Community – the heart of local government;
a case study of the Glenelg Shire Council

Adele Kenneally
Diploma of Librarianship
Postgraduate Diploma of Business (Management)
Master of Education (Research)

An exegesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctorate of Philosophy in Management (Research)

School of Management
College of Business
RMIT University
Melbourne

30 June 2011
DECLARATION

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

Name: Adele Kenneally

Signature: [Signature]

Date: 29 June 2011
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Glenelg Shire Council for allowing me and supporting me to undertake this research project. In particular the Councillors and staff members who generously gave of their time to be interviewed (sometimes twice), and past and present Chief Executive Officers; Phil Shanahan, Stuart Burdack and Sharon Kelsey. I would also like to thank the Senior Management Team, especially Syd Deam whose quiet words of encouragement often made a big difference. Thanks also to the staff of the Community Development Department. Their passion for their community and ongoing desire to make a difference is inspirational. I would particularly like to thank Sandra Robertson for her assistance in formatting and printing the final documents.

Thanks also to RMIT Hamilton for hosting and organising the Local Government Forum in May 2010, and for assisting me with the mail out and receipt of the community surveys.

Friends and colleagues, Dr. Kaye Scholfield, Dr. Cathy Wagg and fellow PhD student Mary Johnson have also provided advice and support, urging me onwards in a positive and caring manner.

I have also benefitted from the infinite wisdom, support (both personal and professional), assistance and advice from my supervisors, Dr. David Hodges and Dr. Bill Vistarini. Thank you for your patience, unstinting belief in my ability to undertake and complete this project, and gentle persistence in pushing me to delve deeper to find meaning and further insights. Thanks for travelling both to and from Warrnambool to accommodate my need for face to face meetings, and for your care and understanding through some of the tough times.

Thanks also to Robert Bain for finding the time to do the final proofreading and editing. My appreciation for undertaking this work with little notice.

Larry and Di Storer also assisted me with the formatting of the final documents for the final submission in electronic format for archiving. Aside from all the jokes, I truly appreciated their assistance to enable me to meet some tight time frames.

And last but not least, thanks to my partner Gerry Ruffa. Thanks for making the journey with me, for putting your life on hold along with mine for the last four years. Thanks for helping with the data input, proofreading (many times); the countless cups of tea, hours of listening, encouragement, and unflagging confidence in my capacity to do the work required. Thanks for building my wonderful new office in our new house complete with bookshelves, bench space and cupboards. I promise to keep it much tidier and more organised in the future! Thanks also for nagging (necessary to keeping me on task at times) and enabling me to find the space and time to complete this work. I know you didn't want to be acknowledged, but thank you anyway.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figures and Tables</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrations</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronyms</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1 Introduction Part One - Research Framework</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction Part Two - Setting the Scene - Glenelg Shire Council</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2 The Research Environment</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1 - Local government</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 2 - Organisational and cultural change</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 3 - Gender and leadership in local government</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 4 - Disadvantage</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 Research Design</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methods</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4 Making Sense of the Experience and the Data</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strand A - Doing the Research</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strand B - A Kaleidoscope of Disadvantage</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strand C - Winning the Tug Of War</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strand D - Down and Dirty in the Trenches</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strand E - The low-down on leading ladies</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5 Key Themes - Significant Landscapes</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertaking Local Government in a 3D Environment</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government - Where are we heading and how do we engage our communities?</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government Responsiveness - how can we do it better?</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading in Local Government - Dealing with unique and complex situations of uncertainty</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6 Conclusion</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

#### Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure No. 1</td>
<td>Map of Victoria indicating Glenelg Shire area</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure No. 2</td>
<td>Map indicating settlements and towns of Glenelg Shire</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure No. 3</td>
<td>Glenelg Shire Council Organisational Chart 2008</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure No. 4</td>
<td>Community Satisfaction Survey Results 2006-2010 in the area of community engagement compared with the large rural shires group</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table No. 1</td>
<td>Glenelg Shire Council employees by occupation 2007</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table No. 2</td>
<td>Community Satisfaction Survey: Glenelg Council Performance over 7 years</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table No. 3</td>
<td>Staff Interviewee Profile</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table No. 4</td>
<td>Councillor Interviewee Profile</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table No. 5</td>
<td>Data Collection timeline</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Notes on text:

- Except where otherwise referenced, notes in bold italics are from the research data or journal
- Extracts from transcripts of interviews or the research journal are in bold Calibri font
- Postscripts are in shaded text boxes
- In Chapters 4-5, quotes from the community are in blue text, quotes from councillors are in green text and quotes from staff are in orange text
## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Illustration</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Industrial Port of Portland in background with fishing wharf in foreground</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Agricultural grazing land surrounded by timber plantations</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Glenelg Shire Council maintains 2,500 kilometres of local roads</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>North and South public housing areas in Portland are areas of significant disadvantage</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Parts of Portland are rated in the lowest decile of the SEIFA Index</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sign at Merino, a small town in the Glenelg Shire with approximately 400 residents</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Portland Neighbourhood House located in South Portland</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Council offices in Casterton</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Council offices in Portland</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Glenelg Shire Council Community Development Department Staff Structure</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Community Survey</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Project Information Statement Staff Interview Questions Councillor Interview Questions</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Community Interviews Data &amp; Results</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Interviews - Staff, Councillors &amp; Consultants Data &amp; Results</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACOSS</td>
<td>Australian Council of Social Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALGA</td>
<td>Australian Local Government Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALGWA</td>
<td>Australian Local Government Women's Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCT</td>
<td>Compulsory Competitive Tendering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DHS</td>
<td>Department of Human Services (Vic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPCD</td>
<td>Department of Planning and Community Development (Vic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVC</td>
<td>Department for Victorian Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOWA</td>
<td>Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOLG</td>
<td>Future of Local Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSC</td>
<td>Glenelg Shire Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HACC</td>
<td>Home and Community Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LADP</td>
<td>Leadership and Development Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local Government Association (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAV</td>
<td>Municipal Association of Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCVO</td>
<td>National Council for Voluntary Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODPM</td>
<td>Office of Deputy Prime Minister (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEIFA</td>
<td>Socio Economic Indexes for Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMT</td>
<td>Senior Management Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAG</td>
<td>Victorian Auditor General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEC</td>
<td>Victorian Electoral Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VLGA</td>
<td>Victorian Local Governance Association</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COMMUNITY - THE HEART OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT;
A CASE STUDY OF THE GLENELG SHIRE COUNCIL
ABSTRACT

The Glenelg Shire is a large rural shire located in remote far Southwest Victoria, and although relatively financially sustainable, is one of the most disadvantaged shires in Victoria. Council also performs poorly in the annual customer satisfaction survey undertaken by the State Government. As a senior manager of community services with Council, the focus of this research project was to improve life for the more vulnerable disadvantaged members of the Glenelg Shire, to develop the morale, confidence, and skills of the workforce, improve Council’s relationship with the residents and citizens of the Glenelg Shire and build my own professional practice.

The last 15 years have been fairly tumultuous for local government in Victoria. Subsequent interventi

An insider action research approach was adopted for this research project. A feature of this approach is that the researcher is an ‘insider’ or a complete member of the organisation and can therefore make a significant contribution to the development of knowledge about organisations.

This research found that local government, especially in remote and disadvantaged areas is the face of all government in the eyes of the residents. State and Federal Governments have high expectations and compliance regimes, but local government has limited capacity and resources to effectively meet these legitimate demands and also respond to the demands of the local residents and citizens. The lack of financial resources is exacerbated by limited human resource capacity, especially in the Glenelg Shire, the 5th worst local government area in the state in terms of education and occupation.
Managing the tensions and balancing the often competing demands is difficult for any leader, let alone a senior female manager working in a conservative control and command style culture.

There is therefore a need to reconceptualise local government at both the macro level and the micro level. The role of local government needs to be clarified and officially recognised by both Federal and State Governments, with the local government taking the lead in the discussion. At the micro level, there is a need for more contemporary models of leadership – essential for a more skilled and qualified workforce.

Insider action research is challenging. Managing the dual roles of researcher and practitioner, thinking in the various realms and dealing with the ethical issues is difficult, but the personal development, increased confidence and improved personal practice can be rewarding.
CHAPTER 1
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This project has been undertaken in the ‘research by project framework’, and is presented as an exegesis or exposition. It focuses on life within a local government organisation, the relationship between the organisation and the community, my experience as a senior female manager in this environment and my passion for the more vulnerable members of the community.

The Glenelg Shire Council is a large rural local government authority located in the far southwest of Victoria. Prior to undertaking this project I had been a senior manager with the Council for two years; the project was undertaken to improve my professional practice and gain a better understanding of local government. I had begun to feel frustrated by poor practices, misunderstandings, and lack of communication between staff, Councillors, and the community. I believed (somewhat ambitiously and naively) that through this project, the relationship between the Council and the citizens could be improved along with many work practices and that this could have a positive effect on the quality of life of the residents.

The first part of Chapter 1 outlines the reasons for undertaking the research, and the reasons for the selection of the specific framework for the project. It also describes the structure of the exegesis and provides a synopsis of the forthcoming chapters. The aim of the second part of this chapter is to set the scene and provide a situational analysis of the organisation at the outset of the project in 2007, including some of the challenges, dynamics and demands. I have used Insider Action Research methodology with an ethnographic dimension and the project is undertaken within the ‘research by project’ framework. The research design or methodology is discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.
INTRODUCTION PART ONE – RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Why did I embark on this project?

I commenced in the role of Citizen Services Manager with the Glenelg Council at the end of 2005. Previous to this role, I had worked at the periphery of local government for ten years as the Chief Executive Officer of a regional library corporation, so I was relatively new to the inner machinations of the world of local government.

Although the Glenelg Council did not enjoy a good reputation in 2005-06, largely due to some poor planning decisions resulting in an uncomplimentary report by the Auditor General (Victoria. Auditor General, 2005) (see page 26), I believed that things could only improve and that it would be interesting and exciting to be part of that process.

In my first twelve months in this role I became aware that things were worse than I had originally thought. Council was viewed in a poor light by the community; there appeared to be little trust or respect for Council as an organisation and as a consequence the staff shared a siege mentality. There was a shared feeling of helplessness, victimisation, and defensiveness due to the perception of hostility towards Council by the media and the community. Poor customer service practices and limited community engagement or consultation and poor communication between departments contributed to the community perceptions. There was a lack of support for other areas and considerable blame shifting and witch hunts when things did go wrong. Overall, there appeared to be a large degree of service based departmentalisation and lack of synergy with a narrow focus on individual jobs. A consultant at that time observed that ‘the tail was wagging the dog’ with the emphasis on bureaucratic processes often at the expense of good service. In some areas there was poor performance by some employees which was not being acknowledged or dealt with, leading to simmering resentment and grievances held by other employees. Councillors didn’t seem to have much trust in the Senior Management Team, and the organisation seemed inflexible, overly bureaucratic with few participative staff practices.
I spent much of my time dealing with things that had gone wrong, being reactive and putting out spot fires. This was a difficult job, and I often felt frustrated and annoyed. As I lurched from crisis to crisis, I discovered that I had a lot to learn about local government and that the role of a senior manager in this environment was ambiguous and not really all that clear.

I was also learning more about the citizens and residents, and discovered that there were some serious issues that didn’t appear to be even acknowledged let alone addressed by local or state governments. The Glenelg Shire has serious health issues and is a significantly disadvantaged community with low levels of engagement with education and training. The fact that this seemed to be swept under the carpet piqued my curiosity and interest. I found that I felt very strongly about these issues. I found a mission.

Although often despondent and frustrated, I was sometimes amazed at the passion exhibited by staff for the services that they were providing for the community. Many people shared my own views of the organisation and also wanted to see improvement.

In early 2007, I began to explore the idea of undertaking a PhD. I had previously studied a Masters ‘by project’ and considered this approach for a PhD. Although somewhat naive, there were two things that I wanted to see happen:

1. Improvement in the way the Glenelg Council (as an organisation) was perceived and viewed by the residents and citizens of the shire
2. Mobilisation of the residents, citizens, organisations and agencies of all tiers of government to address the significant health and disadvantage issues of the shire

What could I do as a senior manager? How could I exert any influence to see these things happen?

I commenced working on a research proposal in 2007 and presented the proposal as part of the first review seminar in November 2007. Through this process, I developed the following research objectives for this research project:
i. To develop my skills as a manager and leader in the local government context
ii. To improve the morale, confidence and skills of key Glenelg Council employees
iii. To improve the Council’s relationship with the residents of the Glenelg Shire
iv. To contribute to a change in Council’s priorities in order to focus its attention on the health, education and other aspects of disadvantage confronting its residents
v. To gain an understanding of organisational cultural change and learning

As is the case with much action research, it didn’t exactly go to plan and as the research unfolded these objectives became more focused and relevant to my practice and the workplace. How and why they changed is described in greater detail in chapters four and six; however, suffice to indicate at this point the revised objectives emerged from the research as:

i. To raise my self confidence, skills and credibility as a leader in local government
ii. To improve the responsiveness and work practices of the Community Development Department (formerly the Citizens Services Department)
iii. To focus attention on and raise the profile of disadvantaged residents in the Glenelg Shire
iv. To improve the way that the Community Development Department engages, communicates and works with the community

**Why did I choose the Research by Project Framework?**

According to Peter Kell, Research by Project is a form of post graduate research that enables research students to explore issues and other challenges in their work places and communities (RMIT, 2002, p.2).

The research by project framework provided a structure for reflection on practice and for the theorisation and articulation of the processes of learning and discovery. These were to be important elements of my research as they enabled me to be intuitive, critically aware, and flexible. I also believed that this approach would provide more intellectual stimulation as there was more potential for self development and personal growth than a traditional research PhD.
As mentioned earlier, in the lead up to this project, a range of organisational difficulties and challenges had been becoming increasingly apparent. I was frustrated and also excited as I thought that the situation would provide me with the opportunity to research my practice as a manager and work with the organisation to improve practices and introduce some positive change. The challenges and difficulties are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

In 2007, at the outset of this research, I also believed that the outcomes of my research were a close fit with the stated outcomes expected of a higher degree undertaken and presented as a project:

a. A more knowledgeable and skilled practitioner

b. A contribution to professional and scholarly knowledge

c. Some body of work or change in practice, normally in the form of / represented by a product or artefact of some kind. (RMIT, 2009, p. 38)

By the end of the research journey, the above outcomes were achieved, albeit in a different manner from my original intentions. This is explored in further detail in Chapter 4.

**Project components and structures**

There are two components of a Research Degree by Project. One component is the completion of a project, of which there is an 'Appropriate Durable Record' of what was produced (RMIT, 2009, p.40). The durable record of this project comprises three parts: the bureaucratic documentation of the journey as captured in the reports, emails, briefing papers, and meeting notes relating to the work; the frameworks and toolkits developed as a consequence of this project to assist others undertaking similar work; and some of the outcomes of the work documented in the Plans and Strategies. These components are exhibited in the Portfolio of items that accompanies this exegesis.

The second part is this written document or exegesis which supports the project work submitted (RMIT, 2009, p.40). The structure of this exegesis is as follows:
Chapter 1  Introduction – planning the journey and identifying the destination
This first chapter is divided into 2 sections: The first part outlines the framework and the reasons for the selection of this research and a summary of the chapters that make up the exegesis. It outlines my frustrations and my reasons for undertaking the research. The second part of the chapter sets the scene for the research, describing the organisation and the internal environment.

This chapter sets the scene and provides the context for the research.

Chapter 2  The Research Environment – reviewing the existing maps
This chapter includes a contextual analysis of local government, and reviews the range of literature relevant to the themes of this research as identified in the early stages of the project. These include: the role, purpose, reform and future of local government; organisational and cultural change in the public sector; gender and leadership in local government; and governance in disadvantaged communities. Further literature reviews were also undertaken as the project unfolded and are also included in other chapters.

Chapter 3  Research Design – preparing the appropriate maps
Chapter 3 outlines the research design (Insider Action Research) used in this project, and describes and explains the methodology and techniques used. Some of the challenges of Insider Action Research are also discussed, including the ethical and political challenges and the difficulties of managing the dual roles of practitioner and researcher. Explanations of the measures undertaken to address some of the ethical questions and to ensure that the research was robust are also outlined and the data analysis techniques are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4  Making sense of the experience and the data
This chapter is a contemporaneous account of the research. Written as a chronological narrative, it includes all the pitfalls, brick walls and blind alleys, assumptions and reflections on the process as it unfolded. Some events have been privileged over others as this research has been undertaken in the untidy world of practice. As with most Insider Action Research Projects, there are many activities being undertaken at the one time. I have unravelled this messiness and organised
this chapter into five individual strands and narrated them separately. The narrative commences in March 2008 and concludes in May 2010.

Chapter 5 Key Themes – significant landscapes
As with all Insider Action Research projects, the synthesis and the integration take place in the writing of the narrative. This chapter is the sense making part of the exegesis, integrating my interpretations and linking them back to the research objectives. It is also the chapter where my findings are extrapolated to a wider context and where I give voice to the other research participants. As part of the sense making, I also found that I needed to refer to the literature again to assist my learning. Some of these references are also discussed in this chapter.

Through the sense making process, four key themes emerged. Although these themes are interrelated, and strongly linked, this chapter has been organised into these four areas:

1. Undertaking local government in a 3D environment
2. Local government – where are we heading and how do we engage our communities?
3. Local government responsiveness – how can we do it better?
4. Leading in local government – dealing with / managing unique and complex situations of uncertainty

Chapter 6 Conclusion

As is the case with most action research, the original objectives become clearer and more focused as the research unfolds. This chapter discusses this process, outlining the final objectives and how they were achieved. It provides some important reflections at the end of the journey with advice for other would-be Insider Action Researchers and their supervisors.

This chapter also includes recommendations for additional research, a discussion of the future role of local government, leaders and senior managers. It concludes with a postscript describing the distribution of the knowledge gained from this project.
The process of Insider Action Research is complex and unpredictable with many contradictions, tensions, and dilemmas. In a metaphoric sense, it is an organic and dynamic journey. The action research journey can be likened to Alice’s journey in ‘Alice in Wonderland (Carroll, 1865). It is often a coming of age story and a story of personal growth in a land where frequently there doesn’t appear to be much sense or logic.
INTRODUCTION PART TWO: SETTING THE SCENE – GLENELG SHIRE COUNCIL

This section sets the scene for the project. It also describes the internal environment and some of the external pressures on the organisation in mid 2007 at the outset of the research project.

The Organisation (Who are we?)

The Glenelg Shire Council was established by the Victorian Government in accordance with the Local Government Act 1989, on 23 September 1994. Three former councils were amalgamated, the City of Portland and the Shires of Glenelg and Heywood, to form the new Glenelg Shire (Glenelg Shire Council, 2008). Although this occurred in 1994, many long term staff members still referred to life before amalgamation, and they believed that things were much better back then. In 2007, there were still three distinct cultures, particularly among the outdoor workers at Heywood, Casterton and Portland and although the majority of the staff worked in Portland, they were viewed with suspicion and cynicism by workers in these other centres.

Where are we?
The Glenelg Shire, located in the southwest corner of Victoria is one of Victoria’s largest geographical local government areas.

![Map of Victoria indicating Glenelg Shire area](image)

The Shire covers a land area of approximately 6,212 sq. kilometres and is named after the Glenelg River which flows from the north to the south of the Shire (Glenelg Shire Council Annual Report, 2006-2007, p. 3). The estimated population is 19,759
(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006), with over half of the population residing in the town of Portland in the south of the shire, and the rest of the population in the smaller towns of Heywood and Casterton and other rural areas.

Portland is 4.5 hours by road from Melbourne and 6 hours from Adelaide. The Glenelg Shire is one of the more remote and geographically isolated Councils in Victoria, with a population density of approximately 3.2 people per square kilometre, (compared with a density of 23.9 for Victoria). Travelling time of 1.5 hours between Portland and Casterton in the north of the shire presents difficulties in managing staff and working together as a unified community.

The distance from capital cities makes it difficult to attract and retain skilled staff, however locals consider it an advantage as the area has managed to remain ‘pristine’ and relatively undeveloped compared with places such as Port Fairy, Lorne and Apollo Bay. The theme of attracting, recruiting and retaining skilled staff is important to this story and is elaborated upon in later chapters.
The geography of the shire is also unique as the residents in the north of the shire rarely or never visit Portland, even though the Council business centre is located there. The people of Casterton and those residing in the west of the Shire tend to use Hamilton or Mount Gambier as their service towns due to their proximity and the range of services available. There are also significant differences between the issues that concern Portland and those concerning the rural remainder of the shire. Some argue that there are two distinct communities within the shire; those in the hinterland and those near the coast (Victorian Electoral Commission, 2007, p.10), and that there is some dislocation between these communities. Others argue that a commonality of interest does exist within the Shire (Victorian Electoral Commission, 2007, p.10).
What do we do?

According to the Glenelg Shire Council Annual Report 2006-2007; ‘Council provides over 100 services to people of all ages and stages of life around the shire’ (Glenelg Shire Council, 2007, p. 4). In summary, this includes services designed to assist the frail, aged and people with a disability to be independent and remain living in their homes (home and community care services), libraries, economic development and business support, maintenance and upkeep of the 211 shire buildings; 2,500 kilometres of roads and bridges; footpaths, swimming pools, boat ramps and street lighting, waste and recycling, public health, local laws (e.g. parking, animal registration and control, etc.), family and children’s services (child care, maternal and child health services, kindergartens,), recreation and youth services (programs, club development, sporting grounds, etc.), tourism, arts and culture and parks and gardens.

Illustration No. 3

Glenelg Shire Council maintains 2,500 kilometres of local roads

Council also has a range of powers and responsibilities under 40 different Victorian Acts. This is in addition to the general powers and responsibilities provided under the Local Government Act (Victoria. Parliament, 1989, online) , and includes land use planning, building control, some public health services, domestic animal control, litter control, parking, roads and traffic.
Strategic Objectives

Every Victorian Council is required to develop a Council Plan within six months after a general election (Local Government Act, Section 125). This is a document that outlines the strategic objectives set by Council for the municipality, strategies for achieving the objectives for the next four years and strategic indicators for monitoring the achievement of the objectives (Victoria, Parliament, 1989, online).

The 2007 Council Plan included a clear statement of the elected Councillors’ intentions for the next two years:

- Good governance (high standards of democratic governance, transparent decision making, acting in the public interest)
- Stewardship (responsible financial management, retaining high quality employees, caring for physical assets)
- Solving problems (with particular emphasis on addressing the planning issues)
- New opportunities (taking advantage of economic development opportunities such as the timber harvest, tourism, renewable energy, and caring for the shire’s natural and built environment)
- Caring for people (respond to community needs and deliver services, caring for vulnerable and most needy) (Glenelg Shire Council, 2008)

This Plan and subsequent amendments was developed by the Councillors and senior managers. There was little opportunity for input by the broader community or other staff members although it was placed on public exhibition. The implications of this approach to consultation are discussed in later chapters, and could be seen as part of the reason for the lack of shared understanding of the Council priorities by the staff and the broader community.

Governance Structure

In July 2007, the Glenelg Shire was divided into nine Ridings, with an elected Councillor representing each Riding. The sitting Council in 2007 was elected in
November 2004 and the nine Councillors were three-quarters of the way through their elected period. The Council comprised five Councillors from the urban area (Portland and surrounds) and four from the rural areas, including Casterton, Heywood, and other rural areas. Thus the balance of power was held by the representatives from the south of the shire, mainly Portland.

An Electoral Representation Review of the Glenelg Shire Council was undertaken during 2007 by the Victorian Electoral Commission to consider the number of councillors and the internal electoral structures. These reviews are undertaken in all Victorian councils before every second election (every eight years). The Final Report was released in October 2007 with the recommendation that the Glenelg Shire Council be revised to consist of seven councillors elected from an unsubdivided municipality. This was a substantial and unpopular change from the status quo.

In the early part of this project, an election was held in November 2008, resulting in the election of four Councillors from the rural hinterland and three elected from the south of the shire (Portland and surrounds), thereby changing the balance of power from the ‘urban’ community to the ‘rural’ community.

**Council Staff**

In 2007, the Glenelg Council employed approximately one hundred and ninety-seven effective full time employees or 317 individual people. This represented a 16% decrease in the number of employees employed from 2003-2004, the consequence of reducing expenditure to improve the financial bottom line. Staff turnover was 13%, an increase of 44% over the 2004-05 year.

The breakdown of employees by gender, employment type (full-time, etc.) and classification of job type are illustrated below in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designated Groups</th>
<th>2003/04 (EFT)</th>
<th>2004/05 (EFT)</th>
<th>2005/06 (EFT)</th>
<th>2006/07 (EFT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managers and Administrators</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The reduction in the number of advanced clerical and service employees (third tier managers) and the number of labourers appeared to have an impact on the organisation, as staff reported feeling overwhelmed and over worked in the subsequent years. It also appeared to impact on the ability of the outdoor staff to attend to the maintenance of public parks, buildings and reserves with fewer staff available to undertake the work. This may have also contributed to the poor perception of Council by the community.

In 2007 the Glenelg Shire Council was organised into four distinct departments with a manager leading each department and forming the Senior Management Team with the Chief Executive Officer. Managers were responsible for ensuring that their teams understood their work and that work was coordinated across the organisation. The Senior Management Team met weekly to ensure that the Council and organisational objectives were met.

As a senior manager, my position in the organisation was renamed from ‘Citizen Services Manager’ to ‘Group Manager, Community Development’ following an ‘organisational realignment’ undertaken in early 2008. I also assumed the additional responsibilities of arts and culture, cultural collections, Indigenous issues and community planning at this time. The structure of my department, the Community Development Department is charted in Appendix No. 1.

The overall organisational structure in 2008 is reflected in the organisational chart illustrated in Figure 3, with the organisation divided into four departments.
How are we funded?

In 2007, the Glenelg Council was in a relatively stable financial position, and over the preceding three years exhibited a strong approach to reducing the level of indebtedness. In 2007, the Victorian Auditor General’s Office conducted an analysis on the financial sustainability of all Victorian municipalities, and the Glenelg Shire Council’s financial viability was assessed as being “low risk,” with no financial viability / sustainability concerns.

In addition, an independent audit of financial key performance indicators for Victorian Councils undertaken in 2007 found that the Glenelg Council was the most financially sustainable Council amongst the sixteen municipalities comprising the...
‘Large Shires’ group in Victoria, ‘based on the strength of its cash position, low debt and strong commitment to asset renewal’ (Strategy Plus, 2007, p. 2). According to a management report to Council on 27 February 2007:

In recent years Council has made a concerted effort to improve its financial sustainability especially in the area of re-establishing a positive cash position, narrowing the gap between the below average level of rates compared to other similar Shires, attracting government grants, implementing a contemporary renewal / upgrade program and defining an appropriate level of depreciation (Hornby, 2007, p. 34).

Hornby also notes in his report that Council rates per assessment were just over the average in comparison to other large rural shires, and that if the Portland Aluminium rates were not counted, rates would be well under the average. The dependence on the rate revenue from Portland Aluminium (approximately 26% of total rate revenue) was and continues to be a concern for officers, as are the low rates in comparison to other Councils. This placed additional stress on Council’s ability to fund services and maintenance of assets to meet the expectations of the community. At the same time, the disadvantage of the community also affected their ability to pay higher rates.

Although Council is financially sustainable, the tension between available funds and community expectations is an ongoing undercurrent to this research journey. The lack of resources and staff has implications for the degree of responsiveness to community needs and is a constant theme for the Community Development Department and for Council.

**How did we compare to other Councils?**

**The Council**

Local Government in Victoria comprises 79 councils with individual characteristics and diversity. For example, Casey City Council has a population of approximately 230,000 and an annual expenditure of $150 million while the Borough of Queenscliff, with a population of 3,175 has an annual expenditure of approximately $7 million (Victorian Auditor General, 2008, p. 30).
The Glenelg Shire is considered to be a large rural council and is usually benchmarked against 15 other Councils in the large rural shires group. These include Baw Baw Shire, Campaspe Shire, Colac-Otway Shire, Corangamite Shire, East Gippsland Shire, Macedon Ranges Shire, Mitchell Shire, Moira Shire, Moorabool Shire, Moyne Shire, South Gippsland Shire, Southern Grampians Shire, Surf Coast Shire and Wellington Shire.

In the financial analysis undertaken by Strategy Plus, an independent consultant, Glenelg’s capital expenditure on renewal and asset upgrade as a percentage of total depreciation is the highest in the sixteen Council grouping, and as mentioned earlier, the Glenelg Council is the most financially sustainable Council amongst the sixteen municipalities. The executive summary of this report also notes that Fees and Charges revenue is below the group average, that grant revenues are above average and that Council has a low level of indebtedness (Strategy Plus, 2007, p. 1).

The report also notes that:

In an ideal situation, Council would prefer to have its three major revenue streams (Rates, Grants, and Fees) all contributing to off-setting the increasing costs of service provision rather than a near complete reliance on rates to achieve this outcome. (Strategy Plus, 2007, p. 1)

Although the Glenelg Council scores well in regard to financial sustainability, it didn’t fare well by comparison with the same group of Councils in customer satisfaction. The Victorian Government conducts an annual community satisfaction survey, which is considered to be an important measure of community views on the performance of local councils. Coordinated by Local Government Victoria, it measures residents’ satisfaction with each Council’s overall performance, advocacy, responsiveness and community engagement. It also measures satisfaction with council performance across nine specific services such as local roads and footpaths, recreational facilities, town planning, waste management and health and human services.

Table No. 2 indicates the performance of the Glenelg Council over the preceding seven years. During this period, the performance of Council has declined in most areas except waste management and economic development. In 2007, the
Glenelg Shire Council achieved the lowest relative performance within the ‘large rural shires’ group in Victoria for overall performance. More specifically, in the area of community engagement, its performance was lower than the median of the group for advocacy and customer contact (Victoria. Department for Victorian Communities, 2007 pp 10-22).

Table No. 2: Community Satisfaction Survey: Glenelg Council Performance over seven years (% residents rating as excellent, good or adequate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Performance</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>-17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>-12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>-12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Contact</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>-13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Roads &amp; footpaths</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>-8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Human Services</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>-10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Facilities</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>-4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance of public areas</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>-8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic Management &amp; Parking Facilities</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste Management</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>+15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforcement of By-Laws</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>-3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>+20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Planning Policy &amp; Approvals</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>-52.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the same report, the Glenelg Council’s performance is also compared with the performance on key measures with other councils in the ‘large rural shires’ group. In 2007, the Glenelg Council had the lowest or equal lowest result in every key measure (Victoria. Department for Victorian Communities, 2007 p. 6).

It could be argued that the poor result in Town Planning Policy and Approvals has affected the scores in the other areas, resulting in poor overall community perceptions. As suggested earlier, Council seemed to be struggling with the balance between being fiscally responsible and the need to be responsive to the community. This theme is also explored further in later chapters.
The People

The demographic profile (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006) indicates that the Glenelg Shire has:

- high proportions of children and older persons
- lower than average full time employment
- higher than average unemployment (9.3% compared with national average of 4.5%)
- average weekly incomes that are 17% lower than the state average
- fewer people with a Bachelor degree or higher in education.

The Socio Economic Indexes For Areas (SEIFA Index), using a mix of information such as incomes, education levels, household and car ownership, occupations, and labour force, has placed Glenelg among the most disadvantaged municipalities in Victoria (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006).

Illustration No. 4

North and South public housing areas of Portland are areas of significant disadvantage

The theme of ‘disadvantage’ is a major focus of my research and explored in much more detail in later chapters. In 2007, it was not ‘on the radar’ of Councillors or officers and had been largely ignored in the strategic planning and policy work of Council.
According to the Glenelg Community Wellbeing Report, (AEC Group, 2006, p. 4) the Glenelg Shire also experienced some health issues of significance:

- A lower than average life expectancy for both men and women than the State and Barwon-South Western averages, with male life expectancy particularly of concern
- A higher than average proportion of women aged 18-24 who are overweight or obese
- Almost one in four persons with an income of less than $20,000 rating their health as ‘poor’ which was four times the Victorian average
- A higher than average proportion of females and a lower proportion of males than the average who have sought help from a mental health professional in the previous year
- A greater than average proportion of adults at weekly risk of short-term alcohol related harm
- A higher proportion of Indigenous people compared with Victoria overall

These health and disadvantage outcomes were to become the focus of a lot of my work over the life of this project, and are discussed in much more detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

**Where were we as an organisation in 2007?**

The Glenelg Shire Council was in a state of flux in 2007. The Chief Executive Officer resigned in February and a consultant was appointed as temporary Chief Executive for approximately three months to undertake the recruitment process and to undertake the role of the Chief Executive. A new Chief Executive Officer was appointed in July 2007, coinciding with the commencement of my project. This provided opportunities as well as challenges, and is discussed further in Chapter 4.

A detailed analysis of the Council Meeting Minutes for that year provides an indication of the topics and issues being considered by Council over this period. The
main focus was on town planning issues with various complex planning permits and planning scheme amendments being considered. Funds from various grant programs were allocated, financial matters and reports, plans and policies were considered for adoption along with contractual items and Best Value (continuous improvement) Reports.

At the end of 2006 and start of 2007, the Glenelg Shire Council was the target of local and state media criticism as a result of the Auditor-General’s Report on planning services (Auditor General Victoria, 2005) which was released at the end of 2005. From mid 1998 until 2004, Council had engaged an external company to provide town planning services. In December 2004, the contract was terminated for non-performance, however, 3 months later the planning contractor was re-engaged. The Auditor General conducted the review as a consequence of community and government agencies’ concerns about the capability of Council and the quality of its planning services.

The particular issue which brought the Council into disrepute was the failure of Council to protect an area of historical and Aboriginal significance known as the Convincing Ground. It is the site of an historic whaling station and the scene of a conflict in the 1830s that resulted in the massacre of Aboriginal people by the first European settlers in Victoria. It is registered with Aboriginal Affairs Victoria as an Aboriginal Heritage Place. In 2003 Council issued a planning permit for development of this site, and in 2005 bulldozing of the site commenced. Works stopped when it became clear that Aboriginal consent had not been provided. This was reported across the state and became the subject of a VCAT Hearing and an investigation by the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecution.

This undoubtedly contributed to the poor perception of the Council on the part of the community. As a consequence, the relationship with the community was poor and staff morale was low. Council and staff appeared to be unable to repair this fractured relationship, with responses being largely bureaucratic.

Despite the problems, at the commencement of this project I was optimistic, for it seemed to me that things could only get better and that the next two years would
provide me with the perfect opportunity to research and study the organisation through this process. I was feeling frustrated but also confident and excited. I wanted to see some organisational improvement; better relations with the community and increased understanding of the socioeconomic disadvantage in the community.

I had no idea how hard this project would prove to be. I found that placing myself as a participant and researcher was difficult and that standing back to observe and reflect on what was happening was emotionally and mentally draining. There were many other things I hadn’t considered at the outset; things that would affect this project and my practice as a senior manager. I certainly didn’t anticipate how difficult it would be to undertake this project whilst working full time in a relatively new position, working for twelve weeks at the end of the project as Acting Chief Executive Officer, building a new house, and generally dealing with the demands of life. Some of this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 2
Chapter 2

THE RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

At the beginning of every journey, the committed and thoughtful traveller consults a range of resources – travel guides, climate reports, maps, and so on in order to prepare for the journey. The traveller makes decisions based on what he or she thinks they will encounter along the way. This decision is influenced both by previous experience and on the particular objectives of the new venture. And so it was with this research project!

This chapter is presented in four parts; each part represents a different subject area, and although they are distinct, like the research objectives, there are some overlaps.

At the outset of the project, my first objective was to develop my skills as a manager and leader in the local government context. It was therefore necessary to gain an understanding of the environments, trends, politics and directions of local government over the preceding 10 to 15 years and to understand how it was still playing out and affecting the Glenelg Council. Over this time there had been enormous change driven by the State Government, including Council amalgamations and the corporatisation and privatisation of local governments. The first section of this chapter is therefore a contextual analysis of the local government environment.

The second part of this chapter relates to the concept of change and four of my research objectives:

- To improve the morale, confidence and skills of key Glenelg Council employees
- To improve the Council’s relationship with the residents of the Glenelg Shire
- To contribute to a change in Council’s priorities
- To gain an understanding of organisational cultural change and learning
At the outset of this project in 2007, it appeared that the organisation was on the cusp of change. Council was implementing the recommendations from the Victorian Auditor General’s Report (2005, pp. 3-6) which was very critical of the conduct of Council, its governance, quality control systems and town planning services, and had also just appointed a new Chief Executive Officer. My early reading indicated that change is more difficult to implement in the public sector, hence the focus on understanding change as it pertains to the public sector and particularly the local government sector. The second theme discussed in this chapter is therefore titled: Organisational and cultural change.

As the only female senior manager in local government in the South West of Victoria in 2008, I found it interesting to reflect on the role of gender in local government at the commencement and throughout the course of this research project. The current culture was a male culture focussed on the traditional roles of local government; roads, rates and rubbish. What could I do to be a more effective manager and leader? How could I get my voice heard at the table to bring attention to the more people oriented issues such as services to the disenfranchised, disadvantaged, elderly, and young? Hence the third section of this chapter is titled: Gender and leadership in local government.

The fourth objective was to contribute to a change in Council’s priorities in order to focus attention on the health, education and other aspects of disadvantage confronting its residents. I decided that I needed to gain a better understanding of the extent of disadvantage in the Glenelg Shire, and of the approaches and interventions used by other local governments to address disadvantage. I also wanted to understand some of the politics around disadvantage, particularly as I knew that it was going to be challenging to change some of the views of the Councillors and senior managers. The fourth and final part of this chapter is therefore titled: Disadvantage.

In addition to the traditional literature sources of academic databases, scholarly articles and books, I have also included information found in the populist media and social networking sources (Wikipedia and Blogs for example) to reflect the views and opinions of other writers and members of society. Perceptions included in this form...
of media can assist in conveying a total picture of the broader community thinking (often marginalized) on a given topic and has the potential to reflect the broader discussions taking place in this newer media. This is particularly important to my research as my objectives included improving Council’s relationship with the residents and citizens of the Glenelg Shire. Whilst academics have usually undertaken rigorous research and have some interesting findings, I felt it was important to obtain a feel for the views of other community people and gain an understanding of their perceptions and opinions.

