Commerce
3 from local government (Mayor and officers)
2 from U3A
1 from the Koori community
2 from ACE Clusters
6 from the Gordon Institute of TAFE, Deakin University, the Geelong Science and Technology Centre (GSAT) and GATE


Seven members of the Advisory Group assisted with conducting these evaluations

(SG PMFIC Aug 2003).

All of the ‘informed people’ were asked to complete a Scoresheet that generated data for Likert scales (Cavaye April 2003). People’s opinions about the impact of Learning Towns/Cities were gathered on a quantitative Likert scale ranging from 0 (no change) to 4 (major change). ‘This is a relative scale only and people will interpret particular scores individually...The framework has a Likert scale questionnaire that corresponds with the criteria in the framework’ (Cavaye 2003b).
In applying the methodology of the Performance Measurement Framework, the questions on the Scoresheet correlated with the questions they were asked during individual interviews or focus group discussions and triangulated with the qualitative data generated from those discussions (Cavaye 2002a:7).

Not all of the respondents felt that they had enough information or knowledge of SmartGeelong – The Learning City to complete the Scoresheet and therefore, this was a performance measure that was not included in the Performance Measurement Framework Geelong Report that was finalised in November 2003. However, I was able to follow people up over a more extended period of time for this research and gathered 47 responses to the Scoresheet from ‘informed people’. Nevertheless, of those people who did attempt it, most of them left sections incomplete as they felt that they could not make a meaningful assessment of those sections (PMFIC Scoresheet 2003).

The Performance Measurement Framework data collection tools and plans for SmartGeelong – The Learning City are attached in PART B as appendices to:


1. Indicators and Measurement Matrix
2. Prompt Questions
3. Scoresheet
4. Action Plan

Appendix A
Appendix B
Appendix C
Appendix D
Figures 11, 12 and 13 below include the sections from the Scoresheet where responses were made by at least 50% of those surveyed. However, while the responses indicated that SmartGeelong – The Learning City was having some impact in developing the awareness of the value of lifelong learning, ‘care needs to be taken (in drawing) conclusions about cause and effect...because the initiative creates most of its impact indirectly’ (Cavaye 2002a:13). Consequently people may not be aware of the direct influence (if any) of the project itself and the available pool of people who can make meaningful comment about the impact of the project is quite small.

1.2.1 Function of SmartGeelong – The Learning City

Figure 11 outlines the perception of ‘informed people’ of contact between SmartGeelong – The Learning City and the local community. In common with the findings of Cavaye for all of the Victorian Learning Towns, with Likert scores between 2.0 and 2.5 out of 4.0, community engagement, communication and collaboration was regarded as ‘quite positive’ (Cavaye 2002a:30; PMFIC Scoresheet 2003).
Figure 11. The extent to which SmartGeelong – The Learning City was perceived to have engaged with the local community.

1.2.2 Influence on attitudes to lifelong learning

With Likert scores of between 2.0 and 2.5 out of 4.0, SmartGeelong – The Learning City was regarded as having some positive influence on attitudes about lifelong learning – Figure 12. Sectors where it was seen to have had an impact included community groups and local government. In contrast to Cavaye’s finding that the Victorian Learning Towns were seen to ‘not yet engage with particular disadvantaged sectors of the community’ (Cavaye 2002a:34), SmartGeelong – The Learning City was regarded as having been particularly successful in this (PMFIC Geelong Report 2003; PMFIC Scoresheet 2003; SG Cjp April 2003; SG Interview with L Brazier July 2003).
Figure 12. The extent to which SmartGeelong – The Learning City was seen to have influenced attitudes to lifelong learning.

1.2.3 Social Changes

Again in common with the strongest finding of the Victorian Learning Towns, SmartGeelong – The Learning City was regarded as having contributed to social change and especially in supporting and strengthening networks (Cavaye 2002a:34). With Likert scores that averaged between 2.1 and 3.2 out of 4.0, respondents perceived that SmartGeelong – The Learning City had contributed to the activity of community organisations and the long term thinking of the community – Figure 13 (PMFIC Scoresheet 2003).
Figure 13. The extent to which SmartGeelong – The Learning City was perceived to have contributed to social changes.

1.3 Interviews and Focus Groups

‘Informed people’ and others participated in ten individual interviews and nine structured focus groups during Cycles 2 and 3 – a total of at least 75 people. These consultations were deliberately targeted and it was recognised that the views were not necessarily representative of the whole community but generated considerable qualitative information that could be used to build broader community involvement (Cavaye 2002a:27). In addition, numerous informal ‘Community Conversations’ were held throughout the three Action Research Cycles that provided additional information that confirmed or disconfirmed insights and observations so that ideas could be changed and developed (Sankaran 2001).
1.4 Community Surveys

In addition to the surveys held throughout the three Action Research Cycles such as New Learner Surveys, surveys were conducted during Cycle 3 with community participants in specific Learning City events ("Training", Geelong Learning Festival) and for the Performance Measurement Framework, a total of approximately **200 respondents** (PMFIC Geelong Report 2003).

2. OUTCOMES

These consultations provided information about the effectiveness of specific initiatives, such as ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ (SG Cjg April 2003) about the effectiveness of SmartGeelong – The Learning City, such as the consultation with the Advisory Group (SG Advisory Group May 2003a) or generated ideas for future development, such as that with The Training Network (SG The Training Network 21 Oct 2002).

The consultations consistently provided positive feedback on the impact of SmartGeelong – The Learning City that demonstrated a realistic understanding of the capacity of the project to influence change:

> Conceptually SmartGeelong is steering the understanding and broadening of the base of what ‘education’ means and introducing the concept of lifelong learning but more time, effort and resources are required to make it a substantial change (SG Jamieson P CoGG at Advisory Group meeting May 2003).
3. G21 (THE GEELONG REGION STRATEGY)

Information gathered through G21 was also used to provide information for the Performance Measurement Framework and the evaluation of Action Research Cycle 3.

The (then) Education and Training Pillar Steering Group held a workshop in February 2003 to determine the strategic directions for education and training in the Geelong Region. The forty workshop participants represented key stakeholders in education, training and lifelong learning and they identified the ongoing development of Geelong as a Learning City as a key direction for the Pillar (G21 Pillar Workshop Report Feb 2003). ‘The City of Greater Geelong has been declared a Learning City; such a development builds awareness of the role of learning in building a dynamic community and enabling the community to manage change and make the most of vocational and lifestyle opportunities’ (G21 2003:20).

In addition to the nine focus groups conducted for SmartGeelong – The Learning City during Cycles 2 and 3, eleven focus groups were conducted for G21 to survey a wider audience to add information to that gathered at the workshop (Appendix 1). Eight of these were conducted in Geelong itself. The remainder were in the regional areas.

The consultation included questions based on the Performance Measurement Framework ‘prompt’ questions in order to add value to the consultation. Participants were informed that their input would be incorporated into the Performance Measurement Framework. The focus groups included primary and secondary teachers, principals, TAFE and University representatives, U3A, neighbourhood houses, parents, school students and local government.
In all, **200 people** participated in the G21 Lifelong Learning Pillar consultations and their input has formulated the Lifelong Learning Pillar Plan.

### 3.1 The G21 Lifelong Learning Pillar Plan (G21 June 2003).

Analysis of the responses from the workshop in February 2003 and the focus groups confirmed consistent features that would be required of G21 initiatives. These were summarised in the Lifelong Learning Pillar Plan:

*Features of Flagship Projects to enhance Education and Training in the Geelong Region:*

1. Contributes to the shared vision of the Education and Training Pillar
2. Is leading edge
3. Demonstrates innovation
4. Promotes communication and cooperation
5. Promotes community partnerships
6. Employs a variety of delivery strategies including outreach models
7. Facilitates access
8. Addresses marginalisation
9. Improves the profile of lifelong learning, education and training in the region
10. Demonstrates the smart use of facilities and resources
11. Includes a strategy for sustainability’

(G21 June 2003)
Five key themes arose from the workshop discussion:

1. Linking Learning (Integration and Networking)
2. Valuing Learning (Developing community culture and attitude)
3. Accessing Learning (Available and accessible information)
4. Supporting Learning (Infrastructure development and access)
5. Promoting Learning (Building on current strengths)

(G21 June 2003).

The input from the consultations was used to develop the objectives and strategies of the Lifelong Learning Pillar Plan. Suggestions for specific initiatives such as Learning Precincts and Learning Shops were then incorporated into the plan and prioritised (G21 Feb 2003; G21 Learning Precinct Working Party June 2003).

Eventually, the Lifelong Learning Pillar Plan was integrated with the final G21 Region Strategy launched in November 2003. The priority projects of the Lifelong Learning Pillar Plan were further prioritised within the G21 Strategy (G21 Nov 2003).

4. JUDGEMENT

The overlapping evaluation processes that occurred during Cycle 3 assisted in identifying the key characteristics and strong themes about the contribution of SmartGeelong – The Learning City. However, ‘ultimately evaluation is a judgement with an element of trust in the long term contribution of the program’ (Cavaye 2002a:16). The three major evaluations conducted for G21, the Performance Measurement Framework and this PhD did provide a range of data from which it was possible to draw conclusions.
Most importantly though, it provided the opportunity for interpretation and thinking from which to rethink and learn about a ‘dynamic and complex interaction and change process’ (Cavaye 2002a:16).

However, this evaluation provided some baseline data which the Advisory Group could use for reflection and further planning. It also developed some experience in developing a measurement framework that could evaluate changes that occurred incrementally in this particular community both directly and indirectly as a result of the project (Cavaye 2002a).

5. RESEARCH QUESTION 1:

What are the key characteristics of a Learning City and what determines these?

The second Australian Learning Communities Conference (ALCN) in Ballarat in September 2002 (Australian Learning Communities Network Sept 2002) and the first OECD Conference in Melbourne on 'Learning Cities, Towns and Regions' in October 2002 (Kosky Oct 2002; Wong Oct 2002a) indicated that the Victorian Learning Towns were beginning to demonstrate evidence of Landry’s key characteristic of Learning Cities – their ability to develop successfully in a rapidly changing socio-economic environment (Landry 2000:267).

In demonstrating this characteristic and identifying its key elements, this project developed a model of social change that contributes to building a Learning City based on the experiences and findings of the project participants and initiatives.
5.1 A new model of social change – emerging components that build a Learning City.

Arising from a period of apathy and conservatism (Moyer's 'Normal Times') and the local disenchchantment with existing institutions by the late 1990s demonstrated by the election of the Victorian Labor government, the potential for SmartGeelong - The Learning City to contribute to the community's regeneration and revitalisation provided the 'ripening conditions' in which new social movements could take hold and develop new change models (Moyer 1987).

5.1.1 Leadership

The Victorian Minister for Education, Hon Lynne Kosky, cited the role of the Learning Town as a change agent as a particular achievement of the projects in her keynote address at the OECD Conference (Kosky Oct 2002). This was recently consolidated in the 2004 Ministerial Statement, 'Future Directions for Adult Community Education in Victoria'. The Minister stated that '...the Government...(has) learned a lot from...the successful Learning Towns' (Kosky 2004). By providing the 'test bed' for innovators committed to leading the way for others (Robinson 2004:2) who were frustrated with official institutions, channels and powerholders (Moyer 1987:14), initiatives such as the Learning Towns have helped achieve the 'Growing Victoria Together' targets, challenges and strategic issues of building cohesive communities, promoting a sustainable environment, strengthening communities, planning for the needs of a changing population and improving confidence and participation. They have 'great networks and connections into their local communities' (Kosky 2004).
Focus Ed was cited as an exemplary case study of effective partnerships in the Ministerial Statement, 'joining with (others)...to deliver programs which meet community needs and capitalise on the expertise of partners' (Kosky 2004:11). The Minister also referred to 'Cafe.com' as an example of innovative and effective partnership at the launch of the Statement (Kosky June 2004). ‘Learning Towns show how effectively...organisations can work with each other...to...help build stronger communities by identifying and addressing local learning needs through partnerships’ (Kosky 2004:7-11).

Through initiatives such as ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ and ‘Training’, SmartGeelong – The Learning City demonstrated leadership by developing new ways of learning. Feedback from these projects and others such as The Geelong Learning Festival confirmed that it had engaged new learners and has had an impact on the quality of life in the community (SG Cjp April 2003; SG 'Training' Aug 2003; SG Geelong Learning Festival Oct 2003).

There was also strong and consistent feedback that it had an influence developing the Learning City characteristic of changing ‘entrenched attitudes of mind’ (Landry 2000:271).

There is a new mindset in Geelong that is more open and more creative

(G21 The Training Network 16 June 2003).

There is a co operation and a willingness to work together

(G21 Principals 24 June 2003).

The People 21 alliance reflected a new mindset in the Geelong region encouraging the sharing of ideas and resources (Van Klaveren 2003:9).
Demonstrating that it was not an ‘unconcerned city...(floundering) by trying to repeat past successes for far too long’ (Landry 2000:267), SmartGeelong – The Learning City contributed to the shift from an education and training paradigm to a learning paradigm, in education as well as business and industry. The renaming of the Education and Training Pillar to ‘Lifelong Learning’ (G21 July 2003) was an example of the rapid adoption of the use of the term ‘learning’ that the Learning Towns reported after their first year.

A paradigm shift is evident in all the Learning Towns in the move from project partners talking about education and training to talking about learning. This has happened during the life of the projects and people are using this terminology confidently and comfortably (Wong Dec 2001).

