

Art, Governance and the Turn to Community

PUTTING ART AT THE HEART
OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT



A report to Australia Council for the Arts on
research on the Generations Project 2006–2009

MARTIN MULLIGAN AND PIA SMITH
GLOBALISM RESEARCH CENTRE



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Art, Governance and the Turn to Community: Putting Art at the Heart of Local Government

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Latrobe street parade

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Most of all, we would like to thank all of the project managers, artistic/creative directors, lead artists and project participants in all the five LGA areas for their generosity towards us as researchers and for their courage in allowing us to intrude on their work. We were inspired by your hard work and commitment and by your creative enthusiasm, sustained over a long period of time. We must also thank the LGA CEOs and General Managers who made the local projects and the research possible across the five participating LGAs and we acknowledge the great support we got from key senior staff in each of the five LGAs.

It has been a rare pleasure for us as researchers to follow the development of complex, ambitious and often inspirational CCD projects over a period of more than three years, and we have great admiration for the skilled CCD practitioners we have been able to observe at close quarters and through many trials and tribulations. We were constantly inspired by people in many roles who demonstrated a passionate commitment to the strengthening of local communities. We are convinced that the Generations Project has been able to demonstrate the strategic importance of CCD for effective local government in Australia, and, in the process, it given us a deeper understanding of what good practice in this field looks like. It has been worth the investment of time, money and effort over the full stretch of four years to create such a robust and enduring educational resource.

Martin Mulligan and Pia Smith, March 2010.



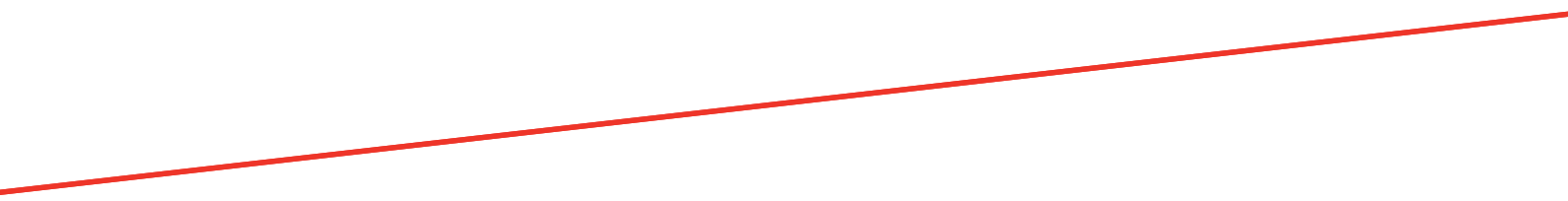
As an 'action research' project over a period of more than three years, the Generations Project has been remarkably successful in finding out what it takes to ensure that community art practices can enrich the practice of local government in Australia. This comes at a time when the building of resilient and inclusive local communities has become even more clearly part of the 'core business' of local government internationally. Indeed, local government authorities that do not find creative ways to constantly build more inclusive communities will pay a considerable 'price' in having to deal with growing social division and conflict, often reflecting much broader, global developments and tensions. Community art projects and programs can enhance the core business of local government provided local government leaders understand that good practice in community art involves considerable skill and a deep understanding of artistic processes.

The national Generations Project was first conceived in 2004 by Cultural Development Network Director Judy Spokes and the former CEO of the City of Port Philip Council (in Melbourne) Anne Dunn. By this time a wide range of local government authorities (LGAs) across Australia had sponsored significant community art and cultural development projects and events and it was evident that successful artistic and cultural activities could build a stronger sense of community at a local level. Many people in local government could see that the arts had a vital role to play in creating more coherent and dynamic local communities and yet this kind of work remained marginal in local government structures and processes. Spokes and Dunn came up with a proposal for an action learning project that could address questions such as: What would it take to convince LGA leaders to take community art and cultural development much more seriously? and Where should this kind of work be situated within LGA structures and processes?

A wide range of LGAs were invited to participate in designing and implementing-over a period of three years-a program of artistic activities that could help the LGA address a significant and pressing social challenge and the project was implemented in the following LGAs: City of Greater Geelong, Latrobe City, Rural City of Wangaratta (Victoria), Liverpool City (in Sydney) and the Charters Towers Regional Council (Queensland). Although the project was initiated before the Australia Council established its Community Partnerships program it was suspended until that program was put in place and so the action learning project was ideally placed to inform the Community Partnerships committee on ways of working with LGAs for enhancing community cultural and artistic development.

The following research report reviews the history and development of the Generations projects in the five participating LGAs and it reports on research that was focused on responding to the following three key research questions:

1. What can be learnt from the Generations Project about what it takes to encourage LGAs to place more strategic importance on cultural development as a praxis across diverse sections and operations of Council?
2. What can be learnt from the Generations Project about forging more effective partnerships between artists, arts organisations, community groups, and LGAs?
3. What can be learnt from the Generations Project about ways in which arts-based projects and initiatives can enhance the capacity of LGAs to engage with their communities across diverse areas of Council work and responsibility?



The researchers used a ‘multi-method’ research methodology—including a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods—in order to address these questions on the basis of comparing the experiences across the five local projects. As a result, the ‘key research questions’ are addressed in chapters 4-6 of the report below. The comparison worked out well because the projects across the five LGA areas certainly unfolded differently and had different levels of success in relation to the overall aims of the national project. While the leaders in each of the LGAs reported to Anne Dunn that their projects had significant local outcomes, it is the comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of the five local projects which makes the investment of time and money in the overall national project worthwhile.

The research report draws on international literature to make the point that the constant creation of strong and inclusive local communities has become a key responsibility of local government in the contemporary world. Indeed, at a time of great flux and uncertainty there has been a ‘turn to community’ at the level of public sentiment and the English social and political theorists Nikolas Rose has suggested that ‘community is not simply the territory of government but a means of government’. A sense of belonging to community cannot be taken as a ‘given’ in the contemporary world and there is a vital role for artistic explorations of place and identity in forging a more conscious and inclusive sense of belonging to community. Conversely, as mentioned above, a failure to attend to the creation of inclusive local communities can lead to a rise in social tension and conflict in a world in which local and global influences can no longer be disentangled.

Of the five local Generations projects, the most successful were those which employed skilled and experienced community cultural development (CCD) workers in key artistic direction roles. A key learning for the LGAs that hosted the most successful projects was how to strike the balance between giving the artists enough ‘space’ in which to work creatively while, at the same time, ensuring that the work was fully embedded in relevant structures and processes of Council. The report concludes that Australia has acquired rich resources in regard to community art practice and that LGAs are well placed to support the further development of the field of practice at both local and regional levels. However, it is critical for LGA leaders to have a good understanding of what good practice really looks like and this is the subject for discussion in chapter 7 of the report.

Good practice in this field requires a set of diverse skills, which must include a good grounding in forms of artistic expression and representation. The work should not be taken lightly and there is no easy ‘recipe’ for success. The Generations Project confirms that while project outcomes are not always easy to ‘measure’—certainly not in the short-term—there can be a wide range of short-term and more ‘slow-burning’ outcomes that can help LGAs address some difficult and even entrenched social challenges.

The following research report includes a detailed discussion of the key research questions listed above (chapters 4-6) and, as mentioned, it also draws on the research findings for an analysis of the ‘physiology’ of good practice in community cultural development (chapter 7). We begin by presenting a very concise summary of the key findings emerging from this analysis of a complex national project. This will be followed by the report’s recommendations, as addressed to the Australia Council for the Arts, and finally some suggestions for enhancing the multi-generational CCD sector in Australia..

Key Findings

1. The constant creation of inclusive communities has become a core 'means of government' in the contemporary world and this is especially the case for local government.
2. In a world of flux and uncertainty a lack of attention to the creation of inclusive local communities will result in a rise in social tensions and conflict.
3. In the era of 'network government' LGAs must enhance their capacity to work with individuals and organisations who have very different assumptions and ways of working (in other words, different cultures).
4. Creative projects that can capture and celebrate a diversity of stories related to life in communities will build a more inclusive sense of community identity and also allow for many more voices to be heard.
5. Artistic projects can only shift perceptions and attitudes in a meaningful way if they have a 'wow factor' related to an inspirational artistic vision and/or the clever crafting of diverse and well-targeted activities.
6. Despite the existence of the Ros Bower Award and the Kirk Robson Award, Australia Council should review the way in which it offers awards and prizes to promote best practice in community cultural development nationally.
7. Australia now has an extraordinary artistic resource in terms of local artists, travelling artists and new technologies. However, this makes it even more important to make clear and effective use of such diverse resources.
8. LGAs should ensure they retain a capacity to carry through effective and ambitious community art projects by: documenting experiences; ensuring skill development for relevant staff; employing staff with relevant skills and experience; and writing a commitment to such work into strategic documents with associated KPIs.
9. LGAs should constantly evaluate their community cultural development work to ensure improved performance and organisational learning but such evaluation must be based on a good understanding of creative processes and the use of a range of empathetic evaluation tools.
10. The Generations Project was artificially constructed (as in the selection of participating LGAs and issues to be addressed), however LGA leadership 'buy-in', significant time for creative development, and national framing and co-ordination have ensured that the 'experiment' has created a very valuable educational resource which should be widely disseminated.

Implicit in these key findings are a number of clear recommendations to interested LGAs. Of course, such a concise statement of the key findings cannot do justice to the wealth of experience discussed in chapters 4 to 7 of the following report. However, the report finds that LGAs have a critical role to play in the creation of more inclusive local communities in a world of flux and uncertainty and that a thoughtful use of socially engaged community art can help them fulfil this responsibility.

Of course, it makes sense to provide experience and training for local people interested in CCD practice. However, there is no guarantee that such practitioners will stay within the local community and there can be a useful role for skilled 'outsiders' in enhancing local projects. The aim should be to nurture the development of a much bigger pool of skilled

CCD practitioners who are available to work in or with LGAs right across the country. In particular, there is a need to support the emergence of more practitioners who have the skill and knowledge to work effectively in remote rural communities. It is important to draw a distinction between local artists and skilled CCD practitioners (who may or may not be based locally). Good CCD practitioners will have the ability to work with a wide range of local artists.

Recommendations to the Australia Council for the Arts

As mentioned in chapter 1 below, the Generations Project was conceived at a time when the Australia Council for the Arts abolished its old CCD Board and eventually set up its new Community Partnerships program. This involved a shift of emphasis from funding specific projects to forging partnerships with LGAs and other community-based organisations that could nurture the growth of community and regional art in Australia. This report certainly confirms the strategic importance of LGAs for fostering the development of community and regional art, particularly when LGA leaders see that support for the arts can also enable them to pursue some of their strategic objectives in creating more effective local governance. Obviously, the state arts funding agencies, under the direction of state governments, have an important role to play in enhancing the nexus between local government and art development, as seen in the NSW government's strategy for art development in Western Sydney. However, the Australia Council is best placed to provide national leadership in this area and to ensure that federal funding for the arts is used effectively to build local capacity.

Recommendation 1:

The Australia Council Community Partnerships program should further emphasise the importance of LGAs and local government representative bodies in building stronger community and regional art sectors in Australia and in enabling the growth of a bigger and stronger network of skilled community cultural development practitioners.

Recommendation 2:

In the field of community cultural development, Australia Council should continue to emphasise the creation of strategic partnerships, however the word 'partnership' is much abused in the contemporary world and the emphasis should be on partnerships which are clear about the common ground, result in common work, and are sustained through human relationships.

Recommendation 3:

Australia Council grants directed through LGAs should specify the need to employ appropriately skilled CCD practitioners in artistic director or creative director roles.

Recommendation 4:

Australia Council should give preference to funding arrangements that allow for two to three years of project development and implementation.

Recommendation 5:

Australia Council should actively support initiatives aimed at developing a stronger network of CCD practitioners in Australia to ensure that individual practitioners have access to better knowledge, resources and infrastructure.

Recommendation 6:

Despite the existence of the Ros Bower Award and the Kirk Robson Award, Australia Council should review its practice for rewarding good practice in community cultural development and consider an annual awards ceremony to better promote good practice.

Recommendation 7:

Australia Council should build on its investment in the Generations Project experiment by ensuring that the research findings are widely disseminated.

Recommendation 8:

Australia Council should fund a follow-up study in the five participating local government areas to investigate the longer term legacy of the five local projects.

Enhancing the CCD sector

Chapter 7 of this report makes it clear that Australia has acquired impressive expertise in regard to diverse but effective CCD practice and yet many practitioners—especially outside urban areas—still work in isolation and without much acknowledgement of their important work. There are probably three generations of CCD practitioners who are still active: those who began their work in the 1970s or who are heavily influenced by social and political movement theory that emerged in the 1970s; those who were able to take advantage of new professional opportunities for CCD practice that emerged in the latter part of the 1980s and early 1990s; and those who have taken advantage of new media and new technologies that have emerged within the last decade. While it is encouraging to see that the practice is being renewed and reconceived by a younger generation of practitioners, it is important that the hard won knowledge and experience of CCD ‘elders’ is not neglected in the training and development of new practitioners.