One of the challenges of an action / research project is to manage the reflexive relationship between the literature and the data. On the one hand as a researcher there was an imperative to ensure that action was informed by solid data. On the other hand as a practitioner I often needed to act even though I did not have as much data or understanding as I would have wished. Waiting was not an option. Nevertheless the literature and the understanding that comes from an ongoing relationship with it was critical. Therefore further forays into the literature are included as the project unfolds.
Part 1 - Local Government

“What’s the biggest problem with Local Government? State Government!”
(Col Dunkley, “Grassroots” as cited by Andrews and Byrne, 2003, online)

This journey was being taken in the land of local government, therefore I felt it was important to understand this landscape. I was relatively new to local government (only commencing in this role at the end of 2005) and at the outset of this research project it seemed that there was not a shared understanding of the role and purpose of local government between the Councillors, staff and citizens of the Glenelg Shire. But this was only part of the picture. There had been a huge amount of change hoisted onto local government by state governments over the previous 10 to 15 years. It seemed to me that local government was caught between the regulatory and financial demands of the state government and the demands and expectations of the residents and citizens. We were struggling to meet the requirements of the state government and yet in doing so we were losing touch with our communities. This section is therefore a contextual analysis of the local government environment, examining the effects of successive government policies and the resultant angst, dislocation and confusion.

Local government was established by the State Government and currently operates in Victoria under the Local Government Act 1989. Over the past 30 years, local government has been subjected to the whims of State Government, often changing with each successive change of government. The 1990s were particularly tumultuous in Victoria with the restructuring of Councils in 1993-94; the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) in 1994 and the corporatisation of local government in the latter part of the 1990s. These reforms are discussed in more detail later in this section.

Local government has been described as the ‘Cinderella’ of public administration (Finn, 1990, p. 49) which may reflect the lower status given this sphere of government. Also like Cinderella, local government was not recognised and was despised by her ugly step sisters (state and federal governments). There has been
some discussion about local government reform in the literature (Aulich, 1999; Jones, 2002; Marshall, Witherby and Dollery, 1999), however Aulich does note the ‘paucity of research of reform at the local government level in Australia’ (1999, p. 12). Nonetheless, the discussion in the literature does acknowledge the need for reform to make councils more responsive, accountable, strategic, and business like. The reform in Victoria has been described as ‘the most prescriptive and proactive’ (Martin 1999, p. 24).

In October 1992, the Liberal / National Coalition won the Victorian State Election with an overwhelming majority. The Kennett government then acted swiftly in 1993, restructuring the face of local government in Victoria by reducing 210 councils to 79 authorities. Smaller Councils were amalgamated ostensibly to provide greater economies of scale, to rationalise services and to achieve a more secure rate base (Andrews and Byrne, 2003, online). In the case of the Glenelg Council, three municipalities were amalgamated; the former shires of Heywood and Glenelg were amalgamated with the Town of Portland. This change came at a cost, and although imposed by a conservative government, it was particularly resented in regional Victoria. As stated in Chapter 1, at the outset of this project in 2008, many Councillors and staff still referred to ‘the good old days before amalgamation’. This perceived high handed treatment by the then government is described in some of the literature as follows:

Even if its longer term purpose was to improve local government as democratic governance through reforming the system as well as its management practices, the reform process dealt brutally with established local democracy in the short term. (Galligan, 1998, p. 205)

The prescriptive and autocratic reform continued in Victoria in spite of the massive upheaval already underway. Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) was also introduced in 1994. A form of privatisation based on the model from Thatcher’s Government in the UK, this involved mandatory exposure of local government services to competition through a process of public tendering. The Kennett government imposed this on local government by legislating the need for Councils to expose annually 20%, 30% and finally 50% of their budgets to CCT between 1994
and 1999. Although the Thatcher Government exempted community services such as home care and child care from CCT, there were no such limitations to the CCT legislation in Victoria. Ernst and Webber describe this ideology as the ‘flagship of the New Right approach to government’ and ‘built upon the trinity of individualism, freedom and property rights’ (1996, p. 121-122). O’Connor describes it as ‘classic neo liberalism’ and ‘an example of economic rationalism’ (2000, online).

It was often heart wrenching and soul destroying for many managers and staff working in local government at that time. The varying experiences of Councillors and employees are described by Schapper in her work on the experience of organisational change during council amalgamations in regional Victoria (1998, 2004). Interestingly, there are some claims that the evidence on the effects of CCT is ‘somewhat mixed’ (Worthington and Dollery, 2002, p. 499). However Ernst and Webber argue that ‘the focus has been on limited and short-term economic indicators and the social, environmental or strategic impacts of privatisation have been largely ignored’ (1996, p. 118-119). The privatisation or contracting out of many traditional local government services often resulted in the loss of a skilled and experienced workforce, and as Ernst and Webber note:

> Once public utilities are sold or local government human service capacity is dissolved, it is a difficult, if not impossible, policy decision to reverse (1996, p. 121).

The effects of council amalgamations and CCT were felt right across Victoria with jobs in local government reduced from 53,000 to 34,000, a loss of 40% (O’Connor, 2000, online). In the smaller regional and rural communities, it was particularly resented as local government had been a major source of employment prior to 1994. In the Glenelg Shire, the resentment was still simmering at the outset of this research project. The Council, a creation of the State Government was viewed with cynicism and distrust.

At the start of this research project, the senior management team was focussed on ensuring that the Glenelg Council met the state government’s corporate requirements: financial reporting, risk management, annual reports, and saving money. Councillors and some of the staff were more concerned with actual service...
delivery and the development and maintenance of infrastructure. It seemed to me that the senior management team was internally focused and that often resources were deflected to meeting corporate requirements. There were tensions between the Councillors and the Senior Management Team and also between the different departments with diverse roles (service delivery, maintenance of infrastructure and finance and legislative compliance).

In addition to the enforced amalgamations and introduction of CCT, life was made even more difficult for local government at this time by the Kennett Government’s decision to legislate local government rate reductions. Councils were required to reduce rate revenue by up to 20% in the first year and then another 10% in the years 1995-1997 (Worthington and Dollery, 2002, p. 499). These limitations on local government spending affected the ability of local government to respond to the needs of the communities they serviced with flow on effects for many businesses within those communities. In 2007/8, the Glenelg Council was still struggling to catch up: the rate per assessment (excluding the rates derived from the Portland Aluminium Smelter) for the Glenelg Shire was substantially lower than that for all other similar Victorian Councils, and was the lowest of the 19 Councils in the large rural shires category (Glenelg Shire Council Strategic Financial Plan 2009-10, p. 14).

Financial sustainability is a struggle for many rural and regional Councils. Finding the funds to meet the community expectations and also comply with the state government requirements is a difficult balance, especially for Councils with disadvantaged communities. Overall, local government obtained its revenue from three main sources in 2005/06: rates (38%), user fees and charges (30%) and grants from Australian and state governments (17%) (Australian Local Government Association, 2008, online). In the case of the Glenelg Council, like many rural and remote councils, the own-source revenue raising capacity is limited, and grants from state and federal governments accounts for 24% of revenue, rates accounts for 46% and user fees and charges 13% of revenue (Glenelg Shire Council Annual Report, 2007-2008). The potential for increasing rates and fees and charges is ‘highly constrained by legislative, policy and structural factors’ (Harvey-Beavis, 2007, p. 14).
and in Glenelg’s case, it is also constrained by the low socio-economic status of many of the shire residents.

The squeeze on local government has also been caused by cost shifting from both federal and state governments. The Commonwealth Government Inquiry into Local Government and cost shifting entitled ‘Rates and taxes: a fair share for responsible local government’ (also known as the Hawker Report) in 2003 noted that local government had increasingly been taking on additional responsibility for social functions (public health, environmental management, accessible transport, community safety, etc.). These responsibilities are often picked up by local government in response to local needs; needs not being addressed by the other tiers of government. Local government’s functions and therefore costs have also increased due to devolution and cost shifting from other tiers of government, increased complexity of services, increased community expectations, and policy choice. The then CEO of the Glenelg Shire is quoted in the Hawker report as stating:

...if we are going to look at imposing new functions on local government, the key to it is: where is the money for local government to provide those new functions? Who was providing the function before, or is it a new function? Who is going to pay for it?...We have the capacity to provide the new functions: we have the people on the ground and we have great capacity to attract people to the regions as well. It is just that we do not have the money to provide those services (Parliament. Australia, 2003, p.15)

As mentioned earlier, the burden of additional regulatory and administrative responsibilities imposed from other spheres of government only adds to the complexities and difficulties of local government. As local government is increasingly finding that they need to do more with less, the pressure to be more efficient and effective is also increasing. As Martin notes:

Local government must adopt performance management systems that allow them to demonstrate value for money services and the effective use of revenue allocated to them by higher levels of government (Martin, 2006, p. 225).
So, in addition to the reform agenda imposed by State and Federal Governments, local governments are also required to be more efficient and fiscally responsible and yet also be able to be responsive to community needs and requirements. Local government is being pushed to reduce costs, improve the quality of products and services, become more innovative, and increase productivity. Major change efforts are required to adapt and adjust to shifting conditions. Council struggles to meet the expectations of the residents and legislative requirements of the state government with limited resources.

It is not surprising that local government is still mostly perceived in a negative light by the community and the media. The entry on local government in Wikipedia is a cynical assessment shared by many:

> Local government is caricatured as being concerned only with the “three R’s”, or Rates, Roads and Rubbish. Local governments are also comparatively subservient to their respective state governments due to their limited powers. For this reason local government in Australia is often criticized as being petty and even redundant. (Wikipedia, 2008, online)

In 2008, in the lead up to the local government elections, there appeared to be an effort to improve the perception of local government across the state in order to attract new Councillors and to increase the number of voters at the elections. Clare O’Neil, a former Councillor of the City of Greater Dandenong wrote:

> Local government is responsible for issues that affect your day to day happiness. The state of your park, whether your street is well lit, the quality of footpaths, the support for your sporting club. Small issues, that have a real impact on the quality of life (The Age, 8 November 2008, Insight p.11).

O’Neil also goes on to remark that ‘when it does work, local government is the rawest, most energetic, and dynamic form of democracy’ in Australia.

In spite of these efforts, the bleak view of local government was reiterated by investigative journalist Royce Millar in The Age in November 2008 in an article aptly headed ‘Too old, dull, and tainted?’ This article was published just prior to the 2008 round of Local Government elections held right across Victoria. Millar asserted that, “Badly behaved councillors and dodgy municipal decision making is nothing new,
of course. Yet there is a widespread view that local government has hit a new low.” (Millar, 2008 online)

Millar goes on to quote Peter Black, described by Millar as ‘a council bureaucrat for the best part of four decades in Victoria’. Black observed that the “quality of councillors is deteriorating” and also observes a “slippage in talent, especially over the past decade”. Millar noted in the upcoming election that candidate numbers were down by 5% compared with 4 years ago in spite of rapid population growth, and believed that this was due to people being too busy, potential candidates being deterred by growing personal abuse among councillors and the difficulty of balancing family with paid and council work, greater community demand and low pay.

Exiner, however, called for more balanced reporting on local government, and noted that less than 10% of Councils were mentioned in the articles in the Age and yet the whole sector is condemned. He claims that ‘focusing on the alleged actions of very few and ignoring the vast majority gives a false impression of a tainted sector’ (Exiner, 2008, p. 12)

In addition to the enormous changes imposed in the 1990s, and in spite of a change of government in 1999, local government was again in the media spotlight in 2005 with reported cases of alleged councillor corruption and the misuse of planning powers in various councils (including the Glenelg Council).

The Victorian Auditor General (VAG) released several significant reports over the period 2005-2009. These were critical of some of the procedures and practices in local government relating to specific areas such as the management of the risks to public health from failing septic tanks; the implementation of planning schemes; management of Occupational Health and Safety in local government; contracting and tendering processes; and performance reporting (Victoria. Auditor General, 2009, online).

The Victorian Ombudsman was also undertaking some investigations at this time resulting in reports being tabled in Parliament on the Melbourne City Council (April 2006), City of Greater Geelong (February 2007), Port Phillip (March 2008) The
overriding themes in these reports included poor governance practices, lack of accountability, issues of conflicts of interest and poor policies and procedures in the area of statutory and town planning (Victoria. Ombudsman, 2008, online).

The Victorian Ombudsman released a report on conflict of interest in local government in March 2008. This report followed a joint report undertaken with Macquarie University to examine the nature and extent of conflict of interest in the Victorian public sector. The Ombudsman noted that the ‘study found sufficient examples of conflict of interest within local government to recommend a separate review of the sector’ (Victoria. Ombudsman, 2008, p.8). In the report on local government, he made many recommendations for improved practices and noted that:

I found many Councils had practices that, at best, lead to a lack of transparency and, at worst, allow opportunities for corrupt conduct (Victoria. Ombudsman, 2008, p.8).

In response to the concerns raised by the Ombudsman, the Local Government Act was again amended in 2008 to include new conflict of interest rules for Councils. These new rules provide clearer and more comprehensive definitions of interest as well as extending the rules to cover additional meetings of councillors. These rules also apply to council staff, committees, and some contractors.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the conduct of Councillors was the subject of many investigations and reviews by the Auditor General. The Local Government Act details how councillors should conduct themselves and avoid conflicts of interest. Over twenty pages of the Act deals with Councillor conduct, and in essence, states that Councillors should be impartial, act with integrity and not confer advantage or disadvantage on any person (Victoria, Parliament, 1989, p. 108).

In spite of the Ombudsman, the legislation and the Auditor General’s reports, the conflict of interest issue is difficult for Councillors, especially in small rural communities because of their community roles and because of their part time status.

They are undertaking their councillor duties and also holding down a job, running a business and usually involved with community groups. Or their
family members are. In these circumstances, the meeting of public and private interests is going to happen (Exiner, 2008, p.12).

In a small regional community, the conflict of public and private interests was an ongoing challenge for councillors and staff throughout the life of this research project.

The media attention, the Ombudsman and Auditor General Reports and the focus on governance issues by the State Government formed an important background to my work. In some respects, the Glenelg Council was the scapegoat for the decisions made in the 1990s by the State Government, but it was also poorly perceived as a consequence of the poor planning decisions made in the early 2000s, the topic of the Auditor General’s report in 2005.

**Role of Councillors**

The Councillors also formed a significant part of the landscape and were on their own journeys. Our journeys often crossed paths, and for some small parts of the journey, we were travelling companions, albeit not always compatible.

In the time leading up to this research project, I had observed that Councillors were finding the tension between involvement in the operational aspects of local government and the need to be strategic to be confusing and difficult to manage.

The State Government was clear about their expectations of Councillors:

> A councillor is expected to represent the interests of residents and ratepayers. This means providing community leadership and guidance, and improving communication between the community and council (Victoria, Department of Planning, and Community Development, 2009, online).

The problems posed by Councillors becoming entangled in the day to day business of the Council was also the subject of inquiry by the State Government. In 1995, the Local Government Board recommended to the Minister for Local Government that ‘the primary role of councillors is in determining policy, setting objectives and establishing the strategic directions of council’ (Burke and Walsh, 1998, p.93).
Nonetheless, Councillors still visibly struggled with this tension ten years later. Ratepayers often approached councillors about a specific issue (e.g. potholes in roads, delays in issue of planning permits, football oval maintenance issues), and the councillors, feeling it is their role, often get involved. This frequently complicates the issue as Councillors may not understand the reasons behind the decision making and may seek to influence priorities in order to obtain a resolution for a particular resident.

On 11th December 2008, consultant Phillip Shanahan spoke to the newly elected Glenelg Council as part of the orientation program about the role of Councillors and emphasised that their role is to ‘pull the big levers’ and to leave the operational matters to the CEO and the council officers. He also emphasised that the business of local government is ‘governance’, and that collectively the Council has power, but individually they have no power. The tension however continued to be evident throughout the life of this research project.

**Future Directions for Local Government – participative versus representative democracy**

As a traveller, it is useful to understand the climate of the territory through which you are planning to venture. Having gained an understanding of where local government had come from, and some of the reasons for its unpopularity, I again turned to the literature to seek an understanding of where it was heading: some relevant signposts and useful equipment. What were the trends and fads overseas, and which direction would our puppet masters, the state government, send us over the next few years?

In the past, the state government had followed the trends established in the United Kingdom. Compulsory Competitive Tendering was an initiative from the United Kingdom, as was the Bracks Government Best Value legislation. At the outset of this research program the discussion in the United Kingdom involved the devolution of power from central government to local government and the empowerment of local communities to have a greater say in their lives through the principles of neighbourhood management (Lyons, 2007). From 2006 – 2008, the UK government
considered a range of papers and conducted an inquiry into the role, function and funding of local government.

In 2008, the White Paper, ‘Communities in control: real people, real power’ was presented to the UK Parliament. This paper outlined proposals for areas where governments (including local government) can devolve more power to citizens. The rhetoric was impressive, however a scan of the 2008 postings on the online discussion forum established on the UK Communities and Local Government website indicated some citizen cynicism as the following post denotes:

Come tell our council, who have refused support for Parish Plans, will not look at Market Towns, and shudder at the very idea of public participation (Lockwood, 29-34, 15 July 2008, online).

In Victoria, there had also been varying discussions about governance at the local government level over the past decade. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, in the 1990s, the Kennett government focused on a corporate approach involving corporate accountability through democratic representations and the ‘redefinition of citizens as share-holders and customers’. O’Toole asserts that the Bracks government has been instrumental in some redefinition of the discourse to include aspects of community governance with emphasis on community participation (O’Toole, 2003, p. 11).

Also known as participative democracy, this model does have its critics (Raymond, 2002; Papadopoulos, 2004). Dissenters argue that the interests of groups with good resources and organisational strength can be pushed through to the detriment of the common good; that pseudo-democratic elites can dominate the process.

As early as 1998 in the UK, research was being carried out by De Montford University and the University of Strathclyde on the current forms of public participation used in local government. The report was commissioned by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (United Kingdom, ODPM, 1998, online). One of the interesting findings was the widespread concern about low levels of public involvement in participation initiatives:

Citizens are deterred from participation by negative views of the council;
a lack of awareness and information about opportunities to participate;
assumptions that the council will not respond to their concerns; and a
perception that initiatives are dominated by certain groups (UK, ODPM,
1998, online).

A series of essays ‘Votes and voices: the complementary nature of representative
and participative democracy’ brings together a range of differing perspectives on
this subject. Published by the UK Local Government Association (LGA) and the
National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) in 2008, the essays all
recognise the need for both representative and participative forms of government;
however it was noted that there is limited research to draw any real conclusions and
that:

Balancing representative structures with participative models of
involvement has become one of the main practical challenges facing
local government (Jenkins, 2008, p. 21)

Nonetheless, the Victorian Government seemed interested in enhancing citizen
participation in local government in the lead up to and throughout this research
project. As usual, the Government was following the direction set in the United
Kingdom, seemingly without any real evaluation of the implications and outcomes.

The Department for Victorian Communities (DVC) was established in 2003 with the
aim of ‘building cohesive communities’ through a more integrated approach to
planning, funding, and delivering services at the local level (Wiseman, 2005, online).
The rhetoric was touting the need for community strengthening, community
building, and social capital. The State Government was particularly focussed on
community planning as a tool or an approach for community building.

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) promoted community planning through
the ‘Lighthouse Program’ in 2006 as a new approach to assist local government to
increase community participation and influence in decision making (MAV, 2008,
online). The MAV contends that in community planning, the community becomes
the driver of change, while local government acts as the facilitator. According to
the MAV, a ‘Community Plan’ can be produced and owned by the community,
which can then inform the development of council, State and even
Commonwealth plans, programs and priorities.
At the beginning of 2008, the responsibility for place based community planning at the Glenelg Council was transferred to my department. It had been implemented in 2007, and in early 2008 it wasn’t going very well. Councillors were suspicious of our intentions and the residents were suspicious of Council’s intentions. I had attended the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) workshops and forums on community planning and I felt I understood the rationale and philosophy behind it. However, over the course of the next two years, I struggled to change either the community or Councillors’ perceptions and the project had varied success. The tensions between representative and participative democracy were evident, and there were times when I returned to the literature seeking answers and support for my findings. The literature and the experience of community planning is discussed in further detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

It was in this environment that I worked and undertook this research project. It was a tough landscape with many rough roads, some leading nowhere. It was largely uncharted territory and I worried about my decisions and competence to take some of the routes before me. I lacked some of the necessary equipment and resources, however I tentatively ventured forward.
Part 2 – Organisational and cultural change

When the traveller sets out on their journey, there is generally a purpose or objective to the journey. The traveller anticipates certain experiences on the journey and may often seek new experiences.

On this journey, I anticipated the experience of organisational change, in particular, cultural change in the public sector and local government. These topics were also reflected in my research objectives, and as a consequence, I commenced a literature review of these topics. I knew that there was a considerable amount of literature related to organisational change, however I was overwhelmed by the vast depth and breadth of it. I quickly realised that I would need to be selective as 'the study of change and its development has been one of the greatest themes in the social sciences' (Garg and Singh, 2006, p.46). I therefore narrowed the review to focus on cultural change in the public sector and in particular in local government.

At the outset, I began by searching for a definition of change management in the literature, and although there are several definitions of change management, according to Garg and Singh the definition most commonly used among practitioners and end-users is given by Prosci (2002):

> Change management represents the processes, tools and techniques to manage the people side of business change to achieve the required business outcomes and also to realize that business changes can be met effectively within the social infrastructure of the workplace (Cited by Garg and Singh, 2006, p. 46)

In brief, I found that the classic change theory published by Lewin in 1946 serves as the foundation for later organisational change models. Lewin suggests the 3 stages of change as:

- **Stage 1, Unfreezing:** creating motivation to change
- **Stage 2, Changing:** Developing on responses based on new information
- **Stage 3, refreezing:** stabilizing and integrating the changes (cited in Proehl, 2001, p. 85)
Lewin developed a technique known as force field analysis to identify both obstacles to change and factors that encourage change. Fifty years, and many other models later, Kotter (1996) developed a large scale change approach for successful organisational change. This model was developed after studying many successful as well as unsuccessful organisations. The eight stage process includes:

- Establishing a sense of urgency
- Creating the guiding coalition
- Developing a vision and strategy
- Communicating the change vision
- Empowering employees for broad based action
- Generating short term wins
- Consolidating gains and producing more change
- Anchoring new approaches in the culture (Kotter, 1996, pp 33-145)

More recently, Abrahamson (2000) has developed a theory for changing organisations without pain whereby organisations can undertake major change initiatives among carefully paced periods of smaller change, using “tinkering and kludging” (Abrahamson, 2000, p. 75). He calls this approach ‘dynamic stability’ and notes that constant change is disruptive and can provoke strong resistance in the form of aggressive cynicism. He advocates using a less disruptive change tool that will create dynamic stability in organisations.

At its essence, dynamic stability is a process of continual but relatively small change efforts that involve the reconfiguration of existing practices and business models rather than the creation of new ones (Abrahamson, 2000, p. 76).

One of the more recent theories about change and learning is described in the work of Senge, Scharmer, Jawarski and Flowers. Senge, et al (2005) explore their own experiences and those of 150 scientists and social and business entrepreneurs in an effort to explain how profound collective change occurs. Their theory of the ‘U’ movement arises from seven core capacities (Senge, et al, 2005, p. 219). The area of the first and downward stroke when handwriting a ‘U’ contains ‘sensing’, which is transforming perception. The bottom of the ‘U’ is the area of ‘presencing’, which is transforming self and will. The upward stoke of the ‘U’ is the area of
‘realizing’ which consists of transforming action (Senge, et al 2005). The seven capabilities reside in these three areas and include suspending, redirecting, letting go, letting come, crystallizing, prototyping and institutionalizing (Senge et al, 2005). According to Senge, developing these capacities underlies our ability to see, sense and realise new possibilities.

More recently still, Adcroft, Willis and Hurst (2008) have proposed a model ‘that combines different forms and processes of analysis to provide a holistic view of change in organisations’ (Adcroft, Willis and Hurst, 2008, p. 40).

Organisations are necessarily complex creatures. Like people, they have appearances and personalities and their true nature is defined by both. Organisations are collections of specifics like products, functions, processes and finances but they are also defined through intangibles such as culture, knowledge and learning (Adcroft, Willis and Hurst, 2008, p. 40)

This model suggests that transformation is a process and is a range of activities arranged into a sequence with an inner logic from beginning to end. According to Adcroft, Willis and Hurst, to understand transformation there are four places where analytical interventions are necessary:

1. The transformation event
2. The transformation program
3. The transformation outcome
4. The transformation myth (Adcroft, Willis and Hurst, 2008, p. 42)

In the early stages of my research I thought that the work undertaken by Shanley (2007) on the interconnections between management development and change management within the context of an industry case study would be relevant to my project. Shanley explored the change management experiences of middle managers in the residential care industry in Australia using interviews with managers and senior stakeholders. Shanley notes that:

There is very little detailed analysis or discussion about how they can most effectively manage this change environment. How managers actually deal with change on a day to day basis has been largely ignored or taken for granted. Most accounts of organisational change paint an
“official picture” of what is happening rather than the actual experiences of managers and other stakeholders (Shanley, 2007, p. 963)

The methodology used by Shanley is similar to that of this research project where the accounts by Council employees have also been used to ‘draw out common themes in their experiences’. Shanley’s research results in a range of practical proposals about how management development practices can be used to support the change management competencies of middle managers (Shanley, 2007, p. 962)

Overall the literature on managing organisational change is vast and varied. Garg and Singh contend that it requires changes in various interconnected areas: technology, structure, systems, people and culture (2006, p. 51) and yet others maintain that organisational culture is at the heart of organisational change (Denison, 1990; Davies and Philp, 1994; Valle, 1999; Schraeder, Tears and Jordan, 2004). Parker and Bradley (2000) argue that the lack of understanding of organisational culture in the public sector is a concern because research on organisational culture indicates that culture is central to the change process and to the attainment of strategic objectives (Parker and Bradley, 2000, p. 125).

I considered that a changing organisational culture would be at the heart of this journey, and, in anticipation, I narrowed the literature review and examined some of the literature pertaining to this subject.

There has been considerable discussion and research devoted to corporate culture. There is, however, some agreement about the features of culture that are shared more or less by members of the organisation. The meanings attached to these features help members make sense out of everyday life in the organisation, and signal how work is to be done and evaluated, how employees relate to each other and other stakeholders (councillors and customers.)

Organisational culture is defined by Cummings and Worley as:

The pattern of artefacts, norms, values and basic assumptions about how to solve problems that works well enough to be taught to others. Culture is a process of social learning; it is the outcome of prior choices about and
experiences with strategy and organisation design. It is also a foundation for change that can either facilitate or hinder organisation transformation (2008, p. 521).

Cummings and Worley go further stating that these customs provide clear and widely shared answers to such practical issues as “what really matters around here,” “how do we do things around here,” and “what do we do when a problem arises”. In reviewing the literature on cultural change, I have further narrowed the review to focus on changing organisational culture in the public sector.

Obvious differences exist between private organisations and public sector organisations, and despite the growing similarities between their environments (Schraeder, Tears and Jordan, 2005), there are still a variety of differences at the operational and cultural levels of these organisations. According to Koch (2005), the obvious difference is that the public sector is not profit driven in the business sense of the term (Koch, 2005, online). Koch notes that in regard to innovation:

We have found that public sector workers may be motivated by idealism, the joy of creating something new, an intense interest in the topic at hand, friendship and a sense of belonging, career ambitions, etc. (Koch, 2005, online)

Koch also notes that another important difference is that the political aspect is much more important as the public sector is at least formally controlled by elected politicians. He also adds that public managers may be less willing to take risks as they receive lower and less performance based material benefits (Koch, 2005, online).

Schraeder, Tears and Jordan also observe the differences and note that the public sector is more structured and rules oriented, decision making is more autocratic at the departmental level and that there are fewer competitors resulting in sparse marketing efforts (Schraeder, Tears and Jordan, 2004, p. 496).

In regard to the literature on organisational culture in the public sector, Parker and Bradley (2000) argue that the reforms in the public sector linked to the New Public Management with their emphasis on flexibility, adaptability and performance
management have been pursued with relatively limited empirical understanding of organisational culture in the public sector and are, therefore, potentially lacking in sensitivity to the culture characteristics of public organisations (Parker and Bradley, 2000, p. 125). Their work focuses on six organisations in the Queensland public sector and suggests that in spite of being encouraged to adopt a greater emphasis on change, flexibility, entrepreneurialism, outcomes, efficiency and productivity, that public sector organisations continue to emphasise the values of a bureaucratic or hierarchical organisational culture. Parker and Bradley also contend that:

The literature on public organisations, therefore, suggests that they have traditionally under emphasised developmental and rational aspects of organisational culture because they have lacked an orientation towards adaptability, change and risk taking (developmental culture) and they have lacked an orientation towards outcomes such as productivity and efficiency (rational culture). Instead these organisations have been oriented towards a hierarchical culture because of their emphasis on rules, procedures and stability (Parker and Bradley, 2000, p. 130).

On the other hand, work undertaken by Schraeder, Tears and Jordan in the United States provides an example of how the culture was changed in a major department of a public organisation through leading by example. They assert that the example(s) set by leaders within an organisation can have a profound impact on the willingness of employees to support or resist cultural change (Schraeder, Tears and Jordan, 2004, p. 501). They also note that the culture of an organisation is constantly evolving and that changing it is a long term endeavour.

Also of interest was the work undertaken by Worrall, Cooper and Campbell-Jamison in the United Kingdom. Their research indicated that the scale of change has been highest in the utilities followed by the public sector and then the private sector (Worrall, Cooper and Campbell-Jamison, 1998, p. 628). These findings were not consistent with general perceptions. They also explored managers’ perceptions and experiences of change across the three sectors and found that public sector managers:

Were substantially more likely to feel exploited, overloaded with information, to lack the necessary resources to do their jobs properly, to
consider organisational morale to be low and to feel subjected to blame culture (Worrall, Cooper and Campbell-Jamison, 1998, p. 629)

They concluded that there appears to be significant problems with how public sector organisations are being managed and with the volume and impact of change.

In regard to analysis and discussion of organisational culture in Australian local government, most of the discourse is by consultants and by current local practitioners. The discourse is descriptive and there does not appear to be a great deal of empirical research, analysis or evaluation.

For example, Hutchinson, editor of a magazine for senior managers in local government asserts that:

Growing numbers of council managers are recognising that the cultural traits and behaviours of their workforce play a crucial role in organisational performance. As a result, local governments are implementing a diverse and sophisticated array of measures designed to improve their internal culture (Hutchison, 2008, p. 12).

The focus of the articles on cultural change in local government in the 2008 editions of the Australian magazine 'Council Manager' is on organisational performance with different Council Chief Executives advocating different approaches and measures from the development of key values, business improvement through to innovative technologies, change management consultancies, and a variety of tools and inventories such as Life Style Inventory, Organisational Culture Inventory, and the Organisational Effectiveness Inventory. The articles reflect the views of the Chief Executive Officers, are promotional and don't provide any real objective evaluation. However it is interesting that Hutchison quotes the view held by Quentin Jones, Australian Director of organisational performance consultancy Human Synergistics, who contends that Australian councils typically have an organisational culture that is classified as “oppositional avoidance culture”, where people are expected to pose ideas and issues and change – and also keep their heads low (Hutchison, 2008, p. 13). This reflects the situation at the Glenelg Council at the outset of this research project.
The discourse on local government culture and organisational change is not dissimilar to the literature on the public sector. It is anticipated that this research project will add to the understanding of culture within the public sector, particularly local government.
Part 3 Gender and leadership in local government

It is also important for the traveller to know a bit about the other travellers on the journey or those who might be taking similar routes.

As the only female member of the Senior Management Team, I often found my style of leadership and management at odds with the other male members of the team. Although we were on similar journeys, it seemed that I was seeing and experiencing a different landscape to the other managers. At the outset of this research project I was the only female senior manager in local government in the South West of Victoria (approximately 5 Councils). Was my style different because of my gender?

Although this is discussed in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5, I undertook a literature review of this subject to gain a better understanding of the issue of women in leadership, particularly in local government.

According to Elisabeth Sexton:

> Australia is run by men. Our political, corporate, cultural, educational, media, scientific and sporting institutions are overwhelmingly male led (Sexton, 2006, online)

The Australian Local Government Women’s Association (ALGWA) in conjunction with the Federal Office of the Status of Women developed a national Framework for Women in 2001. This document was reviewed in 2007, finding that 20% of women working in local government are in a professional capacity and that this proportion has not changed since 1996 (ALGWA, 2007, p.10).

The local government sector has often been described as having a ‘blokey’ culture. Cr. Dick Gross noted at the Women in Local Government Management National Forum in 2008, that “There is no doubt that local government is still blokey,” He went on to say that “We need to observe that and understand that it has to change” (Gross, 2008, online). Research undertaken by the Australian Local Government Women’s Association in 2009 found that 63% of staff participating in their survey reported that decision making styles within their councils were problematic:
Lack of respect for women and the experience you bring to any decision making when asked for your comment or opinion if it disagrees with what they believe the answer should be. Often talked down to, negated or disregarded in a pseudo joking manner which is puerile, annoying, unprofessional and unacceptable. (Australian Local Government Women's Association, 2009, pp 12-13)

Traditionally, the business of local government has been ‘roads, rates and rubbish’; the domain of engineers who are predominantly male. Understandably, males have dominated senior manager positions and although local government has changed and taken on a social dimension, male dominated decision making and a blokey culture has continued. The ‘blokiness’ of local government was also my experience throughout this project, particularly in relation to the Senior Management Team meetings and decision making processes.

It is not only in local government where women are in the minority. The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EWOA) undertook a Census of Women in Leadership in 2008 and found negligible improvement overall in the representation of women on Australian boards and in executive management roles with numbers declining for the first time between 2006 and 2008 (Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency, 2008, p.5)

An Australian Government Agency, the EOWA consults with Australian employers annually regarding their equal opportunity initiatives. They have recently reported that despite women’s experience and expertise, some directors continue to see women’s presence as symbolic and hold them responsible only for what they see as ‘soft’ issues, like employee relations. This research also revealed that women often find that their ideas and opinions are only acknowledged when a male board member agrees with them (Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency, 2008, p. 24).

There is also a considerable body of research available on the relationship between gender role, decision style and leadership style. According to Park, the relationships between masculinity and task oriented leadership style and femininity with relationship oriented leadership style have been empirically supported (Park, 1996,
Research undertaken by Park on the relationship between gender role and leadership style provided strong support for the proposed relationships: masculinity/directive/analytical/task oriented styles and femininity/conceptual/behavioural/relations oriented styles. However, there is considerable debate about whether men and women behave differently in leadership roles although there is general agreement that women face more barriers to becoming leaders than men do (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt 2001, p. 781). Nonetheless, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt have established that leadership style findings from experimental settings tend to be gender-stereotypic. Women’s leadership styles were more democratic than men’s and they tend to have a more transformational style with greater use of contingent reward (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt 2001, p. 794-795).

Cali and Eagly note that ‘it is an exciting period for scholars who study how gender affects leadership’ (2001, p. 629). The increase in the number of women in positions of power has produced new opportunities to study gender and leadership. They go on further to add:

In response to the Gallup Poll’s question, “Do you think that this country would be governed better or worse if more women were in political office?” 57% of the respondents in the United States chose the response “better” with greater endorsement by women (62%) than men (51%). Only 17% of the respondents indicated that such a change would worsen government (Gallup 1995 as cited by Carli and Eagly, 2001, p. 630).

Interestingly, they add, ‘the idea that women might hold positions of power and use that power differently than men no longer seems as alarming to people as in the past’ (Carli and Eagly, 2001, p. 630).

In the research undertaken by Charlesworth and Baird in exploring gender equitable organisational change in two large Australian organisations, they note the debate about the strategy of “naming” the gender problem in their case study work:

One of the major challenges in our dual agenda project has been keeping gender on the table and not burying or avoiding reference to gender in our interactions for fear of backlash or reprisal within the
organisations. While we were initially concerned about being too explicit about the gender aspect and used a “work/family” discourse as a cover, once gender issues began to surface as key problems in the organisation, we have felt more secure about being more explicit, and we as researchers gained confidence as well (Charlesworth and Baird, 2001, p. 402).

Charlesworth and Baird’s research project explored the emerging issues in the application of the “dual agenda” model of gender equitable organisational change aimed at improved work/life outcomes in two large Australian organisations (Charlesworth and Baird, 2007, p. 391). The underlying assumption of the dual agenda was that making changes in work practices to increase gender equity and work/life integration can also increase the performance and effectiveness of the organisation. Their findings noted that the way in which the ‘gender issue’ is framed within the organisation is important.

Recently, other researchers have examined the gender differences in social and emotional skills and the relationship with charismatic and transformational leadership. Goleman describes emotional intelligence as the ability to manage our own emotions and our inner potential for positive relationships (self awareness and self-management) and social intelligence as social awareness and social facility (or relationship management) (2006, p. 331). Porterfield and Kleiner note that ‘without emotional intelligence, the best education, brilliant ideas accompanied by an analytical mind will not constitute a stable and productive leader’ (2005, p. 49). They cite numerous studies where women scored higher on emotional intelligence tests than men (Mayer, Caruso and Salovey, 1999; Mayer and Geher, 1996, Mandell and Pherwani, 2003) and tentatively suggest that females may possess a greater emotional intelligence (Porterfield and Kleiner, 2005, p. 53-54).

Groves’ study of charismatic leadership found that female leaders scored higher on social and emotional skills (Groves, 2005, p. 30). He further notes:

Specifically, women were more likely to demonstrate environmental sensitivity, such as recognizing constraints in their respective organisation’s social and cultural environment (cultural norms, lack of grass roots support, etc.) and identifying the abilities, skills, and limitations of
organisational members. Furthermore, women leaders were also more likely to demonstrate sensitivity to organisational members’ needs and feelings, including the ability to influence followers by developing mutual liking and respect (Groves, 2005, p. 40).