Testing new approaches to developing a learning culture has been identified as a driver in building social and human capital that impacts on economic outcomes (Kearns 2002:9; Department for Victorian Communities 2003). Learning that occurs ‘outside the walls’ is a 21st Century response to the learning needs of individuals and communities (McClellan 2003; Martin 2004).

By experimenting with new approaches such as The Training Network, Focus Ed and the Geelong Learning Festival, SmartGeelong – The Learning City demonstrated a capacity to engage reluctant learners and adapt to the demands of communities that are challenged by the escalating pace of change, thereby ‘looking at its potential resources in a far more comprehensive way...(seeing) a competitive edge in the seemingly insignificant; (turning) weaknesses into strengths’(Landry 2000:267).
Through the creation and inspiration of ‘new wave’ groups (Moyer 1987:15) including new networks and new leadership, the stage was set for implementing a new model of effecting social change.

5.1.2 Advocacy for systemic change

This is not top down. This is not bottom up either. This is inside out.

Germaine Greer (Pearson 2002).

Great nations always keep their minds open...all the time eager to learn new things.

Bakhtiar Ali, Pakistan, following a visit to Geelong (Awasis 2002).

The Learning Towns proactively engaged in supporting a whole of government approach to developing sustainable communities (Kearns 2002), an approach that enabled communities to ‘feel more involved, more in control and less constrained’ as encouraged by the Department of Victorian Communities ‘to drive more fundamental service delivery reform across the public sector’(Department for Victorian Communities 2002b). The involvement of SmartGeelong – The Learning City in Geelong’s ‘Communities in Action’ project encouraged the self reflection that demonstrated that partnerships with other agencies and government departments were starting to bring the concept of a learning community into mainstream social, cultural and economic development, characteristic of a Learning City in being ‘strategic, creative and imaginative’(Landry 2000:267). The social movement had started to ‘take off’ (Moyer 1987:17).
The new governance structure of ‘Communities in Action’ itself, chaired by the Mayor (Communities in Action July 2003) was cited as an example of improved collaboration between agencies and local communities that the Community Capacity Building Initiative was designed to develop (Department for Victorian Communities 2002b; Considine 2004:3).

SmartGeelong - The Learning City’s ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ project (January – April 2003) extended participation in learning and improved social connectedness by engaging local people in developing community action plans that enabled people to own their own neighbourhood (Essenburg 2000). By ‘starkly revealing to the public’ that existing conditions inhibited social values, citizen self interest and public trust, ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ provided the forum for people to respond with ‘great passion’ and to be open to new ways of conducting their lives (Moyer 1987:17). It started to develop this particular community into ‘a place that can learn to change the conditions of its learning democratically’(Landry 2000:267). It provided the ‘trigger event’ that created social change (Moyer 1987:17).

SmartGeelong – The Learning City was also engaged to make a range of presentations from 2002-2004 as particular communities explored the development of new approaches to lifelong learning. In 2002 these included the ACE Vic Conference (ACE Vic 2002) and the Neighbourhood Houses’ ‘Brainfood’ Conference (Narre Neighbours 2002), Flexible Learning Week (Tafe frontiers 2002), Australian Learning Communities Conference (Australian Learning Communities Network Sept 2002), the Australian Catholic University (Australian Catholic University 2002) and the OECD (OECD 2002).
Presentations were also made for the RMIT Regional Learning Networks staff on 1 August (Wheeler 2002b), a visiting delegation from Pakistan on 18 September (Maunders 2002), Staff of the State Library of Victoria on 30 October (State Library of Victoria 2002) the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) (Snelling 2002) and the Victoria Harbour Docklands Authority (Anthony 2002) among others.

This continued in 2003 with presentations for the Hume Global Learning Village, (Kangan Batman 2003), the VALBEC Conference (Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council 2003), Yarra Ranges Council (Yarra Ranges 2003), a panel discussion at RMIT (RMIT 2003) and the Western Region U3A Conference in Geelong in February 2004 (U3A 2004).

Feedback from these presentations (Awasis 2002; Carstensen 2002b; McPherson 2002) continued to indicate that they were influential in instigating and informing debate about change in communities that contributed to the development of ‘new models of planning and service delivery’ as encouraged by the Department for Victorian Communities (Department for Victorian Communities 2002b).

The evaluation of the ACE Vic Conference presentation indicated that 48% of attendees rated the presentation I gave on the study tour as ‘Excellent’ and the remainder rated it as ‘Very Good’ (41%) or ‘Good’ (11%) (Shugg 2002a). Feedback from the ‘Tafe frontiers’ Flexible Learning Week Conference rated my presentation 4 out of 5 and ‘88% of participants said it met their needs well or very well’ (McPherson 2002).
Your participation and input provided extremely valuable insights (MacAdie 2002).

I gave your example of the taxi drivers to illustrate the need to include the community in the planning (Geiselhart 2002).

The reports I had written began to be used as references in other reports and research. For example, they were used for ‘The Experience So Far’ (McCullough 2003), for ‘It takes a village to raise a child’ (Snelling 2003) and for ‘Public Libraries in Learning Communities’ (Kenneally 2003).

### 5.1.3 Driven by ACE

SmartGeelong – The Learning City demonstrated the effectiveness of placing the ACE sector at the heart of the Learning Towns projects. It developed a significant role as a neutral catalyst and convenor of proactive education and training and partnerships with community, local government and industry.

ACE providers confirmed the Victorian Government’s strategy of using them as key facilitators in developing Learning Towns and Cities to unite education and community. These providers were characterised as responsive to local needs, having close involvement with structures and strategies that support lifelong learning and having the ability to design and implement programs that reflect lifelong learning goals (ACFEB March 2000:3).
As a result of the government’s emphasis since 1999 on engaging whole communities in learning, the new directions for ACE as described in the 2004 Ministerial Statement focused on the development of community learning partnerships that ‘builds on the experience of Learning Towns’ to broaden the role of ACE in harnessing community resources, building social capital and deepening government involvement with communities (Kosky 2004:10).

In the absence of national and state policies relating to lifelong learning for all, Sheed noted the leadership role of the ACFE Division ‘in building on and extending local networks...building rich patterns of sociability which are critical to both social and economic development in the learning society’ (Sheed 2001:51). It provided the solution to the potential crisis of powerlessness that models of social change can encounter as the enthusiasm of the ‘early adopters’ dissipates or stagnates while waiting for the majority public support to develop (Moyer 1987:21; Robinson 2004:2).

This critical role in driving and maintaining innovation and leadership was confirmed by the awarding of the Performance Measurement Framework Project by ACFE to the VLCN in February 2003. As a member of the VLCN, SmartGeelong - The Learning City piloted the framework and then acted as a mentor during extension of the trial to ACE Clusters and ACFE Regions in the second half of 2003. The Sustainability Project awarded to GATE in May 2003 was further recognition of the leadership of SmartGeelong – The Learning City.

### 5.1.4 The importance of local government

ACE as the driver is a unique approach to developing Learning Towns and Cities that is not replicated elsewhere (Wong Dec 2001).
ACE as the driver is unique. As I observed at the end of Cycle 3, where Learning Cities are developing elsewhere in Australia, they seemed to be initiated and driven by local government. In several instances, they also seemed to be initiated as a response to critical regeneration issues - in Lithgow, Newcastle and Joondalup for example (Postma 2002; Uzaraga 2002; Best 2003). This was not unlike those Learning Cities developed in the UK and Europe as a strategy for community regeneration and realignment of the economic focus (Franson 1998; Ringnalda 2000; Popplewell 2001; 2002).

Learning Cities overseas were also largely developed through government funding flowing through to local councils. I now believe that the involvement of local government in meaningful ways has emerged as a critical success factor in ensuring the ongoing sustainability of a Learning City and the extent of this engagement will also have a significant influence in determining the key characteristics of a Learning City.

The partnership approach that ACE demonstrated so effectively proved its value to local communities as scarce resources were maximised through cooperation and collaboration. Local governments noticed this and in combination with a rapidly escalating general acceptance of the strength of the lifelong learning message, were more strongly endorsing and supporting the initiatives of the Learning Towns. This was an indication of genuine community development.

Local governments are drawing connections between the level of educational attainment in their communities and the communities’ economic development (Snelling 2003:8).
During Action Research Cycles 2 and 3 there were encouraging signs of commitment by the City Council for SmartGeelong – The Learning City. Throughout this project, from the initial declaration of Geelong as a Learning City and its subsequent involvement in the Geelong Learning Festival and the community forums, increasing the participation and awareness of local government was a challenge. However, SmartGeelong – The Learning City did have impact on increasing ‘the value placed on learning by...local government’ (SG Jamieson P CoGG at Advisory Group meeting May 2003). Community leaders such as the Mayor, Cr Barbara Abley, identified G21 and its Lifelong Learning Pillar as the best opportunity to date for the development of genuine widespread commitment to the development of Geelong as a Learning City (SG Interview with the Mayor July 2003). The formation of this pillar was in itself an indicator of Geelong’s development as a Learning City.

The support of local government is substantial and the Learning City is assisting in the achievement of the Council’s strategic development. The implementation of G21 and the inclusion of an Education and Training Pillar is a significant achievement for the Learning City and its partners (SG Jamieson P CoGG at Advisory Group meeting May 2003).
5.1.5 ACE support of an action learning approach in the evolution of social change

The Victorian Learning Towns developed a distinct learning community model of social change through its foundation in the ACE sector and this was significant in determining the characteristics that did develop. The model was characterised by an action based approach rather than a theoretical one (Australian Learning Communities Network Sept 2002). ‘People in Australia have the personal freedom to do their job instead of being closely supervised’ (Griffin 2003). However, SmartGeelong – The Learning City conducted considerable early research into the UK model in particular. Like the UK community work and now the Learning City movement, SmartGeelong – The Learning City emphasised engaging with people and problems and getting into action as quickly as possible. David McNulty suggested that SmartGeelong start quickly on implementing projects during his first visit to Geelong, so that SmartGeelong - The Learning City could recruit partners and develop insights through action learning (McNulty Sept 2000).

This approach ran the risk of ignoring the structural aspects of system change that Specht warns against (Specht 1975:24). Similarly, McNulty also observed during his second visit to Geelong in August 2003 that there was a new trend for the UK government to support short term radical intervention at the expense of longer term systemic change.
This resulted in the perpetuation of the existing problems once the short term effect had worn off (McNulty 17 August 2003). Faris criticised the tendency to ‘short termism’ in his address to the ALCN in June 2003. He said that governments (understandably) require quick results and the tendency to focus on the immediate rather than the long term systemic change mitigates against profound changes in culture (Faris 2002).

Feedback from interviews with key stakeholders in the Geelong community indicated that SmartGeelong – The Learning City addressed this by operating at different levels (PMFIC Geelong Report 2003). Projects of SmartGeelong – The Learning City engaged people in community action and encouraged participant driven initiatives to develop and adapt (such as the Geelong Learning Festival and ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’). In this way, people were active and learned by doing. At the same time, though, other initiatives of SmartGeelong – The Learning City demonstrated a defining feature of a Learning City in its self evaluation (Landry 2000:267) as it aimed to embed this learning in the longer term bank of collective experience by correcting a potential imbalance in practice skills. It did this by providing practitioners with a more broadly based knowledge than they had at that time (Specht 1975:24; McNiff 2002) - for example through Focus Ed and the Community Forums.

5.2 Evidence of effective social change

5.2.1 Extended participation in learning

The more highly educated a community is, the greater are its economic and social outcomes (Snelling 2003:5).
There is some evidence to infer that participation in learning increased during the time of SmartGeelong – The Learning City. Year 7 – 12 retention rates in Victoria as a whole had increased from 76.2% in 1999 to 81.4% in 2003 (Victorian Schools Innovation Commission 2002; Allen 2004). GATE’s delivery of adult and community education student contact hours increased over the same period from 221 028 in 1999 to 349 212 in 2002 and 566 276 in 2003 – see Figure 5, p 29 (GATE 1999; 2002; 2003). The Barwon South West region was recognised as having ‘relatively high university and technical education participation and attainment’ (Queensland University of Technology 2004).

It is not possible however to derive any conclusions from this about the influence of SmartGeelong – The Learning City on this ‘(a)ny adult education project can only expect to make a small contribution to such a daunting task!’ (Lovett 1983:73) - but projects such as Learning Towns were developing in an external environment that was more supportive of lifelong learning and may have had some influence through a ‘ripple effect’ (Kearns 2000; Australian Local Government Association 2001; Cavaye 2002a; McNiff 2002).

However, by providing information and support in innovative and accessible ways SmartGeelong – The Learning City reached new audiences with particular emphasis on people who were marginalised from traditional delivery of education and learning. The New Learner Surveys conducted at project events throughout the Action Research Cycles consistently indicated that between 30 and 50% of respondents had not participated in learning for at least five years (SG New Learner Survey Sept 2003b).
The Geelong Learning Festival, ‘Cafe.com’ and ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ were all effective innovative strategies for engaging reluctant learners and feedback from participants indicated that they were examples of the achievement of emancipatory action research (SG Cjp April 2003).

The Geelong Learning Festival is an ideal mechanism to underpin the strategic development of lifelong learning (SG Interview with AM Ryan July 2003).

The display at Corio Village (during the Geelong Learning Festival) …opened up opportunities for the community (SG Geelong Learning Festival Oct 2003).

All of the Victorian Learning Towns were recognised by this stage as demonstrating learning ‘outside the walls’- a paradigm shift in the development and delivery of learning opportunities that was regarded as an exemplar for the future of adult and community education (McClellan 2003). The development of learning ‘outside the walls’ provided a model of effective practice that could be adapted by others. In Geelong it included innovative partnerships with community agencies, residents’ groups, new media such as community billboards, new learning environments such as ‘Training’ and online groups such as the My Connected Community group formed by The Training Network.