More should be done to foster inter-generational dialogue about good practice and more can be done to ensure that all practitioners have access to the best knowledge and resources, reflecting both Australian and international experience. There is room for networks, associations, conferences, and publications to share and discuss experience. It is in everyone’s interest to nurture the development of the sector as a whole rather than rely heavily on the work of a relatively small number of rather isolated practitioners.



1. Introduction

1.1 Project origins

The 'Generations Project'—as it was eventually called—was initially conceived by the Melbourne-based Cultural Development Network (CDN) as a form of action research aimed at convincing local government authorities (LGAs) across Australia that community art practices could help them achieve some of their strategic objectives. Even though LGAs in Australia had clearly adopted increasing responsibility for the sponsorship of arts and culture within their local communities, CDN felt that they were yet to grasp what good practice in community art could do for their capacity to fully engage with their local communities. In 2004 the Director of CDN, Judy Spokes, worked closely with Lisa Colley, who was then the Executive Director of the Policy and Research Division of the Australia Council for the Arts, to develop the project proposal and identify project partners. It was agreed that funding would be provided to LGAs willing to participate in the trial project. Judy Spokes and board members of CDN began to approach senior leaders in LGAs with whom they had worked in the past and, on the advice of Arts NSW, Judy also approached the Western Regional Organisation of Councils (WESROC) to identify LGAs in the Western Sydney region that might be interested in the project. CDN Board Member and former CEO of Port Philip City Council in Melbourne, Anne Dunn, worked closely with Judy Spokes in talking about the project to interested LGA leaders. After the first round of consultations, five LGAs—including one in metropolitan Melbourne—agreed to participate. This was reduced to four when the Melbourne-based LGA withdrew but late in the day the Dalrymple Shire Council in Queensland agreed to join the national project, as a result of discussions held with Anne Dunn. Eventually invitations to participate in the national project were accepted by: City of Greater Geelong, Rural City of Wangaratta and the City of Latrobe in Victoria; Liverpool City Council in Western Sydney, and the Dalrymple Shire Council in rural Queensland. During 2008 the Dalrymple Shire Council joined with the Charters Towers Council to form the Charters Towers Regional Council. By 2005 the project was ready to proceed with Australia Council of the Arts as the major sponsor with CDN acting as project manager. The funding agencies—Arts Victoria, Arts NSW and Arts Queensland—were all invited to play an active role in the development of the national project. Judy Spokes invited the (then) Globalism Institute at RMIT University to undertake research on the overall project on the basis of research it was completing for the Victorian health promotion agency VicHealth on community arts and wellbeing within local communities.

In late 2004 the Australia Council had abolished its Community Cultural Development Board and the Generations Project was put on hold in 2005 as the Australia Council decided how to respond to widespread criticism of its decision to abolish the board through which community arts had previously been funded. Anne Dunn was asked to take charge of a Scoping Study for the establishment of a new Community Partnerships program within the Australia Council and this involved an extensive community consultation process that stretched into the early part of 2006. During this time, Judy Spokes left CDN (to be replaced by John Smithies) and Lisa Colley left the Australia Council. The CEO at Wangaratta Council—Justin Hanney—also moved on and while the new CEO—Doug Sharp—did not renege on the agreement to participate in the Generations Project he admitted that he had little interest in arts and culture. In March 2006 John Smithies took steps to revive the dormant project and the Australia Council



nominated staff member Lynda Newton—who had a background in local government—as their key liaison person. John Smithies was able to confirm the participation of the five LGAs and he began the process of renegotiating funding arrangements for the project. He also revived contact with researchers in the Globalism Institute at RMIT University. CDN also appointed the experienced community arts practitioner, Meme Macdonald, to work with project teams in all five LGAs as the national Artistic Advisor. Eventually, nominated project leaders from the five participating LGAs joined with CDN representatives, Lynda Newton from the Australia Council, representatives from Arts Victoria and Arts NSW, and two researchers from RMIT's Globalism Institute for a two-day workshop held in Melbourne in October 2006 and the success of this gathering meant that the project was finally back on its feet.

The name 'Generations' was first used to describe the emerging project in Dalrymple Shire—where there was an interest in 'reconnecting' indigenous and non-indigenous communities across three generations. However, the name appealed to the Cultural Development Network as a name for the project as a whole because it implied both a long-term goal of creating intergenerational renewal in local communities and it also implied that the local projects would generate new ways of working. By the time John Smithies revived the national project in early 2006 CDN was using the name 'Generations Project' for the project as a whole and this name had stuck by the time the national gathering was held in Melbourne in October 2006. This undoubtedly encouraged the local project leaders to think about ways in which their projects might stimulate intergeneration dialogue and elements of this were incorporated—to varying degrees—in all the local projects. It was certainly convenient to have a short title for the national project and the national gatherings became known as the 'Generating Forums'.

1.2 Project aims

At the national gathering in Melbourne in October 2006, co-initiator of the Generations Project Anne Dunn stressed that 'This project is not about demonstrating that community art can do wonderful things for communities. That is already established. This project is about showing that community art can do wonderful things for local government.' In order to realise this broad aim, Anne added, the local Generations projects needed to win support from across the diverse departments of Council and to convince CEOs or General Managers that an investment in community art could help LGAs meet some of their core strategic goals.

In reflecting on the achievements of the project in September 2009, project initiator Judy Spokes said that it had been very important to give the artists and local project leaders plenty of time to develop projects that would relate to the core business of LGAs. Too often, she continued, community art projects are only given enough resources to be very short-term initiatives—around 11 to 12 weeks—and this not only makes it difficult to consult on project ideas but also to ensure that something can be done with the outcomes of good projects: 'You might get a grant and tremendous work is done and everyone leaves at the end feeling down-hearted and upset because there's no capacity to build on it.' A key aim of the Generations Project, Judy suggested, was to 'achieve really important jobs that local government deals with on a daily basis'. In summary, 'local government's job is to sustain healthy communities and healthy places,' Judy argued, 'and that's the

work that a certain kind of arts practitioner has been doing successfully for a long time, in short bursts with little dribs and drabs of money, against the odds, with inadequate understanding and hence support from senior leadership in Councils and other organisations’.

A review of relevant literature in chapter 2 will argue that local government is being obliged globally to take an increasingly important role in the creation of more inclusive and adaptable local communities. This is why local government in Australia has more to learn than ever from a field of practice that has evolved in this country over a period of nearly 40 years and which specialises in the art of creating community (see Mulligan et al 2006). However, if this is a marriage being made in heaven it is not an easy one to consummate here on Earth. There are huge cultural differences in the ways in which local government authorities and community art practitioners go about their work and these differences will be discussed in some detail throughout this report. When the experienced community cultural development worker Meme Macdonald was asked by CDN to act as the ‘artistic advisor’ on the national Generations Project she surprised herself by saying yes. She later told the researchers that her prior experience in community art had led her to the belief that local government authorities would be the ‘last place’ you should start in developing a new community art project. According to Meme, she had struck considerable cynicism in local communities about the role of local Councils and she thought that it would be hard to win acceptance in local communities if you were seen as a representative of Council. However, Meme was excited by a project which explicitly aimed to reduced mistrust between communities, Councils and community art practitioners. As it turned out, Meme had a very positive experience of working within an LGA when she became the Artistic Director for the Generations project in Geelong, yet she insisted that it involved a working relationship that required constant thought and attention.

There are huge cultural differences in the ways in which local government authorities and community art practitioners go about their work.

As already mentioned, when John Smithies revived the national Generations Project in March 2006 he insisted that researchers from the Globalism Research Centre at RMIT should be involved from the beginning to ensure that the project was adequately scrutinised from beginning to end. This enabled the researchers to be present at the first national gathering in October 2006 and the field work on the ‘first phase’ of project development began soon afterwards. In September 2007 the researchers submitted a report to CDN and the Australia Council on the first phase of development which was titled *Generations Project: An Unfolding Story Reflecting on Itself* (see Mulligan and Smith 2007a), which was also circulated to project leaders within the five participating LGAs. On the completion of this report the researchers took a break from monitoring project developments before fieldwork resumed in February 2008. The research on the first phase of project development enabled the researchers to clarify the project aims and these were then captured in the wording of three ‘key research questions’ that were agreed by the Australia Council after the fieldwork resumed in 2008. The three Key Research Questions, which helped to focus the collection of research data, were as follows:

1. What can be learnt from the Generations Project about what it takes to encourage Local Government Authorities to place more strategic importance on cultural development as a praxis across the diverse sections and operations of Council?
2. What can be learnt from the Generations Project about forging more effective partnerships between artists, arts organisations, community groups and Local Government Authorities?
3. What can be learnt from the Generations Project about ways in which arts-based projects and initiatives can enhance the capacity of Local Government Authorities to engage with their communities across diverse areas of Council work and responsibility?

Of course, the research was able to address a wide range of 'secondary' questions related to these key questions and the research methodology allowed for a fairly wide-ranging discussion of topics that were suggested by project experiences. However, it was crucial to focus the research clearly on the overall project aims and to pose questions that could be addressed on the basis of the data that could be collected. The Key Research Questions provide the focus for an analysis of research data presented in chapters 4 to 6.

1.3 LGA leaders' assessment of project outcomes

In mid-2009 the Australia Council commissioned Generations Project initiator Anne Dunn to visit all of the participating LGAs and interview CEOs/General Managers and, where possible, Mayors about the outcomes of their local Generations project. Anne's consultations were focused around eight questions—see Appendix 1—which ranged from the impact of the projects on the 'executive management team' and 'elected Councillors' to a question about whether or not the Council would be willing to invest its own money to ensure that the projects would be continued in some form. The overall assessment of the project outcomes that emerged from this consultation process was very positive indeed. As Anne put it in her report to the Australia Council, the Generations projects clearly led to 'increased understanding' of what the arts and cultural development are and of the ways in which they can assist local government to 'do its business'. Anne reported CEOs and General Managers as saying things like: 'the project was a "runaway success"'; it 'opened my perspective on the arts'; 'I've never seen such interest and involvement'; 'we've seen the arts in a different light and we like what we see'; 'I have gone from interested observer to understanding supporter'; 'I was impressed at the level of constructive debate around difficult topics'; and 'I could not believe the amount of industry support and the dollars invested'. In regard to the impact of the project on Mayors and elected Councillors, Anne wrote:

In every project Mayors have been impressed by the projects and developed respect for the arts and cultural development as a community engagement tool. In some cases all elected members have been engaged, and in others the project has attracted the interest and support of those Councillors with a direct interest. It is clear that many Councillors saw the arts and culture through new eyes and came to understand the power of the arts and cultural development in their communities.

Mayors and Councillors were frequently surprised at how strongly the local projects 'resonated with their communities' and involved many sectors of their communities. They reported that they had heard from 'part of the community, particularly marginalised people' that they had not heard before. Many of the Mayors and Councillors had previously thought of arts and culture as being 'elitist' and 'not

involving the “grass roots” community’, however activities such as storytelling, film and photography, new media, music and dance had broad appeal and, in particular, such activities encouraged some of the Mayors and Councillors to think that ‘young people’ now have ‘a great deal to offer Councils and communities’.

According to Anne Dunn’s assessment, the Generations projects had very positive outcomes for civic engagement. For example, particular projects were able to: ensure that a ‘broader group of people in Council’ were able to participate in visioning and community planning processes; enable young people to participate in Council ‘advisory processes on an ongoing basis’; develop ‘Aboriginal protocols’ for Councils and community projects; articulate ‘separate ward identities’ as a basis for improved ‘social and land-use planning’; increase the extent to which communities valued their ‘heritage’; and actually ‘change the way services are delivered’. ‘New people have been heard in public life,’ Anne wrote, ‘and through the process these voices have been listened to and seen as constructive contributions to civic planning’.

Anne noted that support from CEOs or General Managers enabled the projects to continue despite changes in personnel and, in one case, an amalgamation with another Council. She also pointed out that at the end of the three years there are ‘five Mayors and CEOs/GMs, numerous Councillors and senior staff ... who are willing advocates for the increased use of the arts and cultural development as tools for mainstream local government business’. In all cases, she noted, the LGAs had invested more money in the Generations projects than they originally committed to and in one case there were direct contributions from Councillor Ward Budgets. However, she was not certain that the projects would leave a lasting legacy in the five participating LGAs because ‘as time passes and personnel changes it is likely that this new understanding will fade and arts practice will become marginalised within the cultural portfolio again’. In Anne’s view, this makes it very important to build on the enthusiasm that the local projects have generated and she has suggested that a further assessment of the longer term impacts of the local Generations projects should be made in three years time.