However Davis noted that transformational leadership characteristics (self-confidence, visionary, ability to inspire followers, mission focused, team builder, ability to listen, hear and accept the input of others) were not unique to the female gender (Davis, 2007, p. ii). Her research found that the barrier most often faced by female leaders was being viewed differently to male leaders, and that mentors and positive role models are critical to the development of female leaders.

Yoder explores strategies for enhancing women’s effectiveness as leaders and notes that in practice most leadership exists along a continuum that ranges from male dominated, hierarchical, performance-oriented, power expressive and thus masculinized contexts at one extreme to transformational contexts that stress the empowerment of followers at the other pole (2001, p. 825). Their recommendations fall into three categories: what women themselves can do; what organisations can do; and changes to the context that make it more congenial for women. Of most interest to this research, their individual strategies include:

- Talking and listening extensively with subordinates, avoiding dominant speech acts, using humour to lighten tense exchanges, and being respectful of others
- Adopting a group oriented rather than a self oriented motivational interest
- Bide time and become solidly entrenched in a group before attempting to innovate changes
- Be exceptionally competent (Yoder, 2001, p. 820)

This was useful information at this initial stage of my research, however I found that I needed to keep returning to the literature on this topic throughout the life of the project as I grappled with being heard, acknowledged and having any influence with the Senior Management Team and Councillors. The maps that I discovered at this stage didn’t provide enough detail for the journey, and I found that I needed to
forage for more detailed maps and travel accounts to help me as I became increasingly frustrated at different points of the journey.

**Part 4 Disadvantage**

Some of the work that I was undertaking over the period of this research project involved working with some of the more disadvantaged communities across the shire. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the disadvantage issue had effectively been swept under the carpet by both state and local government. Changing Council’s priorities to focus on the health, education and other aspects of disadvantage confronting residents was one of the objectives of this research project and also became something of a mission for me. This was a major part of the landscape; however, it was largely unexplored and not well understood by councillors, staff and the broader community. Many of my frustrations throughout the project involved my attempts to work towards a shared understanding of these issues across the Council.

As indicated in Chapter 1, The Glenelg Shire is one of the most disadvantaged shires in Victoria. According to the Victorian Local Governance Association’s (VLGA) analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics Socio-economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) Index (Victorian Local Governance Association, 2008, online), ‘The municipality of Glenelg has an Index of 962, which ranks it at number 14 in level of disadvantage among the 79 Municipalities of Victoria - placing it among the most disadvantaged 18% of Municipalities in the state’.

I needed to understand how this degree of disadvantage impacts on how we govern, provide services and engage with the community, particularly in the more disadvantaged areas, and so I turned to the literature.

A search of the literature was undertaken to find out what other local governments were doing to address the issue of disadvantage, poverty and lack of education in their communities. I began with a scan of the discourse on poverty to provide me with a basic understanding of the nature and causes of poverty. McCallum, the President of the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) posted this definition in his article on poverty in Australia:
One widely accepted definition describes poverty as “an enforced lack of socially perceived necessities”. This means poverty is a relative term defined by society to describe the people who cannot participate in the activities that most people take for granted. Some of the experiences of people living in poverty, such as juggling payments of bills, are widely shared by others in the community (McCallum, 2005, online).

ACOSS estimates that there are around 2 million people living in poverty in Australia, based on the number of jobless people reliant on social security payments, and that much of this poverty exists in outer metropolitan suburbs and regional areas. McCallum contends that there are currently 340,000 long term unemployed people, and across Australia 800,000 children are growing up in jobless families. ‘Unemployment payments are as low as $200 per week for a single adult and jobless people often live in poverty’ (McCallum, 2005, online).

Porter and Trezise note that there has been intense debate on the nature and extent of poverty in Australia in recent years (Porter and Trezise, 2006, p. 35). They also note that despite over a decade of economic growth, recent studies (Melbourne Institute 2003) suggest that poverty in Australia is increasing. In their discussion of poverty they explain the theoretical approaches and divide them into either 'right wing' or 'left wing' approaches. They note that the 'right wing' approach emphasises:

- Individual choice and responsibility, drawing attention to the roles of moral character and motivation in determining an individual’s socio economic status (Porter and Trezise, 2006, p. 35).

The other approach, characterized as ‘left wing’, highlights broader social and economic structures:

- This structural approach explores the class and economic processes that limit and anticipate the opportunities open to individuals and the choices they can make (Porter and Trezise, 2006, p. 35).

They go on to discuss these approaches in more detail and examine the structural explanations of poverty. In this discussion they quote Spiker (1993) as arguing that
‘structural explanations of poverty highlight socio-economic processes that favour and are maintained by social elites’ (Porter and Trezise, 2006, p. 39).

A 2007 research report on deprivation and social exclusion in Australia by Saunders, Naidoo and Griffiths, provides evidence for the development of a new series of indicators of disadvantage ‘that are more closely connected with the lives and experiences of those living in poverty’ (Saunders, Naidoo and Griffiths, 2007, p. 87). They found that the concepts of deprivation and social exclusion are closely linked with poverty, however:

Both concepts are multi-dimensional and more firmly grounded in the actual experience of missing out, and each draws on such evidence to generate new insights into the nature and impact of disadvantage (Saunders, Naidoo and Griffiths, 2007, p. 87).

Their work found that the deprivation indicators have highlighted the fact that many in the community are still unable to afford even the most basic needs for food, shelter and health. The exclusion indicators have shown how lack of access to important health and community services, social isolation and low economic capacity prevent many people from participating socially and economically (Saunders, Naidoo and Griffiths, 2007, p. 88). They outline the issues most relevant to local government as follows:

- Lack of access to key services is a barrier for many people (transport, child care, home and community care, etc.)
- Ensuring that all children have the chance to develop to their full capacity in family, community and educational settings (maternal and child health services, early interventions, after school and vacation programs, etc.)
- Providing practical training with computing, budgeting, language and educational skills (public libraries, neighbourhood houses, etc.)

Porter and Trezise also note that direct support for children and families, particularly the vulnerable and disadvantaged, does much to reduce the social and personal costs of mental and physical illness (Porter and Trezise, 2006, p. 41).
Engels and Dufty examine government anti-poverty strategies in Australia. They assert that little has actually been written on this subject because ‘in Australia anti-poverty strategies are uncoordinated and dispersed across several tiers of government’ (Engels and Dufty, 2006, p. 155). In regard to local government, they note that as local government is not fully autonomous and mostly falls within the jurisdiction of State Government, their capacity to undertake anti-poverty programs is largely restricted to offering individual and household waivers or discounts from local rates and charges (Engels and Dufty, 2006, p. 165). They also assert that the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program provided by local government reinforces the ‘provision of local welfare assistance to the ‘deserving’ poor - the aged and disabled’. They do however note that these services are provided at subsidized rates and help to reduce the living costs of eligible recipients, and therefore it does have the potential to help reduce poverty among the aged and disabled population (Engels and Dufty, 2006, p. 165).

They go on further to suggest that local government authorities do have some discretionary capacity to decide where their resources will be directed and what policy agendas are prioritised. They also assert that although some Councils have undertaken studies into the extent of poverty in their communities, they will be unable to fully implement the recommendations in these reports due to ‘financial restraints and the broader structural nature of poverty emanating from outside their municipal boundaries’ (Engels and Dufty, 2006, p. 165).

Engels and Dufty also note that Knox City Council provides a range of support services for the poor, including assessment and referral, financial counselling, emergency relief, no-interest loans and help with gambling problems. They finish off with the observation that:

All three Councils work closely with religious and welfare agencies in their municipalities to help alleviate the impact of poverty upon their communities. Unfortunately, the level of need is much greater than their discretionary resources, so poverty continues in these three Victorian municipalities (Engels and Dufty, 2006, p. 166).
As well as the discourse on the multi-dimensional nature of the problems facing the inhabitants of disadvantaged communities, there is also discussion on the emergent understanding that more ‘joined up’ approaches are required by all levels of government, the private sector and communities to address the problems of disadvantaged localities (Prior, 2008, p. 1). This is related to the work undertaken by the Glenelg Shire Council in the partnership approach with the Department of Human Services Office of Housing in establishing the ‘North Portland Strategic Partnership Network’ to ensure that a ‘joined up approach’ is undertaken to working with this very disadvantaged community. This is discussed in later chapters.

Also related to the work being undertaken in Glenelg is the neighbourhood renewal policy approach of the Victorian and other governments in Australia and internationally (New South Wales and the United Kingdom). According to Randolph:

> The recognition of the complex interrelated nature of social exclusion and the need for a range of place-focused and integrated policy initiatives to assist in tackling social exclusion in neighbourhoods and sub areas of cities has now become a mainstream concern of policy (Randolph, 2004, p.63)

Randolph also asserts that Australia has not matched the level of policy innovation or integration of European initiatives, with some exceptions by state housing authorities (Randolph, 2004, p. 64). Randolph reviews the range of policies and programs that currently direct resources to disadvantaged communities in New South Wales, and argues that although they are important, they are fragmented, lack a spatial targeting framework and are poorly integrated in terms of local outcomes (Randolph, 2004, p. 63).

Closer to home and more recently, the State Government of Victoria undertook an evaluation of their Neighbourhood Renewal Program (Victoria. Department of Human Services, 2008, online). The aim of this program was to narrow the gap between disadvantaged neighbourhoods and the rest of the state by ‘bringing together the resources and ideas of residents, governments, local businesses and community groups to tackle disadvantage and build more inclusive communities’. Launched in 2002, 19 locations were selected across Victoria in areas of public
housing. Community and local stakeholders worked with the government to prepare an area-based local action plan and oversee its implementation.

An evaluation of this program was undertaken in 2008 with the key findings that it is having a positive impact and is narrowing the gap. However, it was also discovered that ‘a small number of indicators haven’t improved and that in order for it to have a long term and sustained effect, Neighbourhood Renewal needs to be mainstreamed and scaled up’ (Victoria, Department of Human Services, 2008 online). Although the evaluation was undertaken by external consultants, it was funded by the State Government, and one could afford to be cynical about the findings, particularly as further funding was not forthcoming for the program.

The work being undertaken by the Glenelg Council relevant to this project is further discussed in Chapter 5.

A research paper by Prior has also explored the role that local government has played in the development of initiatives to redress concentration of disadvantage in specific neighbourhoods of Australian cities with a case study approach based on the Penrith City Council in NSW (Prior, 2008, p.13). He asserts that:

> Local governments have been identified as potential drivers for renewal initiatives because of their control over physical and social planning at the local level, their awareness of local community needs and strengths, and their ability to integrate these to create responses to local issues (Prior, 2008, p. 13)

He found that the Penrith model offers a successful model that other councils might draw on as they develop their own approaches to addressing disadvantage, however he noted that (in the words of one council officer):

> The development of integrated programs like the Penrith Neighbourhood Renewal Program requires a collaborative process and willingness to change. The program that we have today was only made possible through dialogue, which takes time, and our willingness to accept and adjust to the domino effect of change that impacted right down into the way in which council operates (Prior, 2008, p. 14)

Although not explicitly stated by Prior, local government also needs additional resources: both funds and staff to undertake work in this area.
The initial forays into the literature were useful and informative. However as many travellers find, they need more detailed maps and information when they find themselves in difficult and rugged terrains. Much of the territory I encountered was uncharted, and although I returned again and again to the literature, I often became lost in dead ends and the roads often went nowhere. This experience is described in greater detail in Chapter 4. The next chapter describes the vehicle and equipment used for the journey.
CHAPTER 3
Chapter 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

We should be taught not to wait for inspiration to start a thing. Action always generates inspiration. Inspiration seldom generates action (Frank Tibolt, 1992, online).

This Chapter describes the research methodology used in this project. This includes a description of the methodology, methods, and techniques that were used.

The need to be participative underpinned my approach to this research. My intention was to ‘involve all relevant parties in actively examining together current action (which they experience as problematic) in order to change and improve it’ (Wadsworth, 1998, online). My intention was to be genuinely democratic; with the senior management team acting as the critical reference group, we would examine the issues and seek solutions with all parties involved in the discussions. I had anticipated that the methodology that I would be using would be action research. My intention was that this approach would encompass a participative action research style. However, as the research evolved and I developed an enhanced understanding of methodology through the literature, I realised that it is better described as ‘Insider Action Research’ with an ethnographic dimension. This approach is described in greater detail later in this chapter.

As outlined in Chapter 1, consistent with the By Project approach to post graduate research, I had additional research objectives. They were:

a) To develop my skills as a manager and leader in the local government context (A more knowledgeable and skilled practitioner)

b) To gain an understanding of organisational cultural change and learning (a contribution to professional and scholarly knowledge)

c) To improve the morale, confidence and skills of key Glenelg Council employees; improve the Council’s relationship with the residents of the Glenelg Shire and contribute to a change in Council’s priorities in order to focus its attention on the health, education and other aspects of disadvantage confronting its residents (Some body of work or change in
practice normally in the form of / represented by a product or artefact of some kind)

As with most action research journeys, these objectives changed over the course of the project. This is discussed in further detail in Chapter 6.

**Research Methodology**

I was familiar with the action research methodology through the work I had undertaken for my Masters Degree in 2002. Also undertaken in the ‘Research by Project’ framework, I based my former research project on the model of action research described by Cherry (1999). I therefore felt comfortable with this style of work and planned this current research project around these models. My intention was to share the research findings and data with the Senior Management Team, and I had anticipated that as a group we would plan and take action on these findings and reflect on the actions and outcomes in ‘a continuous cycle of planning, action, and review of action’ (Cherry, 1999, p.1).

My original research objectives involved developing my skills, gaining understanding and improving aspects of the practices of the Glenelg Council workforce. I chose action research as the methodology as it provides an explicit link between a systematic enquiry and changes in practice. Changes or improvements are achieved thorough ‘cycles of investigation, action, and reflection, while at the same time reporting it in a way that is useful to both to the project in hand and potentially to outsiders’ (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010, p. 88). Insider Action Research also has the advantage of providing the researcher with the opportunity to reflect and develop her own practice, providing an added personal dimension to the research for deeper learning and self development.

Questioning lies at the heart of action research; not only is it concerned with questioning the content of the data, the values, intentions and actions of the practitioner but just as importantly the methodology itself. It is as if the practitioner has to continually justify the research approach that she is following. Throughout this project I critically analysed the methodology that I was following. As a consequence of this critical reflection and engagement with the literature, notably
the work of Coghlan (2003, 2007, and 2010) my understanding of action research became more refined and instead of describing my methodology as ‘action research’ I adopted ‘Insider Action Research’. This more accurately reflects the reality of the research project.

Insider Action Research is undertaken by researchers within their own organisations. It differs from traditional action research where the action researcher and a client collaborate in the diagnosis of a problem and in the development of a solution based on the diagnosis (Bryman, 2004; Coghlan, 2003). In Insider Action Research, the researcher is an ‘insider’, or a complete member of the organisation and not one who joins the organisation temporarily for the purpose of the research.

According to David Coghlan; ‘in Insider Action Research the researcher is not only concerned with studying some aspect of the organisation, but with changing it’ (2003, p. 456). Insider Action Research also has an ethnographic dimension as the researcher is immersed in a setting, and gathers data through the acts of observing and listening to what is being said within that setting. In this project, there were times where I anticipated that I would be taking on the role of participant observer: watching behaviour, listening to conversations, and asking questions with additional data collected through interviews, surveys and the collection of relevant documents. My intention was to use this information to inform the planning of action cycles and reflections.

The Insider Action Research approach provides a number of advantages over the traditional research approach. Firstly, it is valuable because it reflects the experience of practitioners who are complete members of their organisations, and it has the potential to make a unique contribution to organisational research, especially in relation to how they change and how individuals understand and undertake their roles within that environment. It can also be useful in providing deeper understanding of change management and can ‘enable the deeper aspects of organisational change to be uncovered and researched’ (Coghlan, 2003, p. 461).

Secondly, the researcher is immersed in the environment and therefore has access to many ongoing settings with regular interaction with the members of the
organisation and even potentially an easy passage through the organisation. Bryman discusses the difficulties for researchers in gaining access to groups and closed settings (2004, p. 297), however this is not so difficult for the insider; the ongoing member of the organisation. The insider has access to internal intelligence which can be useful in addressing and solving practical problems in organisations.

Despite these strengths this approach is not without its difficulties. One of the difficulties of using Insider Action Research as a methodology, particularly for a PhD, is associated with the often linear structure of the candidature and the PhD fit with the more traditional research approach. As Sarah and others have noted, there is a tension between these requirements and “an action research mindset of emergence where you start with a “loose idea” that allows for outcomes to unfold and reveal themselves through cycles of action and reflection within a dynamic context” (Sarah et al, 2002, p. 536). Action research does not necessarily involve the testing of a hypothesis; rather it allows the researcher to develop knowledge or understanding as part of practice. The need for an arbitrary beginning and end in a research project is also problematic in the continuing world of the organisation and the work of the practitioner. The researcher has to make an arbitrary decision on the start and finish date and define the project within this time frame. As Sarah and others also note, a pragmatic approach is required to accommodate the ‘project mindset’ within an ‘action research’ mindset (Sarah et al, 2002, p. 540). This does not just apply to PhDs, but also often applies to the linear structure of most project plans and organisations.

There are also occasions when there may be an insider-outsider dichotomy in play. As a woman in a male senior management team and as a researcher undertaking academic research in a community where education is not highly valued, there were times when I felt more of an ‘outsider’ than an insider. The difficulties of undertaking this research project with these challenges is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

In addition, other difficulties can arise from the political and personal dimensions of undertaking action research within your own organisation. There are often many changes with power shifting within the organisational environment. This
unpredictable dynamic with power ebbing and flowing often leads to uncertainty; environments can change rapidly and affect the sustainability of the project. In this research project, the Glenelg Council employed three different Chief Executive Officers from the time I conceived the project in early 2007 to its completion in 2010. (I also finished this research project as Acting CEO; a role that was completely unforeseen). The Senior Management Team also changed in this time with the conclusion of two contracts and two new Group Managers employed in their place; a fifty percent change over in this period. Electoral cycles and political cycles can also impact on the sustainability of action research projects. In November 2008, Council elections were held resulting in three (out of seven) new councillors. This also resulted in a change in the dynamics, different priorities, and ways of working. Some of these challenges are discussed in the first part of Chapter 4.

Whilst organisational politics can pose challenges for the Insider Action Researcher, another real challenge results from the tension between the need to be close to the setting and at the same time create distance in order to be objective and to be able to stand back, assess, and reflect. The researcher and participants also come to the project with their own preconceived ideas, their own experiences, and views of the world. This can lead to a range of differing assumptions and sometimes misunderstandings.

Because it is undertaken by insiders, this approach to research therefore needs to be robust. Advocates of this approach, such as Brannick and Coghlan acknowledge the need for a robust and systematic approach. They assert that it is valid and useful in providing important knowledge about ‘what organisations are really like’ (2007, p. 72). They go on to contend that the advantages of Insider Action Research include gaining primary access to the organisational system, as well as access to the documentation, data people and meetings (depending on the research topic and political perception of that topic). They discuss ‘preunderstanding’ of the organisational dynamics and the ‘lived experience’ of the researcher’s own organisation as advantages for the Insider Action Researcher. However they also note the difficulties in managing the dual roles of being a practitioner and a
researcher. I too experienced these difficulties in this research project. These difficulties are revealed in the next chapter.

**Ethics and ethical challenges**

This research project is multidimensional and data was gathered from a range of stakeholders, including local citizens, elected local government representatives, senior executives from Glenelg Shire Council, work colleagues and staff. Each stakeholder group posed particular methodological and ethical challenges. I was conscious that some of these stakeholders may have felt vulnerable.

Insider Action Research confronts particular ethical challenges (Holian, 1999, Ferguson 2001, Coghlan, 2007). My own experience is detailed in the next chapter; however the dilemma most frequently described in the literature is that of role conflict and the ethical issues arising from the difficulty of managing the dual roles of practitioner and researcher. When information is provided by colleagues and other members of the workplace, it may be difficult to ascertain whether it is provided in confidence to the researcher or the senior manager in the organisation. If it is provided to the senior manager they may be obliged to act on it, particularly if it has the potential to prevent harm to others. There are occasions where this may be avoided by clarifying the role of researcher / practitioner with the person providing the information; however this may not always be possible. There is also the difficulty of maintaining the distinction when recalling this information; was this piece of information provided to the researcher or the senior manager? And what course of action, if any should be undertaken? Detailed notes and the journal entries helped. In the fast moving life of the organisation, the mental and emotional energy required to work through these dilemmas is considerable.

Holian and Brooks provide a number of ethical questions for consideration by potential insider researchers:

1. How to ensure participants are informed and her/his decision to participate (or not to participate) is free? The nature and extent of the level of informed consent and freedom to choose not to participate in events or behaviour that may be part of
‘normal’ work, that could later be included in that selected to be included in the ‘research’ or research publications.

2. Who owns and therefore controls the release of the data? The nature of the information or data of interest, who ‘owns’ this and who can ‘release’ it for the research purposes requested.

3. What is the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the participants? The nature of the relationship between the ‘human subjects’ who may potentially be involved in the research and the ‘researcher’

4. How can the participants be protected? The nature and extent of anonymity and confidentiality for individuals and the organisation including between potential participants or ‘human subjects’ involved in ‘normal’ meetings or ‘special’ group discussions for research purposes (Holian and Brooks, 2004, online)

The dilemmas outlined by Holian and Brooks (2004, online) were considered as part of the research process and although the dilemmas are discussed as separate issues, they are interrelated. In this kind of research, these issues are tightly interwoven, however I have unravelled them and discussed each in isolation, outlining the action taken to address the various issues:

1. Informed consent
   - Where data were collected through interview or survey, participants could choose to be part of the research project. They were given the opportunity to self nominate after they had received details of the research project. I also described the project in the Council staff newsletter (‘The SouWester’) in April 2008. The staff newsletter is distributed to all employees and created awareness of the research project. Information about the project and further requests for volunteer participants were also distributed via email in July and August 2008 (see Working Document no. 8 in the Portfolio).
   - Information about the project was presented to the Senior Management Group and through a Council Briefing Paper (see Working Documents no. 2 and 4 in the Portfolio).
- All participants (staff and councillor interviews and community surveys) were provided with a copy of the Project Information Statement, and were given the opportunity to ask questions and then asked to sign the Consent Form (Appendix 3).

2. Ownership of the data
- Most of the organisational data (e.g. the information about the organisation in chapter one) used in this project is public data usually available from public documents such as annual reports or Council Meeting Minutes. Other data have been aggregated or pseudonyms used so that individuals are not identifiable.

3. Relationships
- Employees who reported directly to me were not included in this study
- Participants were asked to forward their nomination to an independent third party – this was intended to avoid any potential for employees to feel compromised and it was anticipated that this would strengthen the validity of the study. The independent third party also checked the willingness of the volunteers to participate and ensured that they felt comfortable.

4. Protection of participants
- In order to maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for staff members, Councillors and other participants.
- The community survey participants were unrecognised in this research. The surveys were addressed to “the householder” and the addresses were randomly selected from the rates database. The addresses were loaded into an Excel spreadsheet and a formula was designed for the random selection of 500 addresses. The surveys were mailed through the RMIT Hamilton Campus and completed surveys were returned to this address. The completed surveys were not linked to any address and the participants were unable to be recognised.

In this project I also encountered a fifth question. As Holian and Brooks note, another potential problem for insider research relates to the potential to ‘encounter
problems due to unexpected and potentially negative or even dangerous outcomes for organisations and individuals’ (Holian and Brooks, 2004, online). There is the potential for damage to the organisation’s reputation and relationships where information is not handled sensitively. The findings may also have political consequences and the potential to damage reputations and end the continued employment of the researcher by the organisation. In this research project, where there have been any ethical questions of this nature, I have chosen to exclude the discussion of some events and findings in order to protect the organisation and individuals within the organisation from potential identification. This is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Research Methods

The research methods are the vehicle for delivering a robust research project. Unlike other forms of research, an action approach can rarely be finalised at the outset since ‘it is a process through which solutions and insight are generated in an explorative manner’ (Williamson, 2000, p. 147). There are, however, a number of techniques that can be applied in order to ensure that this type of research can be carried out in a rigorous manner, to generate reliable and, to use Kemmis’ notion, “truthful” data (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000).

Data collection

The following tools were utilised to collect data for this research project:

1. **Research Journal**

The research journal was a key component of this research project. Coghlan and Brannick note that journal keeping enables the researcher to ‘integrate information and experiences which, when understood, help you to understand your reasoning processes and consequent behaviour and so anticipate experiences before embarking on them’ (2010, p. 27). A journal may provide many useful functions, however in this research project it had four principal functions:

1. To record observations. The day to day work of a practitioner – researcher is busy with many things happening, often at the one time. The journal was
used to note events, conversations, and various meeting outcomes to assist with recollection.

2. As a means of catharsis. The journal was utilised to vent emotions, in particular those of frustration and at times of anger.

3. A place to record reflections on action. The journal was utilised to stimulate thinking about experiences based on the actions and decisions of the action research cycle.

4. To analyse reflections and to connect with the relevant literature. This is described in greater detail later in the data analysis section of this chapter.

2. Interviews

In the qualitative interview, the researcher aims to acquire rich detailed answers (Bryman, 2004, p. 320). This objective shaped my approach to the interviews conducted as part of this research project. Prior to the interview I prepared a set of interview questions. These questions were based on my research objectives and on my understanding of the context (see Appendix 3 for the list of questions). Although there was a set of interview questions, the interviews were semi structured to gain the perspectives and points of view of the interviewees. The semi structured interviews provided insight into what the interviewee saw as relevant and important and enabled the interviewer to ask new questions, vary the order and in some cases the words used in the question.

There were two rounds of staff interviews. While my initial intention was that each person would be interviewed twice, not all participants were willing, still employed, or able to participate in the second round of interviews. The details of each round are outlined below:

Round 1: July – August 2008 (18 interviews)
Round 2: July – August 2009 (9 interviews)
Table No. 3 Staff interviewee profile (round 1 of interviews)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male interviewees</th>
<th>33%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female interviewees</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>45 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of years working in local government</td>
<td>13 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average job satisfaction rate (out of 5)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews were also conducted with six Councillors over 2008-2009. Three Councillors were from the Council elected for the period 2004-2008, and the other three were from the Council elected for the period 2008-2012.

Table No. 4 Councillor interviewee profile (6 councillors)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male interviewees</th>
<th>84%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female interviewees</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>61 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number of years as elected Councillor</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three Consultants working in a variety of contractual roles also participated in interviews. These contractors were considered to have a unique view of the Council as they worked with other Councils and organisations and yet had enough experience with the Glenelg Council to be able to provide valuable information for the project.

The data from these interviews is included in Appendix No. 5, and is discussed in Chapter 5.

3. Surveys

As a researcher and practitioner, I have worked on the assumption that I have a responsibility to be as informed as possible before taking purposeful action. As a consequence, part way through this project I surveyed the residents of Portland to gain a snapshot of their level of satisfaction with Council services, facilities, staff, and councillor performance. This survey also was designed with my objective of improving the Council’s relationship with the residents of the Glenelg Shire (research
objective no. 3) in mind. My intention was to use these data to identify specific areas for action. The survey documentation is included in Appendix No. 2.

As described earlier in the ethics section of this chapter, 500 surveys were addressed to ‘the householder’ with addresses randomly selected from the Council rate data base. This is the normal process adopted by the Council. The selection was made utilizing a simple excel spreadsheet formula. Although the householder addresses were randomly selected, the responses were not, as respondents could decide, based on their available time and interest, whether to complete the survey. It was also expected that those residents with a particular issue with Council would also be more likely to complete the survey. For example, at the time of the survey decisions about planning permits were a particular local political issue and residents who had been frustrated with the process of obtaining a planning permit may have had an added incentive to respond to the survey. Nonetheless, it was expected that the survey results would provide an indication of the views and perceptions of Portland residents.

Surveys were mailed out at the end of May 2009 with a two week turnaround period. A letter of introduction from the Council Chief Executive Officer and a letter of explanation were also included with the survey. A copy of the survey and letters are provided in the survey documentation at Appendix No. 2. Although I provided a return date of 12 June, the completed surveys trickled in over the next 2 months. By the end of July I had received 74 completed surveys – 14.8% of those mailed out and 0.7% of the population. Although it was a small number of completed surveys, it did provide me with some indication of the views of the Portland residents. These are summarised in Appendix No. 4.

**Informal discussion, conversations, and meetings**

Throughout the course of the project, informal discussion and conversations were held via phone, email, and face to face at meetings and other forums. As described earlier, this is the ethnographic dimension of the project. I was also a participant observer who observed interaction, listened to conversations, examined documents, and made notes on these impressions and experiences. This was simple
and unstructured; there wasn’t an observation schedule and in many cases I had no influence over the situation being observed. Some of these events included Senior Management Team meetings, Councillor Briefing Workshops and Council Meetings.

This approach also provided me with the opportunity to observe and listen in order to inform the planning of any actions and also to gain an appreciation of the effects of any actions. Although I captured some of these events in my notes, I often relied on my memory to record conversations later in my research journal.

Methods Triangulation

Several techniques were employed to collect data for this project. This multi method approach involved triangulation of methods as well as of sources. Triangulation is a practice often employed in interpretivist research to add rigour, breadth, and depth to the study and entails using more than one method or source of data in the study of social phenomena (Bryman, 2004, p. 275).

Methods triangulation was undertaken to check the consistency of findings by the utilisation of different data collection methods, and triangulation of sources was undertaken to cross check for consistency of the information derived at different times and from different people. For example, interviews were undertaken of staff members and Councillors, and the Portland community was surveyed to find out whether there was a shared view of ‘community need’ and what was needed from the Glenelg Shire Council to address those needs.

Data Collection Timeline

The timeframe was as follows (see relevant documents in the appendices):

Table No. 5  Data collection timeframe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Outcome / Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2008</td>
<td>Briefing Paper describing the Research Project was presented to Glenelg Shire Councillor’s Workshop</td>
<td>5 out of 9 Councillors indicated that they would be interested in participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 April</td>
<td>Article in Staff Newsletter providing information about the project and</td>
<td>8 employees volunteered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 July 2008</td>
<td>Email sent to ‘everyone’ providing information about the project and seeking volunteer participants</td>
<td>A further 7 employees volunteered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 July 2008</td>
<td>Email to Councillors providing information about the project and asking them to participate in the interviews</td>
<td>3 Councillors volunteered for interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 August 2008</td>
<td>Another email sent to ‘everyone’ providing information about the project and seeking more volunteer participants</td>
<td>A further 3 employees volunteered (a total of 18 employee volunteers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June – July 2009</td>
<td>Surveys were mailed out to 500 randomly selected residents of Portland</td>
<td>74 surveys returned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2009</td>
<td>Follow up interviews held with staff</td>
<td>9 employees undertook follow up interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data analysis**

**Research Journal**

As mentioned in the previous section on data collection, the research journal was also used for data analysis, and as the basis for reflection. Most of my reflection was also done informally (usually while driving to and from work – an hour each way), and the research journal was central to the process of undertaking this research and became an increasingly significant component of the process.

In this research project, as most practitioners do, I was reflecting in action and also reflecting on action. Reflecting in action has been described as improvising (Schon, 1991, p. 55) or as thinking on your feet. It entails building new understandings to inform actions in the situation that is unfolding. On the other hand, reflecting on action is done later, after the event or activity. The act of reflecting on action enables the practitioner to spend time exploring why they acted as they did, what
was happening in the event or activity. Questions and ideas about activities and practice are then developed.

According to Cherry (1999, p. 31), ‘Learning is central to the action research paradigm’, and the art of reflection is necessary for deep growth and self-understanding. In my research, there were clear instances where reflection provided opportunities for learning. When I was reflecting on some of the interviews conducted with the staff and Councillors, I could see that I was having difficulties in managing the dual role of practitioner and researcher. I especially found this difficult when I was provided with some confidential information about issues that had the potential for a negative impact on the organisation. In writing about it in my journal, I was able to see it from a distance and identify, and often avoid, the conflict. This is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. In this sense, the research journal was a device to promote understanding.

Reflection did not always produce a changed course of action, but often enabled the ‘stepping back’ to view various activities and the unfolding of events with greater clarity. Links were able to be made to professional theory, thereby having the potential to lead to interpretation and understanding, increased self-awareness and eventual empowerment. Examples of where this occurred in this project are discussed in the next two chapters.

The practice of reflection and reflective action was undertaken throughout the course of this project and were recorded in a research journal. I found that journal writing provided the opportunity to return to an experience in an attempt to develop new understandings and perspectives to guide future actions. It also provided a way of considering the ethics of the power-knowledge relationships with participants and the significance of data provided.

Journaling is an important mechanism for learning to reflect on and gain insights into preunderstanding (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010, p. 117). Furthermore, Coghlan and Brannick assert that it enables integration of information and experiences and development of awareness and attentiveness skills (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010, p. 27-28). In this research project, the journal was instrumental in capturing not only the
experiences, but also the emotions (particularly the frustrations) and the associated ruminations.

Theme and content analysis

The techniques of theme analysis and content analysis were used to analyse the qualitative data from the research journal, interviews and surveys. This type of analysis is highly inductive with the themes emerging from the data, rather than being imposed by the researcher.

Notes were taken during the interview process, and the occasional verbatim quote was recorded within the notes with the permission of the interviewee. The interview notes and research journal were firstly transcribed into electronic documents, and then examined for common themes or categories. A list of the themes was compiled in an Excel spreadsheet and then coded. The codes were then applied to the transcripts and the number of times a theme recurred throughout the transcripts was also entered on the spreadsheet. These spreadsheets are included as Appendices 4 and 5. Recurring issues and themes were then identified and used to inform the planning of the action research cycles.

The interview transcripts were also a rich source of information, and direct quotes have also been used in Chapter 5 to emphasise and illustrate the findings and discussion.

Conclusion

The aim of action researchers, according to McNiff and Whitehead (2000, p. 200) ‘is to try to make all our new moments more life enhancing than the previous ones’. Hence the researcher sees the process of thinking in action, and reflection on thinking in action, as a generative transformational process. On many occasions as soon as an answer is reached, another question is generated. Sometimes, there were no answers, or circumstances changed and answers were not required. Such is the nature of action research.

Although this research project commenced in 2007, the data collection was undertaken from April 2008 to May 2010 (approximately two years). The findings and
outcomes are discussed in the next two chapters. However this project, as with all action research projects, is not neatly bookended within a particular period of time. The work continues as the Glenelg Council continues to grapple with improving responsiveness to community requests, and meeting the ever increasing demands of residents, visitors, and citizens.
Chapter 4
Chapter 4

MAKING SENSE OF THE EXPERIENCE AND THE DATA

Introduction

The next stage of writing the story is to reflect on it and test your insights as to what themes emerge. Then you may find that you are surfacing images or themes for the periods or projects which capture your sense of the meaning of the project and lead you to a synthesis (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010, p. 146).

Although Coghlan and Brannick assert that writing is ‘the key to synthesis; where things begin to make sense, and meanings form’, I found this part to be the most difficult part of the project. They also maintain that the writing process becomes an action research project ‘as you engage in cycles of drafting and revising, seeking comments from your supervisor, reflecting, understanding how what you have written fits into the whole, and formulating conclusions’ (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010, p. 146). In my experience, this process was far more arduous and chaotic than that espoused in much of the literature. There were countless times when I lost my way and despairsed of ever finding a way to capture the essence of my research. The neat thesis writing cycles described by Coghlan and Brannick (2010, p.142) and Zuber-Skerritt and Fletcher (2007, p. 421) did not reflect my disordered and eclectic experience.

My intention was to write a chronological account. However I found it difficult to make sense of the research and write it as a moment by moment narrative when I was still working in the same environment, on the same projects and with the same people. I had changed; the work-research environment had moved on and was often very different. It was challenging to work in this dynamic, demanding environment whilst having to think and make sense of a completely different place. My workplace had changed over the period of this research project. I was working in a different environment, but I was also looking backwards and trying to make sense of the earlier workplace. Moving from space to space was a struggle as I grappled with the complexity of the different landscapes. I was frustrated and in
order to deal with this, found myself imposing order on my writing to be able to make some sense of and communicate the work and research. Throughout this chapter I have included direct quotations from my research journal in bold italics to illustrate and provide evidence for discussion and my assertions.

This research process was also not that of a nicely staged action research project. The actual reality of the workplace contradicts the orderly cycles of action research as described by Cherry (1999, p.2) and Coghlan and Brannick as a process of ‘consciously and deliberately planning, taking action, reflecting and evaluating the action leading to further planning and so on’ (2010, p. 5). Although there is discussion of the messiness of this approach in the literature, there is almost no mention of the personal and emotional aspects and their potential effects on the research. In the real workplace, when the researcher is also working with the community, councillors, and other managers, priorities change and the unexpected often occurs to disrupt any planning or planned actions. Human nature, politics and culture comprise ‘the shadow side’ as described by Fox, Martin and Green (2007, p. 59) and the covert or unknown can be troublesome and result in disjointed, incomplete and shambolic activities.

Doing action research in your own organisation is often muddled and convoluted. I was not autonomous and the personal nature is exacerbated in a country town. No-one can prepare you for the difficulties of research in one’s own workplace. The action research cycles are more like a disarray of snail trails or sheep entrails. This is the reality of my workplace:

*We discussed the organisational silos at the Senior Management Team Meeting last week.*

*Staff in one department don’t necessarily know what is going on in another area. We planned to invite customer service staff to attend each of the departmental meetings to find out what is happening. We also decided that each department would also do a flow chart of what happens and who does what in their department for the customer service staff. I was feeling pleased that we were finally doing something practical to address this problem. However, this didn’t eventuate – the Manager in charge of the Customer Services Department refuses to release his staff to attend the departmental meetings due to the cost*
of bringing additional staff to relieve them at the counter. The Group Manager in charge of this area (who was present at our meeting) won’t allocate the resources to alleviate this situation. I was frustrated and confused. What is really going on here? It seems to me that he is not really interested in seeing any improvements in the flow of communication. What does he have to gain from this? He refuses to discuss it or do anything about it. (Research Journal, 24 June 2008)

My initial intention was to undertake action research and to write it as well formed cycles of planning, action, and evaluation leading to more cycles, etc. However, this was not my experience.