The projects and initiatives developed by SmartGeelong – The Learning City as it entered a more mature phase where there was some evidence of significant support that indicated positive social change, would not have occurred without the framework of this flexible and creative approach to community building. Several of the initiatives were regarded as innovative and were used as models for the development of initiatives in other communities, demonstrating a level of success in effecting social change.
For example, interest in ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ came from several Victorian communities including Albury/Wodonga, Mildura and Melton. Focus Ed was used as the basis for the investigation of similar initiatives in Horsham (Hetherington 2002a; b; Horsham 2002) and Albury/Wodonga. Locally in Geelong there were plans to use the partnership experience to extend the program to other industry groups such as the proposal for ‘Learning Pays’ – a work based personal development program (SG Learning Pays Dec 2002).

Information about The Training Network was sent to Wangaratta, Lithgow and Glasgow. It was identified as a key group for G21 to consult with to drive the development of a learning culture in business so that:

employers embrace the idea of an educated workforce

and

education and training becomes more visible, less conceptual

(G21 The Training Network 16 June 2003).

5.2.2 Indicators of economic improvement

Chance favours the prepared mind (Old saying).

Geelong is doing very well economically.

Cr Barbara Abley, Mayor, CoGG (SG Interview with the Mayor July 2003).

Geelong is the surprise packet (Geelong Advertiser 20 Aug 2003).
By 2004 Geelong’s economic indicators showed a marked improvement from four years ago when its unemployment rate was above the State average (Murphy 2003c). At 5.9% in May 2003 it was marginally below the national rate of 6% (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004; City of Greater Geelong 2004). Demographic data in 2003 indicated that the region was exceeding average population and economic growth, a study by Monash University’s Centre for Public Policy reported in the ‘Geelong Advertiser’ on 24 November 2003. The article ‘Geelong a boom town’ followed up the State of the Regions 2003-4 report stating that ‘Geelong was well placed to continue its strong growth of recent years’ (Prytz 2003) and ‘the Region’s robust growth will continue for the next decade’ (City of Greater Geelong 2001-2:4).

By December 2003, the article ‘City growth has investors queuing’ stated that ‘Geelong has posted a powerful year of growth, driven by record building, robust property sales, strong population growth and the highest job vacancies in 14 years.’ The Mayor said that increasing job diversity contributed to Geelong’s attractiveness – ‘especially in the managerial and professional occupations’ (Murphy 2003b).

As with data that indicated improved participation in learning, it was not possible to isolate the influence (if any) on this that SmartGeelong – The Learning City had but the broad vision that G21 set was regarded as the framework for balancing ‘innovation and the creative aspects of Geelong’s traditional industries…and emerging industries such as bio-tech, IT, tourism and a range of services’ (Murphy 2003d). However, the improvement in the indicators was also regarded with some caution by community leaders (SG Interview with the Mayor July 2003) as the basis for calculating the changes. For instance, young people who have casual or part time work were not reflected in unemployment statistics.
These sources also observed that there are increasing numbers of people who do not register as unemployed (SG Interview with the Mayor July 2003; SG Advisory Group May 2003a).

At the same time, though, there was repeated reference in focus groups and interviews conducted for G21 and for the Performance Measurement Framework that there was a more positive mindset in Geelong, that there were individuals and groups with influence (such as the SGN and the SGR LLEN) that were proactive and innovative and whose ideas were taking hold (PMFIC Geelong Report 2003:31).

External factors were also significant in economic performance and included the policies of the State government and the influence of national and world economies. It was only possible to suggest at this stage that a more outward looking and creative culture in the community positioned it to take advantage of opportunities that were presented.

### 2002/2003 financial year Geelong region demographic data:

- Building activity: $602m (increase of 22.7% on previous year)
- Population: Up 2% to 238,404
- Median house prices: Up 24% in Geelong, 27% in Surf Coast and 42% in Queenscliff
- Business confidence: ‘is riding high’ with 77% of companies expecting moderate to strong economic growth

(City of Greater Geelong 2002-3:5-6; Murphy 2003b; a).
6. PERSONAL INSIGHTS ON THE IMPACT (REFLECTION)

If you can’t think of the big picture, there won’t be any picture. Leadership doesn’t mean winning; it means leading (Malveaux 1999).

It is clear that I have been operating on at least two levels as a project worker. Twelvetrees’ description of these levels seemed to describe my practice – firstly as an ‘enabler’, working with people at the local level and helping them develop actions and implement them – most particularly demonstrated through ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ and ‘Cafe.com’.

I also focused on the second strand that Twelvetrees identifies – ‘seeing needs that are not being met are met’ (Twelvetrees ND:79). Both of these strands can and did overlap and they certainly ranged from the small scale social events to larger scale activities that ‘inevitably enter the sphere of politics’ (Twelvetrees ND:79) such as the Performance Measurement Framework and G21.

My work with The Training Network and Focus Ed showed me that I was applying new insights to my role and I brought those to the implementation of People 21 (McNulty Duncan & Barrett 1996). While both networks were set up at the request of potential group participants, thereby contributing to the sustainability of those groups and the likely goal alignment that Twelvetrees identifies (Twelvetrees ND:79), I believe I brought a new clarity to my role whereby I took direct responsibility but did not do the job for the participants.
I found that I moved between the role of local leader and the role of change agent, roles that were determined according to the particular circumstance (Bryant 1979; Cope 2002:139; Costin 2002; ODR-USA 2002; McNulty Aug 2003c; Newman ND). The change agent was the professional outsider who was paid or chose to associate with a community group. This role was essentially one of a resource person and a consultant who provided expert services that were defined by the outsider status. The status of the local leader however, derived from the position as a natural member of the group who takes on the role of spokesperson and advocate (Bryant 1979:84).

McNulty’s address to the 2003 ALCN Annual Meeting generated discussion about the hitherto generally acknowledged role of the Victorian Learning Towns as change agents as described by the Minister for Education in the keynote address at the OECD Conference in Melbourne (Kosky Oct 2002). McNulty, too distinguished between the role of change agent as the external expert and the local leader who was in a better position to instigate sustainable change (McNulty Aug 2003c). This discussion identified the Project Managers of the Victorian Learning Towns as local leaders rather than change agents, who were able to influence community leaders (such as Mayors and local politicians) and who were able to assist in the development of locally appropriate initiatives (such as the Learning Festivals).

I concluded however that while I mostly operated in the role of local leader, ‘identifying with, and in turn being the object of identification for, group leaders in the community’ (Henderson 1981:109) and had this role confirmed by the interviews conducted for the Performance Measurement Framework, that in the case of ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ I was more likely to be perceived by the participants and the community in which they worked as the professional outsider.
I provided, as Bryant and Newman suggest, 'services and information which would not normally be available or accessible to local groups' (Bryant 1979:84). However, my career long experience as an adult educator with the requisite skills that Knowles identifies (Knowles 1970:37) in facilitating, encouraging and networking, contributed to acceptance of my involvement in planning local strategies for change.

There is a distinction here though between encouraging people and exerting power that is implicit in some cases in the community leader's position (Clements 2001:4) whereby the danger of believing that the power assigned to the status becomes a 'substitute for the personal strength that comes from knowing who you are' (Cope 2002:19) and the meta awareness of coming to know 'what makes us tick'(Newman ND:253). My local profile and participation and my personal style enabled me to overcome the barriers that may have arisen if I had been seen as an 'outsider'. Such a role would have devalued the local knowledge and disempowered the participants (Ife 2002:104) and would have prevented the participants from developing skills and knowledge themselves.

I think that at various times I employed each of the seven types of intervention that exemplify the non directive role of the community worker (Henderson 1994; Newman ND:257). By applying Schon's strategy of reflection in action, I implemented the structure that Henderson and Thomas provide for the role of the community worker – roles that were also similarly described by the Biddles ('encourager'), Ross ('guide', 'enabler' and 'expert') and Newman ('get (people) thinking and learning') (Schon 1987; 1991; Henderson 1994:109) - to enhance my sense of 'knowing how' to do the project work that underpins effective practice theory (Henderson 1994:312).
In doing this, I practised a leadership style that demonstrated an ‘ability to unleash the latent and innate talent’ (Cope 2002:89) of others that builds community capacity and leads in the longer term to greater prospects of sustainability (Dattner 2004).

6.1 Emancipatory outcomes through ‘galvanising’

We make it up as we go along (Clements 2001:8).

Throughout SmartGeelong - The Learning City I assumed the role of ‘galvaniser’ and the strategies I employed were reinforced sufficiently consistently to enable me to draw conclusions about the approach to social change that emerged. By stimulating interest in lifelong learning and the idea of a learning community and I was able to mobilise people to form groups. These groups operated at a range of levels such as the strategic Advisory Group, the operational Steering Groups for events such as the Geelong Learning Festival and the networking groups such as The Training Network.

At a different level – one of personal development and empowerment - ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ demonstrated that mobilising people could contribute to individuals achieving a potential that had not been previously demonstrated, one where ‘their image of themselves and their abilities is enhanced’ (Henderson 1994:148). By creating a learning environment, the thinking of the participants had been opened up (Freire 1985:2-14; Moyer 1987:14), so that it allowed for the possibility of change in the relationships between individuals and the way they participated in social systems (Clements 2001:1; Moyer 1987:11).
The feedback from the participants that stated that they had learned new skills in participating was an indication that they accepted the ‘new world’ that they had glimpsed because it was both attainable and ‘intrinsically superior to the world in which they have been living’ – an emancipatory intervention described by Henderson and Thomas (Henderson 1994:148). Participants indicated that they felt they were part of the ‘collaborative endeavour’ identified as a feature of effective community action – ‘equal and leading participants in the process of neighbourhood change’ (Henderson 1994:328) and ‘participating in articulating concerns, identifying needs and resolving conflicts (to) become active agents in their own destiny’ (Fricker 2001:6). This effect was confirmed by the ‘Communities in Action’ governance body when it observed that ‘(t)here is a new attitude of people being empowered – to actually go out and seek their own opportunities and not be reliant on others’ (SG Interview with the Mayor July 2003).

Reflection on my practice helped me to understand that while I could influence and inform the ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ participants, they in turn were influencing and informing me. ‘Their perceptions of their situation were different to mine because we occupied different positions’ (Clements 2001:8). As our relationship developed they shaped my understanding of their world so that there was a degree to which it also became my world and I was seen as a part of it. Our positions in relation to each other changed and they contributed to developing my skills as a Project Manager who could work in a supportive and productive way with people whose experiences had been very different to mine aspiring to the position of the independent thinker in the way that Clements describes Friere (Clements 2001:9).
My work with Focus Ed was an example of the ‘focusing’ function. Even though the leadership of this initiative was moving to others, it seemed important throughout my involvement that I was present at meetings and events. In my role as the ‘strong, connected’ leader (Essenburg 2000) I employed strategies such as supporting the ideas of the participants and allowing all partners to determine the extent of their involvement (Cope 2002:39). Much of my time was spent on Henderson and Thomas’s third ‘rule’ – that of keeping interest at a high level (Henderson 1994:148) so that the community did not regress to complacency (Essenburg 2000) by arranging events, reminding participants about the plan and the actions and by publicising the initiative.

The functions of ‘clarifying’, ‘summarising’ and ‘gate keeping’ were exemplified in the operational aspects of the SmartGeelong – The Learning City through establishment of the various Steering Groups of initiatives such as Focus Ed, the Geelong Learning Festival, ‘Cafe.com’ and The Training Network. As each group was established or reconvened (as in the case of the annual Geelong Learning Festival) the terms of reference were discussed and agreed, all members were encouraged to contribute their ideas and the proceedings of all meetings and agreed actions were documented and distributed. Again, because there was no need for any one organisation to assume ownership of these initiatives and because they were all based on an action learning approach, it was easy to assume the roles of ‘clarifier’ and ‘summariser’ and check that everyone was clear about the purposes and the tasks, that all contributions by individuals were understood and that real consensus was reached (Henderson 1994:148).
My skills in the function of ‘mediating’ were developed by implementing the strategic elements of SmartGeelong - The Learning City. The balance of competing tensions in my employing organisation – between developing and defending the ‘neutral space’ and using the profile of SmartGeelong - The Learning City to enhance the reputation of GATE - was one example of this. Another was in the development of the relationship with the SmartGeelong Network (SGN) where the initial expectations of SGN and GATE’s understanding of the requirements of SmartGeelong - The Learning City were not aligned. Over four years, the relationship with SGN changed in some ways and remained the same in others but on balance it improved.

The function of ‘informing’ and benefiting others through improving my own work (Henderson 1994; McNiff 2002), was demonstrated in several ways. The particular contribution that SmartGeelong - The Learning City made to developing the ‘research base’ of practitioners and the community was acknowledged in the interviews of local community leaders for the Performance Measurement Framework Geelong Report (PMFIC Geelong Report 2003). ‘The Learning City is in a position to provide a research base for the development of a G21 regional lifelong learning plan’ (SG Interview with AM Ryan July 2003). ‘The Learning City project also value adds by maintaining currency of information. It is easy to get out of date very quickly and the information and suggestions that the Learning City provides have validity through its research base’ (SG Interview with the Mayor July 2003).