1.4 Purpose of the research

There can be little doubt that the Generations projects—across the five participating LGAs—had some significant outcomes in relation to the overall, national project aims, discussed above. Many people worked very hard to achieve such outcomes and in each of the five local projects there were individuals who made extraordinary efforts to create successful projects. For this reason, it is pleasing to see that Anne Dunn’s consultation showed that LGA leaders were very impressed with what had been achieved. However, such self-assessment processes have obvious limitations. All the CEOs/GMs and Mayors responded to the questions posed by Anne on the basis of briefings produced by local project managers and it is obviously in the interests of the LGA leaders to put a positive ‘spin’ on what their LGA was able to achieve within this national project. Anne Dunn’s review of the project outcomes certainly prompted the LGA leaders to reflect more deeply on what had been achieved in their local projects and this may have contributed to the fact that many of the CEOs/GMs and Mayors attended the *ReGenerating Community* conference in Melbourne in September 2009 at which the local projects were able to present their outcomes to a national audience. However, it is clear that more independent research needed to be done to look more deeply and more critically at the experiences gained across the five LGAs.

A real strength of the project at the national level was that it involved the parallel development of five different, yet related, projects across five diverse LGAs, ranging

from largely urbanised Geelong to the sprawling rural LGA centred on Charters Towers. The early work done to embed the national project within a good spectrum of LGAs and to ensure that the local projects would attempt to tackle some rather challenging local issues provided an excellent basis for comparing the development of the five local projects. As researchers we certainly benefited from the fact that we were able to observe the development of the five local projects over a period of more than three years and then compare the outcomes across a good spectrum of local government experience in Australia. Opportunities for relatively long-term and comparative research in this field of practice have been all too rare in Australia. Indeed, there is now an opportunity to turn this into a serious longitudinal study by conducting follow-up research on the legacy of the local Generations projects in two or three years time.

It was particularly interesting to observe the different ways in which the five LGAs set up their projects and how the local project leaders then set up structures and processes for project management. The very different approaches led to very different outcomes and so a detailed discussion of the different approaches to project management is included at the beginning of chapter 4.

Mayors and Councillors were frequently surprised at how strongly the local projects 'resonated with their communities'.

As Judy Spokes pointed out in her reflection on the project outcomes in September 2009, it actually benefits the research if the local projects had mixed outcomes and if some of the projects encountered serious difficulties in delivering expected outcomes. There is, of course, as much to be learnt from what went wrong—from what did not work—as there is from relatively smooth success. As researchers we could hardly have scripted a better range of project outcomes but it is incumbent on us to analyse the failings as well as the successes. While we can agree that all the five local Generations projects achieved some significant local successes we will argue that some of the projects were far more successful than others in meeting the overall project aims and that enables us to examine why the results were so uneven. A very significant investment of time and money went into developing the five Generations projects and only a frank and fair assessment of the varied outcomes will ensure a lasting return on that investment. As researchers we worked hard—within the limits of the resources made available to us—to collect a wide range of perspectives on what took place in each local project. While aspects of our analysis might disappoint some of those who worked hard on the local projects we must call it as we see it and provide a framework for analysing the project outcomes. At the end of the day, we are convinced that the national project has been invaluable in generating experiences that enable us to reflect deeply on the contribution that community cultural development can make to the delivery of better local government in Australia. At the same time, we are convinced that local government can provide a secure 'home' for community cultural development practice, provided LGA personnel and CCD practitioners both have a reasonable understanding of what it takes to make this rather tricky partnership work well.

1.5 Research methodology

In 2005 researchers in the Globalism Research Centre—then called the Globalism Institute—were invited by CDN to conduct the research on the unfolding Generations Project because we were in the process of completing a three-year study for the Victorian health promotion agency VicHealth on the contribution that community art and community celebrations can make for increasing the wellbeing of local communities. The research for this project was conducted across four very diverse local communities—ranging from an inner urban area centred on Melbourne’s St Kilda to a rural community centred on Hamilton in Victoria’s western district. This well-resourced research project involved the development of a multi-method research methodology which aimed to combine a range of ‘data collection’ methods that complement each other well in terms of their relative strengths and weaknesses. A generous research budget meant that up to six RMIT University researchers worked on the project across the period of three years and the research methods included; the construction of ‘social profiles’ on each of the four case study communities; implementation of a random survey of people living in the four communities; implementation of a follow-up ‘targeted’ survey of people attending community events; lengthy semi-structured interviews with a wide range of people involved in developing community art projects and initiatives; shorter ‘response interviews’ with a range of people participating in community art activities; the collection of stories related to community art activities (broadly defined) and community celebrations; and, finally, the use of a photonarrative technique to gather perspectives on community life from rather ‘marginalised’ sectors of the community. The methodology developed for this research also enabled the researchers to subject the data to both ‘empirical analysis’—in other words, identifying patterns emerging within the combined data—and ‘conjunctural analysis’—in other words, understanding the findings in relation to broader social contexts. This, in turn, enabled us to address research aims in particular and to also discuss some broader topics that emerged from the exploration of people’s experiences in relation to broader social contexts. In other words, there are several layers of analysis and several ways of presenting the research outcomes; ranging from key findings to a wider and contextualised discussion of the experience.

The research for VicHealth resulted in a 165-page research report titled *Creating Community; Celebrations, Arts and Wellbeing Within and Across Local Communities* (Mulligan et al 2006) and more than 2000 copies of this report were circulated, mainly in Victoria. That research certainly enabled the current researchers to gain a good understanding of community cultural development practice in Australia and internationally and the research outcomes have informed the way that questions and topics for conversation have been posed in exploring experiences within the local Generations projects. For a number of reasons, the researchers have had a much more limited budget in conducting the research on the Generations Project. Most of the research funding was used to employ a dedicated project researcher, Pia Smith, who undertook the fieldwork across the five LGAs on her own. It was also necessary to radically trim the number of research methods used although regular debriefings between Pia—as fieldworker—and Martin Mulligan as research project manager meant that in this case we were able to make better use of Pia’s ‘fieldnotes’ and accumulating observations. Martin and Pia conducted the lengthy semi-structured interviews and ‘response interviews’ for the VicHealth study and refined the interviewing techniques to develop a ‘strategic conversation’ approach that enables some ‘inter-subjective’ conversation related to research questions and topics. The ‘strategic conversation’ technique also draws on Jurgen Habermas’ ‘critical theory’ in the way that embedded forms of knowledge are subjected to critical reflection.

The research methods used for this study were as follows:

1. Collection of material enabling an understanding of the 'profile' of the local communities involved in the five Generations projects (see Appendix 1);
2. Design and implementation of a survey of Council staff in participating LGAs related to their experiences with the local Generations projects (see chapter 3);
3. The completion of lengthy 'strategic conversations' with a wide range of 'key players' in both the local and national Generations projects;
4. The completion of a wide range of shorter 'response interviews' with people who either participated in local Generations projects or who had a more peripheral involvement in the development and implementation of the projects;
5. Regular debriefings between the dedicated fieldworker (Pia Smith) and project manager Martin Mulligan on fieldwork findings;
6. Progress reports on the research that were delivered at several of the national gatherings – the 'Generating Forums'.

From these methods, the 'strategic conversations' and 'response interviews' generate the richest data for analysis and much of the discussion related to the Key Research Questions (chapters 4 to 6) flow from analysis of many hundreds of pages of interview transcripts. Strategic conversations are typically 60 to 90 minutes in duration and response interviews range from 20 to 40 minutes in duration. A total of 101 strategic conversations and response interviews were conducted and a full list of names is included in Appendix 2. However, the following table presents a summary of the kinds of people who were interviewed:

Category of people interviewed	Number of people in this category
People associated with CDN	3
Funding agencies	5
Mayors	4
Elected Councillors	3
CEOs/General Managers	5
Senior LGA staff	10
Generations Project Managers	8
Other LGA staff involved with Generations Project	5
Generations Project Artistic/Creative Directors	4
Lead artists	7
Participating artists	15
Members of project partner organisations	13
Generations Project participants	19
Interested observers	4
TOTAL	101

It was also our intention to collect 'found stories' related to the unfolding local projects. However, such stories were difficult to identify and we concluded that more time would be needed for such stories to emerge organically on the basis of local experience. We had been able to make good use of 'found stories' as research data for the VicHealth study conducted across four Victorian communities. However, for that research we were examining a broad range of projects, events and initiatives, many of which had taken place some time before the research began. The lack of 'organic' stories to emerge from the local Generations projects may reflect the fact that most of the experience was relatively recent and also the fact that the projects were, in part, a rather artificial 'imposition' on local communities. The *Generations* project in Wangaratta took the shape of an array of diverse activities and projects that unfolded over time and in this case organic stories could have been collected. Similarly, the *Refill* project in Liverpool unfolded in a way that enabled a focus on individual stories, however these were stories related to the experiences of a small range of project participants and they were reflected in participant interviews. In the other cases the local projects only developed strong community engagement during 2009 and this did not leave enough time for the collection of emergent stories. Despite our best efforts we could not identify a good range of 'found stories' that would contribute to a comparison of local experiences.

As mentioned, research on the Generations Project was able to build on the outcomes of the earlier study for VicHealth. This resulted in ways of framing local experience and a further exploration of relevant, yet rather broad, literature extended the way that the experience could be framed and analysed. In our research methodology, the review of relevant literature is not just a matter of setting a context for the research. Rather it helps to frame the way that local experience is analysed and some conclusions that are based on more global experiences are included in this study's Key Findings (see Executive Summary). The discussion of relevant literature enables us to undertake the 'conjunctural analysis' of the research findings.

Our review of literature focused on questions of governance and community formation and the role that the arts might play in creating more inclusive and dynamic local communities. While we reviewed literature in the field of community art and community cultural development we also looked more broadly at the development of 'socially engaged art' over the course of the last century. We think it is timely to situate community art and community cultural development within broader artistic traditions and this could help to highlight why artistic quality is so important in this work. For the purpose of this report we have not gone very far in this 'situating' of community art (CA) and community cultural development (CCD) as artistic fields of practice, but we see great merit in that line of exploration. We have included a section at the end of chapter 7 on what this could mean for practitioners working in the CA and CCD fields.

1.6 Introducing the local Generations projects

As discussed earlier, LGAs participating in the national Generations Project were asked to nominate a challenging issue or local government challenge to be addressed through the shaping of the local Generations projects. The presentation in Appendix 1 of the local contexts in the five participating LGAs helps to explain the choices made, however the process for selecting the topic or challenge is also informative.

The project began in the Charters Towers region under the auspices of the Dalrymple Shire Council and the Council CEO, James Gott, and other senior staff and elected

Councillors decided that a growing disconnect between the indigenous and non-indigenous communities in the region was a major concern. The project manager within Dalrymple Shire Council, Su McLennan, played the lead role in deciding that the project should aim to connect indigenous and non-indigenous people across three generations and she nominated the title 'Connecting through Three Generations in Time'. The history of European settlement in the Charters Towers region and the 'demographics of disadvantage' for the indigenous community in the area—as presented above—suggest that the project did indeed aim to address a chronic concern in the region but history and demography also suggest that this would be a difficult 'concern' to tackle.

Those who led the project within the City of Greater Geelong Council carried out wide ranging consultations within their large LGA before being able to clarify the project aims and settling on the title 'Connecting Identities'. The choice of topic reflected the view that many people in Council felt that the older communities in the Geelong area were concerned about the pace of change in the city and that they had little confidence in the Council after the period of turmoil in the 1990s (mentioned above). Project leaders also felt that the wider Geelong community still needed a boost in morale after the long struggle to shake off the effects of the deep regional economic recession of the 1990s. The project aimed to forge a stronger and more inclusive morale in a complex and diverse community by finding a way to celebrate the region's human and natural treasures.

Like Geelong, the Latrobe valley community suffered a deep regional economic recession in the 1990s at a time when the privatisation of the power generation industry led to a surge in unemployment and a consequent drop in community morale. Then, just as things were improving with a diversification of the regional economy, national and international talk about the impacts of human-induced climate change put the focus back on the future of the coal-fired power stations. In order to make the point that people living in the Latrobe valley are just as determined as anyone else in Australia to work towards a 'greener' future, project leaders in Latrobe City Council quickly settled on the name 'Green Expectations' and emphasised the point that the need to find less polluting ways to generate electricity for Victoria was not a matter for the Latrobe valley community alone. In 2007 the Latrobe project creative director, Alison Taylor, came up with the notion of 'the grid' to highlight the fact that the search for greener sources of power links the Latrobe community to all households and businesses across the state and the project began to focus on people's fears and hopes for the future.

As will be discussed in chapter 4, the Generations Project arrived in a fairly indirect way in Liverpool City Council. The approach came through the Casula Powerhouse Art Centre (CPAC) and CPAC Executive Director Kon Gouriotis played a big role in determining the project aims and focus, following consultations with a wide range of community service organisations. CPAC already had an orientation to work with young people in the region from diverse ethnic backgrounds and when the decision was made to focus on Arabic and indigenous youth who were at risk of dropping out of formal education, Kon and CPAC Artistic Director Nicholas Tsoutas were able to appoint appropriate community artists to lead the project. Lead artists Khaled Sabsabi and Aroha Groves nominated the name 'Refill' to emphasise the point that the project aimed to give the target groups the resources to express themselves rather than be 'helped' by people from outside their communities. As we will see in chapter 4 the development of the project through CPAC meant that it had only weak linkages into other areas of Liverpool LGA.