To survive, I often deviated from the standard action research methodology. This chapter is therefore not written as a contemporaneous account of the research. Instead I have imposed some order on the messy world of practice and selected strands of related activities and events. These strands relate to the revised research objectives:

i. To raise my self confidence, skills and credibility as a leader in local government
ii. To improve the responsiveness and work practices of the Community Development Department (formerly the Citizens Services Department)
iii. To focus attention on and raise the profile of disadvantaged residents in the Glenelg Shire
iv. To improve the way that the Community Development Department engages, communicates and works with the community

First, I have described the swampy lowlands (Schon, 1991, p. 43) of the research. In Strand A, I describe the research process and the dilemmas and emotions when things did not go as planned. I have also narrated the evolution of the revised objectives, as the above objectives were not the original ones that I developed at the beginning of the journey. They have unfolded as the work progressed and as I dealt with the barriers, dead ends and blind alleys.

Strand B relates to the third revised research objective as I worked to focus attention on and raise the profile of disadvantaged residents in the Glenelg Shire. However, I found that the impact of disadvantage is all encompassing and affected nearly all
aspects of my work. This strand deals with this experience and my endeavours to work within a kaleidoscope of disadvantage with the differing but related lenses of distance, disadvantage (both socio-economic and educational), and the demographics (ageing and shrinking numbers).

Strand C focuses on the community dimension and relates to my endeavours to improve the way that the Community Development Department engages, communicates, and works with the community (revised objective No. iv). I found that the community, councillors, and staff didn’t share the same view of the purpose and priorities of local government. My work in this area therefore focussed on trying to bring these three spheres together to get some agreement on directions through the development of a variety of policy, strategies, and plans.

The fourth strand (Strand D) describes the struggle to improve the responsiveness and work practices of the Community Development Department (revised objective No. ii). It describes the messy world of practice where we battled to improve systems, procedures, and work processes within the realm of inexperience, a lack of resources and inadequate skills in order to provide better services to the residents of the Glenelg Shire.

The final section of this chapter, Strand E, addresses the first revised objective: to raise my self confidence, skills, and credibility as a leader in local government. Although it focuses on the personal dimension, it is also relevant to other managers, particularly female senior managers working in rural local government.

Taking a bird’s eye view of the subject matter of the individual strands in this chapter, it is apparent that there are three dimensions to this project: the organisational, the community, and the personal dimensions. The strands and these dimensions are interrelated and overlapping. For example, the work undertaken to improve responsiveness also addressed how we engaged and worked with the community, and I was developing my leadership skills working across all dimensions. This chapter will provide insights into my overview.

These strands are my accounts of activities and events, and are limited as they represent only one part of the story; one segment of the whole. They are my versions
of events and are subjective, reflecting my values and understandings. Like all researchers, I have also privileged some events over others, choosing those events that are significant to the research objectives.

Reason describes three broad strategies of action research practice (2001, p.3). This chapter describes the first person action research strategy as I inquired into my own practice as a senior local government manager. The next chapter describes the first person action research approach and findings where I inquired of others (community, Councillors, and staff) in seeking to improve the practice of local government in the Glenelg Shire.
STRAND A – DOING THE RESEARCH

In the beginning ....

The best laid schemes of Mice and Men oft go awry, and leave us nothing but grief and pain for promised joy! (Burns, 1785)

I commenced the data collection phase of my research project with a plan to raise the awareness of what I was doing within the organisation. This involved:

- Presentation to the Senior Management Team
- Briefing Paper for Councillors at the Councillor Workshop
- Article on the Project in the staff newsletter, ‘The Souwester’

The Senior Management Team (SMT) comprising the CEO and the other four group managers meets weekly for about 3 hours ‘to lead and manage the organisation to achieve Council goals and objectives’ (SMT Charter, 2008).

I scheduled the presentation for the SMT for the meeting on 27 November 2007. I was nervously excited about the presentation to the Senior Management Team, however we ran out of time due to other urgent issues on the agenda, so I handed out print outs of the PowerPoint Presentation (see Working Document No. 2 in the Portfolio) and spoke briefly to each of the slides. I was disappointed that there wasn’t any real discussion about my proposal, just a few desultory questions and expressions of good luck.

I was hoping for some weighty discussion about the culture of the organisation and how we were going to work on workplace change, but this left me unsure of what to do next. I really didn’t know where to go next, and felt paralysed by indecision and anxiety.

Reflecting on it over the next month or two, I decided that I had probably pitched it at the wrong level. I was feeling very self conscious about doing the PhD and didn’t want come across as being ‘too cocky’, so I was too tentative and understated the importance of the research. It was a busy time for the Senior Management Team with significant issues under consideration, including the CEO’s first budget process with this Council. In hindsight, I probably should have scheduled a special meeting
with the Senior Management Team to do the presentation and enable a full discussion, however there wasn’t the time available now to do this. I decided to keep going, even without the engagement of the Senior Management Team. I planned to engage them after the first round of staff interviews. I anticipated that they would be interested in the outcomes and that we would address them as a team.

My next step, in April 2008, was to provide a Briefing Paper to the Councillors’ Workshop (see Working Document No. 4 in the Portfolio), thinking that the Councillors would engage in some discussion about the aims of my research. Again I was disappointed with what I perceived to be a lack of interest. There were some encouraging and positive comments, with some Councillors wishing me luck and agreeing to be interviewed. On reflection later that week, I thought that the upcoming Council election in November was probably at the forefront of their minds and that some of them were not expecting to be re-elected. This may have been one of the reasons why there wasn’t much interest and discussion, however I also suspected that I was raising issues that they would rather ignore or that they thought were relatively unimportant.

Accepting this lack of interest, I followed on with an article in the staff newsletter on 10th April, The SouWester (see Working Document No. 5 in the Portfolio). This resulted in only eight staff members nominating for interview. I was hoping for about 20 people to nominate, but I was again disappointed. On reflection, I was facing a dilemma: I really didn’t want to draw any more attention to myself as I had received some derisory comments about ‘being an academic’, but I needed to promote my research in order to get some more participants. This tension between not wanting to draw negative attention and yet wanting the other managers and the Councillors to engage with the research was difficult and challenging. I was rapidly losing confidence and was unsure how to progress. I felt that I had lost my way, but I couldn’t retreat - it was a matter of pride. I had to find a way to keep going.

At this stage, I was entering into the ‘swampy lowlands’ of insider research. Schon notes that in professional practice there is a ‘swampy lowland where situations are
confusing “messes” incapable of technical solution’ (1991, p. 42). In discussing these issues, he notes:

There are those who choose the swampy lowlands. They deliberately involve themselves in messy but crucially important problems and, when asked to describe their methods of inquiry, they speak of experience, trial and error, intuition, and muddling through (Schon, 1991, p. 43).

And so, I muddled on. The research process was not unfolding according to my plan. I kept going with the data gathering, but I was starting to feel powerless and, at this stage, couldn’t see how I could influence the organisational culture. I realised that the process was not going to be as participative as I had originally planned. None of the other managers or the CEO seemed interested. Over the next few weeks, I focused on the data collection and hoped that I would be able to engage the Senior Management Team through the interview outcomes.

I was also struggling with the development of the interview questions for the Councillors. As Jones observes, “Unlike the positivist, we want no preconceived ideas. Therefore we want no leading questions. We do not want our actors to go where we lead them. We want them to go where they lead us”. (Jones, 1985, p.94)

In July of 2008, I started on the staff interviews as part of this research process. I decided to use similar questions to those that I had devised for the Councillors so that I could make some comparisons (see questions in Appendix 3). For example, I wanted to see whether Councillors, staff and the community agreed on the future priority areas for Council. I also wanted to see what Councillors and staff thought about the community satisfaction surveys and community perceptions of Council, and whether there was any alignment there. I suspected that there was not a lot of common ground, and I hoped that this could form the basis of some of my work – engaging with the community to bring their views to Council to inform future plans.

Over the next two months I interviewed eighteen staff members from the Portland Office (subsequent requests for volunteers over six months resulted in a total of eighteen staff volunteers). Due to ethical considerations, I wasn’t able to interview any employees who reported directly to me. Each interview took approximately 45 – 60 minutes, and each interview commenced with an explanation of the project.
Each interviewee was provided with a copy of the Project Information Statement (see Appendix No. 3) and asked to sign it.

As I interviewed, I took notes, trying to capture key sentences and statements. Each interview was undertaken in an informal manner, and there was a rich variety of stories, and a wide variety of views.

Part way through the process I noted the following in my research journal:

*I had an epiphany as I was driving to work this morning. I was thinking about how those that I had interviewed so far had reported low staff morale and job satisfaction. Then I was wondering why they had volunteered and it occurred to me my project had probably attracted these dissatisfied staff because it provided an outlet for their voice. Interestingly, those that are renowned for being dissatisfied haven’t volunteered. I wondered if those that had volunteered are those people that don’t feel comfortable voicing their concerns out loud.*

*(Research Journal, 7 July 2008)*

I was therefore aware that the data from the interviews may be skewed towards the negative as they were reflecting the experience of staff members not feeling that they otherwise had an outlet for their concerns.

I encountered another dilemma – as nearly all the staff interviewed were from other departments, how was I going to develop ‘actions’ in response to what I learned from these interviews? I didn’t have influence in other areas of the organisation and I couldn’t raise specific issues with the other managers as they had been related to me in confidence. Nonetheless, in spite of these worries churning in my mind, I pressed on.

I coded the responses from the interviews and entered them into a spreadsheet (see Appendix No. 5); however this method did not capture the anecdotes and stories that provided the real texture and meanings of the interviewee’s experiences and views. I have drawn on some of these in Chapter 5 to illustrate the themes and situations described in that chapter. A summary of the key themes that emerged through the interviews with Councillors and staff is included at Appendix No. 5.

I became alarmed and worried about some of the descriptions of intimidation, bullying, unprofessional practices and examples of really poor customer service that
were being provided through the interviews. I felt really conflicted, as indicated in the extract from my Research Journal below:

*How can I inform the CEO and the SMT about the information coming through from my research interviews without compromising privacy and confidentiality? Some of the stuff would be so useful. I am really feeling the tension between providing information that would help us make decisions and the confidentiality of the information provided. Some of the things would be gob smacking, e.g. the lies being told to customers by some officers in one area and the high number of errors being made in another area. (Research Journal, 22 July 2008)*

This ethical dilemma is also discussed in the literature on Insider Action Research. Holian notes that ‘determining and maintaining the boundaries between the roles of senior executive and researcher required constant vigilance and even so there was some ‘spill over’ from one role to another’ and that it caused her ‘some ethical dilemmas (Holian, 1999, p.3)’. As the information that was the most worrying for me was provided during the interviews, this was in my role as researcher and was therefore provided in confidence. There was no way that I could ethically pass this information on or deal with it in my other role as a manager without breaking that trust. It did provide me with some sleepless nights as I tried to work out how I could do something to assist those employees. As a consequence, I did act by seeking ways of bringing it to the attention of the SMT by obliquely referring to some things at our Senior Management Team Meetings as the opportunities arose. For example, when discussing training needs, I suggested that all employees could do with some customer service training, not just the front line staff. It was in this way that I tried to raise the issues without alluding to my research or the interviews. Sometimes it was successful, but mostly not.

I was also struggling with another facet of the interview process. How do I remain objective and not get involved in a discussion of the issues? Occasionally I gave up and the ‘interview process’ became more of a conversation or discussion. Sometimes I managed to wait until I reached the end of the interview questions and then I would enter into a discussion with the interviewee.
As Bryman notes, “one of the main ingredients of the interview is listening – being very attentive to what the interviewee is saying or even not saying. It means that the interviewer is active without being too intrusive – a difficult balance” (2004, p.327).

While I was attempting to maintain some structure with the interviews so that I would be able to generate answers that could be coded and processed quickly, I was also mindful that I was seeking rich and detailed answers. Each interview was different as I learned to deal with these dilemmas throughout the process.

By the end of July 2008, I had also interviewed three Councillors. I was still struggling with the balance between being an impartial interviewer and engaging in a dialogue of the issues with the interviewee. This was a dilemma: how do I listen with the objective of also using this as a catalyst for change? This was an opportunity to discuss the issues with each Councillor and argue for an alternate view.

I must learn to keep quiet and not engage in discussion, especially when the interviewee has a view that is totally opposed to my view or it is based on inaccurate facts or misunderstandings. One Councillor said that he doesn’t support one of my projects. He misunderstood the rationale behind the project and when I then explained the facts, he said “Well then, why aren’t we provided with this information?” I thought about this then. Do we do enough to explain to the broader council about some of these projects? I had given at least 2 presentations on this particular project. What else could I do to assist them in understanding what it was all about? Again I wonder, how much of this should I keep to myself? This has all been conveyed to me in confidence. How far can I go in discussing this with the CEO?

I continued to mull over my role. Should I be putting an alternative view to the people that I am interviewing, should I be challenging opinions? Is it just my role to gather facts about their views? It is doing my head in!! (Research Journal, 23 July 2008)

I continued with the interviews into August. I was finding it difficult to jump from work to interview and back to work again. I was also finding it hard to distinguish between what was being said in meetings and open conversations and what I had been told in confidence.

Another problem I am having is that I am finding it increasingly difficult to separate (in my head) what I have been told in confidence and what I have been told in meetings and interviews. Increasingly, I have to stop and think “can I say this?” or “was I told this in
confidence?” It is driving me nuts. No doubt it will get worse as I go on. I worry that I have slipped a few times – not that I can think of any specific examples.

(Research Journal, 6 August 2008)

I returned to the literature to search for answers and ways of dealing with these dilemmas. I found that the difficulties associated with the role duality of researcher and organisational member is widely discussed in the insider research literature (Ferguson and Ferguson, 2001; deGuerre, 2002; Coghlan, 2003; Bjorkman and Sundgren, 2005; Humphrey, 2007; Coghlan, 2007; Brannick and Coghlan, 2007; Moore, 2007). I read and reflected on this literature, and as this duality and similar dilemmas were difficult for all these researchers, I was encouraged and become more confident. I kept going.

Over the next few months, I developed ways of dealing with the conflict. I decided that the best way of dealing with the duality dilemma was to become more circumspect and say less until I had the time and space to reflect on the responses and data and develop some objectivity. In other words, I captured it in my journal, but I didn’t act on it until I had more time to think about it.

I had also been thinking about some of the responses to the questions, and the different ways that people were approaching the interviews. I continued to reflect on the different realities and perspectives of individuals within an organisation:

I did another couple of staff interviews today. It seems to me that there are 3 reasons why people have volunteered:

1. They have a barrow to push – they need an ear and want to be heard
2. They are interested in research, are studying themselves and to help and participate
3. They want to find out a bit about me – they want to please me or get my approval.
4. They are genuinely trying to be helpful

So, how is this going to be reflected in their answers? How independent and impartial are their answers? With one of the people I interviewed today, every answer came back to “not enough money being spent on infrastructure” or “too much notice is being taken of the community – we are too reactive” or even: “the organisation is too inflexible – we don’t get enough training”. Nearly every question got the above responses.

(Research Journal, 6 August 2008)
This is really an indicator that people are viewing the organisation through their own particular prism, based on their experiences in the section that they work. They often don’t get the opportunity to take an overview, nor do they get the information that would allow them to do that. Bolman and Deal (1991) sum it up very well when they note:

Organisations are filled with people who have different stories about what is happening and what should be happening. Each story contains a glimpse of the truth, but each is a product of the prejudices and blind spots of the viewer. None of these versions of the truth is comprehensive enough to make the organisation truly understandable or manageable (1991, p. 12)

Sharing the information

In September, I decided to share some of the information with the Senior Management Team (see Working Document No. 9 in the Portfolio). I wanted to inform them and to work with them on a range of responses as an organisation wide approach. I therefore offered to provide a presentation on the themes emerging from the interviews at the Senior Management Planning Day. I was hoping for some meaningful discussion and some kind of action plan emanating from the information. I considered this to be ‘an intervention’ and a way of addressing some of the issues raised through the interviews. I was anxious about how it was going to be received, however, in spite of my misgivings, the following actions were included in the notes from the day. These notes were distributed to the Senior Management Team sometime after the event.

1. Create opportunities for face to face meetings – GM’s to inform CEO of meeting opportunities. Group Managers to note.

2. Need to nurture/make people identify issue and potential solutions for us to then assist in the process to make the best decision – IE: SMT should not have to make ALL decisions.

3. Need more ‘time out’ for strategic focus – need to plan for this – Options to be determined and discussed at a subsequent SMT Meeting.

4. Support Staff – brief staff about SMT information.
5. Need to identify strategic/corporate stuff to workshop – minimise
discussion/analysis of department issues that are clearly GM’s
responsibility.

(Extract from Notes from Senior Management Team Planning Day, 19
September 2008)

I felt buoyed afterwards as I thought that if these actions were implemented, they
would go some way to address some of the issues raised through my staff interviews
at least in regard to the need for more face to face communication with senior
management.

However, I was still very disappointed that we didn’t have any meaningful discussion
and that these findings were not really addressed. I was struggling to get some
participative action learning happening.

Around mid August in 2008, with some prompting from my supervisors, I started to
rethink my methodology. It seemed to me that my research was more that of an
observer and that I was missing a lot of the action dimension. I also revised my
timelines and took another look at my objectives. I was beginning to doubt that my
research was going to meet my objectives. I thought that these might be incidental
outcomes of my work, but I couldn’t see, ‘in the swampleness’ (Schon, 1991, p. 43)of
the research, that these were going to be achieved.

I continued to reflect on the methodology and re-reviewed the literature over the
next few months. Further discussions with my supervisors alerted me to the Insider
Action Research approach, and through further reading about the experiences of
other insider researchers, in particular, Ferguson (2001), de Guerre (2002), Moore
(2007), and Humphrey (2007), I finally found a sense of ‘belonging’. The difficulties
they described with the ethics associated with the dual roles and walking the
tightrope of ‘insider – outsider’ resonated with my experience.

**Time out for reflection and epiphanies**

My research was taking place against the backdrop of the usual Council business of
Councillor Workshops and meetings, and the actual business of service delivery and
governance. There were times when I had to put the research project on the back burner and focus my energy and time into my work.

I had planned to take two weeks off in October 2008 to work on developing the exegesis for this research project, but I didn’t really achieve very much. However, I did do some serious thinking and reflection. The time out provided me with the space to objectively consider what I had been doing and how I was going to approach the next stages of the project. Instead of focusing my energies outwardly, I decided to examine my own practice and implement what I had learnt in my own department.

*I have been thinking about how I can improve my professional practice and/or get some feedback from my own staff along the lines of the feedback received from other staff through the interview process. I thought about a few options:*

- **Survey monkey** – quick survey and ask them to complete it without identifying themselves. *(I’m not sure if this fits with my ethics approval)*
- **Raising some of the issues (or themes) and seek their feedback at our Departmental Meetings**

Then I thought “Why don’t I just practice what I preach?” I should just go ahead and do the things identified through the interviews in my own department. The main area identified was the lack of communication about what happens at SMT Meetings, Councillor Briefings and Council Meetings. So, as a consequence, I have decided to implement the following:

- **Attend unit meetings at least quarterly (give them an update on things)**
- **Send out updates after each SMT Meeting**
- **Send out updates after Council Briefing workshops and Meetings**
- **Have a discussion about organisational values at our Departmental Meeting**

*I will develop a weekly e-news for our Department and make it available for the SMT for them to alter and make it their own for their own departments.*

*(Research Journal, 27 October 2008)*

I was quietly hoping that some of these actions might also be taken up by the other Group Managers if I was successful.

**Small steps forward and then some back again**

Over the rest of 2008 and into 2009, it seemed that it was a few steps forward and then a few steps back. Overall, there was small progress in organisational
development, but I was able to undertake some actions and interventions in relation to my research. These are described in more detail in parts 3-5 of this chapter. During this period, the Council elections were held and we eventually had a new Council with four of the former Councillors elected and three new Councillors. Geographically, the balance of power shifted from Portland to the northern parts of the Shire, including Casterton, Heywood and Merino with implications for a number of my key projects based in Portland.

As we had three new councillors, the next few months were spent working closely with them to provide relevant information to enable them to make decisions and develop the new Council Plan. Over this time, I became very despondent as the realisation dawned on me that my values seemed to be different from those of the Councillors and maybe even the other senior managers. I seriously questioned my future position with Council and pondered seeking work elsewhere.

I am disappointed in the Council Planning Workshop. I was quite despondent after the event as I drove home. Can I continue to work for a Council that doesn’t appear to give a cracker about social justice or the environment? (Research Journal, 1 March 2009)

However, I had gained confidence through the process of this research project. The literature provided me with insights to further develop my own views and ideas about the role of local government, leadership, and social justice. My own values also became clearer through this process, and I had developed some confidence in being able to defend these values.

I decided that I could not walk away just yet. I felt that I would be letting my team down, and I decided to keep working in the hope that I could promote social justice issues to the Council and eventually win over a couple of champions. I also felt that I couldn’t let the community down. We were working on some important community projects and we were talking to the Department of Planning and Community Development about some significant funding assistance to help us in this work.

I was further encouraged by some of the literature that I was continuing to explore. Ferguson notes in her paper that ‘it is possible to influence the development of our organisation, exercising power at grass roots level in a responsible and ethical way’
(Ferguson and Ferguson, 2000, p. 2). She bases her perspective on the works of Michel Foucault who encouraged people to take action in their own environments at whatever hierarchical level they find themselves, in order to improve their work situations. Like Ferguson, I determined to continue to seek opportunities to influence policies and directions of Council and the organisational culture.

Despite my inner struggles, I continued with the data collection. During May 2009, I developed a community survey to gain an understanding of the community perspective - their priorities and views of Council. I wanted to see if their priorities aligned with those of the Councillors and the staff. I did a random selection of 500 households in Portland (5.2% of the total population of Portland) and sent out surveys with a letter of introduction from the CEO (see Appendix no. 2). Although I provided a return date of 12 June, the surveys trickled in over the next 2 months. By the end of July I had received only 74 completed surveys – 14.8% of those sent out and only 0.7% of the population. Although not a statistically valid survey, given the low rate of return, they did provide me with a snapshot; an indication of the community views. The themes and responses are summarised in Appendix no. 4. They are also the basis for some of the significant findings discussed later in this chapter.

At this stage (June 2009), I was feeling exhausted and overwhelmed and decided to finalise my data collection by August. Over the next three months, I interviewed three more Councillors, and did the second round of staff interviews to ascertain whether they had perceived any changes since their first interviews twelve months ago. I also interviewed three contractors who had worked in various roles with Council over the past year. By August, I had completed thirteen follow up interviews (72% of original participants). Of the original eighteen participants, three had left the workplace and the rest were unavailable within the timeframe to do the follow up interviews. By this stage I felt like I was ‘drowning in data’. I had the notes from my interviews with staff, councillors and contractors, the results of the community survey, my research journal and various notebooks with notes and observations from all the meetings that I attended over the preceding eighteen months. As my supervisors pointed out, I had more than enough data for three PhDs – I just needed to evaluate it, draw it all together and write the exegesis.
Concluding the research and getting over writer’s block

The last three months of 2009 were a period of reflection and sense making. I was attempting to write the narrative and through this process find meanings through this analysis.

In December, I again went back to the literature and did some further reading on practitioner and insider research. My intent in doing this was to try to see how others approached the evaluation and reporting of this style of research and to see if, and how, they coped with it. I didn’t find it overly helpful, as I wasn’t able to find much available on this aspect of the research. In retrospect, I think I had become overly anxious about it and developed a mental block, often described by authors as writer’s block.

Sarah, Haslett, Molinoux and others (2002, p.539) provided some comfort in their descriptions of cycling within a ‘linear view of the world’, and from their paper I gained some inkling of their difficulties in making the shift and maintaining the shift from “starts and finishes” to “journeys”.

Reading an account of practitioner research by Goodnough (2008, p. 452) was heartening as she also described the messiness and uncertainty in practitioner research and notes that:

> From a practitioner’s perspective, being able to study and read about other accounts of action research can facilitate an understanding of the of process and hence, inform how others engage in action research (2008, p. 451)

I decided to take a linear approach to the writing and I found that concentrating on the easier task of describing the organisation at the outset of the project provided me with the space, distance and opportunity to reflect on the changes that had taken place over the last three years, both from an organisational perspective as well as my own practice. I was able to gain some perspective now that I had stepped out of the swamp (Schon, 1991, p. 43), and I could see where I was heading. I was able to feel a little more confident.
I also realised that I felt far more relaxed at work and after some further thinking and discussion with my supervisors realised that I wasn’t expending the same degree of emotional energy on analysing and thinking about what was happening in the context of my research. I did find that while undertaking the research there were several activities or actions taking place on an intellectual and emotional level:

- Engagement in ‘the moment’- participating in the meeting, activity, etc., from my work role perspective (as a practitioner)
- Analysing what was happening – how did it relate to my research? (as a researcher)
- Worrying about how I was going to be able to ‘capture it’ or report it in my writing without upsetting anyone, that is - dealing with the politics or the ‘shadow side’. (The ethics issue).

This was stressful, and I hadn’t realised that it was taking this amount of energy until I stopped the process and had time to reflect on it.

With hindsight, the three month break was fortuitous as the distance enabled me to reflect and see more clearly where I was heading and to see the value of my research. Even though I was struggling with self confidence and writers’ block, the extra reading was useful and I did derive some comfort knowing that what I was going through seemed to be a common experience of Insider Action Researchers. During this time the final themes of my research also gelled and I was able to move forward with the writing.

The next parts of this chapter reflect the selected strands of activities and events that relate to my research objectives as described in the introduction to this chapter.
STRAND B  A kaleidoscope of disadvantage.

Any society, any nation, is judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members -- the last, the least, the littlest (Cardinal Roger Mahony, in a 1998 letter titled, "Creating a Culture of Life"). Although organisational life is experienced as a multi-faceted rope of many different strands interlinked and overlapping, it is difficult to convey in a coherent narrative. The day to day life is often mundane and is comprised of many small incidents that may or may not have meaning or implication. In order to convey the story of my work that is related to the disadvantaged community in the Glenelg Shire, I have selected several critical incidents; this is not to detract from the ongoing hard slog of routine decision making and reports, but rather to engage the reader and provide a lens for viewing this work. Like a kaleidoscope, the different but related areas of work are presented to the viewer with varying colours and patterns.

The strand of disadvantage is interwoven through all my work and research, and the theme of disadvantage continues to be a challenge after the conclusion of the project. Through my work with the community, I was becoming aware of the degree of disadvantage being experienced in different parts of the shire. Although disadvantage in the Glenelg Shire is discussed in Chapter 2 as part of the literature review, at the outset of this project, there appeared to be little if any acknowledgement of this issue, let alone any specific strategies or plans for addressing or dealing with it by Council.

I had provided Councillors with a couple of presentations on the health and socioeconomic issues prior to the commencement of this project, seeking their support for the development of a social plan to address the issues of disadvantage and poverty across the shire. Unfortunately, I hadn’t been able to get their support, and they were largely unbelieving of the data that I was providing.

In order to set the scene, I will go back to April 2007, where I provided a presentation to a Councillor workshop on the ‘State of Health in the Glenelg Shire’ (see Working Document No. 1 in the Portfolio). This was part of the process for the development of the Municipal Public Health Plan. Part of the data indicated that the life expectancy of our residents was much lower than the State average. The
Councillors seemed surprised and one Councillor questioned the validity of the data; “We have older people in this shire than other shires that is why our life expectancy is lower.” Other Councillors wanted me to censor the information: “We have to find a way to make sure this information doesn’t get out. People won’t want to move here or visit the area”. This was the first entry in my research journal, and I was perplexed and mildly frustrated.

I don’t get it – this is not the first time that they have heard this information, after all this is the third Municipal Public Health Plan that we have developed (one every 3 years). Every other Plan referred to this data and included strategies to deal with it. Why don’t they understand it? Are they deluded? Head in the sand? Or it that they just don’t want to hear it? (Research Journal, 10 April 2007)

The information was already largely in the public domain, so I ignored the responses and continued with the development of the Municipal Public Health Plan (see Working Document No. 30 in the Portfolio).

In mid 2007, I also managed to scrape together enough funds from a variety of different areas to employ a community development officer (see position description - Working Document No. 6 in the Portfolio). I had attended several workshops on place based community planning by the Municipal Association of Victoria, and was optimistic and mildly excited about the potential of this process. We had commenced this with the engagement of a consultant to work with the Heywood, Casterton, Nelson, Digby and Portland communities, and I picked up the responsibility for the project in late 2007, when it had been underway for about six months.

I attended the third round of meetings in one of the smaller communities where the consultant was aiming to get the community to sign off on their plan (the community is not named to provide anonymity for participants). Only about eight people turned up, including one of the Councillors who managed to change the priorities and introduce a couple of new projects to the list. After the meeting, driving home, I realised that the process of community planning was not going to be as easy as the MAV were making out. Over the course of the next week, a couple of other attendees at the meeting rang me to complain about the way the Councillor was
able to influence the outcomes. Nobody disputed it because they didn’t want to be seen to be opposing this Councillor as it would have ‘ramifications’.

Following another meeting in one of the small towns in the shire, some of the community members complained about the lack of interest and participation by Councillors. I was perplexed – what is the role for councillors in the community planning process? Where do they fit in? Some Councillors wanted to get in and influence the outcomes and others chose to be remote and disengaged from the process.

We continued with the community planning across the shire, struggling to get people to attend the meetings and then to get people to volunteer for the community planning committees. In Portland, over forty people attended, however it was difficult to get any real agreement on the priorities and again no-one was volunteering to go onto the committee. We had hoped that the committee would implement the plan with our assistance. However, it seemed that the community didn’t want to do it; they just wanted Council to do it for them. On the other hand, many of the community leaders and volunteers were too busy to take on anything else, and I sensed disillusionment with Council and disbelief that anything would ever come out of it.

The community planning process wasn’t working, and I really didn’t know what to do. Nonetheless, we continued throughout 2008, finalising the plans and presenting them to Council for information at the Council Meeting in January 2009 (see Working Document No. 11 in the Portfolio).

The Councillors were confused; they didn’t understand that these were community plans that were owned by the community, not Council. I had hoped that they would inform the Council and link to other plans and council priorities, but some of the councillors appeared to be resentful of the plans. After sitting through the council workshop and listening to the discussion, I reflected that we hadn’t done enough work with the Council before embarking on the process, in fact we hadn’t done any work, and this was most probably why it wasn’t really working.
Back in February 2008, at the Councillor Planning Day, I provided a presentation on the demographics of the Glenelg Shire (see Working Document No. 3 in the Portfolio). This time it was the SEIFA data that was greeted with incredulity and disbelief. One Councillor remarked “How can we have such a high degree of disadvantage when we have people on some of the highest incomes in the state?” I was asked to check the figures and was told that they must be incorrect. When I responded that these were the figures and the data that had been compiled and provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, I was again told that they must have it wrong and that I needed to let them know that.

Illustration No 5
Parts of Portland are ranked in the lowest decile of the SEIFA Index

I found myself stammering and unable to counter their arguments. I tried to explain the SEIFA Index, but it was met with such a wall of disbelief that I just gave up. I couldn’t believe it – I felt like I was talking in a different language. Feeling like Alice in Wonderland, where madness is a fact of life, I really didn’t know which way to turn. I had plunged down the rabbit hole.

After a couple of months of contemplation, discussion with other officers and further reflection, I decided to have another attempt to obtain some understanding and acknowledgement of the issues by the councillors. I thought that the key to this would be the evidence with some further analysis. I also thought that if someone
else presented the data, it might have more credibility. I then engaged a local consultant to do some further analysis of the social data and put together a paper to present to the Councillors. I was still hoping to get Council support for the development of a Social Plan, and I was hoping that this paper would persuade them that there were some significant issues in the Shire. I also chose this particular consultant because I knew that the Councillors trusted this man and would believe him. I had used him for similar work in the past when I wanted to get something controversial, unpalatable or difficult supported by Council. And yes, he was male, and this strategy had worked in the past. Somehow I felt that I had less credibility with the Councillors because I was female. (The gender issue is discussed in more detail later in this chapter).

It took me some time to write the project brief, find some funds and go through the process of organising the work. However by December 2008, I had engaged the consultant and the work was underway. The document was finalised in March and presented to the Senior Management Team. We discussed the presentation to the Councillors. I had planned for the consultant to do the presentation, however the CEO directed me to do the presentation as he thought that the officers had more credibility than consultants. I disagreed with this view, but agreed to do the presentation.

On 15th April, 2009 I provided the presentation on the ‘Draft Report on Social Plan Research’, which unpacked and explained the data from the SEIFA Index (see Working Document No. 14 in the Portfolio). The findings from this paper (Glenelg Shire Council Social Plan Research Report, 2009) are summarised as:

Glenelg Shire’s significant socio economic disadvantage is characterized by a lack of factors that create advantage; pockets of low income and long term unemployed; substantial youth disengagement from work and study; a significant drop out rate from secondary education; lack of skill; a higher incidence of avoidable mortality with reduced life expectancy (the worst in the state for females); a greater incidence of mental health problems in Glenelg’s female population and greater propensity for self harm among Glenelg males; huge alcohol related harm problems for
young people; and increased propensity for family violence; significantly high rates of crime and increasing gambling losses (GSC, 2009, p. 6)

The report also indicates that 50% of the shire’s population is ranked in the lowest 3 deciles for disadvantage and that in terms of education and occupation, the Glenelg Shire is the 5th lowest ranked local government authority in Victoria with 59% of the shire’s population in the worst three deciles (GSC, 2009, p. 4). Alarmingly, Glenelg has 20.8% fewer 15-19 year old school leavers than Victoria fully engaged in work or tertiary study and correspondingly 16.1% more disengaged than Victoria as a whole (more than double the Victorian rate for disengagement). The disengagement rates for 15-19 years is significantly high, standing at more than double (104.5% greater) the Victorian level and 71% greater than the Barwon South West region rate of disengagement for this age group (GSC, 2009, p. 39). The report also notes that a critical area for concern is the year 8 exodus from schooling in parts of Casterton and Portland, and notes that:

There is an increased readiness to leave school without having gained employment and there is a reduced appreciation of the value of education or an increased inability to access education. This helps explain Glenelg’s poor SEIFA ranking for Education and Occupation (GSC, 2009, p. 50.

I concluded the presentation with the explanation that it was the lack of educational qualifications and skills that was really dragging our score down, noting that there was a large cohort of young people dropping out at year 8. In the discussion that followed, one councillor commented that he didn’t really think that a tertiary qualification was the “be all and end all, as his brother left school at 15 and was still making dollars and had never had a problem holding or getting a job.” The main concern of Council was that the report remained confidential; that it did not get into the hands of the media. They did however; agree that I could use it to generate discussion with the state government. Two councillors went to great pains to point out two typing errors in the report; that was their sole contribution to the discussion.
The workshop concluded at about 10pm, and I felt mentally and emotionally drained. I was disappointed with the reaction to the presentation on the disadvantage data. I didn’t agree with keeping the information quiet, which was reinforced by a discussion I heard later that week on the radio about the low literacy rates in schools. One speaker noted that communities need to mobilized to work with the schools – it was a whole of community issue, not just the schools, and that it needed to be discussed out in the open.

However, I did reflect that as most of the councillors didn’t have any tertiary education, they may have felt that I was being critical of them. Maybe it was too confronting. But then, how was I to continue? I felt very strongly that local government had a role in working with other levels of government and agencies to address disadvantage, and that by putting our head in the sand, it wasn’t going to go away.

On the way home from the meeting, I was reflecting on the tension between the need to promote the shire as an attractive place for skilled people and their families, and yet in order to address the disadvantage factor we need to work with the entire community. It should be out in the open and being discussed. What do we do here? What do I do now? (Research Journal, 29 April 2009)

And so, quietly and relatively surreptitiously I planned my next actions. I felt more confident at this point and I commenced sending copies of the ‘Report on Social Plan Research’ out to various agencies and government departments, advising them that it was an internal working document for their use in developing funding applications and various planning activities. I spoke about it at every forum and meeting that I could, including the Primary Care Partnership, the Department of Human Services Integrated Planning Committee, etc. While I was annoyed that Council hadn’t acted on the information, I was passionate about doing something about it.

In July we partnered with the Department of Human Services to establish the ‘Portland Strategic Partnership Group’. The aim of the group was

To provide a platform for the Glenelg Shire, service providers and key government agencies to work together to provide better outcomes for particular communities within the Glenelg Shire. In the first instance, the
group will provide a network to look at issues and initiatives for North Portland (Portland Strategic Partnership Group, Terms of Reference, 2009).

The North Portland area was the subject of a report by the Department of Human Services, highlighting the social, welfare and criminal issues in the public housing neighbourhood in this area. The department needed to address the issues because of the high rates of vandalism to their properties, and the harassment and abuse of some of their most vulnerable clients in the area. We agreed to work with them and facilitate these meetings and undertake a community planning process with the north Portland neighbourhood.

Reflecting on how to engage our Councillors with this issue to promote better understanding, I decided to get the Councillors involved in this project. I reported on the network to the Council and requested that a Councillor attend and chair the meetings (see Working Document No. 19 in the Portfolio). As a consequence, two councillors were appointed to the committee, with the Mayor to chair.

The community planning process for North Portland was commenced towards the end of 2009, and this time we planned it and involved other agencies. We commenced the process with a community barbeque on the school grounds in the area. Councillors attended as well as members of the Portland Strategic Partnership Group. People already working with this community attended (youth workers, social workers, welfare agencies, etc.). It was only the beginning of the process, and the details of this particular project could be the subject of another PhD.

We also continued with the community planning in the other communities, but without the assistance of the consultant. I found that ‘relationships’ were the basis of good community relations. Continuity of the staff involved that worked with the community committees, establishing good relationships and using the existing community networks. Over this time I developed a selective list of useful resources - literature and websites with toolkits, community engagement techniques and methodologies (see Working Document No. 26 in the Portfolio).