Initiatives such as The Training Network, Focus Ed and People 21 were directly focused on providing information so that people were better placed to develop their professional practice.
My role in participating in all of the Steering Groups included one where I was the informant about resources and advice, facts and trend information and experiences of other groups such as the other Learning Towns projects that Henderson and Thomas describe as the functions of ‘informing’ (Henderson 1994:148).

6.2 Occupying the neutral space as a project manager

Look after the relationship (Wong 1996:Section 3, p 3).

It seemed as though as a Project Manager I was also able to occupy the neutral space that SmartGeelong – The Learning City created so effectively. Initiatives such as ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ provided me with an opportunity to operate outside the more traditional oppositional stances that Clements describes as hampering empowerment of the ‘have nots’ (Clements 2001:9). It enabled me to develop non directive skills that at times overcame the assumption that ‘Working with …communities, is always political, and hence has policy implications’ (Ife 1997:166; James 2004). The action learning approach ensured that all voices were valid and helped me to manage any tensions that arose because I did not have a preferred position.

By consciously applying the technique of questioning in the operation of the Steering Groups, I was able to develop my skills as a non directive community worker and ensure that the functions that Henderson and Thomas describe were performed effectively. By questioning, I ensured that my interventions achieved the effective group thinking processes that Batten advocates (Henderson 1994:110). The Steering Groups were clear about their role and purpose and revisited them if they felt they needed to from time to time.
Planning sessions and consultations such as those carried out for G21 and the needs analyses for Focus Ed ensured that participants considered a range of possibilities and not just one. Evaluation sessions and feedback processes such as those conducted after the Geelong Learning Festival helped ‘to assess the progress that has been made and what remains to be done’ (Henderson 1994:110).

I became aware as the Project Manager that my skills and experience primarily as an adult educator rather than a community development worker brought a non-confrontational style that was suited to the development of partnerships. This meant that I had the patience to understand that the development of partnerships between organisations that had different imperatives and cultures that ‘required considerable goodwill and open communication’ (Henderson 1994:7). This supported my observation on the partnership I developed through the 1990s between Colac Adult and Community Education and the Gordon Institute of TAFE that ‘a partnership cannot be established and then expected to look after itself...any partnership must be nurtured and developed. Principally this is best done by high levels of communication’ (Wong 1996:Section3, p 3) and contrasts with the oppositional approach to change by protest and activism that can characterise community development (Brager 1973:142; Henderson 1981:14; Clements 2001:9; Fricker 2001:6).

Through the process of developing SmartGeelong - The Learning City and the research for the PhD I was able to recognise that I had, in fact, acquired skills despite the ‘unpredictable, often volatile nature’ of the work (Henderson 1981:331). It helped to see myself as ‘one meaning maker alongside others’ (Clements 2001:11).
I became more confident in using my intuition in combination with my skills in rebalancing relationships as I tested propositions such as the value of maintaining the neutrality of SmartGeelong - The Learning City and the importance of participating in initiatives such as ‘Communities in Action’ and G21 from their inception. The concept of ‘holism’ (Clements 2001:12) proved a useful one for me in providing me with the confidence to persist through the turbulence of the everyday practice, believing that the balance would happen in time (Covey 1998; Cope 2002; Costin 2002; Hart 2003).

The regular planning and consultations that underpinned my practice provided me with the mechanism to monitor and adjust so that there was never any activity that ‘failed’ but rather activity that changed its course to suit the circumstances and the participants, such as the format of the Focus Ed program and the Geelong Learning Festival. It provided me with the feedback and observations on effective approaches that could be tested again so that conclusions could be drawn about the impact of SmartGeelong – The Learning City in response to research question 2:

7. WHAT ARE THE VALUE ADDED OUTCOMES? HOW CAN THE DEPTH AND BREADTH OF PARTICIPATION BE ENTRANCED?

7.1 The directly attributable impact of the project and the outcomes

There is no doubt that the Learning Towns …Program is having an impact

(Sheed 2001:4).
The characteristics of a Learning City described above had sufficient impact to indicate that a new model of social change was emerging. By applying ongoing action learning, the positive social changes that occurred were able to be captured and documented. Through an increased awareness in the value of learning, SmartGeelong – The Learning City’s and the Victorian Learning Towns’ most important conceptual innovation, the neutral space, was initiated, observed, tested and implemented.

7.1.1 Increased awareness in the value of learning

It has resonance in the community (Best 2003).

Focus groups conducted for the Performance Measurement Framework showed increased awareness of the value of learning and the currency of research and practice in supporting a culture of lifelong learning to be a primary achievement of SmartGeelong – The Learning City.

‘The participation by (the Learning City Project Manager) in the Lifelong Learning Pillar has highlighted the phrase lifelong learning, and gives it practical effect because of the variety of participants on the Pillar, ie., from womb to tomb’ (SG PMFIC - Govt Dept Manager - July 2003).
A paradigm shift was evident in a range of forums such as G21 in the change from talking about education and training to talking about learning (Appendix J). This has happened in the last four years and has extended to well beyond the core community of support for SmartGeelong - The Learning City. By the end of 2001, ‘Learning Towns – Making the Difference’ had already noted that ‘people and organisations are talking about lifelong learning and learning for life confidently and comfortably’ (Wong Dec 2001).

Lifelong learning is the glue that holds our community together – it’s what makes it vibrant and confident (Abley 2004).

7.1.2 The neutral space

Transforming barriers to positives (Packer 2001:7).

The neutral space was repeatedly referred to as one of the most significant developments of the Learning Towns both here (Carolane 2003; McCullough 2003; Kosky Oct 2002; Wong Oct 2002a) and overseas (Franson 1998; Ringnalda 2000; Faris 2002; Wong April 2002). The Learning Towns were identified as ‘play(ing) a unique facilitation role that add(s) value to a range of learning providers and community stakeholders’(Cavaye 2002a:29).
This is not the same as a neutral broker. It is a space that is the whole community where organisations can safely come together to collaborate on joint community activity in a genuine partnership of equals. The equality of partners is critical for effective partnerships (Ohmae 1990:38; Davis 2002; Tett 2002). SmartGeelong – The Learning City transformed concept into practice by providing an impartial focal point for learning opportunities in the community. It appears to be a new concept – internet searches only produce references to physical spaces ‘where people can get together and share ideas…solve problems’ (Shalleck-Klein 2001) or in the context of war zones – but one that is acknowledged (in varying terminologies) by learning community developers as a primary achievement.

For example, feedback indicated that the collaboration that SmartGeelong – The Learning City facilitated between local organisations would not have happened without this provision of the opportunity for key community leaders to meet regularly and develop their relationship with each other. ‘SmartGeelong – The Learning City was able to cut across the networks and bring key players together’(SG Advisory Group May 2003a). The strategy of allocating the Learning Towns funding and a change agent function to the adult and community education sector enabled the commencement of social change at the initial structural level through shifting the control of resources and power to the community sector (Clements 2001:4; Fricker 2001:6) in order to develop ‘alternative structures and process, based on cooperation rather than conflict’ (Clements 2001:220).
SmartGeelong – The Learning City reported examples from its inception of previous attempts to involve others in partnership activity that had been unsuccessful. Focus Ed, ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ and ‘Cafe.com’ were powerful examples of the successful establishment of partnership projects that were actively and vigorously resisted when they were first suggested by individual organisations.

Feedback before they were initiated by SmartGeelong - The Learning City had indicated that these initiatives were seen as ‘empire building’ for particular enterprises rather than innovative approaches to improving participation rates in lifelong learning. The change to a more collaborative stance is an example of the second (ideational) level of social change, ‘where participants come to understand their interdependence and the value of mutuality, reciprocity and compassion’ (Fricker 2001:6). It reconceptualised the role of partners in strengthening participation in lifelong learning and resulted in the demise of previous structures that claimed particular territory, particularly in the demarcation of which education and training organisation would deliver specific programs and who had access to the circuits of power.

SmartGeelong – The Learning City proved to be an attractive framework for developing networking skills and new partnerships. It provided a safe space for people to discuss the operation and delivery of learning, including partners who had previously been regarded as minor players such as the ACE providers and neighbourhood houses – a ‘space for the development of oppositional interpretations of interest and needs, where the voices of those who are excluded from the dominant discourses can be listened to... unique in opening up sites for the celebration of difference’ (Fricker 2001:7).
Project partnerships such as Focus Ed and the Geelong Learning Festival and perhaps most importantly, G21, became well established and demonstrated a degree of sustainability that proved critical in ensuring the long term benefits of SmartGeelong - The Learning City were maintained and strengthened.

7.1.2.1 The effectiveness of the neutral space

Through the observations of SmartGeelong – The Learning City and those of the other Victorian Learning Towns and the international communities with whom relationships had been established, the neutral space seemed to derive its effectiveness from conceptually providing a forum in which Learning City participants could whole heartedly make a contribution to developing the strength and resilience of their own community. Some did this by supporting the empowerment of individuals so that their ‘voice’ was heard in community development. Others did it through influencing the contribution of their organisation to extending participation and access to the strategies and structures that determined community infrastructure and strategic direction.

Participation was inclusive and flexible so that people were purposefully involved. Networking was evident in that participants were often introduced to each other for the first time through SmartGeelong - The Learning City. As a result of those introductions, new collaborations developed that were shaped and implemented beyond the neutral space or SmartGeelong – The Learning City.
The neutral space was effective because it used learning as its key strategy for communication. By adopting the action learning approach repeatedly observed through this research as an effective strategy for objectifying outcomes and developing new approaches on the basis of project findings, participants operating in the neutral space could describe their experiences from their point of view and listen with an open mind to the experiences and conclusions of others without being defensive or protecting organisational territory.

In addition to the initiatives of SmartGeelong – The Learning City, G21 seemed to apply these elements as the Pillar Process developed and these key elements were certainly observed in the operation of the Lifelong Learning Pillar. The experiences of these and other projects in developing and exercising neutral space should be observed and documented as this concept evolves.

So Geelong’s development as a Learning City demonstrated value added outcomes that provided the platform from which to pose **research question 3:**

**8. WHAT ARE THE INDICATORS OF SUCCESS AND EFFECTIVENESS IN A LEARNING CITY?**

**8.1 To what extent can Geelong be regarded as a Learning City?**

By 2003, three years after Geelong was awarded Learning Towns funding, opinion varied about the degree to which Geelong developed as a Learning City. Cavaye’s ‘informed people’ – those people sufficiently involved with SmartGeelong – The Learning City to have an informed opinion (Fricker 2001; Cavaye 2003b), believed that it was.
Feedback from Cavaye to the Advisory Group included ‘Geelong is regarded as a leader in the development of a Learning City’ (SG Cavaye J at Advisory Group meeting May 2003).

Six of the eight G21 focus groups conducted in Geelong during May and June 2003 referred to Geelong being recognised as a Learning City (G21 2003; June 2003). The Mayor identified the strong community input and active contribution to Geelong’s social as well as economic development as a defining characteristic of a Learning City. ‘There is more open communication in Council and this encourages the community to ask questions. If people ask questions, they are indicating a desire to learn’ (SG Interview with the Mayor July 2003).

Others had a differing view. While there was general agreement that Geelong had extensive high quality formal educational provision, some practitioners observed that there were significant segments of the community that did not avail themselves of opportunities to develop their skills as learners and that access to learning and educational provision was not equitable (G21 July 2003; SG Interview with the Mayor July 2003).

Geelong was also not necessarily leveraging its high quality learning infrastructure. Its economic and educational leadership was seen by some as ‘breathtakingly conservative’, complacent and lagging well behind best practice (G21 The Training Network 16 June 2003). It was, in fact, demonstrating the characteristics of Landry’s ‘unconcerned city’(Landry 2000:267). Overseas examples of schools being transformed into Centres of Learning, with multiple age groups engaging in learning in the same environment, were regarded as possible in Geelong, but they required policy driven leadership and local government resources.
The potential for the SmartGeelong Network (SGN) to provide this leadership (and enhance its capacity to generate neutral space) was suggested at various forums and this was identified as an avenue for exploration in the Action Plan of the Lifelong Learning Pillar.

Nevertheless, interviews and focus groups conducted as part of the evaluation of SmartGeelong – The Learning City for the Performance Measurement Framework confirmed that the project itself had an impact on the thinking and concept development of key groups in the community. It was regarded as contributing to the regularly identified ‘new mindset’ (Landry 2000; SG Advisory Group May 2003a) and ‘heightened awareness of the importance of lifelong learning’ and for bringing a ‘strong research base and current thinking’ to the development of strategies such as G21 (SG Interview with the Mayor July 2003). ‘In an environment of a whole of government and whole of community approach, the …Learning Town (is) preparing people’s minds – people are networking and are much more collaborative’ (SG Interview with AM Ryan July 2003). So while there may be divergent views as to whether Geelong could be regarded as a Learning City at this stage, there was no dissent that the project had contributed to preparing the minds and improving the practice of practitioners. Social change had ‘taken off’ (Moyer 1987:17) as the ‘early majority’ accepted proven, better ways of doing what they already do (Robinson 2004:2).

The contribution to building a learning culture by experimenting with new approaches to engagement with groups that had been influenced by the activity of SmartGeelong – The Learning City was also acknowledged. Initiatives such as the Geelong Learning Festival were regarded as having the potential to underpin Geelong’s development as a Learning City.
The limitations of the project resources in achieving this were understood but the potential of the Geelong Learning Festival to influence and change the prevailing conservative view of education was regarded as significant. It was a demonstration that the recruitment of the ‘late majority’—those who were uncomfortable with change and therefore less willing to take risks but who do not want to be left behind—was underway (Robinson 2004:2).