Justin Hanney was the CEO at Wangaratta Rural City Council when the local *Generations* project got started and he had a lot to do with choosing the focus on an ageing population. As indicated in the demographic profile above, the Wangaratta area does have an older community and the region has become increasingly attractive to ‘tree-changers’ moving up from Melbourne. Furthermore, regions such as Wangaratta face a constant struggle to generate enough jobs for young people leaving school and there continues to be a drift away for young people wanting to study or build new careers. The focus on how to cope better with an ageing population was also selected at a time when there was considerable debate at a national level about how the nation would cope as the large ‘baby-boomer’ generation reached retiring age. In other words, the challenge to plan for an ageing population was not just a local concern but a wider national concern as well. Justin Hanney moved on before the local *Generations* project really got going and he was replaced by a CEO—Doug Sharp—who admitted that he had little interest in arts and culture. Project management was taken on by a person who was placed at a fairly low level in the Council hierarchy, Maz McGann, although she had clear support from her line managers Di Mangan and Ruth Tai. The project team in Wangaratta made the wise decision to employ the highly experienced Melbourne-based community art practitioner Robin Laurie very early in the life of the project and Robin worked closely with Maz to develop a range of small but connected projects that could build the overall project momentum. Their aim was to demonstrate what good community art can do rather than talk about it. They did not feel that they needed to improve on the name of the national project as the name of their local project and so the project in Wangaratta also went under the name ‘Generations project’.

Clearly the five local *Generations* projects set out to address some rather thorny local challenges. In most cases the selected ‘issues’ reflected wider—even national—concerns and they all stretched conventional thinking about the roles and responsibilities of local government. Local project leaders were given free rein in deciding how they would focus their project aims and how they would build project momentum over a period of three years. They adopted very different approaches and a comparison of those diverse approaches became a key focus of the research. For this reason, chapter 4 begins with a detailed account of the project development in each of the five local areas.

In most cases the local projects began with some fairly small and targeted pilot initiatives. In Wangaratta this grew into a strategy to develop a wide range of well-targeted projects, many of which could leave behind an ongoing legacy. In Geelong the decision was taken to work towards a very large, high profile community celebration, building on some of the successes of the early initiatives. In Latrobe, the early initiatives struggled to build cohesive momentum and the *Green Expectations* project only developed significant artistic momentum in its final year, culminating in a successful street parade in Morwell in November 2009. In Charters Towers, a rather pragmatic decision was made to continue with a rather diverse array of projects and initiatives. In Liverpool, *Refill* narrowed down to become a very innovative project in a single high school before LGA leaders developed rather late interest in what had been achieved. It is in the interests of the research to be able to draw comparisons across the diversity of approaches and outcomes, but it can become difficult for a reader to follow such a discussion. For that reason the following charts—which run the risk of oversimplifying what occurred—aims to present a very concise summary of the major activities taking place in each of the local *Generations* projects.

Table 1.1: *Connecting through Three Generations in Time, Charters Towers*

Project or initiative	Key aims	Target audience
Digital storytelling workshops run by Feral Arts company	Assisting grazier and indigenous families to create their own stories	Targeted families and individuals
Collection of stories and photos from grazier families	To engage grazier families in the overall project and prepare for combined storytelling activities	Grazier families
Collecting stories and photos from indigenous families	To engage indigenous communities in the overall project and prepare for combined storytelling activities	Indigenous families
Photographic exhibition in Charters Towers	To display and curate historical photos collected from grazier and indigenous families	The widest possible community in the district
Art workshops run by Gudjal artist Patsy Dallachy	To introduce school age children across the region to the different way in which indigenous artists visualize landscapes	School children enrolled in the School of Distance Education operating across the Charters Towers region and beyond
Short film-making workshops run by In the Bin company	In partnership with Charters Towers TAFE, In the Bin ran filmmaking workshops with young people culminating in a public screening	High-School age students involved in a TAFE learning program, screened to a wider audience of young people.
Indigenous dance workshops run by Jai Cummins	To interest young indigenous people in the Charters Towers area in traditional dance performance and to further nurture and support existing interest	Young Aboriginal people living in Charters Towers region
Community theatre project	To develop a local performance of a play called <i>Children of the Black Skirt</i> , written by Angela Betzien and adapted by Tropic Sun Theatre Company in collaboration with local performers	Widest possible audience
Workshops in local high school	Todd Barty (director) and Bo O'Brian (sound artist) from Tropic Sun Theatre Company, and independent artist Jai Cummins, brought in to conduct workshops with students, in dance, drama and beatboxing	Selected high school students
Community art working space in a Council-owned property in Charters Towers	To provide space where interested artists could enrol in a subsidised TAFE course to work alongside each other and learn from different artistic representations of local places and experiences	Experienced and amateur artists living in and around Charters Towers
Development of a 'Yarning Circle' to replace a decommissioned fountain in Lissner Park, Charters Towers	To create a public space in which people might sit and share stories. To leave behind a legacy from the local Generations project	The widest possible community in the Charters Towers region

Table 1.2: *Connecting Identities, Geelong*

Project or initiative	Key aims	Target audience
Collection of digital stories by Malcolm McKinnon to form a 'Memory Bank'	To demonstrate the value of diverse local stories from the past To demonstrate the importance of heritage in facing future challenges; to collect and store a wide collection of these stories	People living in diverse local communities with interesting and often neglected stories to tell
Story Vessels Project	A commissioned sculptural project throughout the project where local artists created 'vessels' representing the wards	Local ward residents, and then a wide audience
Memory Bank project launch	To create an installation 'event' in the national wool museum that launched the digital stories, introduced the first story vessels and featured a sand sculpture by Glenn Romanis; To make the Memory Bank collection and the themes of the <i>Connecting Identities</i> Project known to the widest possible community	The widest possible community in the Greater Geelong area
Mouth to Mountain Journey (which involved a wide range of local initiatives and projects)	To create a very complex, multifaceted and inclusive community celebration of Greater Geelong's heritage and diversity. Many projects—vessel making, school art workshops, dance workshops, puppet and lantern making—culminated in a water-carrying relay from dawn until dusk.	The widest possible community in the Geelong region

Table 1.3: *Green Expectations, Latrobe*

Project or initiative	Key aims	Target audience
Regenerators theatre troupe, mentored by Born in a Taxi company	To establish a theatre troupe that could perform at a wide range of community events on issues related to environmental sustainability	Interested performers and then people attending community events
Latrobe Sustainability Festival	To showcase the work of individuals and businesses who have developed technologies that enable households and enterprises to reduce harmful environmental impacts	The widest possible community in Latrobe
Tree-Planting trailer	To build interest in planting days by commissioning a local artist to paint a trailer equipped as a mobile tree-planting unit	The widest possible audience in Latrobe
'The Grid' DVD	Commissioning of a Melbourne-based artist to create a DVD based on supplied images around the theme of the Electricity grid	Local audience at a Generating meeting event
Community survey	To use a creative way to find out what people feel about the future	Members of trade unions representing power industry workers Members of community organisations

Cinecology Film Festival	A festival of ecologically themed films held at Powerworks education centre	Wide local audience
The Grid Project (involving a range of local initiatives and projects)	To create a very multifaceted and inclusive community celebration based on community responses to <i>Green Expectations</i> initiatives. This included a short film competition; the creating of a 'Pylon Tree' public art work by a local artists and community members; supporting songwriting workshops with the Coal Valley Men's Chorus and a final street parade and twilight market in Morwell	Selected local groups and then the widest audience possible

Table 1.4: *Refill*, Liverpool

Project or initiative	Key aims	Target audience
Creation of a three-year workshop program at Miller Technology High School that would enable the target group of students to find a wide range of ways to represent themselves and their experiences	To introduce students in the target group to a wide range of art forms and techniques that could enable self-expression. Workshops involved performance, visual arts, hip hop, new media, excursions and more.	Arabic and indigenous high school students in years 7–9.
Exhibition of <i>Refill</i> project at Miller PCYC Club in Miller	To enable parents and other community members to see what the students have been able to do in their workshops	Communities of the students involved in the school project
Exhibition of <i>Refill</i> project at Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre	To demonstrate to Liverpool Council and the broad Liverpool area community what the students can do when given the opportunity and resources	Leadership of Liverpool City Council and the widest possible community in the Liverpool area.

Table 1.5: *Generations*, Wangaratta

Project or initiative	Key aims	Target audience
An Imagined Future	Six commissioned postcards of Wangaratta in 2010, 2020 and 2030	Wide audience in the local area
Ukulele Showband	To provide an opportunity to interested people of all ages to learn to play the ukulele and perform with the band	All interested people, with particular interest in involving people of different ages in a collaborative creative project
By Myself portraits	To capture the experiences of older people who choose to continue living alone	Potentially isolated older residents and then the widest possible viewing audience
Heritage Idol and Heritage Festival	To engage people in a fun activity to nominate something valuable and old To build support for an inaugural Heritage Festival	Through the Steering Committee (Library, Council, Historical Society and Family Historical Society) to the widest possible community
Telling River Secrets; digital storytelling	To collect and share stories about associations between people and the areas rivers and creeks	Older people with interesting stories to tell and then the widest possible viewing audience

Viva Le Generazioni Italian community photo exhibition	To capture photos and stories related to the experiences of Italian migrants living in the area	The rather dispersed Italian community and then the widest possible viewing audience
Scooter Challenge	To demonstrate to people—particularly those responsible for infrastructure and planning—how difficult it can be to get around Wangaratta in a mobility scooter	People involved in infrastructure and planning and businesses serving a public that includes an increasing number of mobility scooter users; people using mobility scooters or interested in using scooters
The Conversation Couch	To create a couch on which people could sit to share stories To demonstrate the artistic and technical capacity of TAFE students and to showcase fabric art made in Wangaratta	People coming to the Library and to any place where the couch could be set up
Living Library Books	To enable people to talk to local people with interesting stories to tell	People coming to the Library
Digital Quilt	To create a mobile interface that would enable people to view digital stories or short 'vox pop' interviews with local residents	As many people as possible who come in to the Library, bank, doctors waiting rooms or anywhere where the mobile facility could be set up
We're All Ears audio sound portraits	To create a mobile interface in the form of a 'big ear' that would enable interested people to listen to 'soundscapes' created by targeted members of the community	In any public space—including the street—where the facility could be located under adequate supervision

1.7 Structure of the report

As mentioned above, research for this report focused on three key research questions and the research outcomes in relation to these three questions are covered in chapters 4-6. However, in many ways the report goes beyond answering these three questions. A rather extensive review of relevant literature presented in chapter 2 not only helps us respond to the key research questions, it also identifies some additional topics and issues that this research can address. The literature review helped to shape some of the report's key findings and it informed the discussion of good practice in chapter 7.

As we shall see, a number of LGA leaders involved with local Generations projects reached the conclusion that new, more qualitative, 'evidence' is required for understanding the impact of community art projects. This is why we included a separate chapter on the 'physiology' of good practice in CCD work (chapter 7). This should help to provide some markers for knowing how to better evaluate the outcomes of CCD projects and programs.

Much effort went into constructing 'social profiles' of the participating local government areas and their local and regional communities in order to better understand how the local Generations projects played out within their local contexts. This understanding of diverse local contexts certainly enriches the comparison of the local Generations projects.

However, we understand that not all readers will want to engage with such detailed material and so the 'social profiles' of participating LGAs and their communities have been included in Appendix 1.

1.8 A note on terminology

There is potential confusion resulting from the fact that the word 'Generations' has been used to describe both the local projects and the overall national project. In most cases, the local project was given a separate name but in the case of Wangaratta the same name was used for both the local project and the national project. In this report we will make the distinction between 'Generations Project' as the name for the national project, and 'Generations project' as the name for local projects. We will use the names given to the local Generations projects when that helps to avoid confusion.

When Anne Dunn completed her Scoping Study for the establishment of the Community Partnerships program at Australia Council for the Arts she noted that the term 'community cultural development' was not very popular outside the major metropolitan centre because there is lack of clarity about what 'culture' means in this context. Many practitioners prefer the more old-fashioned term 'community arts' because they feel it is better understood even if it sometimes carries negative connotations in regard to the quality of art produced. In this report we use the term 'community art' to refer to the broad field of practice, however, the term community cultural development—or CCD—seems more apt for describing work that aims to enhance local governance. We also use the term 'socially engaged art' to describe work that has an overt yet fairly broad social or political purpose. We believe there are subtle yet important differences between the three terms—'community art', 'community cultural development', and 'socially-engaged art'—and so we advocate that all of the terms should be used provided each is used in a thoughtful and precise way.