After all our hard work, at the end of 2009, I reflected on the community planning process and considered the outcomes. How do you measure success? How do
you measure the degree of community strengthening and capacity building as a consequence of community planning? Success stories provided by the MAV were based on the amount of funding and projects completed and implemented in communities. It seemed that those communities with little capacity, skills or cohesiveness were going to fail in this area, and that this process could be counterproductive in achieving the objectives of community strengthening and capacity building. It was obvious that the community planning committees attracted people with an agenda or a pet project, and if the process of developing the plan wasn’t handled carefully, those with the loudest voices could influence the outcomes. The facilitation of these meetings required skill and experience. It is clear that there is a lot more work and research required in this area. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.
Postscript:

Twelve months later, Council seems to feel more comfortable with the disadvantage label.

We provided a submission and presentation to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Rural and Regional disadvantage in April 2010 which was reported in the local media (see Working Document No. 23 in the Portfolio).

The state government is also more cognizant of our issues with Portland being identified as the site of some community renewal initiatives and projects. The Barwon and South West State and Local Government Regional Management Forum confirmed Portland as one of three sites for the Towards Liveable Communities (TLC3) Program following a presentation that I provided to the Forum in November 2009 (see Working Document No. 22). The aim of this program is to identify existing and emerging community issues related to disadvantage and liveability, and to ensure coordination is happening at the local level, particularly between local, state government and agencies, and to provide recommendations to the State Government Regional Management Forum for solutions for local programs for whole-of-government led actions.

A re-engagement project has also been established in 2011 with over six community groups working together to address the re-engagement of young people in training and education.

Disadvantage was one of the themes identified in the Great South Coast Regional Strategic Plan, and the more local Glenelg Southern Grampians Primary Health Care Integrated Plan.

Work also continues to promote the philosophy of community planning to councillors and other departments of Council, with some small successes. Council specifically allocated funds to the implementation of the North Portland Neighbourhood Plan and provided funding for Community Planning Grants in the budgets for 2009-10 and 2010-11. Some other communities are now clamouring for Council to facilitate community planning processes in their areas. A Community Planning Policy was adopted by Council in March 2011, and a presentation on community planning was provided to the Management Coordination Group and Council by a prominent consultant in this area in April 2011.
STRAND C  Winning the tug of war

Synergy is the highest activity of life; it creates new untapped alternatives; it values and exploits the mental, emotional, and psychological differences between people (Stephen Covey, 1989).

In early 2008, the community was surveyed again for the Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey. I reflected on the poor performance by the Glenelg Council in 2007 (see chapter 1 for discussion of results) and suspected that there was a lack of shared goals, priorities and purpose between staff, Councillors and the community. Everyone seemed to be working and pulling in different directions; we were not working together to achieve the same objectives.

My research and two years of work inside the Council suggested that there was a disparity or disconnect between the views of the Councillors, staff and community. It seemed at times that the engineers thought that it was Council’s role to build and maintain assets; the accountants thought it was to save money and spend as little as possible; the community services staff thought it was to provide a high level of services; the town planners thought it was to enforce the planning legislation of the state government, and the risk management department thought it was to reduce the chance of any litigation against Council. The community didn’t seem to have a voice as the Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey results for 2007 were largely dismissed by staff and Councillors as not being representative of the community views as “the sample was too small in size” and it didn’t reflect the “views of their friends and families”. In addition, poor systems and project planning often resulted in disaffected residents becoming even more angry and disillusioned with Council. As an example, funding had been provided for an upgrade of one of the shire’s football clubrooms. Without any discussion with the user groups, the shower facilities were removed right at the commencement of the football season in 2007. This created a great deal of community anger and frustration with Council.

In my own department, at the beginning of my research, each area seemed disconnected from Council, each other, and the Community Development Department. There was no consultation over dates and times of events, with the occasional clash. Staff were working on their own projects; there was little
collaboration over activities such as Children’s Week or Senior’s Week, and there was often competition for resources rather than a coordinated and planned effort. It was a microcosm of the broader organisation. There appeared to be a lack of respect and understanding of the role and function of Council and the Councillors and a disconnect between Council officers and the Councillors. Each unit: the Home and Community Services Unit, the Children’s Services Unit; Recreation Services, Youth Services and Library Services seemed to exist and operate separately and independently. The Coordinators were focused on their own operational area, often didn’t work well together and seemed to view their own service area as an independent, stand alone service. They appeared to view the rest of the organisation as obstructionist with unrealistic demands and resented having to write reports and spend time dealing with the corporate requirements of risk management and budget forecasts, etc. They were operationally focused, making ad hoc decisions in a policy vacuum without any meaningful connection with the Council.

According to Senge, systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes and is a discipline for seeing the structures that underlie complex situations (Senge, 1992, pp. 68-69). It seemed to me that there was a lack of ‘systems thinking’ in the way that we were working in the Glenelg Council. Senge also asserts that shared vision is vital:

They create a sense of commonality that permeates the organisation and gives coherence to diverse activities (Senge, 1992, p. 206)

The importance of shared vision, goals and objectives is often claimed in the leadership and change management literature (Nanus, 1992; Kotter, 1996; Wenger, 1998; Christensen, Dale and Walker, D. H. T., 2004; Cummings and Worley, 2009). It seemed to me that there was a disconnect in direction, goals and objectives between the Councillors, staff and community. I decided to test this theory of disconnection through the interviews and surveys, asking the staff, Councillors and the community about their perceptions of the priority areas for Council, and also asking them to describe how they would like to see the Glenelg Shire in the next 2-4 years time. (See survey and interview questions in Appendices no. 2 and 3). At the same time as I was undertaking this research, I continued to seek and trial
interventions, strategies or methods to encourage more congruent thinking on Council priorities between the community, staff and Councillors.

Over the course of 2008-09 we developed several strategic plans and policies. During 2008, I had varied success with the development of the Positive Ageing Strategy, Youth Strategy and Municipal Public Health Plan (see Working Documents No. 29, 30 and 32 in the Portfolio). By bringing together Councillors, community stakeholders and staff to work together on developing these documents, I was aiming for a shared understanding of the directions and priorities for Council in these different service areas. I will outline the development of just one of these planning strategies, the development of the Disability Action Plan to illustrate this process.

The Disability Action Plan 2006-2008 had expired in late 2008, and we needed to develop a new plan. As we didn’t have any additional resources or a budget for this work, it needed to be undertaken with as little effort and time as possible. We started to talk about it in January 2009. The relevant staff had only been with Council for a short time and, although lacking in relevant skills and experience, were enthusiastic and energetic in their approach to this project. We met to discuss a project plan, and I found myself being the wet blanket. The staff wanted to do some extensive community consultation, but had limited research experience. They also had limited writing skills, but their understanding and experience in working with people with a disability was extensive. They were enthusiastic about doing surveys and interviews and thought it was important to ensure that people in the community with a disability, or their carers, friends and family had some input into the Plan. I found myself in the position where I was trying to ensure that the staff felt that it was their project, but at the same time, I didn’t want them to be overwhelmed by the workload further down the track. I ended up saying that I needed to think about their suggestions and how we might go about doing the work.

Thinking about it over the next few days, I weighed up the need for the staff to be involved and to feel ownership of the project with the need to ensure that it went smoothly and that we ended up with a reasonable and workable plan, and that the broader community had input into the Plan. I wanted them to learn from this project and to also have a positive experience. I also didn’t have the time to work with
them in doing the consultations or the background research. There were others in the Community Development Department with the necessary skills, but not the time. I decided to take a committee approach and bring everyone together and divide the work.

Through my experience with the development of the other plans and strategies in 2008, I found that the establishment of a Project Steering Committee worked reasonably well. This entailed a Public Expression of Interest process with several community or stakeholder representatives, one or two Councillors and one or two staff members. This Committee usually worked together on the development of the goals, strategies and action plans. I thought that the existing Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) could undertake the role as the Project Reference Group with the addition of a couple of Councillors to the group.

In February 2009, I provided a report to Council with the final outcomes of the Disability Action Plan 2006-2008 and a proposed framework for the development of the next 3 year Plan (See Working Document No. 12 in the Portfolio). I was quite excited by the prospect of doing this Plan completely in-house for the first time, utilizing our own skills and experience. I was a bit anxious about how we were going to be able to achieve it with already overloaded work programs, and I was worried that some people might not be terribly enthused about being involved.

I decided that I could find a small amount of funding to bring in additional staff resources with extensive experience in doing research, assist with the consultation work and do some background research. I met with them to devise the consultation plan, which comprised a survey process, some public meetings and group interviews with already existing groups of stakeholders. We had discovered the previous year that often it was easier and more effective for us to go to already existing meetings, clubs, and groups at their location and at times that suited them rather than for us to expect them to come to us. We decided to do a formal survey to put some boundaries around the information we were gathering. I thought this was a good approach, especially when the people doing the work were relatively inexperienced in doing community consultation.
A few weeks later, the first draft of the survey was emailed to me for my feedback. I read it with a sinking heart. Although it was based on a survey undertaken by another local government for a similar project, the questions were poorly written and constructed. It was a busy time for me, and I was beginning to wonder if I might have to do it myself, however I decided to persevere with the existing arrangements. Even though it would take longer, I needed to work with them if I wanted it to be a positive learning experience. “Just be patient”, I kept reminding myself.

After some quiet investigation, I discovered that the less experienced staff had wanted to do it on their own. They wanted to prove that they could do it, and hadn’t involved the others at this stage. I was exasperated and exclaimed “Bloody hell” in a heated manner to the staff members involved. Then feeling bad about my loss of control, I went on to quietly explain about ‘leading questions’ and good survey techniques to them. We agreed that they would do some reading about it and then have another go at the survey. They were embarrassed and deflated, and I wondered if I could have handled it another way.

Later, I reflected on this interchange and realised that although I had done some surveying in the past, my current knowledge was due to my own research and struggles with the development of the interview questions and community surveys. I was able to bring this knowledge to a practical work based situation and provide some information for them to read. On the other hand, I also realised that it had made me somewhat arrogant in my approach – after all if I hadn’t been doing this research project, I might not have had this same degree of knowledge. I was aghast – I was becoming like the apparently arrogant academics that many practitioners disliked!

After several iterations, the surveys were completed and the consultations were undertaken. The community meetings were not well attended with only one person attending one of the meetings. Nonetheless, the team thought that it was still worth it as they gained some valuable feedback from that one person. I pointed out that we have to weigh up the costs of advertising, catering and organizing the meetings. I felt miserly, and worried that my own bias against public town hall meetings was influencing my reactions here. We continued, and the more experienced staff did
the analysis of the surveys and interviews. We decided that we would organise a
meeting of the DAC and incorporate a workshop to start the process of using the
data from the research and the consultations to begin the development of
strategies and actions for the Plan. I decided to find some additional funds for an
external facilitator for the workshop. I didn’t have the time (or the confidence) and
following my discussions with staff, it was evident that nobody else felt confident
enough to do it.

As it happened, I didn’t have the time to go over the presentations of the
consultation findings prior to the meeting. The team provided the presentation, with
many glaring errors, including basic spelling and grammatical errors. These were
picked up by the Councillors; this made me uncomfortable as I felt that it reflected
on me. I was even more embarrassed when one of the Councillors put his foot in his
mouth by talking about ‘normal people’. One of the members of the Committee
pulled him up by saying, “I am a normal person but I have a hearing disability.”

We had a workshop yesterday to develop the Disability Action Plan. It was a difficult workshop –
again hampered by lack of preparation and skills. If I had more resources I would have contracted
some of the work out. We didn’t achieve much, but as I said to the staff, it was all about networking
and getting ownership of the Plan. I was also disappointed because I had asked the other Group
Managers to consider sending some of their staff, but on the day, it was only the staff from the
Community Development Department that attended. (Research Journal, 19 May 2009)

Although we had an external facilitator, the workshop was still largely unstructured,
however we did get some ideas for actions and strategies for the Plan. Nonetheless,
I was still disappointed as I had hoped for more in the basis of a Plan. The team
members were also disappointed with the result, but I put a positive spin on it by
stressing the good things that came out of it.

Over the next couple of weeks I weighed up the pros and cons of writing the first
draft of the Plan myself or involving the rest of my department. I decided to go with
the committee idea as this was consistent with the collaborative nature of Action
Research. I wasn’t sure that this would be successful, but I wanted to get their
ownership of the Plan and build their capacity to do this kind of work. I suspected
that it would mean more work and effort for me, but I thought we could give it a go.
I thought about doing a whiteboard approach and working together to develop the strategies and actions, however I decided that this could be excruciating—we had tried this before and found that we tended to get hung up on the details such as the difference between a goal, objective or a strategy. I didn’t have the patience and we didn’t have the time, even though it could have been a good learning environment. Instead we divided up the plan into several sections and allocated them to various individuals to develop.

This strategy was not successful, as there were different understandings of what we were trying to achieve, different writing styles, and people operating on different time lines. After five iterations, I sat down with one other staff member and we finally completed it between us. (see Working Document No. 31 in the Portfolio). True collaboration in practice is challenging and difficult when there are different skill levels, ideas and ways of approaching the task.

At this stage I decided to reflect on what worked and didn’t work in developing plans and strategies. Getting staff, community, and Councillors together around the table did contribute to shared understandings and ownership, however it was important to find the time to plan these meetings well and undertake the necessary preparation. If I had the resources, I would spend them on getting someone to do the consultation and collection of data and evidence to help inform the development of the Plan, Strategy or Policy. The methodology depended on the time and resources available, the skills and experience of the relevant staff, and the purpose of the document. It was, however, a good learning experience for the staff involved with a lot of positive feedback from the participants at the meetings.

In early 2010, I gained further insight into the tensions and conflicting demands relating to providing some of the community services. One of the Community Department units (the library service) was proposing a new brand and logo for their individual service area. I did not agree with this proposal as I thought that all our services should be branded as Council services and identified with the Council logo. I was reminded by the staff that library services were also part funded by the State Government, and that it wasn’t just a Council service. They wanted to distance themselves from both tiers of government with their own identity.
Later, as I was reflecting on this discussion, I realised that most of the services in my department were either partially or even fully funded by the State Government and even in some cases received part funding from the Federal Government. This could potentially be problematic, particularly when the policies and directions of each of the funding bodies were not aligned. This provided additional complexity to the provision of these services, and made life even more difficult for some staff who were balancing the reporting requirements of several masters who sometimes required different outcomes and results. It was no wonder they felt pressured and confused about their direction, policies and procedures.

Postscript:

At the end of 2009, I developed a framework / toolkit for the development of community development policies, plans and strategies to assist staff in designing the processes and methodologies (see Working Document No. 26 in the Portfolio)
**STRAND D  Down and dirty in the trenches**

We work in the dark-we do what we can-we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of the art
(Henry James, short story, 1893)

This fourth strand of my research project deals with my work within my own department; to change the work practices, to improve responsiveness, skills and confidence.

Following the Council election in 2008, a Council Plan was developed and adopted by the new Council in early 2009. Each Group Manager was then required to develop their departmental plan. I viewed this as an opportunity to do some team building and involve the officers in my department in the development of ‘our plan’.

To provide a better understanding of the Council Plan, the links between the Plans and also for them to gain some ownership and understanding of the goals and actions in our Plan. The importance of the alignment of goals, objectives and strategies is supported in the literature on leading change and strategic management (Hill and Jones, 1995; Senge, 1992; Kotter, 1996). More recently, Steven Symes writes:

Strategic alignment helps an organization work cohesively. Organisations have members who operate in different capacities, functioning in different departments or divisions. What one person in the organisation does in one department or division affects the activities of others in the same or different departments or divisions. Strategic alignment coordinates everyone’s activities so the organisation as a whole works toward the same goals using prescribed processes. Employees stop reacting to situations and begin acting proactively to move the organisation toward its goals. (Symes, 2011, online)

I therefore arranged for a half day Community Development Department Planning Workshop on 29 June 2009. All officers in the CD Department were invited; it was essential for all third level managers to attend, and optional for others. I invited the CEO to attend and talk about the Council Plan, and we then spent the afternoon developing goals and actions in alignment with the commitments in the Council Plan (see Working Document No. 16 in the Portfolio).
I also suggested to the CEO that we would like to present our Plan to the rest of the organisation. He agreed and arranged for all Group Managers to present their Departmental Plans over morning tea in the Portland Office over 3 weeks. I thought that this would provide better understanding across the wider organisation of the roles and functions of each department and would promote and reinforce the overall directions outlined in the Council Plan. I presented the Community Development Plan to about 30 officers in the tea room in September 2009 (see working document No. 20 in the Portfolio). As the Community Development Department Plan was the last to be presented, I asked the officers present for some feedback. They indicated that they felt it had been very valuable in providing a snapshot of what was taking place in each department and that it gave them more of an understanding of what each department did. It was suggested that it should be incorporated into the agenda for the Annual Staff Meeting so that all staff could hear about it, not just those in the Portland Office.

In addition, in 2009, I commenced encouraging unit coordinators to develop an operational plan for their units for the current year. I developed a template for them (see Working Document No. 24 in the Portfolio) and by the end of 2009 I had received three unit plans (out of six unit areas). My aim was twofold: to encourage them to think about the linkages between what they were doing at the operational level with the Council Plan and also to develop their strategic thinking and writing skills. I also suggested that they develop these plans at their team meeting.

Within the Community Development Department, I also encouraged staff to undertake training to provide an enhanced understanding of community development principles and financial management. I had identified a number of areas for training; these two areas, however, were particularly relevant to the development of skills relating to the enhancement of the relationship with the community and also the relationship between the budgets of individual service areas and the broader finances of the Council. I often reminded staff when they were seeking extra funds for their service that it equated to an X% increase in rates, to encourage their understanding of the link between their service and the cost to the community.
As part of the organisational staff appraisal process we identified performance and development objectives; however the onus was on individual members of staff to identify and organise the training. By 2009, there had not been a lot of progress made by staff to complete these elements of their development plans, and so, following discussion with various staff members, I organised contractors or experienced staff to provide the following training in-house: community development (two day course), financial management, and communication planning. There was mixed success. The staff that attended the community planning workshop gained an understanding of the principles of community development (bottom up approaches) and they learned some methods of how to work with groups of citizens and how to involve them in the work that they were doing. Most importantly, it appeared to provide them with some degree of added confidence when dealing with people. Staff would refer to this training in discussions about involving and consulting the community, and I heard comments such as “it’s better if we go to them rather than expecting them to come to us” and “we need to use plain English and avoid jargon when we talk to them” and also “at that training we did, we learnt that we need to pound the pavement and sit and talk to people”.

Communication was a key theme from the staff interviews. They wanted to know what was happening at the Council meetings, Senior Management Team Meetings and in other departments. From the interviews with the other staff, I made the assumption that this also would be the case for my staff in the Community Development Department. Following discussions with them, I developed a very basic communication plan (See Working Document No. 25 in the Portfolio) and commenced issuing a Community Development Department E-news on a fortnightly basis in November 2008, with the aim of providing information from either the Council workshop or Council Meetings (see Working Document No. 10 in the Portfolio). However, even at this early stage it was a challenge to find the additional time to put it together. I emailed it to everyone in my department and also to the Senior Management Group inviting them to cut and paste and use if they wanted with their own departments. I was mindful that the impetus for this e-news came from the interviews from staff in other parts of council, and I hoped that they might reap the benefits if it was extended into other departments.
This seemed to be well received, and I got several emails congratulating me on the initiative. Although it wasn’t adopted by the other senior managers, over the next nine months I was continuing to add to the mailing list as more staff members requested inclusion. By the beginning of 2009, it was getting to be rather onerous and I was getting behind with the fortnightly editions, so I decided to move it to a monthly e-newsletter, and continued with it on a monthly basis throughout 2009.

I also initiated a monthly meeting of the unit leaders in the Community Development Department. The aim was for them to hear what others were doing and to encourage integration of relevant projects. I used the opportunity to let them know what was happening at the Senior Management Team Meetings and Council Meetings, and then we would go around the table with each team leader taking five minutes to talk about their areas. I also encouraged them to bring along a different staff member to each meeting to provide them with a broader perspective on the organisation. I also invited others from other departments to come to meetings to talk about projects that they were working on and also so that they could gain an understanding of what our department was doing.

At the outset of this project in 2008, many areas in the Community Development Department still didn’t have written procedures or up to date policy manuals. This could be mostly attributed to a lack of time, skills and resources. It was affecting our effectiveness and efficiency as the following example illustrates. Following the adoption of the Council budget each year, it was usual practice to send out a letter to our clients to advise them of the fees and charges for that year. It was our practice to give six weeks’ notice before the fees were applied, however in spite of several reminders to the administrative staff, the letters were hastily mailed out unchecked with incorrect charges in them. Our contract suppliers were quite irate and there was a steady flow of phone calls from our upset clients. It was also reported in the media. I was annoyed and frustrated, and directed the staff to correct the letter and send it out again. I provided the wording for the letter, but unfortunately I didn’t check the actual printed letters, as the fees and charges were still incorrect, and we were embarrassed for a second time.
At this stage, I stopped and reflected on what was happening here. It was symptomatic of a lot of issues. We had problems recruiting appropriately skilled and qualified staff in this area, and we seemed to lurch from crisis to crisis. The confidence of the staff was poor, and there was no consistency of process, or written policies.

I was in a bind. I found it difficult to deal with the tension between being actively involved and stepping back to let the coordinators deal with this type of issue. On one hand, I felt it was my responsibility to ensure that we didn’t receive any negative publicity and on the other hand, it was important to support and mentor the coordinator through the process so that they learnt and developed as a consequence. This tension is one that I experienced quite often. I believed that as a senior manager, my role was to be an ‘enabler’ and to provide support and ensure my staff felt valued.

At this stage, the leader of this unit went off on leave, and the morale of the team plummeted. Various members of the team came to me at different times in tears, complaining about the team leader and the poor systems and processes. I reflected on my approach and considered several options for action. I could step in and co-ordinate the unit myself, micro managing the team or I could take a more collaborative problem solving approach. I decided to take action and called a team meeting for a frank assessment of the situation and to brainstorm ideas for solving the issues. I thought that this would encourage ownership of the problem and the proposed solution by all the team. Empowering others is also an objective of Action Research. They all had different ideas, and we talked them through and agreed on implementing some of them. I stipulated that they needed to share information and get the procedures written down so that they all had access to them.

In spite of this, we were back in the same situation. Once again I was disappointed and frustrated. Again, I met with the relevant staff to discuss the situation. They said that they didn’t have the time, but it seemed to me that they didn’t know how to go about it; that they needed someone to come in and work with them on a constant basis to develop an entirely new set of systems and processes. Unfortunately at this
stage the team leader then resigned. I revised the Position Description and the position title in the hope of attracting someone with relevant skills and experience. In spite of receiving fifteen applications and interviewing three of the applicants, I decided to go through the process again as none of the applicants had any experience or skills in leading or managing. I spoke to the CEO and we decided to increase the salary level this time. The second time round, I was confident we had the right person and I made the job offer. Unfortunately, after several discussions about salary levels over two months, she declined the position for another with substantially more money and status. I was back to square one. This link between capacity, salary, disadvantage and responsibility is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

I was beginning to feel quite panicky at this stage, and I felt I was running out of options. I was desperately hoping for someone with an understanding of the service we were providing as well as experience in managing staff and finances. I was reluctant to go through the recruitment process again and I wasn’t confident that any of the recruitment companies were able to help either. We rang our neighbouring councils to see if they had an experienced member of staff that we could second for a period of time, but they were unable to help. At this stage, after discussing it with the other Group Managers and the CEO, we made an internal appointment to ‘grow our own’, with the intention of building their skills and capacity in the position.

Why was it so difficult to recruit someone to this position? There were very few applicants from Portland, most of them were from surrounding Councils or Warrnambool. They all had practical experience, but very few had any real management experience. It was at this stage that I noted the conversations and the media reports of a shortage of skilled staff in the southwest with health skills and backgrounds. Hospital managers also reported similar problems. A recurring theme of a lack of capacity and skills was emerging and solutions would extend beyond the life of this research project. There was an obvious need for a Council Workforce Strategy; however there were neither sufficient resources nor in house skills to develop it at this stage.
I was also working with the team leaders in other areas to improve their processes, but again it was a case of two steps forward and one step backwards. I found it hard not to leap in and do the work for them, but as I often lacked the specific knowledge (e.g. children’s services regulations, etc.) I had to step back and encourage the actual staff involved to think through their systems and write them up as procedures. As mentioned earlier, this tension was also a constant thread throughout my work. I was faced with a dilemma – do I support, encourage and assist the staff to develop the documentation or do I source some funding to bring in a consultant to develop the policies in consultation with the staff?

On reflection, I decided to take the slower option and work with the staff to encourage ownership and better understanding of the documents as well as building their writing skills and competencies. By early 2009, it was evident that there was mixed success with this approach. Some units had completed some of the work on policies and procedures, however there still remained significant gaps in the documentation in some units, and other units hadn’t commenced the work. I was worried that the risk was too great, and consequently looked at funding some consultants to do the work. In some areas, where it was just an issue of time, we looked at bringing in relief staff to free up the other staff to do this work. At the end of 2009, this process was still bogged down and we hadn’t made any significant progress.

The Community Development Department also needed to improve the quality and timing of reports to Council. The corporate timelines had been raised by the CEO at my staff appraisal and also at the Departmental Planning Day in 2009. This was a sensitive topic with many team leaders in my department as they had indicated that in their view the timelines were rigid, and often unrealistic.

In spite of raising and discussing the need to meet the timelines at our Departmental Meetings and with individual coordinators at our fortnightly meetings, there was no real improvement over 2007-2008. The CEO and Group Manager for Corporate Services continued to raise the issue at Senior Management Team Meetings over this period.
After some reflection, I decided to discuss it with the coordinators and ask them why they thought that getting quality reports completed on time was an issue. Up to this point I had just been nagging, reminding and asking them to complete the reports on time. In several conversations with various officers, the following views were expressed:

- Constant change to the formatting of the reports undermined their confidence and they felt that they were constantly getting it wrong and being reprimanded by the Corporate Services staff. So why put in any effort try to get it right?
- They didn’t write reports to Council often enough to either feel confident in their report writing ability or to really understand the time lines
- They had more important things to deal with. Ensuring their services were delivered efficiently and effectively seemed more important to them than Council reports

I sympathized with their views, but on further reflection I thought that the basis for their views was a lack of understanding of their roles within Council and the general relationship between Council and the operations and services provided by Council. At this point I realised I needed to keep working with them to develop this understanding. I decided that the late reports and lack of attention to providing good reports was really a symptom of this broader issue - the disconnection with Council.

In spite of this, at the outset of 2009, we developed time frames for reports, placed reminders in the Outlook Calendars, and sent email reminders about deadlines at regular intervals to staff. At the end of 2009, we achieved our target of over 90% of our reports being submitted on time. This was achieved by sheer nagging, however, I was still re-writing about half of all reports. On average, we had six reports each month. I could see that this was going to be a work in progress, and would be a challenge for the foreseeable future. During this period I also commenced the development of a document to assist staff with the development of Council briefing papers and reports. However it wasn’t completed until early 2011, as the corporate
requirements changed from month to month (see early draft as Working Document No. 28 in the Portfolio).

On reflection, I found that improving practice and working systems would be the most protracted and difficult areas in which to bring about some improvement. I was surprised as I had assumed that I would introduce a new system or way of doing a particular procedure in discussion with the staff, and all would be solved. I hadn’t thought about the underlying issues, or why a change hadn’t been already implemented.

At the end of 2009, after considerable reflection and discussion, I decided that the difficulties in changing processes and systems may have been as a result of any or all of the following factors: lack of understanding of its importance by officers involved; lack of competency and skill to undertake the work; lack of time and resources to do the work and, my lack of experience.

Staff performance was also an issue related to the efficiency and responsiveness of the organisation. Poor past performance management of other staff was an area that was constantly raised throughout the staff interviews. I heard of many instances where it was ignored and not dealt with in an appropriate or timely manner. We were in ‘avoiding mode’. There were several instances where unit coordinators were struggling with staff members who were not meeting their job requirements for several reasons, including a lack of understanding of the job requirements, skills and competencies, mental health issues, lack of motivation, and poor attitude.

I was also dealing with some performance issues relating to some of the people that reported directly to me. (For ethical considerations, details of my work in this area have not been discussed.) It was important that I was seen to be dealing with these issues in order to model the appropriate practices and provide some leadership to the others in my department. It was also important to me that I modelled empathy and consideration in dealing with them. In some instances, I referred staff to our Employee Assistance Scheme counsellors for some additional advice and support.

Supporting team leaders to deal with specific performance issues was also complex and time consuming. Many issues had existed for some time, and as a result had
become intractable and more difficult to deal with. Sometimes I would meet with the more difficult cases, and occasionally the Union and legal representatives were also involved.

It also seemed clear to me that just talking about performance management was not enough. I needed to send a clear signal to the staff that this was being treated seriously and I put performance management strategies into action. I had to ‘walk the talk’. The modelling of good practice and behaviour was emerging as a more effective strategy than providing training or talking to the staff about the need for improved performance management.

Postscript:

After 2 years of working with staff to improve work practices and customer responsiveness, I found that the most effective strategy is to ensure that we have the right staff in place. The units where we have made the most progress are those with appropriately qualified, experienced and skilled coordinators, i.e. recruitment.

The difficulty of working for more than one master (funding from local, state and federal governments) has only been accentuated through the change of State Government in late 2010 and the resultant changing policy direction in some areas.
STRAND E  The low-down on leading ladies

A leader is best
When people barely know he exists,
Not so good when people obey and acclaim him,
Worse when they despise him.
But of a good leader, who talks little,
When his work is done, his aim fulfilled,
They will say:
We did it ourselves
(Lao-Tzu, 6th century Chinese Philosopher)

Throughout the research period, I pondered, wondered and worried about my participation and contributions to the Senior Management Team, and my relationships with the other managers and the CEO. This has been recorded in my research journal, but for ethical reasons is not discussed in detail here. I was often concerned that my views were not always given due consideration, and were dismissed as being based on emotion and feeling. The information that I presented to the Management Team as a result of the first round of staff interviews was by and large dismissed as being the views of a few “needy” staff. My efforts to have some personal development sessions included in the Leadership and Development Program were not supported. I was also often concerned about the feelings of the staff, and would also raise this at Senior Management Team meetings, suggesting that we needed to consult with the staff, involve them more in decision making and communicate more effectively with them. Was I being too emotional? Were my concerns valid? Was it because I was a female?

In September 2008, following the Senior Management Team Planning Day, I was reflecting on my style of management compared with the other senior managers, and decided to go back to the literature. I was confident that my style, although different, was also appropriate. Was it different because I was female? What part do emotions play in leadership?

The literature informed me that recent research in psychology provided an alternative view to the traditional view that charisma, intelligence and other personality traits are the keys to effective leadership. Reichner, Haslam and Platow assert that:
In this alternate view, effective leaders must work to understand the values and opinions of their followers—rather than assuming absolute authority—to enable a productive dialogue with team members about what the group embodies and stands for and thus how it should act (2007, p. 24).

They further contend that to ‘gain credibility among followers, leaders must try to position themselves among the group rather than above it’ and that ‘acting superior or failing to treat followers respectfully or listen to them will undermine a leader’s credibility and influence’ (2007, p. 27). These findings reflected the feedback that I was receiving from staff and my own experiences. My own experience also agreed with the researcher’s view that ‘favouritism, or even the appearance of it, is the royal road to civil war in organisations’ (2007, p. 27).

In a study by Carlene Boucher on the ways that women socially construct leadership in organisations she noted the stereotypical (male) values of a leader as ‘emotional distance, objectivity, unconditional confidence, etc.’ (1997, p. 155).

The values espoused by the participants in Boucher’s research are similar to my own. Although the values underpinning the individual participants differed, they included ‘integrity, honesty, energy, conviction, tenacity and challenging the status quo’.

One of the important issues raised during Boucher’s theory building was that of connection. In order to lead, group members ‘have to be connected, to themselves and to others’.

Without this sense of being connected to themselves, they despair of being able to lead, they do not know what to do and they do not feel credible. They connect to others, to strengthen their resolve and to strengthen their resistance. (Boucher, 1997, p. 155)

This was also of importance to me. I found that I needed to connect in order to feel credible, and in order to feel comfortable. I didn’t feel that I was connecting to the Senior Management Team and I wasn’t confident that I had much credibility with them.
Zigarmo et al also note that the ‘cultural meaning and expression of masculine and / or feminine dimensions has also been explored extensively in a leadership context’ (2005, p. 26). They note that:

Males are more commonly socialized to assume individual, independent, aggressive, task leadership orientations, while females are shaped to assume nurturing, collectivist, compromising, caring, relational leadership orientations (2005, p. 27)

However, they assert that people possess the capacity to understand and express both male and female orientations, even though they are socialized towards one. They contend that ‘each individual, regardless of gender, possesses the capacity to learn these two sets of behaviours and therefore have the ability to respond to events and opportunities using either behaviours’ (2005, p. 27).

Feeling surer of myself, over the next few months I attempted to influence the Senior Management Team to place more emphasis on the need for more communication and involvement of the staff in decision making and planning. I started with the discussion about the content and form of the Leadership and Development Program that we were initiating for all third tier staff. Staff members with responsibilities for managing staff, budgets and significant services or programs were invited to submit a written expression of interest for the program.

*We had a discussion today with the successful tenderers for the provision of our Leadership and Development Program. The other members of the SMT want Project Management to be a large component of the training program. I spoke about the need to include some of the personal development elements, especially the areas of ‘critical reflection’ and ‘self management’, etc. Unfortunately I seem to be the only one talking about this stuff (no support from others in the team), and I fear that the program will only focus on the more practical skills.* (Research Journal, 16th September 2008)

I raised the need for more self management competencies again and again. I would speak about it, then the discussion would go straight back to the need for competencies such as project management, staff supervision, and written communication. It was as if I wasn’t being heard, as if I hadn’t even spoken. I felt
that I was being patronized, they wouldn’t even engage in a discussion about it. Once again, I felt that I had slipped back down the rabbit hole in Wonderland.

Under the CEO’s direction, the Leadership and Development Program (LADP) went ahead over the next 12 months with a focus on the more practical skills. My input to the discussion and views about the competencies required were totally ignored.

On reflection, I realised I was probably speaking a “foreign” language. Why couldn’t I get across the need for emotional intelligence competencies? Why was I out of step with the others? Maybe it was me that did not understand?

I referred to the literature to gain some perspective and found that many researchers and writers supported the need for the development of self management competencies (Goleman, 1996; Goleman, 1998; George, 2000; Gardner and Stough, 2002). Henley notes that in order to ‘build a great group’ a leader needs to ‘increase competence in three dimensions – emotionally, physically and intellectually’ (Henley, 2009, p. 4).

I decided that it wasn’t just an issue for me because I was female, self management competencies were an important element of effective leadership. However, it didn’t appear to be important to the other members of the Senior Management Team. Returning to the literature, I discovered a useful description of the differing ways that men and women communicate:

- We also found that the flow of the ways that women traditionally worked together was one to be recognised as truly valid. That is, the dynamic of flowing ideas, which spin off each other in a sort of fruitful chaos until something good emerges, as against adversarial and competitive proposal and argument (Dorothy McRae-McMahon, 2001, p. 57-58)

I mulled over the possibility the that reason I didn’t feel I was being heard in the Senior Management Team Meetings could be the result of the way that I communicated. I thought about the way that I introduced a topic for discussion. Was I too tentative? Did I speak too softly? I often raised a topic by asking others what they thought of it. Was this at odds with the prevailing male style: adversarial and competitive proposal and argument? In following meetings I found that my
ideas were often not picked up or acted on unless another member of the team reiterated my idea in their words. It did not seem to make any difference if I framed the idea in the same manner as the others did (“In my view, we need to....”) or continued to raise it (sometimes up to three times). I raised my concerns in discussion with the Chief Executive Officer at my annual performance appraisal in 2008. He seemed surprised that I felt this way, and said that he felt that my contributions were respected and heard. Nonetheless, I felt that I didn’t have a great deal of credibility with the Senior Management Team, and I couldn’t determine if this was because I was a female, or because I was managing the unimportant softer issues (community services), or if they just thought that I wasn’t all that competent. After all, I had only worked in local government for three years; each of them had worked at least 20 years in the sector. At this stage, I didn’t consider other possibilities. It didn’t occur to me that I may have been underestimating my influence.

By September 2008, I was also becoming concerned at the amount of my time being taken up with ‘staff issues’. People who were unhappy about some element of their jobs, relationships at work or concerned about lines of communication would come to me to discuss issues, vent frustrations, seek reassurance and advice - support that they claimed was unavailable from their own managers. I noted in my research journal:

Another thought – this organisation is running along traditional gender lines. The men are taking care of the ‘hard issues’ – (hunting and gathering) such as meeting with ministers, dealing with the external issues, and I am playing ‘mother’ – keeping the home fires burning, providing the shoulder to cry on, dispensing advice and encouragement to all staff, not just in my department. Is this fair? Should a modern organisation run along these lines? Maybe it isn’t anything to do with gender, but more about management styles? (Research Journal, 11 September 2008)

The above extract from my research journal also illustrates my concerns in September 2008. There were a lot of meetings occurring at the time with Government officials and Ministers as the Shire was lobbying for various projects and dealing with the planning issues. I was feeling excluded from this process and was also annoyed because I felt that I was picking up and dealing with other manager’s problems – providing support for their staff.
The staff and Councillor interviews identified leadership as an issue for the organisation (see Appendix No. 5).

Staff are the spokes in the wheel; need to be well spaced and well tuned. A manager’s position will get respect; people in that position have to earn that respect. If we are well led then respect will follow. We need leadership that is solid, and that can withstand political pressures and manipulation. Managers are viewed as wishy washy and indecisive. A bit like an academic – might be brilliant at maths, but can’t teach kids. Nothing is getting out to the staff – nothing from the Management Team meetings. They are seen as reactionary and not strategic. Can we just stick to it for a while?  (Extract from transcripts of staff interviews)

Leadership was also identified as an issue by the Senior Management Team; many Group Managers found it difficult to take any leave as they didn’t have any staff with the skills and experience to step up and fill their roles while they were away (Research Journal, 22 July 2008). This meant that senior staff were often exhausted and close to burn out. It also meant that others were not being given the opportunity to step up and learn by acting in the senior manager’s roles. Staff were not being enabled to learn by doing.