8.2 The journey starts with the first step

Another way to consider Geelong’s development as a Learning City was to regard it as having started the journey. Bill Lucas said in his address at the Geelong Learning Festival 2001 that there is no end point in becoming a Learning City. The important step to take was the first one, not the last (SG Interview with AM Ryan July 2003; Lucas September 2001). There was no such thing as a Learning City that is completed (Lucas September 2001). Cr Graham Crapp made the same observation during the research for ‘Learning Towns – Making the Difference’ when Albury/Wodonga ‘decided that the declaration of a Learning City was the first step in the process of becoming one and that it is a step in a journey rather than a conclusion to it’ (Wong 2001). By considering the development of a Learning City as a journey, Geelong could be seen at this stage as having moved into the Learning Communities segment from the Networks segment - Figure 14. It may be that in fact Geelong moved backwards and forwards between these segments while it developed the skills to consolidate its new approach to evaluation and reflection on its progress.
Community leaders in Gothenburg demonstrated a similar approach. ‘As a Learning City, Gothenburg encourages and welcomes debate on many issues and acknowledges that many solutions need to be tried and tested as well as renewed and reinvented’ (PMFIC Geelong Report 2003:13). Landry’s observation about creative cities applies equally well to genuine learning cities – the city ‘that wishes to learn will be wise enough to understand that no evaluation process can be true or complete...It will learn continuously from its own evaluation...demanding more of itself each time it goes through the cycle’ (Landry 2000:246). By evaluating its progress as a Learning City, Geelong could be in fact demonstrating that it is one. The non linear, dynamic process was characteristic of social change and in fact assisted in understanding the discomfort that such change engenders.
Starting with its declaration as a Learning City in 2000, Geelong elevated the role of lifelong learning in building the capacity of the community. Through SmartGeelong – The Learning City and other advocates, the City Council developed G21 and created the Lifelong Learning Pillar. This provided the leadership that resulted in the structured community network required to develop ways to improve understanding of the importance of lifelong learning (Franson July 2000). The community moved from being well networked to starting to demonstrate the characteristics of a Learning Community that would ensure improved access and engagement in learning for all sections of the community.

9. SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

Community processes take time (Ife 2002:222).

Ife's work on sustainability was influential in determining the strategies and evaluation of the sustainability of SmartGeelong – The Learning City. In embedding plans for the sustainability of the initiative it was helpful to bear in mind his concept of a 'steady-state' solution (Ife 2002:75) that did not demand increasing levels of resources or whole scale structural change but that relied instead on partnerships and new ways of thinking and doing.

Sustainable community development takes time (Sheed 2001; Faris 2002). Projects such as SmartGeelong - The Learning City can stimulate and encourage community development but the development of 'autonomous, active and participatory communities...cannot be speeded up' (Ife 2002:221).
9.1 Community indicators of effectiveness contribute to sustainability

The various evaluations and reports on the Victorian Learning Towns identified that new community indicators of success were emerging that assisted in measuring the effectiveness of Learning Towns and Cities in improving the social and economic conditions of a community through increased participation in lifelong learning. SmartGeelong – The Learning City had these indicators operating effectively and they include:

9.1.1 The need for a strategic framework

The active participation of an Advisory Board and a strong Strategic Plan provided the critical leadership in developing and implementing Learning Town strategies (VLCN 2004; Franson July 2000). This is an aspect that can be easily overlooked or dismissed but the Victorian Learning Communities Network (VLCN) determined that Learning Towns needed to be able to operate with a high level of autonomy and flexibility to be effective and that control and direction must be vested within the Learning Town itself (Saleeba 2004). Where these elements were not well developed in the early stages of the Learning Towns, a need to do so was acknowledged and implemented as the projects matured (VLCN 2004; Wong Dec 2001).

As the impact of SmartGeelong – The Learning City emerged through the action research process, the importance of the strategic framework in sustaining the project through the long process of social change was reinforced. Without the guidance provided by the framework and the regular opportunities for evaluation and reflection that it provided, achievements would not have been recognised and strategies would not have been assessed and adjusted.
The Advisory Group of SmartGeelong – The Learning City remained remarkably unchanged over three years with just one replacement being effected. This group provided the semi permanent core that provided the local context and managed the ongoing evaluation (Landry 2000:241).

Its contribution to the engagement of business, widely recognised as difficult to achieve, was significant and effective. SmartGeelong – The Learning City ‘is practising a commitment to supporting lifelong learning in business and in disadvantaged communities. Many Learning Cities have trouble in engaging business but Geelong has done this better than most through the membership of the Advisory Group’ (SG Cavaye J at Advisory Group meeting May 2003).

Consequently, the ‘Advisory Group’ had developed functions well beyond that of merely providing advice. In becoming the means by which SmartGeelong – The Learning City demonstrated an emancipatory shift in power through consultation and influence, the Advisory Group could more properly be regarded as having executive and strategic functions. An effective Advisory Group ensured community ownership of the concept and the strategies. This effect would be worthy of further examination through case studies and comparison with other Learning Towns projects.
9.1.2 The Partnership Model - developing numerous and significant cross sectoral partnerships

...if the community worker can act as a catalyst in bringing groups into being or in bringing together groups that already exist, then the quality of life will be thus enhanced (Winwood 1977:64).

Effective partnership building is central to the success of learning communities (Kearns 2004b) and the relationships that were initiated and developed by SmartGeelong – The Learning City through effective application of the neutral space are possibly its most significant achievement to date. The Steering Groups of SmartGeelong – The Learning City provided tangible forums for partnership development. My experience in partnership development brought an approach to those Steering Groups that recognised that partnerships ‘are likely to be multifaceted and fluid’ (Wong 1996:Section 3, p 2), and that partners will have differing levels of involvement. It is easy to be less patient with your partner than with your own organisation (Ohmae 1990:115) and partners in the Steering Groups learned to celebrate the achievements rather than question the level of participation of others (SG Geelong Learning Festival Oct 2002; Oct 2003). The collaborative approach and the skills in partnership development and maintenance that were available were particularly effective to a degree that feedback has noted at many levels, such as research for the Performance Measurement Framework, for G21 and for the Melbourne OECD Conference.
The measurement of different types of partnership is an area that the Victorian Department of Education and Training and the Department for Victorian Communities are developing in the accountability requirements of their demonstration programs such as Learning Towns, the LLENs and the Community Building Projects. The Community Collaboration Charting developed through the Performance Measurement Framework is one tool that will continue to be trialed now that the Performance Measurement Framework report was accepted by the ACFE Board in May 2004 (Cavaye 2004).

### 9.1.3 Community Collaboration Charting

Projects initiated by SmartGeelong – The Learning City developed a measurable number of new partnerships that are well documented in minutes and reports. The projects built on the skill base of these partnerships to source new funding for initiatives that they would not have been able to access or implement through any one organisation. This local interpretation of government and other initiatives in order to add social value is a characteristic of partnerships that has been recognised internationally (Kellock 2004).

The Community Collaboration Charting conducted for the Performance Measurement Framework demonstrated measurable improvement in the number and strength of partnerships generated by SmartGeelong – The Learning City. The technique showed that there was an increase in community collaboration initiated by SmartGeelong – The Learning City from a score of 16 in 2002 - Figure 15 - to 25 in 2003 - Figure 16 - (PMFIC Geelong Report 2003). This technique was adapted from the Group Collaboration Charts developed for the Performance Measurement Framework (Cavaye 2003b). Cavaye commented that ‘obvious thought has gone into the collaboration charts’ in feedback on the Performance Measurement Framework Geelong Report (Cavaye Nov 2003).
There was subsequent interest in this technique from the Learning and Integration Unit of the Department of Education and Training and the charts from SmartGeelong – The Learning City were submitted to use as a model for piloting with some of the LLNs in 2004.
9.1.4 Appreciation of the value of lifelong learning

The G21 focus groups and the Performance Measurement Framework trial indicated that SmartGeelong – The Learning City had an influence in improving the appreciation of the value of lifelong learning:

There are new ways of thinking about education.

Lawrie Miller, Executive Director, Geelong Chamber of Commerce

(SG Advisory Group May 2003a).

We want to get everyone in Geelong learning.

TAFE Officer, Gordon Institute of TAFE

(SG Geelong Learning Festival July 2003).
There is a culture of cooperation and a willingness to work together

(G21 Principals 24 June 2003).

The Learning City has provided a framework for the development of a culture that values lifelong learning that community activity can build on and develop

(SG Interview with the Mayor July 2003).

Cavaye indicated that people regard learning as important in improving the community and for assisting the community to manage change, thereby confirming the proposition posed in the introduction to this project that lifelong learning can be used as a strategy to improve social inclusion and to developing community responses to issues they currently face.

In addition to strong skills in achieving partnerships, the other principle strength Cavaye identified with the Advisory Group was SmartGeelong - The Learning City’s skills in leveraging learning and community outcomes (SG Advisory Group May 2003a). ‘It helped learning providers add value to learning delivery and opportunities, such as developing innovative learning ‘products’ like the International Computer Driver’s Licence’. It not only enhanced awareness of learning but also ‘mediated access to learning opportunities that people sought as a result of enhanced awareness’ (Cavaye 2002a:30).

Cavaye and Kearns identified the role of the Learning City as a catalyst for developing a learning culture that ripples out into the community (Kearns 2000; Cavaye 2002a).

SmartGeelong - The Learning City demonstrated this not only through the initiatives it established but also by adding value to them.
The project accessed funds and contributions from partners that totalled $500 000 in the three years to July 2003 (PMFIC Geelong Report 2003). This excluded any costs for the time that people contributed. It also excluded the value of any ongoing employment that people entered as a result of Learning City activity such as the participants from ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’.

It was not possible to make strong claims about broader impacts after the three Action Research Cycles but SmartGeelong – The Learning City would potentially demonstrate those ‘impacts on employment, services and society (through the) flow on from groups more directly involved or influenced by the project’ (Cavaye 2002a:11). It would demonstrate change through the actions of learning providers, groups and individuals that the Performance Measurement Framework would continue to identify and document as it was applied on a cyclical basis.

9.1.5 New groups and stronger networks

The networked society is here

(Australian National Training Authority 2004:2).

The partnership model that underpinned SmartGeelong – The Learning City contributed to increased networking across and among community sectors. The Training Network and Focus Ed were examples of new groups that were established through the enabling, support and inclusion provided through the community development necessary for building community capacity.
The technique developed for Group Collaboration Charting was used to conduct an initial assessment of the strength of the relationships with these groups for the Performance Measurement Framework that could be used for measuring changes at annual intervals (Figures 17 and 18).

These groups demonstrated aspects of enabling – setting up a group and working intensively with it and then the more routine servicing that is more likely as the group develops (Packer 2001; Twelvetrees ND:79). These groups also demonstrated the added value of being formed in response to the requests of potential group members and the job of the project worker was to help people think through the practicalities required to achieve the goal of the participants.
The second annual assessment on community networks carried out in June 2004 indicated that the strength of network participation by SmartGeelong – The Learning City marginally increased but that some of the potential engagement with other networks identified in 2003 had not developed. This may have been because maintaining the current activity placed a sufficient demand on the available resources of the project. It may have been because the networks were not especially relevant. It may also have been because not enough attention had been paid to that aspect of the plans. Whatever the reason, the charting process provided information for the Advisory Group to examine and reflect on, rethink and learn from, in its planning processes for 2004 and beyond (Cavaye 2002a:16).
9.2 Emancipatory effect of networking

People before structures (Pearson 2002).

An alliance means sharing control (Wong 1996:Section 3, p 2).

G21 demonstrated the strategic value of developing resources and networks that already existed into a coalition that has the potential to influence and change the circumstances of the ‘marginalised and vulnerable sectors of society’ (Packer 2001:3) by opening up the circuits of power. ‘Good partnerships take effort and commitment from both sides. It is important to remember that the partnership was entered into because together the organisations would be stronger than if they were on their own’ (Wong 1996:Section 3, p 4). The networks that were developed through SmartGeelong – The Learning City were used to validate ideas, support initiatives and raise commitment (Blackmore 2002:13).

By understanding that the organisational goals and values of partners may well differ and allowing time for those to be explored, the partnerships established through SmartGeelong – The Learning City such as the Geelong Learning Festival Steering Group were an effective emancipatory action research strategy that built confidence and understanding among organisations that were also competitors. They created the neutral space that empowered participants to work effectively together on other initiatives such as ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’. This partnership behaviour was also able to be effectively used when participants in these networks became involved in other initiatives such as G21 and ‘Communities in Action’, creating the broader impacts that would generate social change (Blackmore 2002; Davey 2002; Ife 2002; Martin 2002; SG Communities in Action Oct 2003).
Networks strengthen communities and build positive social capital. ‘Strengthened communities are positive and resilient…(they can) bounce back from challenges…and respond to future challenges’ (Department for Victorian Communities 2002b).

(R)obust networks are critical to the development of strong communities (Department for Victorian Communities 2004b).

Networks, relationships, knowledge and integration will be key features of economic and social success in a less structured society in the 21st Century (Blackmore 2002; Australian National Training Authority 2004:2). The networks that were established and strengthened by SmartGeelong – The Learning City demonstrated that ‘people are the ends, not the means’ (Essenburg 2000) and provided an example of ‘new models of planning and service delivery’ that demonstrated a ‘modern approach to prevention’ that the Department of Victorian Communities sought (Department for Victorian Communities 2002b).

10. THE LEARNING COMMUNITY – A NEW MODEL OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Learning Communities have become an international movement and …Victoria has developed strong links with particularly the European experience (Cavaye 2002a:39).