The term local government authority—or LGA—is the best generic term for the organisations of local government in Australia and it is used frequently in this report. However, people working within the five LGAs commonly use the word 'council' to refer to their own organisation and so we use the term 'Council' to refer to particular LGAs when this seems appropriate. In each case the name of the LGA refers to a broad area extending way beyond the civic centres that often give the LGAs their name. However, it is convenient to use the short-hand name for the LGA area and so in this report we will often use the names Charters Towers, Geelong, Latrobe, Liverpool and Wangaratta to refer to the LGAs areas as a whole.

2. From the literature

Setting the framework for analysing the experience

2.1 Growing challenges for local government

Governments are trying to meet new, more complex demands, using tools and levers which have changed little in half a century or more.

Tom Bentley, 2001

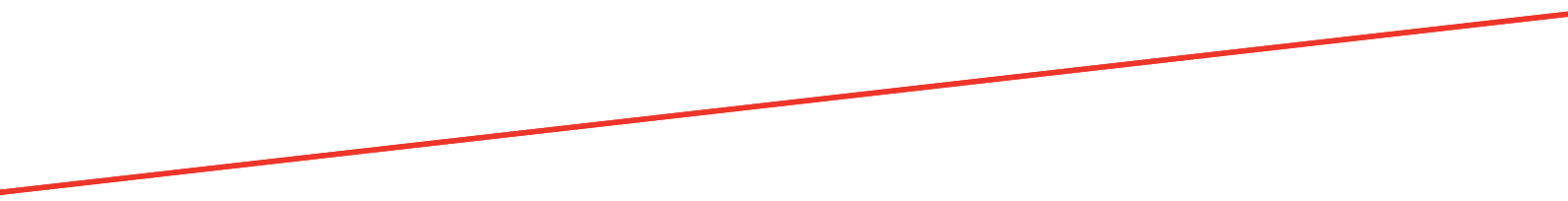
... community is not simply the territory of government but a means of government

Nikolas Rose, 2008

Tom Bentley (2001 and 2005) is among many writers who have suggested that there has been a lingering crisis in regard to democratic participation in western societies; a crisis resulting in what some have called a 'democratic deficit' (see Banks and Orton 2005). As Bentley put it in 2001, 'More people voted in last year's Big Brother TV poll than in the Scottish, Welsh or European elections'. As Director of the Demos Foundation, Tom Bentley was actively involved in advising the Labour Government of Prime Minister Tony Blair on ways of addressing the democratic deficit. Yet when the Blair government released an *Audit of Political Participation* in 2007 it suggested that not only did levels of political participation and 'people's sense of political efficacy' remain low, they had continued to decline! (Cornwall 2008, p. 12).

It is interesting to focus on the views of Tom Bentley because after leaving the Demos Foundation he moved to Australia where he first served as a close advisor to the Labor premier of Victoria, before moving into the office of Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard, where he has helped to shape the Rudd government's policies and practices on 'social inclusion'. In 2007 Bentley gave a speech in Melbourne on the tenth anniversary of the election of the Blair government in the UK, in which he argued that the Blair reforms aimed at delivering more transparent and accountable government had succeeded in ensuring that 'government spending [was directed] into services and support structures for people who could benefit most from the availability of those resources'. As a result, Bentley argued, people were less worried than they had been about corruption in government. Bentley also said that the Blair government had introduced some very important constitutional reforms to bring about a decentralisation or devolution of political power in the UK, as in the creation of the London Mayor and Assembly, the Welsh National Assembly and the Scottish Parliament. However, while such changes occurred at the level of a 'global city' and the 'nation-state'. Bentley acknowledged that the Blair reforms had done little to 'generate widespread community participation'.

In part, Tom Bentley blamed ongoing social change for the inability of the Blair government to engage with local communities, noting that 'we live much more flexible and therefore much more fragmented lives than we might have done a generation ago'. He noted that 'individualism' and 'social diversity' have partly been driven by the success of 'liberation and civil rights movements' but this poses a 'very big challenge' for 'traditional social and organisational expressions of togetherness'. However, Bentley acknowledged that some of the top-down ways in which the Blair government tried to revitalise community participation had been ill-conceived. For example, community sector organisations were invited to have representatives on a wide range of public and private sector boards and yet they ended up feeling that 'the structural inequalities of



power and resourcing and expert knowledge were too great for them to represent a genuine or authentic community perspective'. Towards the end of his speech, Bentley made a point which we will return to later in this review of literature when he said: 'You have to build community if you want to create the legitimacy and the energy which will support the process of taking risks and building new enterprises...' While we need a more penetrating critique of the failures of the Blair reforms than this, Bentley's focus on finding more 'legitimate' expressions of community is useful.

As Bentley has acknowledged (2007), the top-down approach of the Blair government did not result in any meaningful decentralisation of power at a local level. Between 1996 and 2003, the Demos Foundation had developed the concept of the 'adaptive state' (see Bentley and Wilsdon eds, 2003) which clearly influenced the policies and practices of the Blair government. In turn, this work has influenced the policies and practices of state and federal Labor governments in Australia and the State Services Authority of Victoria worked directly with the Demos Foundation to produce a document titled *Towards Agile Government* (2008) which introduced the concept of an 'Agility Cycle' for creating more effective public administration. Yet even though the book on the 'adaptive state' which was edited by Bentley and Wilsdon (2003) included a chapter by Barry Quirk arguing that local government could become the most adaptive tier of governance in the UK, the concept of the adaptive state proved to be too abstract to reshape thinking on local governance in any significant way.

According to Haus and Heinelt (2005), debates about the future of local government need to focus on: a) existing constraints on the operation of local government and; and b) the need—which is more pressing at the local level—to shift the focus from government to governance. The authors note that within the 'Anglo group' of nations—including the UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and, in some respects, the USA—'local government has weak legal and political status, but is important in shaping and delivering public services' (p. 17). As a result, the authors suggest, local government in these countries has assumed a 'more functional than political role' (ibid). This problem has been exacerbated in recent times, the authors suggest, because there has been a growing emphasis within local government on 'system effectiveness' over 'citizen participation', even though it can be argued that 'effective governance is actually generated by participation' (p. 24). Haus and Heinelt argue that local government faces the twin crisis of 'legitimacy and effectiveness' at a time when local government authorities are obliged to engage with a much wider range of public, private and community sector organisations. Haus and Heinelt (p. 19) argue that local government must embrace the shift from government—for example, regulation by the state—to governance—for example, 'horizontal and cooperative modes of coordination'. In their view governance 'addresses both the interaction of public and private actors in policy making, and the definition of commonly agreed problems and objectives'. Later in the same book, Murray Stewart (2005) noted that discussion about the need for local government authorities to put more emphasis on 'partnerships, coalitions and strategic alliances' has now shifted towards an even stronger emphasis on the need for 'network governance' (p. 152).

While it is clear that there is a need to develop even stronger forms of collaboration between public and private 'actors' to create more effective forms of local governance

in the contemporary world, it is important to avoid the assumption that ideas and ways of working in one sector can be directly applied in another. Indeed, some of the failings of the Blair government's approach to 'community participation' probably relate to the fact that they were driven by concepts taken from the private sector. In particular, much emphasis was put on the notion of identifying and rewarding 'social entrepreneurs' within marginalised communities and yet Tom Bentley has acknowledged (2007) that this high profile policy did little or nothing to help local communities. Sociologist Richard Sennett (2006) went even further in saying that the whole notion of the 'entrepreneurial society'—as pioneered by the Blair government in the UK—only served to 'corrode' a secure sense of self in the conditions of 'new capitalism' when people must constantly adapt to shifting opportunities for employment. There are plenty of examples of a misappropriation of ideas in Australia and as long ago as 1995 Stuart Res and Gordon Rodley argued that 'managerialism'—as adopted from the private sector—had become a curse for many public sector organisations in Australia. As we will argue later in this review of literature, there is a large body of literature on community development as a field of practice—in Australia and internationally—and it stands to reason that this literature will include more insights on energising local communities than literature related to private sector economic management.

Whereas Tom Bentley suggested that the changing nature of social life has posed new difficulties for government, Nikolas Rose has offered a more penetrating analysis of what the changes mean for a broader conception of governance in an essay first published in 1999 and republished in 2008. In this essay Rose argues that 'globalisation' has had far-reaching impacts on the ways in which people are now thinking about their relationships to 'society'. The compression of time and space, the opening up of communication channels and the increased flow of information and ideas have all increased the sense in which individuals are now participating in a 'variety of heterogeneous and overlapping networks of personal concern and investment' (p. 87). As a result, Rose suggests, people are much less focused on the obligation between citizen and society, as mediated by the state. At the same time, a world of expanding relationships can generate new forms of insecurity and Rose argues that this has created a new lack of confidence in 'society'. Indeed, Rose argues that the 'idea of community' has come to replace the obligation to the social because community is now being seen as an 'antidote or even cure to the ills that the social had not been able to address' (p. 89).



The dawn procession that began the M2M journey, Barwon Heads

Photo: Andrea Rotondella



River of Dreams participants during the M2M Journey, Geelong

Photo: Andrea Rotondella

Nikolas Rose sees new opportunities for government in the shift from the social to community because this enables governments to think of citizens as 'moral individual[s] with bonds of obligation and responsibilities' (p. 91). 'The vocabulary of community also implicates a psychology of identification', Rose noted, and the opportunity is that 'community is not simply the territory of government, but a *means* of government: its ties, bonds, forces and affiliations are to be celebrated, encouraged, nurtured, shaped and instrumentalised in the hope of producing consequences that are desirable for all and for each' (p. 93).

In many ways, Rose's essay echoes many of the observations made by Zygmunt Bauman in his book on community (2003). While Bauman's book was not focused on challenges to government, he was able to demonstrate that the desire for community in the contemporary world reflects a deeper desire to feel safe in a world of great flux and uncertainty. Between them, Bauman and Rose have explained why there has been a 'turn to community' at both the level of public consciousness and at the level of political discourse, which has puzzled many sociologists (see, for example, Walmsley 2006). Sociologists have been puzzled by this big shift in emphasis because they have long been guided by the predictions of the pre-eminent early sociologists Emile Durkheim and Ferdinand Tonnies who each—in their own way—suggested that there would be a major shift of allegiance from community to society. Durkheim suggested that old forms of community would be replaced by new, spatially dispersed, forms of 'solidarity' while Tonnies suggested that more traditional 'gemeinschaft' characteristics of communal organisation would be largely overwhelmed (although not completely) by the 'gesellschaft' characteristics of 'modern society'. So a return to community in what some have called the 'post-modern' era has come as a surprise and, as we shall see later, many sociologists have been suspicious about what it means.

It is important to note that the 'turn to community' is not likely to be ephemeral. US sociologist Neil Brenner has worked with political theorist Bob Jessop to develop the argument that we have already witnessed a 'rescaling of the state' which—according to Jessop—does not mean that the 'national' has been 'hollowed out' but rather that 'the national is being redefined in relation to other scales (local, regional and triadic) of institutional organization, regulatory experimentation and political strategy' (Brenner 2009, p. 126). According to Brenner (p. 126) political strategists might now understand that structures of the state—across different spatial scales—'may be ruptured and rewoven through the very political strategies they enable'. Saskia Sassen (2006) has been more forthright than this in saying that we are 'living through an epochal transformation' (p. 1) in which 'global and denationalizing dynamics destabilize existing meanings and systems' (p. 2). While writers such as Jessop and Sassen may differ on the future role for the nation-state, they agree that a profound transformation of the state has taken place and this suggests that the challenges to government that were discussed by Nikolas Rose have only deepened. The conditions that gave rise to the turn to community—as discussed by Rose and Bauman—have become even more entrenched.

In recent years it has become increasingly apparent, in Australia and internationally, that local communities—which are increasingly made up of people who have migrated from various parts of the world and/or their offspring—can be divided by political or social developments taking place elsewhere in the world. Furthermore, new 'global threats'—such as climate change, 'peak oil' or economic crises—can also put more pressure on local communities and local government. In such circumstances, the need to create more cohesive—in other words, less divided—local communities has become more important and this has surely become a central concern for local government in Australia.

2.2 Local government and the turn to community

Community is relevant today because, on the one side, the fragmentation of society has provoked a worldwide search for community and, on the other ... cultural developments and global forms of communication have facilitated the construction of community.

Gerard Delanty, 2003, p. 197.

As argued above, it is surely more important to turn to the practice of community development than to the practice of economic development to seek insights on how to build stronger, more cohesive, and more resilient communities in the contemporary world. It is interesting to note that many—if not most—local government authorities in Australia today have a community development unit or otherwise community development workers located in something like a social development unit. Yet it is unlikely that many local government leaders have a good understanding of the way this field of practice has emerged and developed in Australia so this is a good starting point for understanding what has been learnt as a result of the practice.