I continued to reflect on my style and that of the other managers. Not wanting to appear arrogant, I decided to stop talking about it and just continue to lead and manage in the style that I felt most comfortable. I tried to include effective communication; collaborative decision making; support and empowerment of staff; positive attitude; taking responsibility for one’s actions and creative thinking. The literature also supports the view that modelling leadership behaviours is important. Senge asserts that ‘what matters most is the visible behaviour of people in leadership positions in sharing their own personal visions and demonstrating their commitment to the truth (1992, p. 344).’

I also returned to the literature to see if there was any research that identified strategies for female leaders to exert some influence in their male dominated leadership groups. (The discourse on the relationship between gender role, decision style and leadership style is discussed in Part 3 of Chapter 2). I discovered three helpful texts: Tannen 2001, Kirner and Rayner, 1999 and , Glass, 1993. Tannen developed the framework of status and connection described in her book ‘You just
don’t understand: women and men in conversation’. She found that men and women talk in very different ways for profoundly different reasons:

Women tend to focus on relative connection (whether what we say brings us closer together or pushes us further apart) whereas men tend to focus on relative states (whether what we say puts one of us in a one-up or one-down position) (Tannen, 2001, p. 301).

Kirner and Rayner assert that ‘you need power, to make a difference’ (1999, p. 3) and that power is exercised by women through networking: acting collectively, persuading, consulting and influencing (1999, p. 4). I devised a range of strategies from these texts and worked at implementing them. These included:
- Being more assertive by taking up more space, spreading out my papers, walking around while doing presentations
- Using direct objective statements such as “we will” and “there are” instead of “I think” and “I feel”
- Avoiding tag endings at the end of sentences such as “this is a difficult report isn’t it?” and the use of upward inflections at the end of sentences.
- Using stronger quantifiers such as “always”, “none” or “never” instead of “kind of” or “a bit”
- Using anecdotes and jokes to lighten the mood
- Joining in conversations about politics, football, and news events (to show that I am knowledgeable)

It was my perception that things had improved slightly. However I still found that by and large my views and opinions were ignored by the SMT. They would stop and listen, then continue speaking as if I hadn’t uttered a word.

Continuing to reflect on my own practice as a leader, I often found that I was caught up in the day to day business of meetings, report writing and responding to phone calls and emails. I often found myself unprepared for the regular meetings that I held with the department coordinators, and I would find that by the end of the day I was emotionally and mentally exhausted. Was I modelling good management and leadership practice?
In June, 2009, I decided to capture my activities over one day as a detailed journal of that day (see Working Document No. 15 in the Portfolio). Later that week, I examined the piece of writing and reflected that:

- I needed to minimise the number of meetings that I had each day and ensure free time before each meeting to prepare and think about how I might deal with any issues that might arise.
- I was doing too much ‘hand holding’. I needed to encourage people to think through and resolve their own problems. I needed to ‘let go’ to enable them to develop, learn and gain confidence.
- Achieving the balance between the role of coach and ensuring that we provide efficient and effective services is difficult. I sometimes felt that I needed to take control of a situation to ensure that it was resolved successfully, but by doing this I was saying by my actions that I didn’t have confidence in their abilities.

As a consequence of this reflection, I acted by altering my calendar to provide more free time for preparation and reflection by blocking out time as ‘no appointments’. I found that this was partially effective, however my staff soon worked out that this usually meant that I was in my office and interpreted it as me being available. Achieving the balance to ensure adequate time for reflection and preparation is an ongoing dilemma.

At the end of the research time frame, I found that although the literature, experience and reflection had been useful, I was no closer to determining the impact of gender on leadership or management style. I continued to read and seek out literature that might provide further insight over the next year. I discovered a research report by Andrea Diamond that looked at the possibility of gender as a factor in the career development and identity of Victorian local government chief executives. She concluded that:

The dominant culture within local government, according to both male and female CEOs, is one of hegemonic masculinity. It is a homogenous culture that is dominated by white, middle aged men (2007, p. 156).
Diamond also noted that female CEOs consistently described a sense of intense scrutiny, resulting in the need to prove their worthiness and capacity to be successful at this level. She noted that ‘this results in the female CEOs setting high standards for themselves and being constantly achievement oriented’ (2007, p. 167). Was this also applicable to my own situation? I also felt a sense of intense scrutiny when I first came into this position, but had associated it with the view that I hadn’t come from a traditional local government background. I also felt a need to prove my capacity to be successful at this level, but I hadn’t associated it with the gender issue. I did however feel the pressure to be a successful role model and to exhibit good leadership for the other younger women in the organisation. I felt that I was being observed and sometimes even scrutinized in my dealings with the other senior managers and in the way I carried out my work. Diamond refers to this as ‘the constant sense of women being on display’ (2007, p. 167). This was an additional pressure that I only became aware of in the writing of the exegesis. Coghlan and Brannick refer to this as the place ‘where synthesis and integration take place’ and ‘things begin to make sense; meanings form’.

There were times though where I wondered whether by avoiding dominant speech acts, I was acting in a submissive fashion and avoiding anything that might be seen as threatening male colleagues. Diamond found that ‘female CEOs appear strongly motivated to ensure that they do not threaten their male colleagues or prevailing culture’ (2007, p. 157).

Although I found it easier to maintain optimism and good humour, I struggled at times with the balance between supporting staff to problem solve and think creatively about their own work issues, and the need to take control and tell them how to do it. It was certainly easier to do the latter, and I found that at times when I was tired and stressed, I resorted to solving the issues for them. However, it was not an effective approach for developing my team members as future leaders and managers.

I continued to work at expressing my ideas and views at Senior Management Team meetings, although interestingly, my perception is that I have gained some credibility over recent months. The struggle doesn’t seem so pronounced since
September 2009 when I was asked by the CEO to act in his role while he took annual leave. Though I would like to think that my credibility has increased due to the work undertaken through this research project and my tenacity, I suspect that being selected to act as the CEO has played a large part in this change. Being anointed by the alpha male did more for my quest for credibility, acknowledgement, and influence than any of the actions undertaken in the course of this research.

Postscript:

Following the resignation of the CEO in July 2010, I was appointed as the Acting CEO for 3 months. Since this time, the dynamics of the SMT have changed and I now find that my views and opinions are now sought by the other members of the team, confirming my conclusion.
Chapter 5
Chapter 5

KEY THEMES - SIGNIFICANT LANDSCAPES

Introduction

The previous chapter presented the research as five strands because it was not possible to structure a single narrative. These strands were structured around significant events and periods of time, and described selected parts of the journey as it happened. According to Coghlan and Brannick ‘the next stage of writing the story is to reflect on it and test your insights as to what themes occur’ (2010, p. 146). As they also note, writing the exegesis ‘is a whole new learning experience’ where things begin to make sense ‘and meanings form’. This is the next stage of reflective practice and another action research cycle.

This chapter has emerged from the swamp (Schon, 1991, p. 43); it attempts to make sense and extends and develops theory in respect to the themes that have emerged through the synthesis and formation of meaning. The chapter changes the perspective from the immediate (as described in the previous chapter) to the more general. It reflects Reason’s ‘second person action research / practice’ (Reason, 2001, p. 3), and is based on the analysis of the data – the staff and councillor interviews, the community survey, the research journal, personal reflection, meeting notes, records of conversations and organisational documentation (policies, plans and meeting minutes).

Here I also give voice to the respondents and participants, resulting in a number of emergent themes:

1. Undertaking local government in a 3D environment
2. Local government – where are we heading and do we engage our communities?
3. Local government responsiveness – how can we do it better?
4. Leading in local government – dealing with unique and complex situations of uncertainty
These themes are underpinned by the data from the interviews with the Councillors and the staff, and the community surveys. Quotations are coloured blue for community, green for the Councillors and orange for the staff voices.

The themes are interrelated and have emanated from a complex and challenging workplace, and the experiential learning of a senior female manager within that workplace. They have emerged from the analyses of the transcripts of the staff and councillor interviews, the community surveys, meeting notes and the observations and reflections included in the research journal and notes taken over the two year period of this research project. The analysis process was described in more detail in Chapter 3.

The themes emerged from the data, however, the literature enabled me to feel more confident about the findings and at times assisted in my thinking. I have therefore included some of the literature in this chapter.
5.1 Undertaking local government in a 3D environment

Undertaking local government in an environment characterized by large distances from capital cities, in a community with significant pockets of disadvantage and with an ageing demographic is challenging and complex. It is further complicated by a community that is often disillusioned and disaffected not only with local government, but with all tiers of government. As one survey respondent wrote:

Too much bureaucratic (green influenced) red tape: i.e. all the bullshit about not being able to burn dry rubbish (rose pruning’s etc) in one’s own backyard. Not being able to clear native vegetation with close proximity to ones country residence. Not being able to collect dry firewood from roadsides (community survey respondent).

Distance

As outlined in Chapter 1, The Glenelg Shire Council is located in the far south west of Victoria, one of the more remote and geographically isolated Councils in Victoria. The distance factor affects the ability of staff to access training and networking opportunities and is often a disincentive to recruiting and retaining skilled employees.

The culture is influenced by the isolation of the shire. It has affected the tenure of staff – more transient. This has given rise to higher levels of stress in the various teams (staff interview).

Potential employees, particularly tertiary educated graduates, are difficult to recruit to a town that is geographically remote from their social and learning networks. Portland is an industrial town with a lower number of university graduates than regional Victoria overall and is without a local university presence. Therefore, some creativity is required to market the organisation and location to potential recruits, and some successful strategies have included offering higher rates of pay, leading edge organisational practices (e.g. worker empowerment, community development opportunities, etc.), and flexible working conditions for employees travelling to work in Portland from other regional centres (Hamilton, Warrnambool and Mount Gambier).
Our geographic isolation from other capital city centres sometimes limits the aspirations of the council and the community (staff interview).

The opportunity to work on attractive projects, particularly in the community development area, such as community planning and Indigenous community development can also attract skilled employees— at least for a short time. A ‘grow your own’ strategy may also be successful, but can be time consuming and expensive as skilled and experienced staff may then be attracted to larger local government organisations to enhance their experience and build their careers. Isolation also is an inhibitor to the upgrading of skills and qualifications as discussed in Strand D of Chapter 4.

Sometimes we appoint people to positions because no one else applies. Sometimes this is not the best decision (staff interview).

Conversely, the distance factor also has other implications for the workforce. In addition to a rapid turnover in some areas, in other areas some long term employees are entrenched in their roles and have no desire to move on. In order to take up opportunities in other organisations, employees would need to relocate or commute large distances. As a consequence, it can be difficult to bring about change and continuous improvement in some areas.

People have lived and worked here their entire lives, and are not open to new ideas. “Work as a team and do it my way” (staff interview).

There is a lot of inflexibility – a lack of thinking outside the box. We need more people with broad life experience here – anything left of centre is not a fit (staff interview).

In addition to the staffing issues, the distance also impacts on the ability to network, lobby and advocate to state and federal government departments and bureaucrats. It is not unusual for senior staff and Councillors to spend a whole day travelling for a meeting that may only take 1 hour. The distance factor has implications for the Glenelg Shire community – the high cost of travel affects the amount of lobbying and advocating for community issues that is able to be
undertaken, an expensive factor for a community with significant health issues that require new and innovative services and additional government resources.

Illustration No. 6
Sign at entrance of Merino, a small town in the Glenelg Shire with approximately 400 residents.

The distance factor also affects the price of service provision to rural and remote communities. According to Turnbull (The Age, July 3, 2010, p. 15), a report on local government financial sustainability ‘pointed out that distance increased expenses, blowing out the average cost of metropolitan council services of $10 a head to $200 in remote areas’. According to this report (Whelan and Whelan, 2010), population sparsity, population dispersion, and council remoteness from major population centres increase service costs. According to Whelan, ‘provision of services over larger distances increases service costs’ (2010, p. 9). This further disadvantages rural councils, especially those more remote from larger population centres.

Demographics

The ageing of the population is one of the major transformations being experienced by Australia’s population, and is a current focus for both economic and social policy (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004, online).

There has been a great deal of government and industry focus as well as press and media coverage about the impacts of an ageing community on an organisational workforce and the community in general. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004; Australia. Treasury, 2004; Australian Local Governance Association, 2004; Australia. Productivity Commission, 2005; Rodgers, Emma, 2010;) The former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, noted that ‘Australia must dramatically raise productivity if it is to meet the challenges of an ageing population’ (Harrison, 2010, online) and the third
intergenerational report predicts ‘the proportion of the population aged 65 and over will jump from about 14% now to 23% by 2050 with only 2.7 working age Australians for every one aged over 65 or more’ (Harrison, 2010, online).

The Glenelg Shire Council has a significantly greater challenge addressing the ageing population issue than does the whole of Victoria and regional Victoria overall due to a declining population base. According to population projections, 60% per cent of Portland’s population and 53% of the shire’s population will be 55 years or older by 2031 against 35% for Victoria (Glenelg Shire Council, Ageing Well in Glenelg, 2008). This research found that coupled with reduced life expectancy for Glenelg residents and the shire’s poor socio-economic standing, the implications for the provision of services and sourcing a workforce to provide these services will be challenging.

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, in terms of education and occupation, the Glenelg Shire is the 5th lowest ranked local government authority in Victoria (Glenelg Shire Council, Social Plan Research Report, 2009, p. 4). According to the SEIFA Index for Education and Occupation by resident (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008, online), in 2006, a total of 11,631 residents ranked in the lowest 3 deciles for educational attainment and or low (unskilled) occupational status. This amounts to 59% of all Shire residents, and creates enormous challenges for economic development within the Shire, particularly where new industry is seeking skilled labour.

This also has implications for the Glenelg Shire Council as an organisation. As indicated above, distance makes it difficult to recruit and retain a skilled labour force, and Council, like other industry in the Shire is forced to recruit locally. As a consequence, some employees may find it difficult to upgrade skills and qualifications to adequately meet the needs of their roles. This places an additional training load on the organisation, and additional pressure on the senior management team. The lack of qualified and skilled staff makes it difficult to back fill some positions, placing additional pressure on the organisation during periods of staff absences and leave. It also affects the ability of council to be a high performing organisation; to be able to adapt to a changing environment.
This research also found that the lack of skills and qualifications impacts on the
degree of organisational innovation and effectiveness, and can also affect the
capacity of the organisation to be responsive and flexible and to respond to future
issues and external changes.

Disadvantage

Equity and freedom are important characteristics of democracy and
these principles are reflected in all citizens being equal before the law
and having equal access to power (Aristotle, 350BC)

The Glenelg Shire Council is ranked in the most disadvantaged 18% of local
government areas in the state (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006) with pockets of
significant disadvantage (ranked in the lowest decile) in Portland, Heywood and
Merino. This was discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

I found that some rural and remote Councils find the tension between the need to
bring attention to the degree of disadvantage being experienced in the community
and the need to promote the community as a good place to live in order to attract
new residents and industry a challenging and difficult dilemma. This dilemma is also
difficult for practitioners in the community development areas of local government
who are working closely with these communities and regularly witness the problems
and needs of the people. On occasions they feel conflicted when dealing with
these tensions – a Council which may not want attention drawn to the issue, and the
needs of the community to have the attention of agencies and government
brought to the issue in order to develop an integrated range of responses and long
term strategies.

It is also challenging to gain an understanding of the role of local government in
addressing disadvantage when there is a view that the ‘nature of poverty emanates
from outside municipal boundaries’ (Engels and Dufty, 2006, p. 165). Nonetheless,
local government can contribute to alleviating disadvantage and poverty through
community renewal programs, the provision of financial support for support services
(emergency relief, etc.) and individual and household waivers or discounts from
local rates and charges. However, in severely disadvantaged areas, this has
implications for others in the community - they may have to pay more or have fewer services. According to Engels and Dufty:

A more coordinated and comprehensive strategy for alleviating poverty can be developed only if it is prioritised as our most serious social problem that demands a whole-of-government response across all three levels (2006, p. 169)

Some local governments are working in partnership with the state government to address disadvantage through an ‘early intervention’ approach with priority given to services for the early years (ages 0-4) through additional support services for parents and integrated service delivery facilities such as the Portland Child and Family Complex. Taylor and Fraser (2003) note that ‘early intervention policies aimed at preventing lifelong poverty and exclusion are the most effective use of government resources’. In many municipalities, the state government funds the programs that are delivered by local government – the closest tier of government to the community.

Local government is well placed to take a leadership role and advocate and lobby for a coordinated and strategic approach to addressing and alleviating poverty and disadvantage; however in some cases the political views of the local politicians may constrain the resources and the priorities of the Council. This research indicates that some Councillors and community members hold the theoretical view that ‘emphasizes individual choice and responsibility, drawing attention to the roles of moral character and motivation in determining an individual’s socio-economic status’ (Porter and Trezise, 2006, p. 35). Often as a consequence, less compassion and priority are given towards those labelled as ‘undeserving poor’. I found that Council officers working in this environment often experience conflict and discomfort when they hold opposing or alternative views, and are confronted with a range of dilemmas on a regular basis. It is easy to blame the disadvantaged.

Communities disadvantaged by lack of income and education are also often suspicious of government and don’t have access to the avenues that connect with governments. There is often a lack of trust between those citizens that feel disempowered and excluded, and tiers of government, particularly local
government. The literature suggests that there is a lack of trust between community and local government (Cuthill and Fien, 2005), however this is amplified in communities where there are higher numbers of disadvantaged residents and where there is a greater gap between the ‘haves and the have nots’.

Councillors should listen to ratepayer’s (sic) opinions more and not rebuff with their own opinions (community survey respondent).

There is not sufficient interest in the ratepayers opinions, Councillors are more concerned with the views imposed on them by council’s senior staff and consultants (community survey respondent).

The literature also indicates that there is an overall ‘inequality of voice’ in the many forms of political and civic participation (Manwaring, 2007, p. 12) and that the more affluent socio-economic groups are more likely to engage than lower socio-economic groups (Verba, Schlozman et al, 1995; Pattie, Seyd et al 2004). There is also a suggestion that ‘those groups already engaged with government networks’ are more likely to be part of any engagement or consultation process and that a low level of trust is a key barrier to engagement (Manwaring, 2007, p. 13). This goes to the heart of the concept of disadvantage – the lack of capacity to participate in democracy and exercise their rights and be heard.

There is a degree of elitism – there are business groups (Portland mafia) who get things done just by knowing Councillors. Then there are some Councillors who will lean on staff to get things done (staff interview).

There is a lot of judgmental stuff that goes on within Council – about the haves and the have nots (staff interview).

This research found that a high degree of community disadvantage therefore has implications for the planning and delivery of services, and for facilitating citizen participation in local governance in the Glenelg Shire. Overall, local governments in these environments have to be more creative in designing consultation and communication processes. Public meetings and surveys are common data collection methods traditionally used by many local governments (Cuthill and Fien,
2005, p. 72); methods not conducive for participation by residents with low literacy and confidence levels. Engaging these citizens takes time and patience. I found that local government will have to instigate new and innovative community engagement and consultation initiatives.

The capacity of community groups and organisations to manage and understand the governance, finance and risk aspects associated with their community organisations, particularly incorporated groups, is constrained in disadvantaged communities where there are low levels of education and skills, and a corresponding broad distrust of authority and government. I found that there is more pressure for these local governments to assist community groups and work with them to build their capacity. In Victoria, Councils, including the Glenelg Council, are implementing the cluster management model for kindergarten committees and working with their local Neighbourhood Houses; complicated processes when the community is distrustful of the intent and nature of the models.

Illustration No. 8

Portland Neighbourhood House located in South Portland - Glenelg Council agreed to auspice this program in 2009

There is a greater need for community development processes in disadvantaged communities. Issues should be addressed through a whole of community consultative response, with local government working alongside other agencies and government departments. This requires a greater range of financial and human resources which is difficult for a Council constrained by the financial capacity of their ratepayers.
This research also found that the environment of disadvantage, an aged demographic and the distance from capital cities creates an additional layer of complexity and pressure for the senior officers in those Councils. These conditions also make it difficult for the community development officers actually planning and undertaking consultation and work with these residents. They require a range of relevant skills and experience in addition to the personal attributes of patience, resilience and adaptability. Recruiting, skilling and retaining this workforce is another challenge for the senior managers working in remote and disadvantaged communities. They too require a far greater degree of resilience and creativity to develop innovative approaches to overcome the obstacles. However Whelan notes:

No amount of managerial expertise will overcome the substantial negative impact on operating capacity imposed by environmental factors over which they have little or no control (Whelan and Whelan, 2010, p. 17)
5.2 Local Government – where are we heading and how do we engage our communities?

Local government is the third tier of government in Australia and in Victoria, local government authorities vary in size, rate base, needs, infrastructure and resources (MAV, 2008, online).

The role of local government was discussed in Chapter 2, however further discourse is occurring on the future role and direction of local government. The Municipal Association of Victoria has undertaken an annual summit on the Future of Local Government since 2005. The original summit in 2005 found that local government needs to embrace change and reform, and needs to be more responsive to the community with less focus on regulation. It found that the future is not ‘business as usual’ and that the key local government area needs to be community strengthening, not service delivery (Municipal Association of Victoria, 2006).

This research found that there is a basic and fundamental conflict between community, councillors and staff (see Appendix no. 4) on the priorities for local government with many people indicating that priority should be given to the provision of infrastructure (roads, facilities, etc.) and economic development.

A thriving exciting place to live, safe to walk through at night; with new industrial and business vying to be part of Portland; dual lane highways and passing lanes along its highways to neighbouring towns (community survey respondent)

Some Councillors have focussed on the provision of services (child and aged care, waste, planning) and the liveability of the community (see Appendix no. 5). However, I found that there are other Councillors who see the purpose of local government in more traditional terms as roads, rates and rubbish.

I’m a bit of a roads, rates and rubbish man. As long as our basic services are presentable and tidy, we don’t need much more (Councillor Interview).

This research found that Council staff also indicated that they saw the provision of infrastructure and services as important priorities for local government. The issues of economic sustainability, financial management and balancing community demand
with the available resources are also viewed as important priorities for local government by Council staff.

There is a lack of understanding in the community about the difficult task of local government and the lack of resource capabilities. People slam the whole Council based on a single issue. We are not well regarded, there is a lot of ignorance, we just can’t be everything to all people (staff interview).

I found that the role and purpose of local government does not appear to be well understood. Confusion exists, and this confusion extends to councillors and staff, as well as the residents. Local government also mostly suffers from a poor reputation.

Before I worked for local government, I had no idea what they did. I am just astounded by the range of services provided (staff interview).

Some community members incorrectly see local government as responsible for all road and rail networks, public buildings, and the provision of sewerage and water supply.

Council should provide a shopping centre, post office and petrol outlet in South Portland. The Post Office has outgrown current needs and needs to be expanded or replaced (community survey respondent).

Although the State Government (VicRoads) is responsible for major roads and highways and water authorities have been established by the State Government to provide water and sewerage services, many community members don’t understand or are confused about the different roles and responsibilities of government and semi government agencies:

I am currently looking at a bill of around $25,000-$35,000 to have sewerage connected. I already have a $9,000 environmentally friendly water treatment plant and they want me to remove it so the FUCKS can charge me rates for sewage (community survey respondent)

This research found that there is a significant role for local government in working more closely with other government agencies to ensure that community concerns are addressed. The concept of ‘joined up government’ or ‘seamless government’ is
found in many government policy documents (Australian Government, Council of Australian Governments, Victorian Government) however appears to be directed towards the provision of information or to address complex policy issues that cut across several departments and tiers of government, such as disadvantage, water use, and global warming. Engaging across a range of jurisdictions and portfolios to enhance responsiveness to community driven issues seems to be an emerging issue that will be a major challenge for local and state government and their agencies.

The benefit of seamless government is that it breaks down the artificial silos within a sector of government but just as importantly, it can break down the silos between jurisdictions. The ability to share data and information securely between jurisdictions is particularly important in rural and remote Australia where often the council office is the only government office available (Hughes, 2005, online).

As a result of this research, there appears to be a role for local government to drive these functions working towards ‘seamless’ government, particularly in rural and regional areas where local government is the ‘face’ of government overall. A whole of government approach or range of activities has the potential to improve responsiveness to community needs and could result in better coordination of services or policies. Again, this creates greater challenges for rural shires, particularly in finding a suitably skilled workforce to drive this innovation and implement it. This dilemma has implications for these councils as they lack the skills to successfully negotiate with federal and state governments and to plan and implement this very different approach to service delivery.

Local government has often been accused of being bureaucratic and paternalistic with poor financial management (Jones, 2002), and in more recent times it has been condemned for poor governance practices, a lack of accountability, poor processes and systems, and a lack of responsiveness to the community (Millar, Royce, 2008; Victoria Ombudsman, 2008; Dowling, 2009). This was also evident in the range of community survey responses:

Lying bullshit, wasting funds, revenue raising, running their own agenda regardless of public concern (community survey respondent)
In more recent years, I found that the lack of trust and poor perception of local government has been addressed in the discourse on local government; solutions for these issues have been found through community governance and community participation. The newly elected government of Great Britain has also raised the issue of devolution of power to local government and communities in their policies: The Government believes that it is time for a fundamental shift of power from Westminster to people. We will promote decentralisation and democratic engagement, and we will end the era of top-down government by giving new powers to local councils, communities, neighbourhoods and individuals (U.K Cabinet Office, 2010, p. 11).

The devolution of power to local communities has been described in Chapter 2, nonetheless there is still an undercurrent of mistrust and cynicism towards all level of government:

Our present representative democracy system has led to feelings of mistrust and anger towards politicians, and cynicism about government. It is time to develop democracy to a higher level, to instil real accountability and trust in decision making, to hand the reins of power where they belong: with us, the citizens (Bracewell, online, 2010)

There is some evidence that providing people with choice and the ability to set their own priorities does lead to stronger communities and social capital (Cox, 1995; Putnam, 2000), however there is a tension between representative and participative democracy. This research has found that Councillors believe that they have been elected to represent their citizens and sometimes find the notion of handing greater decision making power back to citizens challenging:

Council is a group of people assembled to reflect community views. The majority of Council views reflect the majority of the community. It would be nice if staff were accepting of this view (Councillor Interview).

Other research on the model of participative democracy indicates concern about the low levels of public involvement (United Kingdom, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 1998, online), the dominance of pseudo-democratic elites and well resourced and strong interest groups (Raymond, 2002; Papadopoulos, 2004), and
the lack of involvement of politically marginalized citizens (Geissel, 2009). Further
detail on this debate is provided in Chapter 2. There appears to be a general
consensus among researchers that further empirical research is needed and that
careful design of the participatory procedure, selection of the participants and the
degree of support from the decision making bodies can impact on the success or
otherwise of the procedure (Geissel, 2009).

In Victoria, ‘community planning’ has been advocated by the Municipal Association
of Victoria through the Lighthouse Project to assist local government to increase
community participation and influence in decision making (Municipal Association of
Victoria, 2010, online).

The MAV is promoting ‘bottom up’ community planning as a key process
to support community strengthening and generate local community
leadership. The preferred process aims to increase community
independence, harness its ability to solve problems and implement
identified opportunities (Municipal Association of Victoria, 2010, online).

This approach has been adopted by many Victorian Councils, including the Glenelg
Shire Council, to increase community participation and input into decision making.
The aim of the community planning model is for the community to become the
driver of change, while local government acts as the facilitator. The experience of
community planning in the Glenelg Shire is described in Chapter 4. As a
consequence of this research project and the experience of undertaking
community planning, a select list of useful resources has been developed, including
online toolboxes, training, other related resources, techniques and methodologies of
community engagement (see Working Document No. 27 in the Portfolio).

The traditional method of undertaking community planning suggested through the
MAV Lighthouse Program (Municipal Association of Victoria, 2006) involves local
government ‘stepping back’ from the process. The MAV provided funding for
Councils to contact external facilitators to undertake the process for Councils.
Several Victorian Councils (including Glenelg) engaged consultants to undertake
and facilitate the ‘visioning’ process with communities and to develop the Plans with
the communities. This research found that this strategy is less successful in
communities with low capacity and trust of governments where consultants are viewed with a fair degree of cynicism and distrust:

Less use of consultants; more action, less paper; less meetings, more action (community survey respondent)

This research found that the more successful approach involves the slow development of relationships between Council officers and residents. Where the process involves Council officers working with the community to develop the plans utilizing a variety of engagement techniques and working with other community agencies and government departments, the result is a Community Plan with a higher degree of commitment from the residents involved. The ongoing relationship between the officer and the residents provides a useful conduit between Council and the residents and provides greater support for the Community Planning Committee as they develop their capacity and implement their plans. It remains to be seen if this approach is more successful in meeting the MAV’s community planning objective of community strengthening. This research also found that the degree of success depends on the level of skills of the officers involved. Additional training and the selection of key personnel to fulfill this role is critical for the process.

Further research is also required on the measurement of the success of this model of public participation, particularly as a measure of community strength and capacity building. My experience and my research suggests that the MAV Lighthouse Project model of community planning rewards those communities where there is already a high degree of capacity for leadership, project management, networking, submission writing and financial management. These communities are able to take advantage of the process to attract additional funding for specific projects and to have a voice at Council and other government tables, as the community plan priorities are fed into the already existing systems. This particular model has the potential to increase the gap between disadvantaged and other communities. Community plans can often provide the vehicle for projects and agendas of a small group of articulate and socially elite people; this may only compound the degree of advantage and accentuate the exclusion of the more disadvantaged groups.
This research also found that community planning will have limited success without a whole of organisation approach. The traditional top down method of strategic planning should be replaced by the bottom up approach where the community plans inform and drive all other council plans, including the Council Plan, the Budget, and asset management plans. Where this doesn't take pace, the community planning process risks further cynicism and distrust of Council by the community.
5.3 Local Government Responsiveness – how can we do it better?

Citizens’ ideas of what they are entitled to from government have shifted over the last 20 years. They are demanding greater responsiveness and customisation. (Moore, 2006, p. 27).

This research project found that local government responsiveness is a key area of dissatisfaction for the community, Councillors, and the staff. The following comments from respondents are examples of this dissatisfaction:

I put in a complaint to Council last year to stop the footpath repair until I could see someone from Council about the trip hazard at the end of my driveway which meets the footpath. The trip hazard is due to the nature strip tree lifting the footpath up. The job went ahead, there is still a trip hazard and I have had no Council representative come to see me or the job and there has been no written response to my letter (Community survey respondent).

The bureaucracy causes most concern – they don’t do simple things like following up on requests. They say they will look into it all the time and don’t get back or respond. I pass requests on all the time and they all go into a big black hole. Just respond!! (Councillor interview).

A member of the community received a letter from us to advise that trees were growing from their property onto the footpath. They had actually fixed the trees 3 months earlier. The tone of the letter was quite militant and this tone puts people’s backs up. I understand that we don’t have enough staff, but this is pretty ordinary. This is just one example, and there are many more (staff interview).

This research found several factors contributing to the lack of responsiveness. One of the key facets includes the lack of systems or synergistic thinking. Senge describes this as ‘a singular focus on the mechanics of the job and a lack of understanding for the common goal’. As Senge asserts, ‘it is a framework for seeing interrelationships not things, and patterns of change rather than static snapshots’ (Senge, 1992, p. 68). The lack of systems thinking is also illustrated by the following comments:

People are in their silos and just want to stick to their knitting (staff interview).
I would like to see better communication between departments – less as a threat or imposition. Need to work together. For example, take the fence on the foreshore. One part of the organisation put it up, and the other part was ready to pull it down because they didn’t know (staff interview).

Some of the community services provided by local government are also part funded or even fully funded by either State or Federal Governments, or even all three tiers (e.g. library services, arts programs, home and community care, etc.). This research found that when the policy and directions differed between each funding provider, it created additional tension and difficulty for the staff providing the service. This dilemma contributes to the lack of synergistic and systems thinking.

As a consequence of this research, I developed a framework for the development of Council strategies, plans and policies to assist in encouraging systems thinking, stimulate shared goals, priorities and purpose, as well as cultivate relationships and develop staff capacity. The framework (See Working Document No. 26 in the Portfolio) involves Councillors working alongside community members and staff to develop actions and strategies, goals and priorities in a variety of service areas. My research and experience indicated that it is more effective to utilise resources internally (for example to pay for relief staff) rather than to outsource the entire project to consultants or contractors.

This research also found that other contributors to the lack of local government responsiveness include a lack of staff skill and capacity, and a lack of time and resources. Poor systems, processes, and communication methods can also be additional factors in a lack of responsiveness. The role of leadership and management in addressing this issue is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

We have some inefficient staff that don’t do things in a timely manner. Some staff members have poor customer service skills. Customers keep getting told ‘in another week’, and then ‘it will be another week’. Some people have an aversion to doing things, they procrastinate, and the file sits on the desk and sits on the desk (staff interview).
Although improving systems and processes may seem like an easy fix for most managers, it can be difficult to achieve when staff lack skill, confidence, competence and motivation or don’t have enough time or resources. In local government, it isn’t uncommon to find that some staff are just so overwhelmed that they are simply unable to keep on top of the requests for action; in some large rural councils such as the Glenelg Shire Council, there are frequently over 21,000 customer contacts per week in the form of emails, phone calls, visits, etc. (Millard, 2010).

Some people have a poor work ethic. They think they are producing, but they aren’t. 15-20% of the organisation are not performing (staff interview).

Performance management can also be effective in improving responsiveness. This can be complex and time consuming, especially when many issues have not been effectively dealt with in a timely manner. Goal setting is an important component of performance management (Cummings and Worley, 2009) and the development of work plans with clear objectives established jointly by the employee with their supervisor can result in improved performance.

This research found that weekly meetings to discuss work plans are an effective intervention to improve performance; however the focus of positive encouragement behaviour is an important element of successful people management (Inamori and Analoui, 2010). Focusing on the positive outcomes and gentle nurturing encouragement, combined with humour may produce better outcomes than a negative and directive approach.

In workplaces there is a growing awareness of the need to move away from the directional form of leadership to the dialogic; from ‘you do it my way’ to the recognition that the ever-changing context invites a wider contribution and discussion (McNab, 1998, p. 88.)

This research found that effective performance management of one or two staff members can improve the overall morale in the Unit and stimulate others to also work more effectively. Dealing with performance issues as they arise leads to a perception of fairness and creates a culture where the team understands the ramifications of certain behaviours. Staff members observe and note the activities
around them and as Inamori and Analoui assert, ‘positive perception of local colleagues can contribute to enhanced organisational performance (Inamori and Analoui, 2010). This research supports this contention.

Team building, also known as team development and group process interventions, can also contribute to improved responsiveness. The findings from this research project indicate that simple and inexpensive team building activities such as regular team meetings, and workshops to develop an annual team plan can be effective interventions and can assist in systems thinking and team development.

Team building is used for improving interpersonal and social relations, achieving results, meeting goals and accomplishing tasks (Klein, et al, 2009). The findings from this research project also indicate that social activities such as lunching together as a team improve interpersonal relations, develop trust, mutual supportiveness and sharing of feelings. It also demonstrates that planning workshops for goal setting assists in setting objectives for the development of team goals and strengthens team member motivation. Workshops are also effective in developing systems thinking as discussed earlier in this chapter.

There is some positive empirical support for the effectiveness of team-development strategies (Klein et al, 2009) and it has been acknowledged that team developmental interventions are key interventions that may be used to facilitate team effectiveness (Noe, 2002).

This research also found that team training is another intervention that is successful on occasions, particularly when related to the development of specific skills and systems thinking. When training such as a two day short course on community development is undertaken by the entire team together, it stimulates group understanding of the underpinning philosophy for the team, especially when working in a community domain.

An organisation comprises a variety of teams with differing team sizes, functions and goals. This research also found that team development by individual teams may assist that team in improving performance, but can also add to the silo effect across
the broader organisation. Managers undertaking team strengthening activities may increase the responsiveness of one team at the expense of the organisation.

The issue of organisational silos is of concern to local government staff and Councillors and as discussed earlier in this chapter, can lead to a lack of systems thinking. Silos can be barriers to responsiveness in local government when departments operate as self contained business units presenting barriers to communication across the organisation. Failure to share information, knowledge and expertise across an organisation may result in some service delivery failures (Bundred, 2006).

The culture is not good. There is little respect and understanding of other positions. Everyone is caught up in their own silo. A large number of staff lack the ability to take accountability for their actions (staff interview)

Illustration No. 8
Council Offices in Casterton

Different cultures at the different geographic locations contribute to poor communication across the organisation

This research also found that poor communication across the organisation as a consequence of silos at the departmental as well as the unit level can result in a lack of responsiveness. Many enquiries or requests are complex and require answers and actions from several officers in different departments. A collaborative approach involving the establishment of cross functional teams working on projects can assist in the establishment of better relationships and more effective communication. However, cross functional teams can be less effective if not provided with sufficient support and resources, particularly when members are already feeling overwhelmed with work. This research also found that in large organisations with over 200
employees over a large geographic area (e.g. Glenelg Shire Council), it is also useful to bring everyone together on an annual basis for a staff meeting. This can be a useful mechanism for building staff relationships and communicating with staff, particularly in regard to the more strategic aspects of the organisation such as budgets, goals, and organisational direction over the next 12 months.

Another useful strategy to improve responsiveness is the leadership mode of modelling responsive behaviour.

We need strong leadership providing constructive advice and modelling the right behaviour. No more “I’m too busy” (staff interview).

The role of leadership is discussed in further detail in the next section of this chapter.
5.4 Leading in local government – dealing with unique and complex situations of uncertainty

Leaders who have a desire to engage in their own journey of change, before or alongside their team, are the ones that are at the forefront of great local government organisations (Griffith, 2009, p. 40).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 2, the pressure for local government reform has been a state and federal government priority for the last 10-15 years; however the emphasis has been on the corporatisation of local government - financial management, strategic planning and councillor conduct. Nonetheless, the literature on public sector management notes the need to transition from a paternalistic and bureaucratic culture to one of innovation, flexibility and citizen responsiveness (Claver et al, 1999, Jones, 2002; Krastins, 2008; Cooper, 2010). This need does not appear to be reflected in the state and federal government rhetoric or legislative attempts to reform local government. The research undertaken for this project finds that local government needs to become more adaptable, less risk adverse and responsive to the community rather than to the state government.