The consistent recognition through the Performance Measurement Framework of the contribution of SmartGeelong – The Learning City to the research base of practitioners indicated that the project began to influence the structural aspects of system change Specht described as in danger of being neglected in the UK community work sector.
A new model of social change encompassing the distinctive elements of neutral space, the leadership of local government and the emancipatory effects of networking had emerged. In developing this model, SmartGeelong - The Learning City had particular success in demonstrating the building of new coalitions, designing new programs and in trialing new methods of evaluating outcomes that lead to changes in the way segments of the community work together and meeting these challenges as required by the ACFE Board (ACFEB 2001 - 02:11).

This PhD research itself was recognised in interviews conducted for the Performance Measurement Framework as a contribution to the ‘systemic problem analysis’ and development of the ‘skills for program evaluation and review’ (Specht 1975:24) that were necessary for structural change. It ‘has created awareness of what a Learning City is and of the importance of being a learning community…(It has) increased the knowledge base of people working in all community sectors’ (SG Interview with the Mayor 2003). ‘The presentation for the community on the overseas study tour was an important step in developing the understanding of a Learning City. I got excited for Geelong at that stage because I could start to understand the concept’(SG Interview with L Brazier July 2003). SmartGeelong – The Learning City developed as the potential foundation of the ‘positive and necessary force’ that would benefit the entire community, required of effective community work (Specht 1975:24).
As a community development intervention that provided ‘additional support...to promote and coordinate lifelong learning’ (ACFEB 2001 - 02:11), SmartGeelong - The Learning City demonstrated characteristics that were distinctive. If the traditional emphasis of community work has been to facilitate the role of relationships between people and organisations (Winwood 1977:64) then SmartGeelong - The Learning City facilitated this on the basis of the ‘educational model’ that Winwood described. The Performance Measurement Framework, G21 focus groups and interviews and the 2003 report on the Victorian Learning Towns, ‘Progress, Partners and Projects’ (Carolan 2003) cited SmartGeelong - The Learning City’s achievements in enhancing the information sharing and the learning potential (that are features of Winwood’s educational model) as particular strengths in the new networks and collaborations. There were also elements however of Winwood’s ‘mutual aid’ model that mobilised new resources through new relationships (Winwood 1977:64) through the leverage that Cavaye identified as an achievement of the Victorian Learning Towns (Cavaye 2002a). ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ also demonstrated the ‘cultural change’ model whereby Cjp participants and the initiatives they implemented such as the Walking School Bus and the performing arts program at Rosewall Primary School addressed exclusion by self directed community action.

The G21 focus groups’ repeated reference to ‘a new mindset’ or ‘a new attitude’ in Geelong also supported the impact of the implementation of interventions such as SmartGeelong - The Learning City in achieving the overt aim of social change models that Winwood and Friere described – to ‘change people’s attitudes above all else’(Winwood 1977:65) and therefore ‘as actors, (learners) transform the world with their work’ (Freire 1985:14). SmartGeelong - The Learning City engaged in the transactions with other systems that are a function of effective intervention (Henderson 1994:148; Kemmis 2000a).
These included local government, government departments and other groups in the community. These transactions encompassed the range described by Henderson and Thomas such as meetings, publicity, deputations, negotiating for funding and other resources and lobbying.

SmartGeelong – The Learning City also developed along the lines of the social change model described as the ‘Social Movements Tradition’ (Winwood 1977; American Studies 2002). This was acknowledged by the ACFE Board as an achievement of the Learning Towns, ‘now mentoring other communities aiming to achieve similar outcomes’ described by Sheed (Sheed 2001; ACFEB 2001 - 02:11).

SmartGeelong - The Learning City broke down traditional boundaries and developed a new model for changing social relationships that blended elements of a range of existing models. By taking the relevant components of previous models of intervention and inserting the new strategies developed through collaborative project practice, a refined and more robust model that was suited to the individual community was created.

10.1 The ‘ripple effect’

Beyond the impact of the specific initiatives of SmartGeelong – The Learning City, the extent of its involvement in other community initiatives was mapped and assessed in 2003 using the Group Collaboration Charting technique is shown in Figure 19. The ‘ripple effect’ model is the only one ‘really capable of handling both the conceptual and practical difficulties of mobilising for change.’
This social movements tradition emphasised not only the need to change 'the amounts of resources at the disposal of community groups but also the control of those resources' (Winwood 1977:66). In referring to the ripple effect, Kearns and Cavaye confirmed the influence of the Learning Towns in being the catalyst for change that was felt well beyond the initial activity, so much so that they may not even be able to be identified as the source of the eventual change (Kearns 2000; Cavaye 2002a).

The Learning City demonstrates the effect of unconscious influence. It underpins initiatives that would not have happened without the project. It is not in the nature of Learning Cities to claim the credit (Cavaye 2002a).
The second assessment of participation in community activities carried out by SmartGeelong – The Learning City in June 2004 indicated a score increase from 20 to 23, with additional partners (Figure 20). It indicated that the relationship with Cjp had disappeared and this was accounted for by the fact that the program was no longer being conducted by GATE. It also indicated that no Community Forums had been conducted in 2004 and this was an activity for the Advisory Group to reflect on in its planning.
10.2 Critical Success Factors

If the findings of this project against the anticipated outcomes were successful ones, they would provide information about the critical success factors for the development of Learning Cities and Towns. A preliminary description of these included:

1. Seamless educational pathways between all educational sectors.
2. High levels of access to good quality education, training and learning opportunities.
3. Community understanding and commitment to the value of lifelong learning.
4. Active collaborative relationships between key stakeholders involved in education, training and employment ensuring the provision of a wide range of learning opportunities, especially in the workplace.
5. Numerous and significant cross sectoral partnerships.
6. A broad range of cross sectoral educational outcomes for the entire community.
7. New resources to support improved access to lifelong learning opportunities, especially for increasing the use of information and communication technologies.

The critical success factors of the project were found to be strongly aligned with these predictions. This finding was supported by the themes that evolved in developing the G21 Lifelong Learning Pillar Plan.

A check was conducted to determine whether each of these was a critical success factor, by exploring the potential consequences if any of them were missing (Wong 1996) - Table 16:
Table 16. Critical Success Factors for a Learning City

If one of these is missing:

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<tr>
<td>1. Leadership and advocacy for systemic change. 2. Promoting Learning (Building on current strengths).</td>
<td>Seamless educational pathways between all educational sectors. High levels of access to good quality education, training and learning opportunities.</td>
<td>Community understanding and commitment to the value of lifelong learning.</td>
<td>Active collaborative relationships between key stakeholders in education, training and employment ensuring the provision of a wide range of learning opportunities, especially in the workplace.</td>
<td>A broad range of cross sectoral educational outcomes for the entire community.</td>
<td>People drop out of systems. People who lack confidence and skills are not motivated to continue their education because of the lack of recognition of educational attainment between providers and difficulty in navigating systems.</td>
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<td>1. Extending participation in learning. 2. Accessing Learning (Available and accessible information).</td>
<td>Seamless educational pathways between all educational sectors. High levels of access to good quality education, training and learning opportunities.</td>
<td>Community understanding and commitment to the value of lifelong learning.</td>
<td>Active collaborative relationships between key stakeholders in education, training and employment ensuring the provision of a wide range of learning opportunities, especially in the workplace.</td>
<td>New resources to support improved access to lifelong learning opportunities, especially for increasing the use of information and communication technologies.</td>
<td>No reduction in the numbers of non learners. This means that up to 30% of populations will not participate in or contribute to their community.</td>
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<td>1. The value of the neutral space in breaking down barriers.</td>
<td>Seamless educational pathways between all educational sectors. High levels of access to good quality education, training and learning opportunities.</td>
<td>Community understanding and commitment to the value of lifelong learning.</td>
<td>A broad range of cross sectoral educational outcomes for the entire community.</td>
<td>New resources to support improved access to lifelong learning opportunities, especially for increasing the use of information and communication technologies.</td>
<td>Leadership is lacking and effort is dispersed and less effective. People and organisations will keep on doing things the way they have always been done. Communities will display poor levels of creativity and poor levels of trust and understanding among stakeholders.</td>
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<td>1. Increased awareness of the value of learning.</td>
<td>Seamless educational pathways between all educational sectors. High levels of access to good quality education, training and learning opportunities.</td>
<td>Active collaborative relationships between key stakeholders in education, training and employment ensuring the provision of a wide range of learning opportunities, especially in the workplace.</td>
<td>A broad range of cross sectoral educational outcomes for the entire community.</td>
<td>New resources to support improved access to lifelong learning opportunities, especially for increasing the use of information and communication technologies.</td>
<td>The development of an understanding of the importance of lifelong learning in all community sectors, including business, will be hampered. Therefore resources to support wider engagement in lifelong learning will not be allocated.</td>
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<td>2. Linking Learning (Integration and networking).</td>
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<td>2. Valuing Learning (Developing community culture and attitude).</td>
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<td>1. Numerous and significant cross sectoral partnerships.</td>
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<td>2. Supporting Learning (Infrastructure development and access).</td>
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<th>Community understanding and commitment to the value of lifelong learning.</th>
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<td>Active collaborative relationships between key stakeholders in education, training and employment ensuring the provision of a wide range of learning opportunities, especially in the workplace.</td>
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<td>A broad range of cross sectoral educational outcomes for the entire community.</td>
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<td>New resources to support improved access to lifelong learning opportunities, especially for increasing the use of information and communication technologies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community initiatives to generate improved social inclusion will not be sustainable. The capacity for initiatives to demonstrate new approaches and engage new partners will be limited.</td>
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<td>When all the CSFs are operating effectively:</td>
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Figure 21

The Learning Community – a new model of social change

Fragmented community

Skilled neutral facilitation (ideally led by local government)

creates neutral space...

...so the emancipatory effect of networking emerges.

The Learning Community evolves - a dynamic, innovative community with increased capacity in which all critical success factors are operating effectively.
10.2.1 When all of the Critical Success Factors are operating successfully...

SmartGeelong – The Learning City provided the strategic framework that created a local model of social change incorporating the key features of being driven by local government, creating the neutral space in which to build networks that could emancipate participants and their constituents and develop a dynamic, innovative and responsive community (Figure 21).

This model demonstrated that it could include the excluded, break down barriers to collaboration and expand the thinking of individuals, groups and organisations. As a model that planned for sustainable change, it developed through the collective action of its leadership group that alerted, educated and mobilised the community over a reasonably long period of time, to challenge existing systems and ‘restore critical social values’ (Moyer 1987:3).

When all of the critical success factors are activated, the resultant dynamic, innovative community pays attention to people who are marginalised and capitalises on the creativity of its citizens to generate new approaches and attract resources to support its engagement activities. SmartGeelong – The Learning City demonstrated that its emancipatory initiatives could mobilise the community to challenge systems and become active in the decision making process. Café.com and ‘Jobs in the Neighbourhood’ were examples of creating an ‘empowered citizenry’ (Moyer 1987:3) and shifted the locus of control from institutions and systems to networks and groups (Moyer 1987; Landry 2000; Pearson 2002; Henderson 1994; Kemmis 2000a).
Other social change initiatives that occurred in Geelong at this time reinforced the effectiveness of this approach. ‘Communities in Action’ and G21 provided the neutral space in which to develop the required active collaborative relationships, led by high level local government representatives, that built on existing networks. Within G21, the Lifelong Learning Pillar challenged the original premises of the implementation group of G21 in consulting widely (including beyond the core interest group) and in demonstrating emancipation from existing structures by changing the focus (and the name) from Education and Training to Lifelong Learning.

The SmartGeelong Network (SGN) in a sense came full circle to become the leadership group that had the structure and representation to provide the neutral space, ensured that the critical success factors operated effectively. In itself, it had reviewed and amended its purpose on the basis of action, feedback and reflection. The recommendation of the Lifelong Learning Pillar for SGN to continue to lead the development of a community culture that valued lifelong learning and increased its access and participation demonstrated that positive social change had occurred.
Chapter 8

FINAL REFLECTION

1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LEARNING COMMUNITY MOVEMENT (ACTION)

We are now in a position to respond and we can do it fast (Blunden 2004).

Non integrated, disconnected responses won’t work (Sodoti 2003).

Learning communities seem to have a resilience and appeal that has ensured their continued development through the early years of the 21st Century despite erratic funding and inconsistent policy application. This may well be because they have become a ‘movement’ rather than an ‘initiative’ in the manner of a New Social Movement. Such a movement is characterised by a greater emphasis on group or collective identity, values and lifestyles rather than, or in addition to, developed ideologies. It also demonstrates a tendency to emerge more from middle than working class constituencies (American Studies 2002). The development of an international movement will ensure the survival of Learning Cities because they are being driven by the community and by people with vision who have capitalised on this as suggested by Maunders (Maunders 1980:226).

The Victorian Learning Towns demonstrated commitment to leading the way in developing Learning Communities. Victoria has more declared Learning Cities and Towns per capita than anywhere else in the world apart from Finland (Longworth 2003a).
The Victorian experience has been used to strengthen the concept and to develop partnerships nationally and internationally with presentations to conferences such as those of the Australian Learning Association 2003 (McCullough 2003) and the conference of the Queensland branch of the ALCN, ‘Participate 2004’ where ‘there was strong interest in what we are doing’ (Carolane 2004).

SmartGeelong – The Learning City (and the VLCN) established relationships with other Victorian, Australian and international communities that have continued. Exchange visits were sometimes facilitated between some of these communities and two way learning remains a feature of these relationships.