Of course, it is never easy to establish the precise origins of a field of practice but it is interesting to note that its origins in the UK go back at least 30 years before the election of the Blair government in 1997. According to Paul Henderson (Pitchford and Henderson 2008, p. 8), Murray Ross and Eileen Youngusband began writing about a need for a focus on the development of community within the field of social work in the late 1950s, however, it was not until the Seebohm Report was published in 1968 that this concept was put into practice. Within a ‘year or two’ of the Seebohm Report, Henderson notes, community development workers were being appointed in a range of social service organisations and the field expanded rapidly through the mid-1970s. In 1968 an Association of Community Workers was set up in the UK and just two years later the *Community Development Journal*—which continues today as an influential international journal—was established. According to Henderson, the early community development movement in the UK focused at a ‘professional level’ on ‘a structural analysis of deprivation’ and at the ‘grassroots level’ on ‘welfare rights campaigns and the organisation of tenants and residents on housing issues’ (p. 9).

Susan Kenny (2006) has noted that the first social service agency to adopt a community development framework in Australia was probably Melbourne’s Brotherhood of St Lawrence in 1970 when it established its Family Centre Project—later renamed the Action and Resource Centre for Low-Income Families—to examine ‘structural and economic factors’ that ‘perpetuate poverty’ (p. 39). Kenny goes on to note that the Australian Assistance Plan (AAP), introduced by the Whitlam Labor government in 1972, introduced a conception of ‘social development’ that was clearly based on the principles of community development as they were being articulated in both the UK and Australia and this plan resulted in the establishment of Regional Councils of Social Development. Sometimes the AAP is seen as the trigger for community development in Australia but the current author (Martin Mulligan) personally observed the adoption of community development principles by a range of Aboriginal community organisations and the broader South Sydney Community Aid organisation as they were operating in the Redfern area of Sydney before the election of the Whitlam government at the end of 1972. One catalyst for this adoption of community development principles by local agencies based in Redfern was the social worker Martin Mowbray who later developed an academic critique of the practice, as we will see later.

While community development first emerged within the field of social work—first in the UK and soon afterwards in Australia—it is important to note that it was heavily influenced by a range of global social movements that emerged at the same time. So, for example, the civil rights movement in the USA partly morphed into a struggle to ‘empower’ oppressed black communities while ‘second wave feminism’ and the indigenous rights movements that emerged in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, USA and Canada also focused on notions of empowerment over welfare. The rise of ‘national liberation’ struggles across the colonised ‘Third World’ also focused on demands for ‘self-determination’ and support for these struggles in ‘First World’ societies merged with the rise of the other social movements mentioned above. By the early 1970s influential writers such as Saul Alinsky, Carl Rogers and Ivan Illich were articulating a philosophy of self-empowerment reflecting the aspirations of the ‘new’ social movements but it was the Brazilian community educator Paulo Freire who did the most to turn this into a philosophy of community empowerment through the publication in English of his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

The community development ‘movement’ in Australia and the UK has had a paradoxical relationship with the state. As the incorporation of community development in the rhetoric of the Whitlam government’s Australian Assistance Plan of 1973 demonstrated, it was not difficult for the state to adopt the formation of stronger communities as a goal of government. At the same time, community empowerment became the catchcry of the social movements campaigning for radical social change and for the creation of a much more equitable global society. In a sense, the community development movement was born with two in-built contradictions. On the one hand it was adopted as a means of government and, on the other hand, it was articulated as a critique of social control and ‘stateism’. The other contradiction reflects the fact that community development was incorporated within the practice of social work with a strong welfare orientation and, on the other hand, it articulated as a radical critique of paternalistic government and welfare dependency. Susan Kenny (2006, pp. 135-137) has noted that the consolidation of community development in the 1980s may have reflected the ‘failed promise’ of the ‘welfare state’ although she notes, of course, that the welfare state was rapidly disbanded from the mid-1980s by western governments taking their lead from the neoliberalism popularised by the Thatcher government in Britain and the Reagan administration in the USA.



Launch of the Grid project and launch of the Pylon Tree, Latrobe
Photo: Pia Smith



The Street Parade Finale of the Grid Project in Morwell. Hazelwood Power Station is in the background.
Photo: Pia Smith

Susan Kenny (2006, pp. 118-119) has noted that in both the UK and Australia community development began to find a home within the sphere of local government during the 1970s. Initially this had some support from the other tiers of government, however, Paul Henderson (Pitchford and Henderson 2008, pp. 10-11) has noted that the field came under increasing pressure during the 1980s from the combined effects of the Thatcher government's neoliberal agenda and the subsequent economic recession. During this decade, Henderson notes, the number of community workers had shrunk by about 50 per cent. Kenny (2006) has noted that the field went through a similar—yet less dramatic—decline in the 1980s, despite the election of a national Labor government in 1983. However, it continued to find a safe haven within local government, on the one hand, and found new support within community-based organisations that were critical of neoliberal government policies that continued to erode welfare 'rights'. Within local government and within the sphere of social worker there was growing pressure for a 'professionalisation' of the practice. In some ways this deepened the rift between what some have called 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches to community development (see Shaw 2007). Reduced funding for community-based organisations reduced their capacity to work independently yet, as Kenny has pointed out (2006, pp. 128–130), this has also led to an increased emphasis on partnerships between state agencies and civil society organisations promoting a community development agenda that has continued to gather force internationally since the late 1990s. As Kenny notes, the adaptability of the broad community development movement in Australia has meant that it is now based on a range of 'political ambiguities'.

An early advocate of community development in Australia, Martin Mowbray, has become a strong critic of the way the associated rhetoric has been 'co-opted' by state. As early as 1981 he joined with Louise Bryson in suggesting that the term 'community' had become a 'spray-on solution' for government agencies (see Bryson and Mowbray 1981) and in 2004 he suggested that government rhetoric about 'building great communities' had only distracted attention from the responsibility of government to really address the causes of social inequality and division. Mowbray is among many commentators who have suggested that the growing 'professionalisation' of community development in Australia has been a bad thing for what had once been a radical critique of social injustice. However Susan Kenny (2002) has responded to this critique by suggesting that a practice as broad as community development will always have in-built 'tensions and dilemmas' because many community development workers are trying to simultaneously contribute to social change while, at the same time, they seek to bring respectability to their field of practice so that it will be taken seriously by government. Kenny argued (2002) that community development has been given the task of trying to create a 'new fused discourse' that does not abandon historic struggles for welfare rights, builds in a community activist framework of empowerment for marginalised sectors of a community, and adapts to the realities of economies that are dominated by the market. In the third edition of her community development textbook (2006) she points out that there is a very wide range of practices in community development in Australia and yet there is a shared interest in improving 'social justice' and in enhancing 'self-determination'. Community development introduced the notion, Kenny suggested, that even poor communities can be seen as being 'asset-based' rather than 'deficit-based', a notion that was picked up by the Blair government in the UK. However, the emphasis on self-determination involves an imperative for 'participatory democracy' which presents an enduring challenge for all levels of government, as discussed in section 4.1 above. In this sense, Kenny argues, community development has become a discourse that the state can neither fully co-opt nor ignore.

Mae Shaw (2007) has also argued that community development 'continues to be subject to competing rationalities, inhabiting a position at the intersection of a range of opposing ideas, traditions, visions and interests' (p. 33). The 'ideological elasticity' of community development is both its strength and weakness, Shaw asserts, because while it can be 'appropriated to maintain the *status quo* and preserve privilege, it can also create an increasingly rare public space for the expression of various forms of common position and collective identity or, indeed, dissent' (p. 33). Shaw suggested that community development practitioners need to be aware that their field of practice 'contains within its own terms an unavoidable choice: It can act as a mirror, simply reflecting back an image of "the world as it is" ... or it can provide a lens through which existing structures and practices can be critically scrutinized in order to find ways to create a more equal, supportive and sustainable alternative—"the world as it could be"' (p. 34). It is certainly possible, Shaw continued to create 'spaces in which people can assert, celebrate or contest their "place" in the world'. However, this means an engagement with 'the politics of community' in 'ways which offer the possibility of talking back to power rather than simply delivering depoliticized and demeaning versions of empowerment' (p. 34).

In reflecting on efforts made to inject some community development principles into the delivery of health services to remote Aboriginal communities in Australia, Campbell, Wunungmurra and Nyomba (2005) noted that 'the power inequalities inherent in the relationship between government departments and marginalized groups means there are intrinsic challenges when they seek to do community development in partnership' (p. 163). However, the authors note that health agencies had become aware that 'top-down' interventions have not reduced the gap in regard to health outcomes for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians and so they sought new ways to engage with the remote communities. Of course, this paper was written before the Howard government launched its very top-down 'intervention' into a host of remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, an approach continued by the Rudd government. If this latest top-down intervention also fails to deliver long-term health benefits for the communities concerned then government agencies will have little alternative but to adopt a much more patient community development approach, in partnership with agencies who have a capacity to work within such communities.



The Cultural Couch in action, Wangaratta
Photo: Maz McGann



Workshop during the Wangaratta Heritage Festival
Photo: Maz McGann

An interesting paper by Martin Geoghegan and Fred Powell (2009) links debates about the contradictory nature of community development back to the wider discussion about the 'turn to community' in the contemporary world reflected in the writings of Nickolas Rose and Zygmunt Bauman, as reviewed earlier. Geoghegan and Powell suggest that Bauman, in particular, provides a starting point for rethinking the significance of community because he presents it as a 'mission to rediscover greater ontological security in modernity, but this involves reconciling the tension between our need for both security and freedom—the calculus of which will determine the quality of our lives' (p. 4). If community has become the 'antidote' to the failings of society—as Nickolas Rose put it—Geoghegan and Powell suggest that community development now 'has a vital catalytic role to play in democratising democracy, where community development ... provides a vital public space for democratic dialogue and political criticism in an era characterized by the eclipse of the ability and interest of the ordinary citizen to influence the practices and practitioners of "thin" (in other words, liberal) democracy' (p. 3). While this seems to ignore the contradictory nature of community development, as discussed above, it does link the practice of community development to the emerging aspiration for community in the contemporary world and to perceived failure of democracy to deliver greater security to its citizens in the context of global change. In this sense, the crisis of government, discussed in section 3.1, can be seen as an opening for a revitalisation of the practice of community development.

Of course, it continues to be important to scrutinise and Graham Crow has suggested that there an important role for appropriately trained sociologists in this regard. According to Crow (p. 185) 'Community studies have the potential to expose some of the more fanciful assumptions underlying policy initiatives which trumpet the virtues of 'community ... In doing so, community sociologists necessarily engage with deep-seated mythologies of 'community' rather than reproducing them.' Crow noted that 'community studies' first emerged as a sub-discipline within sociology in the 1950s and 1960s but it was ruthlessly criticised by influential sociologists such as C.W. Mills who once described work in the field as reading 'like badly written novels' (Crow, p. 173). Under such attack this genre of sociology almost disappeared in the 1970s but according to Crow it has come back strongly in recent decades. This undoubtedly reflects the turn to community in the contemporary world and, as Crow put it; 'the contested nature of "community" means that its representation is bound to be political and relevant to policy debates on which people will have different opinions' (p. 185).

Many sociologists (for example, Walmsley 2006) have complained that the word 'community' is used very loosely and ambiguously in many public discourses. This reflects the view expressed as long ago as 1983 by cultural theorist Raymond Williams when he said that 'community' can either be 'the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships' (p. 76). 'What is most important, perhaps,' Williams continued, 'is that unlike all other terms of social organization (state, nation, society, etc), it seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term' (ibid). As Erhard Berner and Benedict Phillips (2005) have argued, simplistic or one-dimensional conceptions of community can be 'flawed to the point of being harmful' (p. 17) for people trying to develop self-help initiatives within poor communities. As Berner and Phillips put it: To expect 'communities' to be havens of cooperation is utterly naïve; to treat them as homogeneous will further marginalize those most in need' (p. 17). At the very least we need to understand that 'communities' contain a host of 'sub-communities' and 'social networks' and that in the contemporary world it is possible to belong to

'community' at levels ranging from place-based local communities to extended—even global—virtual communities made possible by major advances in communication technologies. However, even this is not enough because as Zygmunt Bauman put it (2003) 'community' is more aspirational than real in the conditions of 'late modernity' and it is the desire for community which should interest us the most.

Gerard Delanty (2003) went even further than Bauman in helping us to understand that 'community' is a norm to be strived for rather than an existing social 'structure'. 'Community exerts itself as a powerful idea of belonging in every age,' Delanty wrote (p. 11) but western societies inherited from the ancient Greeks an 'ambivalent' conception of community because it refers at the same time to 'locality and particularness' and to the sense of a 'universal human community in which all humans participate' (p. 12). It is the fact that the 'idea of community' can operate at many levels at the same time which has given it such enduring appeal, Delanty suggests. He goes on to argue that 'Community is relevant today because, on the one side, the fragmentation of society has provoked a worldwide search for community, and on the other ... cultural developments and global forms of communication have facilitated the construction of community' (p. 193). In one sense, community in the modern world, Delanty suggests, is little more than 'an open-ended system of communication about belonging', however, 'the persistence of community consists in its ability to communicate ways of belonging, especially in the context of an increasingly insecure world' (p. 187). Perhaps the most important insight in Delanty's masterful little book for the challenges of local government is contained in the following quote: 'Contemporary communities are groupings that are more and more wilfully constructed: they are products of "practices" rather than "structures"'. Communities are created rather than reproduced' (p. 130).