The change from local government to local governance and the need for an end to ‘command and control’ leadership is also discussed in the literature, (see for example Hambleton, 2007 and Howard and Taylor, 2009). Howard and Taylor also note that ‘traditional models of public sector leadership (hierarchical, authoritarian and directive) are inadequate in dealing with complex problems that have no identifiable cause or solution’ (Howard and Taylor, online, 2009).

However, it appears that local government leadership is still being run on the classical principles of labour specialization without a lot of worker empowerment. This could be attributed to the large degree of regulation and compliance in the range of local government responsibilities. Jones asserts that:

Traditional local government organisational culture developed over many decades in response to prescriptive state Acts which stressed administrative and compliant behaviour from local councils rather than strategic management proactivity (2002, p. 38).
The organisation needs to move away from traditional lines of public service to a more holistic approach. A more organic organisation with less formal organisation in work teams. More dynamic and less risk adverse (Staff interview).

The literature on public sector leadership is touting a more people centred approach with a focus on relationships and group functioning (Dempsey, 2008, 2009). This style of approach is also supported by this project. Some employees are seeking this approach in their workplaces, in particular the new comers to local government, new graduates and younger employees with experience of other organisations.

This research found that leadership and more specifically, leadership style is also a concern of local government officers at all levels:

There are some people who could rise and do better if they had a different style of leadership – encouragement and support (staff interview).

I would like to feel more empowered with less micro managing. Treat people more as adults (staff interview).

Some of the discourse on leadership in local government asserts that working in this industry is different from other sectors (Koch, 2005, online). Working in local government involves a greater degree of complexity as the manager is dealing with the often competing needs of a range of community groups and individuals within a geographically tight political framework. Local government provides a wide range of services, ideally with the focus on service effectiveness rather than profit, however this research found that there are often tensions between providing effective services and meeting the political imperatives of the Councillors. These tensions are often complex, placing additional pressure on senior managers who are often placed in the position of explaining Council decisions to their staff. Every decision is scrutinized by the staff and the community and transparent decision making is important to them as well as the State Government. This research found that in local government, there is some conflict between political and managerial goals, and with local government operating closer to residents and citizens than other tiers of government, there is also an emphasis on the process as well as the outcomes.
The experience of being a leader in local government is more complex and contradictory than conventional management textbooks and courses may allow (Dempsey, 2009, p. 28).

Local government is much harder than the private sector. We have to be very aware that it is not just about the outcome, but about who will be impacted and the repercussions. It is not an easy job in local government. People have to be very skilful to do it well (staff interview).

This complexity is even more complicated by the confusion about the role of local government, as indicated by this research with findings of diverging views about the priorities of local government from Councillors, staff and citizens. Working in this environment is difficult, especially for the inexperienced and unskilled worker. In addition, as previously discussed in part 1 of this chapter, Councils often experience difficulty in attracting, recruiting, and retaining skilled and experienced staff, particularly in rural and regional areas.

In spite of the added complexity, employees coming to Local Government from a range of other backgrounds and experiences still bring with them expectations of participatory decision making and worker empowerment practices as indicated in the staff interviews undertaken as part of this research. This is supported in the literature (McColl-Kennedy and Dann, 2000; Macky and Boxall, 2008; Krastins 2008). Employees expect to be trusted, to be able to innovate and take calculated risks with the support of their managers. They expect to be able to challenge the status quo and to be heard and taken seriously. In order to recruit and retain these employees, local government may need to implement high involvement work practices.

Supporting and empowering staff can be quite challenging for busy senior managers. It is difficult to find the time to listen, probe and ask the questions that will assist employees to make decisions and it takes ‘patience and humanity’ (Howard and Taylor, 2009). The tension between staff development and ensuring efficient processes is a real dilemma for senior managers. It is often far simpler and easier to adopt a more directive style and make the decisions and do the problem solving for staff, however this approach can stifle initiative, create resentment and poor
morale. It may also affect the Council brand and lead to staff resignations and difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified and experienced employees.

Nonetheless, as indicated by this research (see chapter 4), there are times when managers also need to be flexible and adaptable in deciding which approach may be more appropriate for different circumstances. There are also times where a more directive approach is necessary when dealing with decision making that involve significant risks to the organisation or staff.

The literature also supports the findings of this research indicating that reflective practice is an important tool for managers and leaders. Reflection assists with the ‘surfacing of dilemmas’ (Schon, 1991, p. 328), and may be useful in determining the appropriate approach on different occasions.

When a practitioner becomes aware of his frames, he also becomes aware of the possibility of alternative ways of framing the reality of his practice. He takes note of the values and norms to which he has given priority, and those he has given less importance, or left out of account altogether. Frame awareness tends to entrain awareness of dilemmas (Schon, 1991, p. 310).

For senior managers working in local government, leading and managing is often dealing with unique and complex situations of uncertainty where a certain degree of improvisation is required. Balancing the needs of staff, and different community groups within a political framework can be difficult and requires a capacity for reflection in action. Schon notes that competent practitioners ‘sometimes use this capacity to cope with the unique, uncertain, and conflicted situations of practice’ (Schon, 1991, p. viii). It is useful for senior managers to make time for reflection throughout the day and it is helpful in dealing with the feeling of being overwhelmed. This is further supported in the literature:

In the ideal world, which is mostly not often available to us, a good manager will assume the need for considerable reflection time, which allows for imagining new possibilities and rethinking the present situation.

(Dorothy McRae McMahon, 2001, p. 75-76)
Reflective practice requires time and a degree of self awareness and self knowledge, skills not often taught in traditional local government management programs. In addition to the implementation of high involvement work practices, the provision of training and staff development programs can enable existing and potential leaders to develop self knowledge and self management to create innovative and energizing environments. This finding is also supported by the literature:

This lack of leader self knowledge results in organisational systems, policies, practices and stories that do not create energizing environments of true hope and worth for those who work in them (Zigarmo, et al, 2005, p. 11).

The development of self management competencies is further discussed in the literature (Goleman, 1996; Goleman, 1998; George, 2000; Gardner and Stough, 2002) with Henley noting more recently that in order to ‘build a great group’ a leader needs to increase competence in three dimensions – emotionally, physically and intellectually (Henley, 2009, p. 4). Self management has also been identified as a necessary competency by senior educators in Australia as part of the draft National Curriculum. According to David Howes, General Manager of Curriculum at the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (Topsfield, The Age, 2010, online), the draft curriculum includes the capacities of thinking skills, creativity, self management and social competence for students (The Age, 26 April, 2010, p. 1). These competencies are also required for effective leadership in local government.

At the directorate level of local government, the senior manager also has another role as the interface between the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the rest of the organisation, and is often the conduit between the Council, the CEO and staff. One of the key priorities of the senior manager is to support staff to undertake the direct management of services. At this level, senior managers are ‘on display’ and their staff expect some direction, consistency, communication and support.

Where we want to be is for people to know where they are heading, to take the initiative and make decisions. To know that they will be supported even if they get it wrong from time to time (staff interview).
Effective leadership also involves modelling good leadership practices by senior managers, including customer responsiveness, collaborative decision making, support and empowerment of staff, self knowledge and self management, and systems thinking. Senge asserts that ‘what matters most is the visible behaviour of people in leadership positions in sharing their own personal visions and demonstrating their commitment to the truth’ (1992, p. 344). Sarros and Butchatsky also note that:

Breakthrough leadership extends beyond leadership by inspiring individuals through behaviour that encourages continuous learning, builds confidence and competence, and ultimately results in a committed, enlightened and inspired workforce (1996, p. 56)

As one staff member declared:

Managers and key unit leaders need to lead by example. Got to set the example. People will mimic that example (staff interview).

Female leaders in local government are under even more pressure to model good leadership practice as they report a sense of ‘intense scrutiny, resulting in the need to prove their worthiness and capacity to be successful at this level’ (Diamond, 2007, p. 167). The literature about the relationship between gender and leadership was discussed in Chapter 2. My experience through this research project was consistent with the views of Diamond (2007) and Dempsey (2009) that there is increased pressure on women to model effective and highly competent leadership, and that it can sometimes be hard for senior women managers to be heard and taken seriously by other managers and councillors.

In rural and regional Victoria, the senior local government managers are predominantly male. ‘It is a homogenous culture that is dominated by white, middle aged men’ and there is the constant sense ‘of women being on display’ (Diamond, 2007, pp. 156-167). There is also a school of thought that suggests that the research, teaching and theorizing about public sector management has been largely based on the experience of ‘white male managers in the private sector’ (Dempsey, 2009, p. 27).
According to the Australian Local Government Women’s Association, only 7% of Chief Executive Officers in local government are women (ALGA, 2010, online) and there is considerable debate about whether men and women behave differently in leadership roles. This was discussed in more detail in Chapter 2; however, it is possible that the word ‘manager’ in local government is still unconsciously gendered. Like many of the women quoted in the literature (Diamond, 2007; Dempsey, 2009), I also found it hard to be taken seriously and to be heard. I also felt that I was often operating on the periphery and often found that my ideas and opinions were only valued and acknowledged when another male manager agreed with them. ‘You get interrupted when you are talking, you can’t command attention, but above all you can’t frame the issues’ (Vedantam, 2010, online).

Traditional views of leadership and management are seen to be held by many local government staff and Councillors as indicated by the following comment:

We are getting better press at the moment because the CEO is a man. The Councillors also work better with a man – they aren’t good at working with females (staff interview).

Nonetheless, there is ‘some consensus on the strengths that women leaders can bring to local government: candidness, a desire to confront situations, collaboration, consensus building, empathy, flexibility, willingness to learn, determination, home/work balance, egalitarianism, openness, and community orientation’ (Dempsey and Diamond, 2006, p. 3). As indicated in the following staff comments, there are local government staff members seeking more of these attributes in their leaders and managers:

Communication is important to a good culture. Need to over communicate. Relationship building is also part of building culture. It is more important than money (staff interview).

There is a lack of a listening ear here. Not just hearing, but doing something about it. Some managers are just not helpful (staff interview).

Need to develop more sociability within the work process. Encouraging people to talk and get along (staff interview).
Griffith notes that ‘the soft skills of empathy, encouragement, listening, learning and taking the time to develop our team require a uniquely different context for leadership’ and are part of the ingredients ‘needed to develop high-performing local government organisations’ (2009, p. 40). These ‘soft skills’ are often associated with the leadership style of women leaders (the relationship between gender role and leadership style is discussed in Chapter 2). Changes in work practices to increase gender equity and increase the number of senior women managers in local government organisations has the potential to assist Councils to improve their organisational performance and effectiveness.

One of the barriers most often faced by female leaders is being viewed as different to male leaders (Davis, 2007, p. ii). Other researchers have found that the way in which the ‘gender issue’ is framed within the organisation is also important (Charlesworth and Baird, 2007). There may be times where explicit reference to gender aspects can result in backlash or reprisal within organisations, nonetheless there are strategies that women can adopt to enhance their effectiveness as leaders (Yoder, 2001). These strategies include enhancing communication through extensive talking and listening to employees, using inclusive language, humour and respect. Women leaders also need to be resilient, to bide their time before attempting change and to be ‘exceptionally competent’ (Yoder, 2001, p. 820) in order to build their confidence and credibility and to achieve respect within the organisation.

The year 2010 was declared the Year of Women in Local Government with ‘the primary focus for the year to raise awareness of the opportunities for, benefits of, and the need for increasing the participation of women in leadership and management roles within local government” (Year of women in local government, 2010, online). An increase in the number of women leaders is needed not only to ensure equity and fairness, but is also necessary to bring a broader range of skills to the industry that will assist the local government sector to become more effective, responsive and more attractive to bright young professionals.
ends. But with this emphasis on problem solving, we ignore problem setting, the process by which we define the decision to be made, the ends to be achieved, the means which may be chosen. In real world practice, problems do not present themselves to the practitioner as givens. They must be constructed from the materials of problematic situations which are puzzling, troubling, and uncertain. In order to convert a problematic situation to a problem, a practitioner must do a certain kind of work. He must make sense of an uncertain situation that initially makes no sense. (Schon, 1991, p. 39)
Chapter 6
Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

The journey of action research is reminiscent of Leichhardt’s ill-fated journey of exploration in search of an overland route from Sydney to Darwin as fictionalised in “Voss” (White, 1957). Voss’s party passes through the settled lands of the Hunter Valley then strikes out into “unknown” country and confronts not only practical and physical but also psychological and spiritual challenges.

There are periods when the explorer (the researcher), in the depths of despair, considers giving up the journey and returning back along the known path. There are periods of exhilaration, when the explorer finds an oasis with nourishment for both the body and soul.

At the end of the journey, if the explorer survives (unlike Voss), the map is redrafted and although the rich lands ripe for agriculture might not have been found, the new and more accurate maps provide those who later venture on the same journey with more accurate directions and an improved sense of how to prepare, what to expect and how to survive. The original objectives of the exploration might not have been met, and some might have been discarded along the way. Has the journey been worth it? The new flora and fauna discovered, although not predicted and not the objective of the journey, contribute to knowledge and provide greater understanding of the country we inhabit and our relationship with it. My research journey was like this. There were signposts and guides along the way (the literature), and at times I chose to travel through the swampy lowlands. The journey included ‘experience, trial and error, intuition, and muddling through’ (Schon, 1991, p. 43). There were times I struggled, but I have no doubt that I have improved my own practice and contributed to the maps and knowledge for the next wave of explorers.

My objectives - why was I undertaking the journey or exploration?

At the outset of my research project, the objectives were identified with the intention of narrowing and clarifying them as the research developed and a clearer focus
emerged. I understood that the journey would be eventful and unpredictable, leading to some unexpected outcomes.

My first objective at the beginning was ‘to develop a set of strategies and intervention to enhance governance, communications, and organisational learning in a local government context’. At the outset of the project I had envisaged that the senior management team would work together in a participative style of action learning to develop as a team and identify successful strategies and actions to enhance governance, communication and improve our organisational performance. However, as discussed in Chapter 4, I was unable to engage the group to undertake this style of activity. As a consequence, I revised and narrowed this objective, or metaphorically, I changed the vehicle so that I could continue the journey.

As the Group Manager of the Community Development Department, I focused my attention on the area that I was able to influence and as a consequence this objective became ‘to support and work with the Community Development Department to improve responsiveness and work practices’. My work in this area was described in more detail in Chapter 4, with some tangible outcomes (see Working Documents No. 24-28 in Part 2 of the Portfolio), a framework for use by local government in the development of policies, strategies and policies, a select list of useful resources for community planning, a departmental communication plan, a basic template for an annual service plan, and a procedure for the development of Council Briefing Papers and Reports. It is envisaged that these documents will be made available to other local government practitioners to assist them with their work.

The second original objective was ‘to gain an understanding of the cultural change process in a local government organisation’. This objective was based on my assumption that the Chief Executive Officer and the Senior Management Team would identify and discuss the need for cultural change and then using the broad data and themes from my staff interviews would develop some appropriate interventions and strategies. However, as discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, this did not eventuate. Cultural change is a complex and long term process, and
although anecdotally there appeared to be an improvement in staff morale, it is a difficult subject to measure and research in a project timeframe of 2 years. Instead, I focused on the objective ‘to support and work with the Community Development Department to improve responsiveness and work practices’.

The third original objective was ‘to improve the quality of community life and the facilitation of community well-being by the Glenelg Shire Council’. As I became more aware of the degree of disadvantage in the community, the lack of knowledge and understanding, and the lack of political will to address this issue, I refined this objective to ‘focus attention on and raise the profile of disadvantaged communities in the Glenelg Shire’. The complexities and political difficulties in undertaking this work were also described in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5.

My fourth and final objective at the beginning of the project was ‘to improve the relationship between the Glenelg Shire Council and the community and to enhance the understanding of the factors that impact on this relationship’. This objective was based on the results from the Annual Community Satisfaction Survey undertaken by a contractor on behalf of the Victorian Government (see Chapter 1). Although it is a measure of community perception, in 2007, the Glenelg Council had the lowest or equal lowest result in every key measure when compared with other councils in the large rural shires group. My aim was to improve these results, and I had assumed that the Senior Management Team would be working together in an action research approach to this issue. As discussed in Chapter 4, this did not eventuate. After some reflection, I revised this objective to ‘improve the way that the Community Development Department engages, communicates, and works with the community’. This involved community planning and the engagement of the community and Councillors in the development of Council policies, plans and strategies, staff training and other interventions as discussed in Chapter 4.
Postscript:

In July 2010, the results of the Community Satisfaction survey were published, indicating a significant improvement in the community perception of the Council’s community engagement efforts. Community engagement has improved from 55% to 72% of people rating Glenelg Shire Council’s performance as good/excellent or adequate whilst the state average for large rural shires has fallen from 66% to 63% over the five years from 2005 to 2010.

The following graph indicates the improvement in the community engagement area over the past 5 years.


Objectives of Research by Project

According to RMIT policy, it is expected that ‘the outcomes of a higher degree undertaken and presented as a project would include’:

---

Figure No. 4 Community Satisfaction Survey Results 2006 – 2010 in the area of community engagement compared with the large rural shires group

---
• A more knowledgeable and skilled practitioner

• A contribution to professional and scholarly knowledge

• Some body of work or change in practice, normally in the form of / represented by a product or artefact of some kind. It is acknowledged that some “products” might be ephemeral or experiential (RMIT, 2009, online)

As I explored the territory of managing in a local government context, working within a local community and political framework my knowledge and skills were enhanced and expanded (as discussed in Chapter 4). Through an action research and reflective practice approach, I developed my leadership skills (often painfully), confidence and competencies. I also gained a greater understanding of local government and the complexities and tensions of working in an environment characterised by large distances from capital cities in communities with significant pockets of disadvantage with a demographic that is aging more rapidly than for Victoria overall. This is new knowledge. Although there is considerable discourse on risk management, performance reporting, financial sustainability, leadership and organisational change in local government, there is little available on the actual practice and experience of working as a manager in local government, and even less on the experience in a ‘3D environment’. This project also provides new information on the practice and experience of community planning with limited resources in a Victorian rural context, and the results of various methods of addressing the ‘disconnects’ between staff and Councillors, and staff and the community. (This ‘new’ knowledge and information was discussed in Chapter 5).

I also gained new insights, and through the project journey I went from an inexperienced and naive local government manager who felt that she was rarely listened to, to Acting Chief Executive Officer for 12 weeks from July to October 2010.

The knowledge gained from this research was also disseminated to the community, Glenelg Council staff members, Councillors, other researchers and local government professionals at various times throughout the project. For example, in August 2008, I provided a presentation at the RMIT Hamilton Community Forum on this project (see
Working Document No. 33 in the Portfolio). Although in the early stages of the research, there was some interest in the research methodology shown by the attendees. In September 2008, I provided a presentation to the Senior Management Team on the themes emerging from the staff interview (see Working Document No. 9 in the Portfolio) and in February 2009, I provided a presentation to Councillors on ‘Community context – what is the community saying’ (see Working Document No. 13 in the Portfolio). This presentation was also provided to the workshop facilitator (on request) for use with his Community Development students at La Trobe University in Bendigo. In July 2009, I provided a presentation on the process of developing our Municipal Health Plan to approximately 100 other local government and health professionals at the Ministerial Rural Health Forum in Melbourne (see Working Document No. 18 in the Portfolio). Other examples are provided later in this chapter in the Postscript.

The third component of ‘research by project’ is the research product. In this case it comprises 3 parts: the bureaucratic documentation of the journey as captured in the reports, emails, briefing papers, and meeting notes relating to the work; the frameworks and toolkits developed as a consequence of this project to assist others undertaking similar work; and some of the outcomes of the work documented in the Plans and Strategies. These components are exhibited in the Portfolio of items that accompany this exegesis.

**Important reflections at the end of the journey**

Although in many respects the journey continues through my continued work with the Glenelg Shire Council, staff, Councillors and residents, this action research project has concluded. As with many explorations and journeys, there are things that the explorer feels compelled to share with others thinking of undertaking similar treks or journeys. I also feel compelled to share some thoughts and experiences with others considering undertaking Insider Action Research. These comments are addressed to potential researchers who hold an organisational role linked to a career path and ongoing membership of the organisation, and who are considering taking on a more temporary role as a researcher for the duration of a project. These are things that I would have liked someone to have told me at the outset of my
research. Unfortunately I only found the work by Coghlan and Brannick and others midway through the project.

Undertaking full time work and study is difficult and exhausting. Undertaking Insider Action Research adds another dimension and is harder as it takes an emotional and physical toll as the researcher grapples with the challenges of thinking “in layers” and dealing with the complexities of “acting, thinking and doing” at several levels at once. For example – chairing a meeting, taking notes and thinking from a research perspective as well as dealing with the meeting purpose is difficult and requires concentration and a great deal of energy. The researcher needs to think: “What is going on here? Is this relative to my research? How can I capture it? – What about the ethics and the politics? – How can I include this without being seen to criticize an individual or organisation?” There are additional tensions due to the need to accurately reflect events, actions and interventions, balanced with the need to ‘protect’ and disguise individuals, groups or the organisation.

Moving from the role of researcher back to the role of practitioner is also conflicting and confusing and requires great concentration. In some instances, the researcher needs to develop strategies to deal with the conflict. Coghlan and Brannick refer to this tension as ‘role duality’ and note that:

> Augmenting your normal organisational membership roles with the research enterprise can be difficult and awkward, and can become confusing and overwhelming (Coghlan and Brannick, 2010, p. 119)

There are often ethical dilemmas throughout the course of an Insider Action Research project. Dealing with information provided ‘in confidence’ that has ramifications from a risk management and, or, legal perspective poses ethical dilemmas for researchers and can lead to internal conflict, feelings of guilt and intense worry about the possible outcomes. Dealing with these emotions is also tiring and difficult for researchers.

It is important to consider and reflect on the assumptions that underpin the project design and methodology at the outset of the research project. How realistic are they? At the outset, I had based my project on the assumption that the Senior Management Team would undertake a participative style of action learning that
would apply to the whole organisation. I made this assumption without discussing it with the team or the CEO prior to the beginning of the project. It should be noted, however, that I worked with three different CEOs in the course of this project. As described in Chapter 4, it was naïve to assume that I would be able to engage the Senior Management Team in a participative action research approach, and consequently, the project didn’t evolve down that path. Instead, I found myself having to redevelop this aspect and focus on the department that I managed – the Community Development Department. I was undertaking the action research on my own with little engagement or interest shown by the Senior Management Team. It was a difficult realisation that undermined my self confidence for a period of time, and almost resulted in my withdrawal from the research program.

Insider Research, although very challenging can also be rewarding. The messy nature of action research means that it is often a difficult journey, with the risk that the researcher may not emerge unscathed from the research (Moore, 2007; Humphrey 2007). One of the more stressful and difficult components of this project was the writing of the final chapters of this exegesis. Organising all the data- the transcripts of the research journal, survey results, and interview notes - was arduous and awkward. Making sense of the data, interpreting it, and extrapolating it to ‘a broader context’ became time consuming and confidence sapping. There were periods when I felt that I hadn’t done enough work for a PhD or that the outcomes were not significant or important enough. I struggled with the writing as I was trying to ensure that individuals were not identifiable and that it didn’t reflect badly on the organisation, as I wanted to continue working there. It is important to allow enough time in the project plan for this component of the project. I would also advise providing some distance from the workplace - taking 3 months off work to enable objectivity and perspective in this stage of the project.

Nonetheless, Insider Action Research has provided an avenue for self development and self knowledge. In many cases, the saying by Nietzsche ‘that which does not kill us makes us stronger’ (1899) also applies to those intrepid explorers undertaking Insider Action Research.
Summation at the conclusion of the journey

The research undertaken as part of this project found that the role, priorities, and future directions for local government are viewed differently by councillors, the community, and staff. This disconnect has ramifications for the community as these often competing views dilute the effort and resources allocated to various areas. As a consequence, community responsiveness is inconsistent and results in the community perception that local government is ineffective and performs poorly.

Councils need to engage their communities, councillors, and staff in integrated discussions and planning exercises to enable shared understanding of the role of local government and the development of shared priorities regarding future directions for the community and Council. Councillors as individuals struggle with understanding the purpose and role of local government. There is a role for the state government and the industry peak bodies to provide compulsory training as part of the induction process for new councillors. There is also a role for the peak industry bodies to communicate the role of local government to the community and promote the industry in a positive and sympathetic manner.

The process of community planning as a strategy for participative democracy as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 can assist in addressing this divide between the council and the community. However, further research needs to be undertaken to identify successful methods of engagement, particularly in regional areas of Victoria and with disadvantaged rural communities. The existing Lighthouse Model – (an MAV model), can potentially widen social inequalities. Further research is also needed on the success measures for effective community planning.

Confusion about the role of local government is not only occurring at the local level. The future role of local government is being discussed in many seminars, conferences, and forums. The Municipal Association of Victoria, for example, has held an annual summit, ‘Future of Local Government’ (FOLG) since 2005 to discuss future roles. There has been widespread agreement at the summits that the key focus of local government is ‘community wellbeing’, and that the role of local government is more of a ‘priorities broker that identifies community priorities and
attracts resources from other levels of government to address these needs’ (Municipal Association of Victoria, Circular to Councillors and Chief Executive Officers, 2007, online). The findings from this research project support this approach, however, they also indicate that residents and ratepayers are often confused about which services are provided by which level of government, and furthermore, many don’t care. They just want services delivered efficiently at the local level. They want their roads free of potholes, their footpaths stable and walkable, their rubbish collected regularly and efficiently, public toilets clean and accessible, and they want to be heard and acknowledged in a timely fashion when there are problems with their infrastructure or services.

There is, therefore, a need to reconceptualise local government beyond the narrow realms of corporatization and business systems that have been the focus of the past 10 years. As indicated by the Australian Local Governance Association (ALGA, 2010, online), local Government needs recognition in the Australian Constitution as the third tier of government to enable direct funding to local government rather than through the Victorian Government systems. This would also enable local government some clarity in regard to ‘role’ and would provide legislative strength for bargaining with the other tiers of government.

In rural and regional Victoria, local government is the face of government overall. In order to facilitate ‘seamless, joined up government’ espoused by the current state government, there is a need for local government to take more of a leadership position in negotiating this role. Constitutional recognition would strengthen the position of local government to negotiate their share of this space.

In addition to constitutional recognition, there is also a need to review the size and boundaries of local government areas in Victoria. The financial pressure on Councils is growing as they seek ways of meeting the increasingly complex needs of their residents and ratepayers. Recent work on the sustainability of local government indicates that there are at least eighteen small rural councils that ‘do not have the capacity to adequately service their communities’ (Whelan and Whelan, 2010, p. 2) unless provided with a substantial increase in funding from the State Government. With declining populations and the gradual associated withdrawal of state
government services from these rural areas, the issue of further Council amalgamations or refinements to municipal boundaries needs to be placed back on the Agenda for discussion between local and state governments. This time though, it needs to be led by local government.

Local government needs to focus more on people related processes, not just the achievement of compliance and corporate goals, rules and regulations to please the puppet masters; the state government. Effective engagement with the community at the grassroots level in participative democracy has the potential to mobilise the community to stand up to the state government on behalf of the Council - local democracy at its most powerful.

In addition to the reconceptualisation of local government at the macro level, there is also a need to reconceptualise it at the micro level. This research project found that there is a need for improved responsiveness to residents and citizens; an issue foremost in the minds of community members, staff and councillors. Local Government needs to develop better systems and processes and to move towards more contemporary models of leadership, including worker empowerment, and participative decision making practices. The process is not more important than the outcome and blind adherence to the process makes bureaucracy a dirty word.

New leadership development programs for local government managers that incorporate self management and emotional intelligence competencies are required for effective leadership. A more contemporary leadership approach will also assist in attracting and retaining a more skilled and qualified workforce, a necessity for the new style of local government in the future.

Many local governments are operating in environments that are distant from capital cities, constrained by a demographic profile of ageing and disadvantaged residents, and complicated by low levels of citizen education and have a greater need for a workforce that is creative, highly skilled and innovative to be able to address the many challenges posed by these demographics. Furthermore, community groups and organisations can be demanding and distrustful as they require greater degrees of support and assistance due to their lack of skills and
capacity. The traditional methods of local government engagement are not appropriate or relevant in these environments, and further research is required to identify and evaluate new strategies and ways of working with these communities.

Postscript
Although this doctoral project concluded in May 2010, the work place project continues; such is the cyclic nature of action research and learning.

This project continues to impact upon the organisation and the industry as I disseminate the knowledge and findings from the research. On the 7 May 2010, a local government forum was held at RMIT, Hamilton to showcase this project (see Working Documents No. 34 and 35 in the Portfolio). Entitled ‘Fostering strong communities: bridging the academic – practitioner divide’, the forum featured speakers working as practitioners with, and local government and also academics who have undertaken research in relevant fields, such as community and regional development. The forum attracted twenty-five participants with positive feedback, including one attendant who was inspired to consider doing a PhD herself.

A further presentation was provided to the Glenelg Shire Council Management Coordination Group on 2 June 2010 (see Working Document No. 36 in the Portfolio). This group comprised approximately twenty senior and middle managers from across the organisation. The feedback at the end of the presentation was positive with several questions about the process. The Chief Executive noted that the findings were consistent with his views of where local government needed to be heading. A further presentation was provided to a group of 20 council officers and 5 Councillors on 14 September 2010. There was positive feedback from the staff, however this may have been as a result of my role at that time as Acting Chief Executive Officer. Councillors’ comments included queries about the exclusion of the outdoor workers from the research and the need to do the community surveys in the other small towns across the shire. This could be interpreted as some affirmation and support for the research findings.

The Chief Executive Officer resigned in July 2010 to take up a new position with a metropolitan council. In my final performance appraisal with him, he recognised my research and noted:

As the completion of your PhD comes to a conclusion, I would like to acknowledge that this has positively contributed to your professional
development as a senior manager within the organisation. I have seen your considered approach to working with other colleagues and managing projects and problems utilising the techniques, skills and learning from your PhD (Burdack, 2010, p.1).

“If not larger dreams for organisations, what?  
If not you, who?  
If not now, when?”

(Dee Hock)
Appendices
Appendix No. 1

Glenelg Shire Council
Community Development Department
Staff Structure
Appendix No. 2

Community Survey
Dear Householder,

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Adele Kenneally and I am employed by the Glenelg Shire Council as the Group Manager, Community Development. I am undertaking a PhD in Philosophy in the School of Management at RMIT University. The title of my research project is “Community – the heart of local government: a case study of the Glenelg Shire Council”.

I am writing to invite you to complete the attached survey as part of my research. This information sheet describes the project in straightforward language. Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding to participate. If you have any questions about the project, please ask me or one of my supervisors. The findings will be published as part of the documentation for my PhD.

My research has been approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). You have been randomly selected to complete the attached survey as you are a resident of the Glenelg Shire.

The purpose of my research is to explore the organisational change and learning that is taking place within the Glenelg Shire Council as the organisation grapples with the balance between being financially responsible and sustainable and being engaged with and responsive to community needs. This research will explore the changes to the organisational culture as it changes. It represents a unique opportunity to gain an internal picture of an evolving rural local government organisation through the eyes of the employees, councillors and the community.

All survey data will be confidential unless you give written consent to be personally named.

I do not foresee any risks to you from participation. Your perceptions and views of the Glenelg Shire Council are valuable and will assist me in my research. Completion of the survey is voluntary and you can choose not to take part.

If you have any further questions about this research or your involvement in it, you can contact me as follows:

Adele Kenneally, Ph: 03 55 222205 or Mob: 0419354022 or email: akenneally@glenelg.vic.gov.au

Or you can contact my supervisors:

Dr. Bill Vistarini, Research Supervisor, School of Management, RMIT University, Phone: 55613373, Email: bill@vista@bigpond.com

Dr. David Hodges, Director, International Business Program, College of Business, RMIT University, Phone: 99255932, email: david.hodges@rmit.edu.au

When you have completed the questionnaire please:

- Check that all questions have been completed, unless otherwise directed
- Place questionnaire in the reply paid envelope provided
• Seal and mail as soon as possible

I would appreciate it if all surveys could be completed and returned by Friday 12 June 2009. Your co-operation and response is much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Adele Kenneally
13 May 2009

Dear Householder

Re: Enclosed Survey and Research Project

Please find enclosed a survey with a letter of explanation from Adele Kenneally, a senior officer employed by the Glenelg Shire Council. Adele is undertaking this survey as part of her research for a PhD with the School of Management at RMIT. This research has been approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

We are working towards ensuring that the Glenelg Shire Council is a high performing organisation; that we do things better and smarter and that we are more responsive to the community. The research being undertaken by Adele will assist us in achieving this aim, and it will therefore benefit both Council and the residents of the Glenelg Shire.

I would therefore encourage you to take a few minutes to complete the survey and return it as soon as practicable. Your view of our performance is important in improving the effectiveness of our day to day operations and will help us with our long term strategic planning. We are interested in knowing how we compare to your expectations, and the research being undertaken by Adele will help us improve our bottom line performance.

If you have any queries about this research, please don’t hesitate to contact Adele or her supervisors, the contact details are included on the next page.

Yours sincerely,

STUART BURDACK
Chief Executive Officer
Glenelg Shire Community Survey

Please choose the one (1) answer that best represents your view by placing a tick in the appropriate box. Please choose 1 box only.

**RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS**

1. Gender:
   - □ Female
   - □ Male

2. Age:
   - □ 16-24 years
   - □ 25-34 years
   - □ 35-49 years
   - □ 50-64 years
   - □ 65+ years

**COUNCIL SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

3. What is your overall satisfaction with the services provided to you by the Glenelg Shire Council? (See attached list of Council provided services)
   - □ Very satisfied
   - □ Satisfied
   - □ Indifferent
   - □ Dissatisfied
   - □ Very dissatisfied

If you are dissatisfied with the services provided by the Glenelg Council, what is your main reason for feeling like this?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………}

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………}
4. What is your overall satisfaction with the **facilities** provided for you by the Glenelg Shire Council? (e.g. ovals, sporting grounds, swimming pools, parks, playgrounds, community centres, community halls, cultural and arts facilities, library, etc.)

- [ ] Very satisfied
- [ ] Satisfied
- [ ] Indifferent
- [ ] Dissatisfied
- [ ] Very dissatisfied

If you are dissatisfied with the facilities provided by the Glenelg Council, what is your main reason for feeling like this?

______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________

5. How would you rate the **overall performance** of the Glenelg Shire Council over the last 12 months?

- [ ] Very Poor
- [ ] Poor
- [ ] Acceptable
- [ ] Good
- [ ] Excellent

How can Council improve on this?

______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
STAFF PERFORMANCE

6. In the past 12 months have you had any contact with Council staff?
   □ Yes □ No

7. How would you rate the **courtesy and helpfulness** of the Glenelg Shire staff?
   □ Very Poor
   □ Poor
   □ Neutral
   □ Good
   □ Excellent

8. How would you rate the **efficiency and responsiveness** of the Glenelg Shire staff?  
   (E.g. Did they provide clear, easy to understand advice? Did they get back to you quickly?)
   □ Very Poor
   □ Poor
   □ Neutral
   □ Good
   □ Excellent

9. How satisfied are you with the **overall performance** of Council’s staff?
   □ Very satisfied
   □ Satisfied
   □ Indifferent
   □ Dissatisfied
   □ Very dissatisfied

If you are dissatisfied with the overall performance of Council’s staff, what is your main reason for feeling like this?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
PERFORMANCE OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

10. Have you had any dealings with your elected representatives (Councillors) over the last year?
   □ Yes   □ No

11. Thinking about the last time you dealt with a Glenelg Shire Councillor, would you say that they were responsive to your particular needs?
   □ Definitely not responsive
   □ Not very responsive
   □ Somewhat responsive
   □ Definitely responsive

12. How satisfied are you with the overall performance of Councillors?
   □ Very satisfied
   □ Satisfied
   □ Indifferent
   □ Dissatisfied
   □ Very dissatisfied

If you are dissatisfied with the overall performance of Councillors, what is your main reason for feeling like this?
........................................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................................

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

13. Please describe the Glenelg Shire in 4 years time – how would you like to see it?
........................................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................................................
14. Council will be working with the community and other agencies to make the Glenelg Shire Council a better place in the future. In this regard, what do you see as the 3 priority action areas over the next 4 years?

1................................................................................................................................................................
2................................................................................................................................................................
3................................................................................................................................................................

Thank you for completing this survey. Please place the completed survey in the reply paid envelope provided and mail it to me before Friday 12 June 2009.
Attachment to Survey

List of Council Services

- Accessibility and Inclusion - advice and advocacy
- Activities for older or residents with a disability
- Art Gallery exhibitions
- Building inspections and permits
- Casterton Sale yards sales
- Child care
- Cleaning of halls and council facilities
- Community planning
- Customer service at Council offices
- Food premises inspections
- Immunisations
- Library services
- Local laws patrols - dogs, stray cattle, etc.
- Maintenance of toilets and community BBQs
- Maintenance of Council buildings
- Maintenance of footpaths
- Maintenance of parks and gardens
- Maintenance of street and town signs
- Maternal and Child health services
- Meals on wheels
- Parking patrols
- Performing arts programs
- Personal care for older or residents with a disability
- Respite care for older for older or residents with a disability
- Road works
- Roadside environment management
- School crossing supervision
- Street sweeping and cleaning
- Town planning permits
- Visitor Information (tourists, etc)
- Waste collection
- Waste Water disposal - permits and advice
- Youth activities (e.g. Freeza events)
Appendix No. 3

- Project Information Statement
- Staff Interview questions
- Councillor Interview questions
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

PROJECT INFORMATION STATEMENT

Project Title:
Community – the heart of local government; a case study of the Glenelg Shire Council

Investigator:
Adele Kenneally, PhD student : Qualifications; (Diploma of Librarianship (RMIT), Graduate Diploma of Business (Management), Master of Education (Research))

Supervisors:
Dr. Bill Vistarini, Research Supervisor, School of Management, RMIT University, Phone: 55613373
Dr. David Hodges, Program Coordinator, Bachelor of Business International RMIT University, Phone: 03 9925 5932

Dear ………………….