The VLCN remained informal but became well established and included members across Australia who participated in its online network through My Connected Community. A position paper developed in May 2004, ‘Learning Communities – Making a Difference’ advocated the achievements and effectiveness of the Learning Towns in empowering people in communities to ‘shape their futures by providing innovative ways of delivering opportunities for learning and skills acquisition’ (VLCN 2004).

In March 2004, Australia’s unemployment rate of 5.6% crept into ‘the good half of the OECD range’ although eleven of the other 29 countries have unemployment rates of under 5% (Colebatch 9 April 2004). At the same time, Victoria was the state that was the furthest advanced in its key indicators for young people – that is, engagement in education, training or employment. The longevity of this improvement requires the sustained backing of integrated, community based responses (Sodoti 2003).
Consequently, the prospect of a national policy on lifelong learning announced by the federal opposition in preparation for a federal election in 2004 may contribute to the effectiveness of social inclusion strategies in supporting economic improvement (Hughes 2004; Latham 2004; Ward 2004). Anticipation of a national policy was supported by the Senate Inquiry into Lifelong Learning (Stott Despoja Sept 2004) and newly released reports advocating the development of national strategies to better engage people (Clemans 2003; Hartley 2004; McGuire 2004; Vinson 2004; VLCN 2004).

The scope of the ALCN that was extended at the second Australian Learning Communities Conference held in Ballarat in September 2002, attracted an Australia wide, cross sectoral audience of 100 that included established, new and emerging learning communities. The third national conference was held in Newcastle in September 2004 with 170 attendees (Stott Despoja Sept 2004). Discussions are now being held to establish a three country international seminar series on Learning Communities that includes Australia, the UK and Canada (Wheeler 2002a).
2. OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE (PLANNING)

That was okay yesterday. How can we do it better tomorrow?

(G21 - ACFE Manager 16 June 2003).

As a participant in the VLCN, SmartGeelong – The Learning City developed local responses to local challenges through strong community partnerships. SmartGeelong - The Learning City demonstrated genuine commitment by a range of new partners and that evolved into a model of social change by implementing the new concept of neutral space. The challenge remains to sustain and develop that commitment to result in significant change through the extension of lifelong learning opportunities to individuals in the community.

Sustainability of SmartGeelong – The Learning City became more likely through G21 and the Lifelong Learning Pillar. G21 continued to support the development of a community culture that learns from its experiences, reflects on them and plans for improvement by practising these principles in its own implementation. It planned to devise strategies that include people who are marginalised and economically disadvantaged. It developed its own neutral space that fostered a collaborative approach to community development that recognises that ‘investment in learning underpins the development of functional communities’ (Cavaye 2002a:39). It provided the best opportunity for locally managed social change that focused on improving participation in lifelong learning. This was proving to be a more appropriate model than a bureaucratic one that demands more immediate results (Ife 2002:221).
3. PERSONAL REFLECTION...

Go in, make the change and pull out (LLEN Executive Officer 2003).

It with a sense of achievement that I observed the successful development of the concept and practice of learning communities in Australia and especially Victoria. As an action research project conducted over four years within the framework of a post graduate program, SmartGeelong – The Learning City taught me about the value of such an approach. The Action Research Cycles provided the structure and the method by which a community initiative can be implemented, adjusted and evaluated.

I observed in practice what I had held in theory – that it pays to be clear about the goals, to hold the line and ride through the turbulent times. If people are clear about the focus and have been included in the process, the achievement of positive and productive outcomes does not rest with one person such as the Project Manager, but belongs to the ‘others’, the ‘informed people’. Every outcome presented a new opportunity for learning.

It did not all have to be ‘successful’ in conventionally understood terms, but it did have to be observed and analysed. The ICDL was an example where the action learning approach objectified the progress of an initiative that struggled to achieve its intended outcomes. By documenting all stages of that initiative, adjusting its management and including all of the project stakeholders at all stages, the responsibility was shared, new approaches were tried and new insights emerged.
3.1 ... on the project

I left GATE in October 2003 to take up a new position in the Western suburbs of Melbourne. From the distance and perspective of a few months away from the project, my observation of both SmartGeelong – The Learning City and the VLCN provided new insights for me. The Training Network, the Geelong Learning Festival and Focus Ed continued to develop in 2004. The first Focus Ed Event for 2004, ‘Thinking about Thinking’ with Jason Clarke of ‘Minds at Work’(SG Focus Ed Event 104 March 2004) drew an audience of 180 so that appeared to still be an effective strategy for networking and professional development of the education community. A second Event on June 17 2004, ‘Move it and use’, with Associate Professor Annette Gough of Deakin University discussed the findings of the ‘Notebooks’ study into the impact of this initiative on the teaching and administrative work of teachers and principals (SG Focus Ed Event 204 June 2004). The third Event on 19 August featured a local teacher returning from the Victorian Schools Innovation Commission (SG Focus Ed Event 304 Aug 2004).

‘Cafe.com’ was used as a case study of community engagement through technology for a workshop in the ‘Communities in Control’ Conference held on 7-8 June 2004 (Denmead June 2004). The work of SmartGeelong – The Learning City also continued to be embedded in ‘Communities in Action’ employing two neighbourhood house coordinators for additional hours in a joint new community development role funded by the Department of Human Services Office of Housing(SG Newsletter March 2004). The 2004 Geelong Learning Festival was launched on 1 September (SG Newsletter June 2004).
The effect of the Group Collaboration Charting in identifying potential new partners resulted in new membership of the Advisory Group by June 2004 that included U3A, the Geelong Kindergarten Association and the Department of Human Services (SG Newsletter June 2004). The Advisory Group now had a practice of action research that had been applied and was providing data that could be interpreted and would stimulate thinking and relearning (Cavaye 2002a:16).

All of these developments extended the findings of this research and continued to build the learning community model of social change. Collaboration continued to be evident among the established ‘early majority’ and the neutral space that was the Learning City was attracting new members of the ‘late majority’ (Robinson 2004:2). The process appeared to be easy to apply in the absence of me as the project manager, it was replicable, able to be built on and produced observable results indicating that the critical success factors were in place and operating.

3.2 ...and the personal skill development

Despite the convention that change agents are external to a community or organisation, I think that there were strong elements of being a change agent as well as a community leader that I blended into my role as Project Manager of SmartGeelong – The Learning City. The two roles do not seem to have impeded my effectiveness in the community and the sustainability of the change could well be strengthened as new people take over and reshape the work that I started.
In facilitating, managing and supporting the debate ‘as people struggle to come to terms with new working cultures’ I was able to assist new partners to understand each other and engender change that displayed the passion required to make it permanent (Cope 2002:145).

In my new position I was pleased to be able to become involved in a region where the VLCN had influenced the development of learning communities where there had been no Learning Towns program funds provided. I am now a member of the Melton Community Learning Board that has just negotiated a joint agreement with Victoria University (VU) and the local ACE provider, Djerriwarrah Employment and Education Services to establish the Melton Learning Precinct that will operate from the Melton campus of VU. This precinct will become the hub for community learning and will facilitate the development of ‘learning outside the walls’ as well as be accessible for a range of learning opportunities in the facility itself (Shire of Melton 2002).

Through the work of VU I have also become reacquainted with the work of Peter Kearns. VU, in partnership with the Western Region Department of Education and Training and the Western Forum of Councils, is developing Learning and Innovation West, a regional community building strategy that was driven by ‘Growing Western Melbourne Together’ a paper prepared for this group by Kearns (Kearns 2003). As a member of the Creativity, Innovation and Enterprise Working Party of Learning and Innovation West, my experience with learning community development has been valued and acted on through the project plans for engaging business and community. ‘Cafe.com’ and the partnership between the Gothenburg Volvo factory and the local high school that I described in my report on the study tour have proved of particular interest at this stage (Holm 2001; White 2004a; Wong April 2002).
I was also delighted to be able once again to host David McNulty on his visit to address the third ALCN national conference, ‘Be Shaken – Learning for Change’, held in Newcastle, NSW in September 2004 (Australian Learning Communities Network Sept 2004). In addition, I was engaged to present a workshop on Skills, Capabilities and Cultures for Community Strengthening at the ‘Changing the way Government works’ conference arranged by the Department of Victorian Communities in October 2004 (Department for Victorian Communities Oct 2004).

Consequently, my professional learning continues to influence others (Kemmis 2001) and I have found new communities of enquirers with which to maintain and develop my skills, to further test my propositions and refine the new knowledge I have developed (McNiff 2002).

The interest and models being developed by communities such as those in Melbourne’s West, that have identified lifelong learning as a valuable strategy in strengthening those communities, is the most powerful indicator of the success of the Learning Towns projects. They have reinforced the observations made in this research and have contributed to demonstrating that community partnerships that value lifelong learning can effect social change and build communities that are viable, socially inclusive, democratically aware, adaptive and successful in a rapidly changing environment.

Our central purpose in lifelong learning must be to secure a socially cohesive and economically prosperous nation, recognising that these aspirations are mutually reinforcing in that personal fulfilment, employability and competitiveness are all part of the same process (Kearns 1999b:151).
APPENDIX A

SMART GEELONG
The Learning City

"Learn something new everyday"

ICDL Trial

Thank you for agreeing to assist us in trialing the International Computer Driver’s License (ICDL).

The implementation of the ICDL will introduce the Geelong Learning Guarantee, an initiative of ‘SmartGeelong – The Learning City’. An overview of this project is included for your information.

There are three providers of accredited ICDL software whose products we are testing. In order to assist us in making a decision about which product to choose, we are asking you to work through the CD as follows:

➢ All trial participants to test Module 3 (Word Processing)
➢ All trial participants to test one other module

An evaluation form is included with this package. We ask you to complete one for each product that you test.

I will need to collect all the CDs that I have distributed at the conclusion of the trial.

If you have any questions as you trial the software, please get in touch with me. I look forward to your feedback and will keep you informed about the progress of our project.

Shanti Wong

SmartGeelong – The Learning City
Project Manager

June 2001
SMARTGEELONG – THE LEARNING CITY
www.geelonglearningcity.vic.edu.au

Geelong Learning Guarantee

‘Learn your way to your future’

The Geelong Learning Guarantee is a major strategy of ‘SmartGeelong – The Learning City’ to promote ongoing learning in the workplace. The focus of the strategy for 2001 – 2002 is to increase the number of people in the Geelong workforce who have basic information technology skills.

Aim:

To ensure an ongoing commitment from the Geelong business community to providing basic information technology training so that:

➢ The Geelong community works together to achieve social inclusion and business excellence by providing a basic qualification that allows all people to be part of the Information Society.
➢ Geelong businesses lead the way in ensuring that the workforce has the skills to meet the economic and social demands of the 21st Century.
➢ Individuals are provided with opportunities that enrich their personal as well as their working lives.

The Geelong Learning Guarantee targets are:

➢ 1000 members of the Geelong workforce engaged in basic computer training by mid 2004 or assessed as having an appropriate qualification.
➢ All students exiting school at whatever year level with a recognised credential in basic computing by the end of 2004.

‘SmartGeelong – The Learning City’ is:

➢ Conducting benchmarking surveys to establish levels of current computer qualifications in schools, training providers and industry.
➢ Determining an appropriate qualification to set as the desired standard for basic computer training.

The Geelong Learning Guarantee will be launched by mid 2001 with the support of the project partners.
APPENDIX B

SMART GEELONG
The Learning City

"Learn something new everyday"

GEELONG LEARNING FESTIVAL 2002
SEPTEMBER 2 – 6
EVALUATION FORM

Thank you for participating in the Geelong Learning Festival this year.

We would appreciate your feedback on the Learning Festival so that we can implement improvements in 2003. Please take a minute to put down your thoughts so that we can begin the planning process for next year....

1. Was the Geelong Learning Festival beneficial for your organisation?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   Why?

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

2. Would you participate in the Festival next year? ☐ Yes ☐ No

3. What improvements can you suggest for the following?
   Venue(s)

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

   Publicity and Promotion

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
Organisation of the Festival

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

Other

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

4. Would you be interested in joining the Steering Committee for the planning of the 2003 Learning Festival? □ Yes □ No

Contact details

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

5. Any other comments or suggestions?

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form

Please return to:

Geelong Adult Training and Education (GATE) Inc.
PO Box 673
BELMONT VIC 3216

Fax: (03) 5241 3664
APPENDIX C

Professional Development Needs Analysis 2001/2

To the Professional Development Coordinator:

Focus Ed is an initiative of SmartGeelong – The Learning City and aims to provide relevant, affordable professional development for the education community. We are interested in your school's priorities for professional development so that we can plan our program to meet your needs. Please fill in the survey below and return to Focus Ed by 30 April 2001.

Name ........................................
School ............................................................
Phone .................................................................
Email .................................................................

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>tick</th>
<th>Student Welfare</th>
<th>tick</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy: Year P-4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Boys in schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy: Years 5-8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Counselling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy for pre school children</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching literacy in secondary schools</td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech and language development</td>
<td></td>
<td>management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment and reporting</td>
<td></td>
<td>Attendance/Retention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy: Year P-4</td>
<td></td>
<td>rates/Lateness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy: Years 5-8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please describe)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other (please describe)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching &amp; Learning</th>
<th>tick</th>
<th>Staff Welfare</th>
<th>tick</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle years</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stress management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed ability teaching styles</td>
<td></td>
<td>Relaxation and health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td>Planning for retirement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning styles</td>
<td></td>
<td>Financial management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other (please describe)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please describe)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Technologies</td>
<td>tick</td>
<td>SSOs, Integration Aides</td>
<td>tick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic skills with Microsoft Office</td>
<td></td>
<td>Autism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic skills with Edumail</td>
<td></td>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>Legal responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using LT in the classroom</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other (please describe)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please describe)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We are also interested in your own needs as a PD Coordinator:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Development for PD Coordinators</th>
<th>tick</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conducting Needs Analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRMS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network meetings for PD Coordinators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please describe)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

How would you like to get more information about Focus Ed and SmartGeelong – The Learning City?