As already mentioned, the authors of this report were involved in an earlier study for the Victorian health promotion agency VicHealth on possible links between community art and celebrations and the 'wellbeing' of local communities (see Mulligan et al 2006). The findings of this study concurred with Delanty in saying that a sense of community must be constantly created and recreated for local communities in the contemporary world. The report highlighted the importance of community celebrations which give people an opportunity to 'avow' the importance of community when it is often not visible and also the importance of activities—such as community choirs—which can give people a 'visceral' sense of being community, at least for the purpose of the activity. The *Creating Community* report also stressed the importance of having an inclusive orientation in efforts to create a sense of community. This is not to say that a sense of community can be forced on people—and our report advocated approaches that give people more choice in regard to the terms of their social 'inclusion'. However, it argued that agencies interested in the wellbeing of local communities should aim for the wilful construction of inclusive communities. As will be discussed in sections 4.3 and 4.4 below community art initially developed as a rather separate field of practice to community development (CD) in both Australia and the UK. However, they certainly came to influence each other more in recent decades, resulting in the emergence of the practice that is often referred to as community cultural development (CCD). The *Creating Community* report noted that experienced community artists—or CCD practitioners—have probably been aware for much longer than CD workers that a 'sense of community' must be constantly created and recreated. Indeed, it might only be artistic representations of community—as in community festivals—that can give it some kind of public visibility.

If Delanty is right in saying that contemporary communities only exist if they are 'wilfully constructed' and that communities must be created and constantly recreated,

this helps to explain the failure of the Blair government's initiative to have 'community representatives' appointed to a host of boards in both the public and private sector. As Bentley pointed out (2007) 'structural inequalities of power and resourcing' made such representatives feel that they could not adequately represent their communities in such gatherings. Even more to the point, individuals would struggle to 'represent' a community where the 'sense of community' is weak or largely unexpressed and in such circumstances they could only offer narrow and shallow readings of the community. On the other hand, strong and inclusive expressions of community could give rise to more powerful forms of representation that could, now, be articulated by appropriate representatives. The failing of this Blair initiative should serve as some kind of lesson to local government authorities about what it takes to adequately consult with local communities.

If contemporary communities do not exist unless they are 'wilfully constructed' then it is obviously in the interest of local government to help construct coherent and inclusive communities. Attempts to impose narrow forms of community identity on complex local communities is likely to cause tension and division and even provoke anti-social forms of behaviour. The constant creation and recreation of inclusive forms of community identity has surely become 'core business' for local government in the contemporary world.

2.3 Art, community and local governance

Distinct from society (which is a simple association and division of forces and needs) community is not only intimate communication between its members, but also its organic communion with its own essence.

Jean-Luc Nancy, 1986.

An essay by Sandy Kirby (1991) notes that—like the field of community development discussed above—the community arts 'movement' gained an important boost from the emergence of the 'new social movements' of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and—again like community development—it also gained a boost from the Whitlam government when it formed the Community Arts Committee of the Australia Council for the Arts in 1973. However, unlike community development, the community arts movement in Australia, UK and north America has drawn from much longer traditions in radical politics. Kirby points out (p. 21) that the high profile visual artist Nicholas Chevalier—who came to popular attention in the 1850s with a series of satirical cartoons in the Melbourne Punch—produced the first heroic image of the common working man in his 1858 image titled *The Coming Man*. In a sense, Chevalier began a tradition that was subsequently picked up by pro-labor poets such as Bernard O'Dowd and Henry Lawson and their work came to be imbued by the promise of socialism, especially after the formation of the Australian Socialist League in 1887. As Kirby points out (pp. 23–24) the Australian labor movement developed two main interests in regard to the arts in the last part of the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century. In the first place, the interest was in providing much greater access to cultural activities for working class people—a push which resulted in the establishment of a host of Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Art and, in 1913, the Workers' Education Association. The second interest was to foster cultural expression about the lives of working people and this was boosted by the formation of the Australian Communist Party in the wake of the Russian Revolution of 1917. In the 1930s the growing Communist Party established Workers' Art Clubs and the Writer's League. In Sydney it established the New Theatre to host performances of left-wing Australian plays and it fostered the formation of the Waterside Workers'

Federation Film Unit which created a very successful film called *Hungry Miles* (Kirby, p. 25). All this gave birth to a 'social realism' tradition in Australian film, theatre and literature and the 'social realists' got engaged in a fairly sharp debate with more avant-garde artists gathered around the *Angry Penguins* magazine in Melbourne; a debate about the representation of experience which continues to today (see section 4.4 below). The point to be made here is that the community art tradition which grew alongside the social movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s was strongly influenced by the radical traditions of the labor movement. The trade unions, for example, had established strong traditions in street theatre and the creation of murals, which were picked up by a new wave of community artists. Street theatre became an integral part of the burgeoning protest movements while artists such as Geoff Hogg in Melbourne created new traditions in community murals and a group of artists associated with the 'Tin Sheds' at the University of Sydney used screen printing techniques to begin a new tradition in poster art which spread around the country (see Kirby p. 29).

The extent to which the development of the community arts movement in Australia reflected similar developments in other countries will be discussed further in section 3.4 below. However, in contrast to the community development movement, the community cultural development movement (as it became known in the 1980s) was more heavily influenced by a politics of dissent and, in a sense, it was more overtly political. At the same time, when some community artists began to engage with a wide range of local communities they gained more interest in how such communities might tell their stories or represent their own experiences (see Mulligan et al 2006). This gave birth to new forms of community theatre, in particular, which were also influenced by Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Artists working with 'disadvantaged' individuals and communities began to see that the practice itself was a form of therapy for many people—and this stimulated the growth of the successful, but distinct, arts therapy movement. At the same time, some artists working with 'disadvantaged' or 'marginalised' people and communities began to see that they often had different and sometimes challenging perspective on the nature of Australian society and this led to a new trend in 'critical' art, as represented in the work of theatre companies such as *Somebody's Daughter* and *Rawcus*.

By the end of 1990s the community arts movement in Australia and elsewhere had become impressively diverse yet it faced a constant battle for funding. One way to promote funding for projects that facilitate active participation in, rather than a more passive consumption of, the arts is good for the wellbeing of individuals and their communities. However, this argument can be taken too far. For example, the National Endowment for the Arts in the USA released, in 2006, the results of a survey of 17,135 people who participate actively in arts activities and it purported to show that such people are twice as likely to engage in other forms of physical activity and twice as likely to volunteer for community service (as if there was a causal rather than incidental relationship here). In releasing the results of the survey, NEA chairman Dana Gioia proclaimed that 'Healthy communities depend on active and involved citizens' and 'the arts play an irreplaceable role in producing both citizens and those communities' (NEA 2006). There is plenty of evidence (not reviewed here) to indicate that active participation in the arts can be good for the health of individuals but it is spurious to link this directly to the health of communities. The aforementioned *Creating Community* report (Mulligan et al 2006) argued that community arts and celebrations contribute to the wellbeing of local communities in that they help to create a sense of community in which people can feel a more secure sense of belonging. This, in turn, enables individuals to feel less

socially isolated and this can reduce individual stress and anxiety. In other words, it is the actual creation of community that can promote a sense of community wellbeing, rather than the simple participation in arts activities.

More compelling 'evidence' than that offered by the NEA survey regarding the benefits to local communities of arts participation came in the report commissioned by the Ford Foundation and published, in 1999, under the rather arresting title *Animating Democracy: The Artistic Imagination as a Force in Civic Dialogue* (Bacon, Yuen and Korza 1999). This report focused on ways in which artistic representations of community can foster 'dialogue' within complex, and potentially divided, communities. The report looked at a wide range of projects that sought to 'give voice' to rather marginalised or even 'subaltern' sub-communities and it showed that some of these projects had given people a much better appreciation of what life is like for 'other' people living nearby. In commenting on this, Arlene Goldbard (2006, p. 53) has said that 'Creating a cultural container for dialogue can give people the chance to encounter each other as human beings, to consider before they speak the effect their words may have on the listener, to speak from the heart' she went on to say that theatre can provide an effective way for people to put themselves into the shoes of other people because 'the theatre form invites the whole person into the encounter' (ibid).

Since the publication of the *Animating Democracy* report, Americans for the Arts have maintained a website which presents a wide range of projects aimed at facilitating 'civic dialogue'. Unfortunately, the report and the website present largely anecdotal 'evidence' regarding the benefits of this work and they do not explore the assumption that increased 'civic dialogue' will 'animate' local democracy. While the work may foster a rather active form of dialogue across difference and promote the idea that local authorities need to understand local communities in their own terms, it does little to explore the contribution that enhanced 'participation' can make to the efficacy or legitimacy of local government. It stops short of what it really means to 'animate' democracy in terms of governance. A paper by Max Stephenson Jr (2005) tries to build on the 'Animating Democracy Initiative' by suggesting ways to turn dialogue into a sustained 'community-level conversation' which, in turn, aims to establish ongoing 'social learning networks' in the community and to promote new forms of community 'leadership' through the 'leadership development programme'. The paper focuses on work being done with a 'multidimensional community' centred on Southside, Virginia, in which there are low levels of education and high levels of unemployment. While it suggests that the 'enervation' provided by new forms of civic dialogue can be linked into more sustained community development strategies, rather than being left to 'atrophy', the evidence related to the project is not very convincing and the language is rather rhetorical. Again the discussion does not focus on questions of governance.

While the focus has been on 'animating democracy' in USA the Blair government 'reforms' in UK, discussed in section 4.1 above, put a heavy emphasis on 'social inclusion' as a way to increase 'civic participation'. The 'social inclusion' agenda has linked with a 'cultural inclusion' agenda and Phil Carey and Sue Sutton (2004) have written about their evaluation of a rather ambitious 'participatory arts' project in a 'post-industrial' community in South Liverpool that had previously been targeted by some unsuccessful 'regeneration initiatives'. Carey and Sutton report that unlike the earlier initiatives the 'Closer' community art project managed to generate some enthusiasm within the community with 850 residents participating in a range of artistic activities. The researchers report that the community art project was linked to longer-term community

development strategies for the community and they suggest that project fostered better links between the community and 'key agencies' in the area. Carey and Sutton acknowledge (p. 132) that their evaluation was limited because it had a 'short time-scale' and was conducted when the project itself was almost complete. The authors recommend that evaluation 'must be integrated into [a] project from the start' (p. 133). However, they argued that the high levels of participation in the project were encouraging and the success seemed to be based on the fact that the diversity of projects offered 'a means by which people can explore and express their relationship with the physical and social environment' (p. 133). This project suggests that a focus on inclusive participation may be more productive than a more narrow focus on dialogue. However, Carey and Sutton argue that the challenge—as always with successful community development initiatives—is to ensure that the opening is not wasted and the legacy of the project is sustained in some way. There is no discussion in the paper of the role of local government in this regard.

Richard Florida's work (for example, 2003) on the importance to cities and regions of nurturing creativity and creative people has been very influential. It has linked with a broader discussion about how to nurture and consolidate the 'creative industries'. While Florida's broad thesis supports the idea of active participation in the creative arts, it does not offer any insights on how to nurture the community arts sector and it does not seem helpful to think of socially embedded art as an 'industry'. Nevertheless, Florida probably helped to spark interest among local government leaders in how to foster more creative activity in their communities and when Anne Dunn conducted her review of the community arts sector for the Australia Council in 2005 she noted that local government authorities across Australia had increased their interest in a wide range of artistic activities and practices. In 2007 the authors of this report were asked to conduct an evaluation of Regional Arts Victoria's program for placing Regional Arts Development Officers within different regions of Victoria. This evaluation revealed that whereas RAV had assumed that arts organisations would be most enthusiastic to secure a RADO for their regional, local government authorities emerged as the primary partners in the project and it was the support of the LGAs that gave the initiative some stability and continuity. A growing interest in art and culture by local government authorities is also confirmed by the fact that many LGAs in Australia and internationally have endorsed the notion—articulated by the Australian community cultural development practitioners Jon Hawkes—that 'cultural vitality' should be seen as the 'fourth pillar' of community sustainability (alongside economic, social and environmental sustainability). However, it has been easy to adopt the rhetoric of the 'fourth pillar' without really knowing how to put it into practice and the Cultural Development Network—which published the *Fourth Pillar of Sustainability* monograph by Hawkes (2001)—initiated the Generations Project to suggest ways in which the rhetoric could be turned into practice.