My name is Adele Kenneally and I am undertaking a PhD in Philosophy in the School of Management at RMIT University. The title of my research project is Community – the heart of local government; a case study of the Glenelg Shire Council. You are invited to participate in this research and this information sheet describes the project in straightforward language. Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding to participate. If you have any questions about the project, please ask one of the investigators. The findings will be published as part of the documentation for my PhD.

This research has been approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). You are invited to participate in the project as you are an employee / councillor of the Glenelg Shire Council or you are a resident of the Glenelg Shire.

The purpose of my research is to explore the organisational change and learning that takes place within the Glenelg Shire Council over the next 1-2 years as the organisation grapples with the balance between being fiscally responsible and sustainable and being engaged with and responsive to community needs. This research will explore any changes in the organisational culture over the next 1-2 years. It represents a unique opportunity to gain an internal picture of an evolving rural local government organisation through the eyes of the employees and councillors. Overall, approximately 250 people will be invited to participate in a variety of ways – surveys, interviews and group discussions. I will also be taking field notes at relevant meetings and reviewing official council documentation. These notes will be confidential and all persons observed will remain confidential and unidentified.

Interview and survey data will be confidential unless you give written consent to be personally named. The research has RMIT HREC approval. You may withdraw at any time and any unprocessed data may also be withdrawn.
If you agree to participate, you may be asked to participate in an interview which will involve a face to face session with me to reflect on your perceptions of the organisational culture and any changes or learning that you may have observed. The interviews will take approximately 1 hour and there may be up to 3 interviews. Your participation will be confidential.

I do not foresee any risks to you from participation. The benefit will be the contribution of your experiences and perceptions of the Glenelg Shire Council. Participation is voluntary and you can choose not to take part. If you do choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time.

If you have any further questions about this research or your involvement in it, you can contact me as follows:

Adele Kenneally, Ph: 03 55 222205 or Mob: 0419354022 or email: akenneally@glenelg.vic.gov.au

Or you can contact my supervisors, Dr. Bill Vistarini (email: bilttamvista@bigpond.com) or Dr. David Hodges (email: david.hodges@rmit.edu.au)

Yours sincerely,

Adele Kenneally

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, University Secretariat, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001. The telephone number is (03) 9925 1745.

Details of the complaints procedure are available from: www.rmit.edu.au/council/hrec

I have read and understand the Project Information Statement. I agree to be interviewed, and I understand that I can withdraw my agreement to participate in this research at any time.

Name: ...........................................................................................................................................

Signature: .......................................................................................................................... Date: ..................................
Interview Questions – Staff

Section 1 – Personal details

1. Age and sex
2. What is your role with Council?
3. How long have you been an employee of the Glenelg Shire Council?
4. What skills or experience do you bring to this role?
5. On a scale of 0 – 5 how would you rate your job satisfaction?

Section 2 – Community Perceptions

1. How do you think that the Glenelg Shire Council is perceived by the community?
2. Why do you think that is?
3. Please look at this table from the 2007 Local Government Community Satisfaction survey. Do you think that this is an accurate reflection of the community views on the Glenelg Shire Council?
4. Why / why not?
5. When you look at the results over 5-7 years, there has been a marked decline in some areas. What do you attribute that to? Why?

Section 3 – Local Government – Purpose, Priorities and future

1. What do you think are the 3 top priorities for a local government authority? Why?
2. Local government authorities are required to be economically responsible and cost effective and yet also to be adaptable and responsive to the local community. The challenge for all local government authorities is to achieve the right balance. Where do you think the Glenelg Shire Council sits on this continuum? (Provide alternatives- e.g. numbering score)
3. What do you think ‘community well being’ means?
4. Please describe the Glenelg Shire Council in 2 years time – how would you like to see it?

Section 4 – Culture and Change

1. Corporate culture is defined as “the pattern of values, beliefs, and expectations shared by organisation members. It represents the taken for granted and shared assumptions that people make about how their work is to be done, how employees relate to one another and to customers and stakeholders”. How would you describe the corporate culture of the Glenelg Shire Council?
2. What do you think are the strengths of the corporate culture of the Glenelg Shire Council?
3. What do you think are the limitations?

4. Is there anything you would like to see change?

5. How do you think this could be achieved?

6. Do you think there have been any changes over the last 12 months? If so, what are they?

**Section 5 – Other**

I’ve asked you a lot of questions. I would really like to hear from you if there is anything that I have forgotten. Is there anything else that you would like to add?
Interview Questions – Councillors

Section 1 – Personal details
1. Age and sex of Councillor
2. Occupation?
3. How long have you been a Councillor with the Glenelg Shire Council?
4. What do you think your greatest accomplishments have been as a Councillor with the Glenelg Shire Council?
5. What skills or experience do you bring to this role?
6. What do you think your future is as a Glenelg Shire Councillor?

Section 2 – Community Perceptions
1. How do you think that the Glenelg Shire Council is perceived by the community?
2. Why do you think that is?
3. Please look at this table from the 2007 Local Government Community Satisfaction survey. Do you think that this is an accurate reflection of the community views on the Glenelg Shire Council?
4. Why / why not?
5. When you look at the results over 5-7 years, there has been a marked decline in some areas. What do you attribute that to? Why?

Section 3 – Local Government – Purpose, Priorities and future
1. What do you think are the 3 top priorities for a local government authority? Why?
2. Local government authorities are required to be economically responsible and cost effective and yet also to be adaptable and responsive to the local community. The challenge for all local government authorities is to achieve the right balance. Where do you think the Glenelg Shire Council sits on this continuum? (Provide alternatives- e.g. numbering score)
3. What do you think ‘community well being’ means?
4. Please describe the Glenelg Shire Council in 2 years time – how would you like to see it?
Section 4 – Culture and Change

1. Corporate culture is defined as “the pattern of values, beliefs, and expectations shared by organisation members. It represents the taken for granted and shared assumptions that people make about how their work is to be done, how employees relate to one another and to customers and stakeholders”. How would you describe the corporate culture of the Glenelg Shire Council?

2. What do you think are the strengths of the corporate culture of the Glenelg Shire Council?

3. What do you think are the limitations?

4. Is there anything you would like to see change?

5. How do you think this could be achieved?

6. Do you think there have been any changes over the last 12 months? If so, what are they?

Section 5 – Other
I’ve asked you a lot of questions. I would really like to hear from you if there is anything that I have forgotten. Is there anything else that you would like to add?
Appendix No. 4

Community Interviews

Data & Results
**Question No. 1  Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>55.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question No. 2  Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Population in cohort</th>
<th>Respondents as % of cohort *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>16-24 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>25-34 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.76%</td>
<td>1035</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>35-49 years</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25.68%</td>
<td>2132</td>
<td>0.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>50-64 years</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32.43%</td>
<td>2101</td>
<td>1.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35.14%</td>
<td>2079</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>7347</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 Census of Population and Housing
Postal Area (3300) Portland Age by sex Based on place of usual residence


**Question No. 3  Council Services and Facilities**

What is your overall satisfaction with the services provided to you by the Glenelg Shire Council?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>54.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Very Dissatisfied</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question No. 3  Council Services and Facilities - Satisfaction
If you are dissatisfied with the services provided by the Glenelg Council, what is your main reason for feeling like this?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Comment 1</th>
<th>Comment 2</th>
<th>Comment 3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comment</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Cleanliness of streets, roadsides and public toilets</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Lack of maintenance of public toilets</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>West Portland Sewerage costs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wheelie bin for green waste</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lack of road maintenance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Planning permit issues</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Poor maintenance of Fawthrop Lagoon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Too much bureaucracy and regulation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lack of road and facility maintenance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Accessibility issues for people with a disability</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Aquatic Centre gym maintenance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Not enough Council workers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Lack of promotion of tourism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Lack of availability of services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Not listening to community</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>High tip fees</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Lack of bike path maintenance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Inadequate rubbish collection</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Dogs - roaming and droppings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Lack of responsiveness to requests</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Lack of footpath maintenance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>More recycling bins in CBD</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Poor customer service</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question No. 4
Council Services and Facilities
What is your overall satisfaction with the facilities provided for you by the Glenelg Shire Council? (e.g. Ovals, sporting grounds, swimming pools, parks, playgrounds, community centres, community halls, cultural and arts facilities, library, etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>62.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Very Dissatisfied</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question No. 4
Satisfaction
If you are dissatisfied with the facilities provided by the Glenelg Council, what is your main reason for feeling like this?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Comment 1</th>
<th>Comment 2</th>
<th>Comment 3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comment</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Aquatic Centre pool issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Aquatic Centre gym maintenance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Hockey facilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Maintenance and standard of playgrounds</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Lack of maintenance of parks and reserves</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lack of maintenance of public toilets</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Recreational fishing precinct poor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Foreshore area not attractive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Opening hours of public toilets</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lack of multiuser paths</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Dogs - issues with droppings and roaming animals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Poor maintenance of Fawthrop Lagoon</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Poor facilities maintenance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Poor expenditure of rate revenue</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Parking time limits</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Question No. 5**  
**Overall Performance of Council**

How would you rate the overall performance of the Glenelg Shire Council over the last 12 months?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Very Poor</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>45.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question No. 5**  
**Overall Performance of Council**

How can Council improve on this?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Comment 1</th>
<th>Comment 2</th>
<th>Comment 3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comment</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>More listening to community</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Planning permit issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Cleaning of public toilets</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>West Portland Sewerage Scheme</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Improve road maintenance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>More industry encouragement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Clean up streets, roadsides, etc.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Increased inspections of assets</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>More emphasis on environment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Staff performance levels need improvement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Improve Fishing &amp; foreshore facilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rangers policing more in Portland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Promotion of Council services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Install more roundabouts</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Funding for West Portland Sewerage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>More public forums</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Question No. 6
**Staff Performance**
In the past 12 months have you had any contact with Council staff?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>71.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question No. 7
**Courtesy and helpfulness of staff**
How would you rate the courtesy and helpfulness of the Glenelg Shire staff?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Very Poor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>54.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question No. 8
**Efficiency and responsiveness of staff**
How would you rate the efficiency and responsiveness of the Glenelg Shire staff? (E.g. Did they provide clear easy to understand advice? Did they get back to you quickly?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Very Poor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>55.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Question No. 9

**Overall Performance of Council staff**

How satisfied are you with overall performance of Council’s staff?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>62.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Very Dissatisfied</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question No. 9

If you are dissatisfied with overall performance of Council’s staff, what is your main reason for feeling like this?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Comment 1</th>
<th>Comment 2</th>
<th>Comment 3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comment</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Planning issues</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Native plants in roundabouts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Maintenance of parks and gardens</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Poor maintenance of Fawthrop Lagoon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lack of policing by rangers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Maintenance of sporting facilities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Improve tourism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Don’t alternate mayors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Building permit issues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>West Portland Sewerage Scheme</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Lack of responsiveness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Staff are selfish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question No. 10
Performance of Elected Representatives
Have you had any dealings with your elected representatives (Councillors) over the last year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>75.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question No. 11
Councillor Responsiveness
Thinking about the last time you dealt with a Glenelg Shire Councillor, would you say that they were responsive to your particular needs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Definitely not responsive</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Not very responsive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Somewhat responsive</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Definitely responsive</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question No. 12
Overall Performance of Councillors
How satisfied are you with overall performance of Councillors?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>45.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Very Dissatisfied</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Question No. 12 cont.

If you are dissatisfied with overall performance of Councillors, what is your main reason for feeling like this?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Comment 1</th>
<th>Comment 2</th>
<th>Comment 3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comment</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>West Portland sewerage scheme</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Planning issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>More listening to community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Opportunity to meet with councillors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rates too high</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>More policing of local laws</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Parking for recreational fisherman</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>More car parks for disabled</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Clean up streets, roadsides, etc.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>No visible achievements or results</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Councillors not in touch with reality</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Better balance development &amp; environment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Backward Council</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Lack of vision</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Poor direction for staff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Question No. 13
Shire in 4 years
Please describe the Glenelg Shire in 4 years time - how would you like to see it?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Comment 1</th>
<th>Comment 2</th>
<th>Comment 3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comment</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Increased economic development</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Increased tourism opportunities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Listening to residents / informing residents</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Improvements/ maintenance to footpaths &amp; roads</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Leadership 'don’t wait for others to do it'/ proactive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>More activities for children / young people</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>More inclusive community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Increased maintenance of town (cleaning, etc.)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Fix planning issues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Parking for boat trailers on foreshore</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Geothermal energy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Increased focus on history and heritage</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Well maintained natural areas</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Vibrant and modern towns and CBDs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Improved efficiency and customer service</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>More diversity in community</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Benchmarking</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Improved safety of streets (lighting, etc)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Safe highways (dual carriageways, etc.)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>increased User pays - fees and charges</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Less bureaucracy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Increased parking in school areas</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Increased freight train services</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Green waste service</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Maintain / improve level of services</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Shopping centre in South Portland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Bike path networks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>More activities for aged and elderly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Improved kerb and channeling (drainage, gutters, etc)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>More baby friendly amenities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 49, 22, 9, 80
Question No. 14

Priority Action Areas

Council will be working with the community and other agencies to make the Glenelg Shire a better place in the future. In this regard, what do you see as the 3 priority action areas over the next 4 years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Comment 1</th>
<th>Comment 2</th>
<th>Comment 3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No comment</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Improved / maintain roads</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>More economic development</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Fix planning issues</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Foreshore redevelopment and improvements</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Increased tourism opportunities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Increased maintenance of town (cleaning, etc.)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Parking for boat trailers on foreshore</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Improved social and community services</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Financially sustainable (decreased rates)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>More investment / maintenance in infrastructure</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Increased / better parking in CBD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Parks, reserves, gardens, nature strips - improve, update, maintain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>More activities for children / young people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Support for alternative energy projects</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Upgrade / redevelop, increased access to sporting facilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Environmental management (including clean air)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Playgrounds - maintained, improved</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Public toilets - maintain, develop, improve</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Speed humps / traffic congestion near schools</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Dogs - control, clean-up, provide for</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Increased / maintenance walking and cycling tracks/ footpaths</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Services, housing and accommodation options for retired / aged</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>More consultation / engagement with community</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Improved safety of streets (lighting, speeding, vandalism, etc)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reduced carbon footprint</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Portland aquatic centre - improve, maintain, etc.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Improved medical services</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Improved kerb and channeling (drainage, gutters, etc)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Increased freight train services</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>More / support community events</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Upgrade of Port</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Improvements to CBD area</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Anderson Point steps</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Bikes on streets - control and monitor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Transparent decision making</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Increased roundabouts in CBD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>More parking for disabled</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Sewerage issues fixed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Green waste service</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Less use of consultants</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Less bureaucracy (paperwork, meetings, etc)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health and safety inspections increase</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>School crossing supervision - increase</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix No. 5
Interviews – Staff, Councillors, and Consultants
Data & Results
SECTION NO. 1

Personal details

66% of staff interviewees were female
33% of staff interviewees were male
Average age: 45 years
Average Number of years working in local government: 13 years
Average job satisfaction rate (out of 5): 3
**SECTION 2 - COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS**

How is GSC perceived by community and why? (Q. 1&2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Staff No. of responses</th>
<th>Councillors No. of responses</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypical - Council Officers don't work hard (cushy and protected)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mismanage community funds</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy with some services and not with others</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception not good - caused by Planning issues</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff not responsive - not responding in a timely manner</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor perception based on community ignorance (of local government issues and resource capabilities)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't get value for rates</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people don't get the answers they want (regardless of right or wrong)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistakes exaggerated and played up by media (Lack of balance good news versus bad news)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived poorly (disappointment and disillusion)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community is cynical about Council</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulatory nature of local government - perceived as 'telling people how to live their lives'</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualistic views rather than as broader community view</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council not good at promoting what we do</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People's opinions are based on what they read in newspaper</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of accountability</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of communication with community</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government is scapegoat when things go wrong</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uneducated community</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of individual responsibility (someone else's fault)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of compassion and empathy of staff</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved perception over last 3 years (communication, etc.)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community frustration - want to see things getting done</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions vary between services</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor perception based on lack of road maintenance</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on individual experience of one interaction or service</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council is Portland Centric</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most people don't really care about Council - apathy</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### SECTION 2 Responses to Questions 3 and 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is the Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey results an accurate reflection of community view?</th>
<th>Why / Why not?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
<td><strong>Code</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, it is an accurate reflection</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, it is not an accurate reflection</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception is actually worse than portrayed by ratings</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are not good at engagement</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection on CEO at time</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Due to Town Planning Issues</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample size too small</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People have a single issue focus (rated on single issue)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It mirrors what I think myself</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are doing better than this</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People have unrealistic expectations</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources spent on consultants - none on actioning plans</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service is poor</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance of public areas is poor</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People don't understand terminology - e.g. Advocacy</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People have a thing about female CEOs</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception caused by media</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 3 – LOCAL GOVERNMENT – PURPOSE, PRIORITIES, AND FUTURE

Q. 3.1 What do you think are the 3 top priorities for a local government authority? Why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>STAFF</th>
<th>COUNCILLORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1st Priority</td>
<td>2nd Priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Services (child care and aged care)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain Local Roads</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads &amp; Infrastructure</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance of facilities (for recreation, etc.)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Planning</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy on behalf of community</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building and maintenance of social infrastructure</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building capacity of staff and councilors</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community engagement and participation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity building of community</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building civic pride (appearance of towns, etc.)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing community needs with available resources</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liveability</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Sustainability (strategic long term decision making)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and wellbeing</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good governance</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsive and responsible service provision</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop understanding of community needs, issues, etc.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be proactive</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation &amp; sport</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy - not an arm of State government</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key themes by colour:
- Infrastructure
- Services
- Finances
- Consultation and advocacy
- Capacity building
- Wellbeing
- Environment
Q. 3.2 Where do you think the GSC sits on the continuum between economically sustainable and responsive to the community?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>STAFF</th>
<th>COUNCILLORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the middle - 5 or 6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the tight fisted side (4.5 or less)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the customer responsiveness side (6 or higher)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q. 3.3 what do you think community wellbeing means?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>STAFF</th>
<th>COUNCILLORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting needs of people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of quality services for people</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads, parks and gardens well maintained</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating efficiently and effectively</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People engaged in activities (incl. recreation)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of programs and activities for people</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well maintained facilities and assets</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy vibrant community</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good social amenity</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General wellbeing of community</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance of living standards</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle, livelihood &amp; landscape</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy environment</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced - finances, community services, etc</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community is engaged and consulted</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plenty of jobs (economic development)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear vision and direction</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key themes by colour:

- Infrastructure
- Services
- Finances
- Consultation and advocacy
- Other
SECTION 3 Question No. 4
Please describe GSC in 2 years time - How would you like to see it?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>STAFF Responses</th>
<th>COUNCILLORS Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning issues resolved</td>
<td>1 3 1 4 Totals</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low rate increases (value for money)</td>
<td>2 1 1 Totals 2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better management of existing assets</td>
<td>3 1 1 2 Totals 1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved systems (e.g. Finance)</td>
<td>4 1 1 Totals 1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland Child and Family Complex completed</td>
<td>5 1 1 1 Totals 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff stability (less turnover)</td>
<td>6 1 1 Totals 1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff enjoy coming to work</td>
<td>7 2 2 Totals 2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office space issues sorted</td>
<td>8 1 1 Totals 1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMT considerate of staff feelings</td>
<td>9 1 1 Totals 1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent and equitable treatment of staff</td>
<td>10 1 1 2 Totals 0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved communication and consultation between Mgt and staff</td>
<td>11 1 1 2 Totals 0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased customer satisfaction</td>
<td>12 2 2 4 Totals 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More positive outlook (media reports, etc.)</td>
<td>13 1 1 2 Totals 0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More dynamic, less bureaucratic</td>
<td>14 1 1 1 Totals 1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture encouraging of training and education</td>
<td>15 1 1 Totals 0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 year budget process (instead of 1 year)</td>
<td>16 1 1 Totals 0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More community focus (infrastructure, activities, etc.)</td>
<td>17 1 1 Totals 0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More strategic approach with a clear direction</td>
<td>18 1 2 3 Totals 2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More environmentally focused</td>
<td>19 1 1 1 Totals 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome focused</td>
<td>20 1 1 2 Totals 0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less silos - spirit of cooperation and understanding (both org and crs)</td>
<td>21 1 1 2 Totals 0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More community engagement</td>
<td>22 1 1 2 Totals 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More accepting of change and differences</td>
<td>23 2 2 Totals 0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More economic development</td>
<td>24 1 1 2 Totals 2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased focus on tourism</td>
<td>25 1 1 Totals 1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent roads and infrastructure (better maintenance)</td>
<td>26 0 1 1 Totals 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent services</td>
<td>27 0 1 1 Totals 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community wellbeing</td>
<td>28 1 1 1 Totals 0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council and staff working in harmony - together as one</td>
<td>29 0 1 1 Totals 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased staff professionalism</td>
<td>30 1 1 Totals 0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland Bay Infrastructure Plan going ahead</td>
<td>31 0 1 1 Totals 1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased responsiveness to community</td>
<td>32 0 1 2 Totals 1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change needed - all OK now</td>
<td>33 1 1 Totals 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less intervention from State Government</td>
<td>34 1 1 Totals 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>17 14 10 3 44 6 6 5 3 20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key themes by colour:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infrastructure</th>
<th>Organisational focus (bureaucracy, efficiency, leadership, etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Inclusive / diverse community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### SECTION 4 CULTURE AND CHANGE

**Q. No. 1  How would you describe the corporate culture of the Glenelg Shire Council?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>STAFF</th>
<th>COUNCILLORS</th>
<th>CONTRACTORS</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inequity and inconsistency in the ways that people are treated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are good at customer service</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each Department has a different management style</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More support required for people on commencement in a new role</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and experience needed so that people can 'step up' when required</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each department / location has a different culture</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some areas are understaffed</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inequitable allocation of office space</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragmented culture (range of values, expectations, how work is done, etc.)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much change for change sake</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No rewards for long term service</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we don't make staff feel important/ thank or acknowledge</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor communication between admin and Councilors</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some staff have been their positions too long - stale</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not much respect for some areas (e.g. Planning)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bland culture - nothing stands out</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People are generally cooperative</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraisals not taken seriously - just done to comply with procedure</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people are passionate - but meet too many obstacles</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture is supportive on a personal level</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Silo mentality - protective of own areas</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to isolation of shire - too many temporary and transient staff</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People are uncertain of management structures</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High levels of stress in some teams</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative, closed and defensive</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-20% of staff have a poor work ethic</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few people go beyond the acceptable (just turn up)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not much has changed in 20 years (outdated)</strong></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed to new ideas and perspectives</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public service ethos - bureaucratic, etc.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff not listened to</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are not good at performance management</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Them and us attitude (management and staff)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of accountability &quot;blame culture&quot;</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Culture is functional - 'this is what we do and that's it' | 35 | 1 | 1
Inward looking | 36 | 1 | 1
Fragile and bruised | 37 | 1 | 1
Risk adverse - all too hard | 38 | 1 | 2
Siege mentality | 39 | 1 | 2
High levels of commitment and dedication | 40 | 1 | 1

### SECTION 4

Q. 4.2 What do you think are the strengths of the corporate culture of the GSC?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>STAFF</th>
<th>COUNCILLORS</th>
<th>CONTRACTORS</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work as a team to get job done at unit level</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good policies (family friendly, etc.)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff want to work with community</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendliness of staff</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual staff meeting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In spite of fiscal restraints, we do a good job</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot of knowledge / talent in the organisation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great training opportunities</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive on a personal level (networks)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good positive direction</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty and empathy of CEO</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some services are done well (e.g. Library)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good communication with ratepayers</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsive to ratepayers</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New staff - working through issues</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No-one is excluded or left out</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morale is good</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMT works well</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good systems in organisation (IT, etc.)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of opportunity here</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive energy about place</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to achieve good outcomes</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good relations between Councilors</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good work values of staff</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good relations between staff and Crs</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good financial management</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 4

Q. 4.3 What do you think are the limitation of the Corporate Culture of the GSC?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Councilors</th>
<th>Contractors</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negativity of community towards Council</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance of assets</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change is not managed well</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff restructures not managed well</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistency in the way that staff are treated</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different management styles in different depts.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job insecurity in some areas</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office space - fragments departments</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations have all been addressed</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning still needs to be fixed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people not performing (better perf mgt)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor communication between management and staff</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactionary, not strategic</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wishy washy, indecisive, rudderless</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretive - information not free flowing and avail</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service needs improvement / inconsistent</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaming and scapegoating</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no commitment to staff development beyond minimum</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivalry between different locations (Port/Hey/Cast)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of resources (staff and funds)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affects of amalgamation still being felt</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronyism</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative dress code</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchical not flexible structure</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty in attracting and retaining good staff</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflexibility and lack of innovation</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not inclusive of people that are 'different'</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people have never worked anywhere else</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of enabling leadership in some areas</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture is stratified and fragmented</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tail wags the dog</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need area managers for different parts of shire</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of good governance and strategic thinking</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of cohesive plan to move forward with</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gossip and lack of professionalism by some Managers</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear, intimidation and bullying in some areas</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian and petty bureaucracy in some areas</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic summary by colour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management and Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People oriented</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

230 | Page Adele Kenneally Student No. 2015394
### SECTION 4

**Q. 4.4  Is there anything you would like to see change?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Councilors</th>
<th>Contractors</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More consistency in the way staff are managed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary inequities dealt with (e.g. Banding discrepancies)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better response to maintenance issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better change management practices</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better connection with services in other locations</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Updates on the progress of the Strategic Futures Plan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Dept needs to have more confidence in themselves</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility in dealing with ratepayers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improved responsiveness</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve communication between admin and crs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get rid of inflexible performance management systems</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less reactivity and more strategic decision making</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage staff to develop and use all skills</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silos broken down and addressed</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improved communication between staff and mgt</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff being asked to take on more and more</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less back stabbing and white anting</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSC to be attractive to LG job seekers</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change desired</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Get rid of the dead wood (move some people on)</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for people to do team reflection</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More structured approach to project management</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council to be first point of contact for info about community</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less micromanagement of staff - more trust</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More respect and less gossip about staff</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More resources (staff and $$$)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less consultancies</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer and more succinct reports</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer than 1 year term for Mayor</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage innovation and 'thinking outside box'</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a more sociable culture - encourage people to talk</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater degree of calculated risk taking &amp; decision making</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased leadership capacity</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### SECTION 4

#### Q. 4.5 How do you think this could be achieved?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Councillors</th>
<th>Contractors</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better management and leadership</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mgt to engage and communicate better with staff</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers and team leaders setting a good example</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved performance management</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treat staff in a consistent manner- fair and equitable</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More regular briefings (by CEO) in local workplaces</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop leadership skills in organisation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Be more adaptive / strategic , not reactive to change</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better communication between Mayor and CEO</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership - solid - withstand politics and manipulation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in resources (staff and funds)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve work plan documentation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved community engagement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to trust staff more</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide coaching / mentoring sessions for new leaders</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve responsiveness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restructure of Departments - create another dept</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increased profile of Councillors across shire</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More contracts for senior staff (to move people on)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed attitude: &quot;make it happen&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-functional teams that are resourced and targeted</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service staff to attend team meetings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote knowledge throughout organisation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need a balance of ‘doers’ and ‘thinkers’</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document - who the team is, core tasks, what they do</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce regular reporting against org values</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate corporate values instead of &quot;can do crap&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review and revamp recruitment and selection processes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better systems for recognising and rewarding people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use less jargon when communicating with staff</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to deal with the small stuff better - we judged on that</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off site 'think tank' and team building</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff to take more individual responsibility</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get rid of the dead wood</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less bullying and harassment by managers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a Learning Strategy and Training Plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop 2-3 principles / core value to guide decision making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less consultancies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer and more succinct reports</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved communication between Depts.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More training - bullying, equal opportunity, etc.  
provide more opportunities for staff to socialise  
Acknowledge and celebrate when things done well  
Provide support for those doing calculated risk taking  
Improved lobbying of government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Councillors</th>
<th>Contractors</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better communication between admin and crs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More community engagement / relationship</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No changes yet</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive CEO</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved communication</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO is more approachable</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More strategic direction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved media coverage</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in confidence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New staff with new attitudes</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO modelling right behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An ‘ease’ about the place / positive feel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying and intimidation still going on</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff morale has improved</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restructure of depts didn’t work well</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male CEO - Councillors work better with a male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly business as usual</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Plans</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased opportunities for development (e.g. LADP)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved customer service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction of organisational values</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased demands on staff (RCLIP project)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evolutionary not paradigm shifts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Corporate Plan, Budget, Strategies and Plans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff less fearful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less of the siege mentality - drawbridge is lowered</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More bureaucratic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some individuals responding and doing good work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realignment of staffing structure working well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References
REFERENCES


AEC Group, 2006, Glenelg community wellbeing report 2006, AEC, Brisbane


Alvesson, M. 2003, Methodology for close up studies – struggling with closeness and closure, Higher Education, 46, pp. 167-193


Argyris, Chris, and Schon, Donald, 1978, Organisational learning; a theory of action perspective, Addison Wesley, Reading (Mass)

Aristotle, 350BC, Politics, Book 6, Section 1317b


Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006, Census of Population and housing [online]
[Accessed 21 June 2008]

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008, Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas 2006. Education and Occupation by resident [online]
[accessed 22 June 2010]

Australian Local Government Association, 2008, About local government [online]
http://www.alga.asn.au/about
[accessed 13 August 2008]

Australian Local Government Association, 2004, Local Government will struggle to cope with ageing population, media release, 25 November 2004 [online]
[Accessed 14 August 2010]

http://www.alga.asn.au/federalelection/
[Accessed 31 July 2010]

[Accessed 31 January 2010]

Australian Local Government Women’s Association, 2009, Research, June 2009, written by the UTS Centre for Local Government for the ALGWA [online]
http://www.algwa.net.au/files/7KQUE0MY1K/ALGWA_Research_Report_corrected_.pdf
[Accessed 31 January 2010]


Bracewell, David, 2002, What is participatory democracy? [online]
[Accessed 27 May 2010]

Brannick, Teresa, and Coghlan, David, 2007, In defense of being “native”: the case for insider academic research, Organisational Research Methods, Jan 2007, 10, 1, pp. 59-74

Bundred, Steve, 2006, Solutions to silos: joining up knowledge, Public Money and Management, April 2006, pp. 125-130

Burdack, Stuart, 2010, Community satisfaction survey results 2010, Presentation to Councillors workshop 13 July 2010

Burdack, Stuart, 2010, Memo to Adele Kenneally – Annual performance appraisal 2009-10, Glenelg Shire Council, Portland


Cherry, Nita, 1999, Action research: a pathway to action, knowledge and learning, RMIT University Press, Melbourne


Coghlan, David, 2003, Practitioner research for organisational knowledge; mechanistic and organistic-oriented approaches to Insider Action Research, Management Learning, December 2003; Vol 34 (4)


Connell Wagner, 2007, Port of Portland – port land use strategy, draft prepared by Connell Wagner for Port of Portland and Department of Infrastructure, May 2007


Costley, Carol; Elliott, Geoffrey; and Gibbs, Paul, 2010, Doing work based research: approached to enquiry for insider-researchers, Sage, London

Cummings, Thomas G., Wortley, Christopher G., 2008, Organisation development and change, 9th ed., South-Western Cengage Learning, Mason, USA


Davis, Rita F., 2007, Female transformational leader characteristics: an exploratory investigation; a dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Philosophy, Capella University, May 2007, United States

De Guerre, Donald W., 2002, Doing action research in one’s own organisation: an ongoing conversation over time, Systemic practice and action research, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 331-349


Dempsey, Kate and Diamond, Andy, 2006, Gender is not an issue: the invisibility of women executives in local government, Local Government Manager, Vol. 40, (1), August/September 2006

Denison, D.R. (1990), Corporate culture and organisational effectiveness, John Wiley, New York


Dowling, Jason, 2009, They’re rubbish, The Age Tuesday July 7, 2009


Fox, Mark; Martin, Peter and Green, Gill, 2007, *Doing practitioner research*, London, Sage


Glass, Lillian, 1993, *He says, she says; closing the communication gap between the sexes*, New York, Bantam Books


Glenelg Shire Council, 2008, Senior Management Team Charter, GSC Portland


Glenelg Shire Council, 2009, Strategic Financial Plan 2009-10, Portland

Goleman, Daniel, 1996, Emotional intelligence; why it can matter more than IQ, Bloomsbury, London


Goleman, Daniel, 2006, Social intelligence; the new science of human relationships, Hutchinson, London

Goleman, Daniel with Senge, Peter, 2009, Working with Presence: a leading with emotional intelligence conversation with Peter Senge. [Audiobook]


Henley, Dede, 2009, Power of collaboration; being a leader of a great group, Leadership Excellence, August 2009, p. 4.

Holian, Rosalie and Brooks, Robert, 2004, The Australian national statement on ethical conduct in research: application and implementation for ‘insider’ applied research in business, Action research international, Paper 7 [online]
www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/ari/p-rholian04.html
[Accessed 7 March 2010]

[Accessed 7 March 2010]


[ Accessed 6 June 2010]

[Accessed 22 May 2010]


http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/ aio/840089
[Accessed 25 January 2010]


Learmonth, Noel F., 1934, Portland Bay settlement, being the history of Portland, Victoria from 1800 to 1851, The Historical Committee of Portland, 1934


Community – the heart of local government; a case study of the Glenelg Shire Council

Municipal Association of Victoria, 2007, Economic and Community Development: Community planning [online]
[Accessed 17 June 2010]

Municipal Association of Victoria, 2008, Fact Sheets [online]
[Accessed 8 November 2008]

Municipal Association of Victoria, 2008, Community Planning Overview [online]
[Accessed 21 November 2008]


Nietzsche, Friedrich, 1899, Twilight of the idols [online]
[accessed 22 July 2010]


O’Connor, Brendan, 2000, ‘The Kennett years: scorched earth or creative destruction’, Joint Fabian Society and Labour History Conference, October 2000 [online]
[Accessed 17 January 2010]

O’Neill, Clare, 2008, Here’s a vote that will affect your life, Insight, The Age, 8 November 2008, Melbourne

O’Toole, Kevin, 2003, Exploring community governance in Victorian Local Government; refereed paper presented to the Australasian Political Studies Association Conference, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 29 September – 1 October 2003


Park, Daewoo, 1996, Gender role, decision style and leadership style, Women in Management Review, Vol. 11, No. 8, pp. 13-17


Portland Aluminium, 2006, Celebrating 20 years in the community, Alcoa, Portland, 2006


Proehl, Rebecca Ann, 2001, Organisational change in the human services, Sage, US


Reason, Peter, 2001, Learning and change through action research, Creative Management, edited by J. Henry, Sage, London


Sarah, Rod; Haslett, Tim; Molineux, John; Olsen, Jane; Stephens, John; Tepe, Susanne; and Walker, Beverly, 2002, Business action research in practice – a strategic conversation about conducting action research in business organisations, Systemic practice and action research, Dec 2002, pp 535-545

Sarros , James C. and Butchatsky, Oleh, 1996, Leadership: Australia’s top CEOs; finding out what makes them the best, HarperCollins, Sydney

Saunders, Peter; Naidoo, Yuvisthi; and Griffiths, Susan, 2007, Towards new indicators of disadvantage: deprivation and social inclusion in Australia, Australian Council of Social Services, Social Policy research Centre.

Schapper, Jan, 1998, ‘We had no choice. It was inevitable’. Some thoughts on parallel processes between researcher and researched in response to organisational change, Monash University Faculty of Business and Economics Working Paper 08/98, January 1998

Schapper, Jan, 2004, A case-study of the experience of organisational change: council amalgamation in regional Victoria, thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy, Department of Management, Faculty of Business and Economics, Monash University, July, 2004

Schraeder, Mike; Tears, Rachel S; and Jordan, Mark H.,2005, Organisational culture in public sector organisations, Leadership & Organisation Development Journal Vol 26 No. 6, 225, pp 492-502

Schon, Donald, 1991, The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action, Ashgate, UK


Senge, Peter; Scharmer, C. Otto; Jaworski, Joseph; and Flowers, Betty Sue, 2005, Presence: exploring profound change in people, organisations, and society, Brealey, London


Steinbeck, John, c1937, Of mice and men, Arrow Books, London


Taylor, Janet and Fraser, Alex, 2003, Eleven Plus: life chances and family income, Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Melbourne


Turnbull, Jeff, 2010, Rural councils fear for their survival, The Age, July 3, 2010, p. 15


[Accessed 8 January 2009]

[Accessed 6 February 2009]
http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/840089  
[Accessed 25 January 2010]

http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/ari/p-ywadsworth98.html  
[Accessed 12 April 2008]


Whelan, Merv and Whelan, Rohan, 2010, Local Government financial sustainability: focus on small rural councils; abridged report, May 2010 [online]  
http://vic.liberal.org.au/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=SP21kpMMLuA%3d&tabid=80  
[Accessed 3 July 2010]

White, Patrick, 1957, Voss, Penguin, UK

Wikipedia contributors, Local government in Australia, “Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopaedia, [online]  
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_government_in_Australia  
[Accessed 9 June 2008]

Williamson, Kirsty, 2000, Research methods for students and professionals; information management and systems, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga (NSW)

Wiseman, John, 2005, Local heroes? Learning from recent community strengthening initiatives in Victoria, International Conference on Engaging Communities, 14-17 August, 2005, Brisbane [online]  
www.engagingcommunities2005.org  
[Accessed 19 January 2008]


Year of women in local government 2010 [online]  
[Accessed 24 September 2010]


Zigarmo, Drea et al, 2005, The leader within; learning enough about yourself to lead others, Pearson Education, U.S.
Zuber-Skerritt, Ortrun, and Fletcher, Margaret, 2007, The quality of an action research thesis in the social sciences, Quality Assurance in Education, Vol 15, No. 4, pp. 413-436