SMART GEELONG
The Learning City

"Learn something new everyday"
APPENDIX D

NEW LEARNER SURVEY

1. **When did you last take part in training or learning?**
   
   During the last two years  
   More than two years ago  
   More than five years ago  
   Not since leaving school

2. **If you have been involved in learning in the last five years, what type of learning was it?**
   
   Art and Craft  
   Computer  
   Vocational / Work skills  
   Personal development  
   **Other:**

3. **If you have not been involved in any learning for more than five years, what has stopped you?**
   
   Cost  
   No Transport  
   No childcare  
   No interest

4. **What learning would be of interest to you?**
   
   Practical skills  
   Financial / budgeting skills  
   Computer  
   Language / Literacy skills  
   **Other:**
5. What is your age group?

16-19
20-29
30-39
40-49
50-59
60+

6. Gender

Male
Female

7. Country of birth ..................................................

8. Would you be prepared to be contacted by someone from SmartGeelong – The Learning City to follow up your responses to this survey?

If so, please put your contact details here:
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
....................
APPENDIX E

Information Technology Training Survey

'Smart Geelong – The Learning City' is researching the level of Information Technology training required in the Geelong workforce in order to plan future training requirements. We would appreciate your contribution to this planning by providing the information requested:

6. Do all students in your school have access to Information Technology training as part of their program? □ Yes □ No

7. If not, what percentage does have access? ___% 

8. Do all students in your school participate in Information Technology training at some stage in their school program? □ Yes □ No

If not:

3i. What percentage does participate? ___% 

3ii. What resources would you require to make Information Technology training available to all students? ____________________________

9. What types of Information Technology training are available at your school? □ VET □ Introduction to computers/Internet □ Other – please describe ____________________________

_____________________________
What percentage of your students exits school with a recognised credential in Information Technology? 

Any other comments? 

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.
APPENDIX F

focused
Enhancing skills in Education

2002 Program Evaluation

Name
(optional).

Course
name:

Training
provider:

Presenter:

Date:

Please rate the following statements by circling your response.

1. Were you satisfied that your expectations of the training were met?

Very Satisfied    Satisfied    Undecided    Not Satisfied

2. Were you satisfied that the training was relevant to your professional development needs?

Very Satisfied    Satisfied    Undecided    Not Satisfied

3. Were you satisfied with the expertise of the trainer?

Very Satisfied    Satisfied    Undecided    Not Satisfied

4. How did you find out about the course?

5. Do you have any suggestions to improve the program?

6. What, if any, aspects of the program would you change?

Thank you for your time to fill out this form. Your feedback is valuable to us.
APPENDIX G

The Training Network
Developing Human Resource Potential

"Learn something new everyday"

Questionnaire

May 2002

Conducted by telephone.

Participants: People who attended The Training Network in the past but have not come this year (3 meetings)

Script:

• From SmartGeelong – The Learning City calling about The Training Network...

• Our records show that you have come in the past but not to the meetings recently, is this the case?

• We are calling people like you to find out why have you not attended and what we could do to change so that you might attend in the future?

• Why haven’t you come?

• What would need to change? Or, specific question about reason given for above (e.g. what time would suit you better, what topics would you be interested in, what is the best way to advertise to you so that you would remember?)
APPENDIX H

‘TRAINING’ – Geelong Learning Festival
Wednesday 20 & 27 September
REGIONAL / METROPOLITAN ACTIVITY 2003

1. What type of organisation do you work for?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TAFE: Metro</th>
<th>TAFE: Regional</th>
<th>ACE: Metro</th>
<th>ACE: Regional</th>
<th>University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Government | Private provider | Industry | School | Other |

2. Which position do you hold?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Manager</th>
<th>Developer</th>
<th>Support Staff</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. What is your gender?

Female
Male

4. How would you describe your level of experience with flexible and online learning?

Beginner
Intermediate
Advanced

5. Did you attend the Flexible Learning Week Conference in 2000, 2001 or 2002?

2000
2001
2002

6. Did you attend this year’s Flexible Learning Week Conference on Tuesday 19th August, 2003 at the Carlton Crest Hotel?

Yes
No

7. Did you attend a Flexible Learning Week activity in 2000, 2001 or 2002?

2000
2001
2002
8. Please tick the best response to each statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree/Agree/Disagree/Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have gained new knowledge from this activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in this activity will have a positive effect on my work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will implement new initiatives based on learnings from this activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have increased my flexible learning options from participating in this activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have increased my interest in flexible learning from participating in this activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will use the web, TAFE VC and/or TAFE frontiers website more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am looking forward to viewing the Case Study CD ROM in the satchel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am looking forward to viewing the 'building flexAbility' CD ROM in the satchel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I really appreciate the satchels, inserts and promotional materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I relied heavily on the Flexible Learning Week website for information about the two weeks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I heard about this activity from a colleague</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX I

G21 – GEELONG REGION ALLIANCE 2003

OUR REGION – YOUR FUTURE

The Geelong Region Alliance leads and supports activities and projects that benefit the wellbeing of the communities of the Barwon Region

FOCUS GROUP PROGRAM

1. Welcome/Introductions/Setting the Context

2. Questions to be addressed

   • What do you want to be the features of the Education and Training in the Geelong Region in the future that will make the region an outstanding place to live and work?

   • What are the key strengths and main shortcomings of the Geelong Region with respect to the Education and Training Pillar?

   • What are the main opportunities that exist or will emerge to take advantage of these themes (strengths/shortcomings)?

   • What are the main threats that might hinder the opportunities coming to fruition?

3. Mapping current projects and relevant activities

   • What policies/program initiatives are currently in place (region wide and locally) to address these themes?

4. Identifying desired outcomes for the Education and Training Strategy within the Strategic Alliance Process

   • What do you see as the desired outcomes for the Education and Training Strategy for the region?

5. What if...?

   • Big ideas that could make a difference

6. Where to from here?

   • How do you want to stay connected to this process?
$35,000 boost for local adult education

GEELONG adult education programs got a $35,000 boost yesterday under the State Government’s Learning Towns initiative.

Geelong was one of nine locations in the State to receive funding under the initiative, which aims to link adult education and training providers with industry, local government and other organisations.

Post-Compulsory Education Minister Lynne Kosky announced the funding at a conference of adult educators in Geelong yesterday afternoon.

Ms Kosky said the money was part of a major State Government commitment to the adult education sector, and a further $75,000 would be allocated to each of the nine Learning Towns in 2001.

“We cannot grow Victoria unless we are committed to Victorian education,” Ms Kosky said.

She said adult education programs offered many benefits for those who took courses, such as boosting their employment prospects and self-esteem.

The executive officer of Geelong Adult Training and Education (GATE), Chris Dennead, said the money would be used to work with a Learning Towns coordinator.

Learning attitudes

CHANGING our attitude to learning is the key to building a stronger society, according to a visiting education specialist. Head of the United Kingdom’s Campaign for Learning, Bill Lucas, yesterday told a Geelong conference about the importance of integrating learning into every facet of life. He said people who viewed learning as an ongoing process benefited from the “viagra effect” — an added capacity to take in new information. “Most people do not have a positive image of learning,” Mr Lucas said. “It needs to become lifestyle, it needs to become unremarkable otherwise we will find ourselves on a campaign of self-destruction.” He said communities had to do away with negative images of dusty classrooms and put greater emphasis on informal experiences. “It is as much about attitude as it is about content,” he said. Mr Lucas visited Geelong as part of the city’s learning festival.

of Geelong as a Learning City/Exegesis
raise for ‘learning city’

IS CRAVEN

GLONG's move to become a learning city received solid support from an expert yesterday.

Mr Kearns, managing director of Smart Learning Services, said he was excited by learning developments in the city.

A few things are happening here and quite innovative," he said. "It's on learning network development, it's a matter of all the groups pulling together and going in the same direc-

Mr Kearns yesterday spoke to business and community representatives at a forum organised by Smart Geelong, The Learning City.

He also addressed training managers and apprentices.

"I think there were quite a few learning cities in Australia. 

In particular, there is a learning city in Britain, in such places as Glasgow, Edinburgh, Birmingham and Sheffield.

The OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has done an intensive study on learning cities over the past three years and has been looking in particular at a learning region," he said. "The study has shown that learning makes a difference to economic outcomes in a region.

It found that when learning capabilities are increased, the social capital of the area accumulates, having an impact on human capital and economic outcome.

Mr Kearns said learning cities enlarged the role of adults in community education, giving it a more strategic role. There was growing recognition around the world that lifelong learning was needed because of the pace of change.

"People need to keep learning throughout their lifetime to maintain their employability," he said.

GEELONG ADVERTISER, Friday, November 9, 2001 — 9

Educators get set to learn

NICOLE MAYNE

GEELONG educators are set to take their skill base to a new level with the launch of a new professional development program for the city.

Focus-ed 2002, an initiative of Smart Geelong — The Learning City, was unveiled yesterday at the Deakin Management Centre.

The latest education network to hit the region, it will provide people in the education field with an opportunity to update their personal and professional skills.

Focus-ed was developed by representatives from schools and training providers to fill gaps in current training programs.

It aims to target areas of knowledge that have been identified as lacking by teachers and support staff in Geelong and Colac.

By bringing educators from across the region under one umbrella, the founders hope to attract more high profile, top quality presenters to the region to promote learning for life.

Focus-ed 2002 programs will be delivered by the Department of Education, Employment and Training, Gordon TAFE, Deakin University, Geelong Adult Training and Education and the GSAT.

Learning comes under scrutiny

BEN CRANE

GEELONG Learning City project manager Shanti Wong has taken up a scholarship to study the learning town movement in Britain and northern Europe.

The $14,420 TAFE scholarship will enable Geelong and other cities in Victoria to capitalise on the lessons learned in setting up learning towns overseas, according to Ms Wong.

The learning city movement started in the UK and northern Europe and has been in place for a number of years. There are now 48 learning cities in the UK network.

Geelong's Learning City concept started last year with $75,000 funding from the State Government. Nine learning cities and towns are in the Victorian network.

The Geelong Learning City project is separate to the State Government's Local Learning and Employment Network, which focuses on 15 to 24-year-olds.

The focus is similar but with a different age group, according to Ms Wong.

The Learning City aimed to increase people's engagement in learning by the whole population, not just that specific age group, Ms Wong said before going overseas.

It was widely accepted that about 30 per cent of any given population was not actively involved in learning, she said.

"That means they don't read newspapers, they don't watch news on TV, they certainly don't visit museums, libraries and community centres," she said.

"They are not making informed decisions about elections, may not be accessing benefits available to them and are often not employed — that social exclusion has a huge economic implication as well."

Ms Wong said the focus of Geelong Learning City was on building partnerships between business and industry, education, local government and the community.

"Together we can achieve things that we can't achieve on our own," she said.
Learning round the world

Geelong is right up there with other learning cities such as Rotterdam, Gothenburg, Glasgow, Blackburn and Norwich, as Shanti Wong discovered on a recent study tour.

The learning city concept is alive and well and thriving around the world. While Geelong still has a long way to go in the range of activities available, the city has the commitment, will and expertise to follow the path of international learning cities, already some four or five years ahead of us.

The learning city concept has achieved widespread acceptance and understanding of the concept of lifelong learning and its value to individuals, communities and countries.

All of the cities had particularly difficult social and economic conditions to tackle in the first instance and the work is only just starting to reap results.

A common theme was 'initiative overload' - a problem Geelong would love to have! The sheer number of initiatives available and the resultant accountabilities was causing some difficulties. One strategy to cope with the overload was to act as a coordinating body for the initiatives underway, research the initiatives being undertaken, set up networks to ensure that there was no unnecessary duplication and to share experience.

New areas of emphasis included alternative provision within the school system of vocational programs as well as the more traditional offerings. Basic skills for adults was reinstated as a priority after years of neglect. By contrast, Vocational Education Training in schools and Adult Basic Education was well developed and supported in Victoria in particular and SmartGeelong - The Learning City is working closely with the SmartGeelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN) to implement alternative educational programs for young people.

Significant funds were available for the provision of ICT infrastructure. All cities had many computer and internet access facilities and some had large banks of laptops for mobile provision of learning programs. These facilities were largely available free of charge, encouraging casual access.

There was evidence that significant barriers to learning could be relatively easily overcome with appropriate funding support. A widely used effective strategy was the development of Learning Champions, committed participants in communities, businesses and projects, who promoted and encouraged their cohorts to become lifelong learners.

A link emerged between Healthy Cities and Learning Cities and some research had been conducted on the improvement in community health observed when people become active learners.

The Learning Cities seemed to be thriving and successful contributors to the regeneration of particularly disadvantaged communities. They were extraordinarily successful in attracting major funds for extensive projects. They were frequently used for piloting initiatives and conducting research. The concept of a Learning City was no longer fragile or vulnerable, displaying the characteristics of significant partnerships, widening participation and developing learning pathways that distinguish them from other cities.

Shanti Wong, manager of SmartGeelong - The Learning City was the recipient of an Employment Training Tertiary Education travelling scholarship.

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