As noted in section 4.2 above, community development has certainly been better established as a profession within local government than community cultural development. However, as we noted in the *Creating Community* report (Mulligan et al 2006), the practice of community development (CD) and community cultural development (CCD) have come to overlap more in Australia over the last 10 years or so. The increasing overlap of these fields of practice internationally was acknowledged with the publication of a special edition of the international *Community Development Journal* in 2007 which focused on ways in which CD could build a stronger relationship with 'cultural politics, those democratic and aesthetic practices that challenge mainstream democratic models' (Meade and Shaw 2007, p. 413). In their introductory editorial, Meade

and Shaw (ibid) argue that CD practice can be inspired by what Maxine Greene called the 'democratic imagination' (p. 414) and they cite poet Emily Dickinson in saying that 'imagination lights the fuse of possibility' (ibid). It is a little curious that Meade and Shaw do not refer by name to the practice of community cultural development although some papers in the edition they have edited refer to forms of engagement with what might be called more elite forms of art. They do note, however, that the arts share the dilemma of community development in potentially becoming 'an agent or adjunct of state policy' and in times of 'scarcity of diminishing public expenditure' 'the arts have been politicized as government extends its reach'. Meade and Shaw cite a paper by Selwood (2006) in saying that governments demand that the arts 'build communities, regenerate economies and include marginalized groups' (p. 415). Meade and Shaw suggest that 'art can generate the kind of solidarity which creates communities of identity ... [while] it can also reinforce a conservative estimation of human possibility' (p. 416). Furthermore, 'the arts cannot transcend socio-economic contexts by the force and will of their craft alone, but they can awaken people to both the negative and positive spaces which it opens up' (p. 416).

Meade and Shaw talk about 'socially committed art' but they refrain from talking about a field of practice—in other words, community art—that has a longer heritage than community development. Many of the papers in the edition they have edited discuss fairly conventional community art projects and yet the editorial could be seen as an attempt to 'appropriate' this practice to community development. This does not bode well for building the dialogue between community art/CCD and community development, however, Meade and Shaw do acknowledge that an engagement with art can invigorate the practice of CD.

One point at which CD and CCD appear to be intersecting more is an interest in the power of stories. So, for example, the international Community Development Journal carried one paper in 2009 by Robert Little and Lynn Froggett on ways to create 'authentic representations of individual or community voices' through 'community storytelling' and another paper, in the same edition, by Celina Su 'storytelling' as a way of building 'inter-minority coalitions'. The work reported in the latter paper bore a lot of resemblance to the work reported through the Animating Democracy website, although this link was not mentioned in the paper. The shared interest in storytelling probably relates to the observations made by the sociologist Richard Sennett when he suggested (2006) that in the context of the growing fragmentation of contemporary social life people are trying to 'make their experiences cohere' by creating a 'sense of narrative movement' in their own lives. When people can create their own stories they can reflect on the way their stories interact or resonate with the stories of others. However, it needs to be stressed that there is considerable skill involved telling a 'good story', with good 'narrative structure'. As we will discuss later in the report 'digital storytelling' has become something of a fashion in Australia and internationally but we could easily become overwhelmed by the quantity rather than quality of such 'community stories' and the skill to both enrich them and share them in appropriate ways is still undervalued.

One thing about skilled storytelling is that it can link stories of particular experience to more 'universal stories' of the 'human condition'. This relates to what Gerard Delanty said about the way that the ancient Greeks developed an understanding of community that linked the 'local and the particular' to a 'universal community in which all humans participate' (Delanty 2003, p. 10). According to Chris Lawn (2006) the twentieth century German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer helped to explain the 'universal appeal' of art by pointing out that it is 'not an innocent diversion or amusement but a crucial point of

access to fundamental truths about what it is to be human' (ibid, p. 87). Lawn suggested that Gadamer explained that art can 'captivate' and 'intrigue' us because it 'draws us into its world, however seemingly remote and distant that world appears' (p. 93). At the same time, Peter Hallward (2006) has suggested that the French philosopher Giles Deleuze was able to explain that creative expression involves a double movement from the particular to the universal and back again. According to Hallward's interpretation Deleuze argued that creative expression aims to 'loosen and then dissolve ... limitations' in order to effect 'virtual creating', which, in turn, 'individuates it' (p. 2).

Another French philosopher, Jean-Luc Nancy (1986), has suggested that community 'is made up principally of the sharing, diffusion or impregnation of an identity by a plurality wherein each member identifies himself only through the supplementary mediation of his identification with the living body of the community'. Nancy points out that one 'quality' of community is that it enables people to better contemplate loss—for example, the loss of individuals who have died or moved away, the loss of youth, the loss of practices/even traditions that have vanished. This can create nostalgia which is not—in itself—a bad thing. However, nostalgia can encourage a 'romanticisation' of the past which can become divisive in complex, multicultural communities, especially when a narrow and romanticised representation of a community is presented as that community's prevailing identity. On the other hand, memories can also help people to deal with loss and change and a critical engagement with nostalgia became a feature of the Generations projects in both Wangaratta and Geelong.

Of course, the community arts movement involves much more than the creation and sharing of community stories. As already mentioned, the *Creating Community* report (Mulligan et al 2006) also pointed to the importance of opportunities to 'avow' the importance of community and activities that enable participants to have the 'visceral' experience of being community, at least for a while. The artistic representation of community suggests that the ceaseless creation and recreation of a sense of community in the contemporary world is more like an art than a mechanical task. The artistic creation of community seems like a more inspiring way to pose the new challenge for local government in the contemporary world than more agonising demands to increase 'civic participation' or 'civic engagement'.

2.4 Community cultural development and socially-engaged art

As discussed above, an essay by Sandy Kirby, published in 1991, provides a useful overview of the history of community arts up to that point of time in Australia. Kirby's essay was published in a volume edited by Vivienne Binns which provides, as a whole, a good snapshot of the field of practice at a time when the Australia Council had turned its attention to it. There has been no serious attempt to update Kirby's history and her brief essay cannot be compared to the much more comprehensive efforts made by Arlene Goldbard to capture the history and understand key operating principles of the field that she prefers to call community cultural development. Goldbard's recent book (2006) is the best introduction to CCD as a field of practice. Although it is focused on practice in USA Goldbard makes references to work in Australia and there are clear parallels in the developments that have taken place in both Australia and the US.

For Goldbard,

Community Cultural Development' describes the work of artist-organisers and other community members collaborating to express identity, concerns and aspirations

through the arts and communications media. It is a process that simultaneously builds individual mastery and collective cultural capacity while contributing to positive social change. [p. 20]

From this starting point, Goldbard's endeavour is to collate not only a definition and discussion of practice, but to highlight the ongoing theoretical and conceptual evolution of the field, woven through a history of ideas in art and social movement throughout the twentieth century. She also draws out key themes addressed by CCD practice, and outlines the state of the field. A recurring issue for the CCD field in the US, as elsewhere, is a lack of professional structures that would include material support, infrastructure, training, and public awareness, and Goldbard attempts to allow for the diversity of practice within the field to be contained within a discussion of unifying themes and principles.

While clear about her views on the aims of the practice, Goldbard notes the absence of a formalised theory of practice for community cultural development work, stating that ideas about the work tend to arise from practice, rather than an imposed overarching theoretical framework. She acknowledges the risk of a definitive formula for successful work—such practice would then become 'frozen into a model rather than remaining fluid, improvisatory and constantly evolving' (p. 140). Rather than a model, then, she suggests 'an armature: an array of basic concepts and principles sturdy enough to support many different approaches to practice'. The diversity and effectiveness of practice in the CCD field is certainly witnessed in the descriptive and anecdotal evidence Goldbard has amassed from across the field internationally. However, as it tends to remain dispersed, and—until recently—poorly represented in academic and theoretical analysis, these broader, potentially unifying or defining principles mentioned by Goldbard, have had limited circulation.

According to Goldbard, the development of community arts or CCD practice can be seen as unfolding like an organic and complex system of 'threads' that are interwoven into a tapestry of culture, politics and ideas over the course of the twentieth century. She notes that for community artists 'vigour and independence gain strength in periods when social activism and social conscience awaken' (p. 102), and she takes as her starting point the height of the Industrial Revolution, 'when industrialisation, having given birth to urban anomie, also created its own opposition, expressed in a nostalgia for a human-scale past' (p. 102). However, Goldbard's purpose in revisiting the history of the field is not to pin down its history but rather to trace the idea that it has had an unfolding trajectory which has been concurrent with other trajectories—such as modern and avant garde art—and sometimes, but not always, in dialogue with them. Goldbard suggests that a point of departure for the CCD trajectory was the call made by William Morris in the late nineteenth century for the social reintegration of the artist and a revival of artisanship. From this came a more conscious opposition to the notion of the romantic artist and the emergence of artists working in communities. Beginning in the late nineteenth century but extending through to about 1930, the US Settlement House Movement aimed to 'integrate' new immigrants into the 'common culture' but this grew into a critique of a single culture and a growing focus on emphasising the importance of allowing people to draw on their own cultural backgrounds to give expression to more multicultural communities.

From the 1930s onwards 'community art' in both the US and Australia became more political with growing interest in the political alternative provided by the Soviet Union and communist ideology related to 'class consciousness' and the creation of 'popular fronts' through cultural expression. Artistic practices—including banner making, murals and street theatre—were taken into the trade union movement and new forms of 'working class theatre' were created. In part this movement grew in opposition to the rise of totalitarian

regimes in Europe (including the German Nazi regime) and it created a link between art and 'dissent'. In Australia and Britain, strong trade unions used art to explore issues related to workers' rights and the 'need' for international working class solidarity. Goldbard argues that the Depression-era 'New Deal' policies of US President Roosevelt established the first publicly funded community arts programs that attempted to create employment by undertaking public works of art, such as murals at schools, orphanages, libraries, museums and other public buildings. From there, the Public Works of Art Project expanded into other forms of visual art, theatre, writing and historical narratives.

In the 1960s and into the early 1970s community art in the US got a new boost from the rise of the Civil Rights movement, followed by the feminist movement and other forms of 'identity politics'. Once again the movement became more political and for the first time, the broad community arts movement in the US began to draw influences from non-western societies, particularly following the influence of Brazilian community education writer Paulo Freire and associated work by Augusto Boal on the 'theatre of the oppressed'. As mentioned earlier, a non-artistic community development movement also gathered strength during the 1970s in countries such as the US, the UK and Australia and, according to Goldbard, this began to merge with an interest in under-development in non-western societies. During the 1980s community arts and community development began to overlap and the term 'community cultural development' was adopted to suggest that cultural expression can take many forms. Goldbard admits that the term has had its detractors who argue that the term 'culture' is too ambiguous in this context. However, the term does signify a certain enriching of community arts by situating it within a broader agenda related to community development on a global scale.

It is interesting to note that Sandy Kirby (1991) also put emphasis on the emergence of 'new' social and political movements in the 1960s and 1970s in regard to the emergence of a more coherent community arts sector in Australia. Opposition to the war in Vietnam stimulated a substantial body of art work in Australia and Kirby notes that support for the emerging Aboriginal land rights movement also had an artistic echo (p. 19). Kirby does not discuss the contribution of the feminist or gay rights movement to the burgeoning community arts movement of the 1970s and she does not mention the significant influence of Maoist ideology after relationships with China opened up in 1972. The sinister side of Mao Zedong's 'cultural revolution' was not understood in Australia until much later and by then it had influenced many young people to think that they could become more effective political activists by becoming 'cultural workers'.

As discussed in earlier in this chapter, Kirby points out that the community art movement in Australia has long been associated with calls for political reform and the social movement ideology of the 1970s—which emphasised the creation of 'grassroots' people's movements—led to an interest in local communities and the expression of community identities. A link with local government soon followed. At the same time, Kirby notes, the lingering influence of a community arts movement that emerged within the trade unions and socialist organisations—gaining artistic influence through initiatives such as the creation of the New Theatre in Sydney—means that the impetus to 'organise and consciously engage ordinary people in the cultural life of this country had always come from the political left' (p. 20).

A major shift took place during the 1970s in that the emphasis within community art changed from a didactic education exercise for the working class to an emphasis on participatory art that would enable all people to express their own sense of identity. In this shift, the influence of 1960s and 1970s 'identity politics' is clear. Kirby notes that the

creation of the Community Cultural Development Unit within the Australia Council in the 1980s helped to provide more secure funding for a wide range of community art activities and programs but at the same time it introduced a new form of bureaucracy that could potentially crush the 'sense of purpose and direction that historically manifested itself in radical political and cultural initiatives, and that indeed gave rise to the community arts movement' (p. 29). Perhaps this history helps to explain why many community art and community cultural development practitioners in Australia insist on their need for independence from bureaucratic structures that may stifle creative expression and social commentary.

As Goldbard points out (2006), developments in community art in the US and internationally during the twentieth century were taking place in parallel with, but always in dialogue with, other developments in artistic practices. It can be argued that the emergence of 'modern art' from the late nineteenth century onwards resulted in new forms of social engagement on the part of many artists and a book edited by Will Bradley and Charles Esche (2007, 3rd edition) provides a useful overview of some important developments. Like Goldbard, Bradley and Esche say that they had no intention of creating a history of modern art but rather to sketch a parallel history which, while closely linked to the accepted narratives of the history of modern art, is also defined against them'. It is interesting to note that this history largely runs in parallel with the history of community cultural development, as outlined by Goldbard (2006). The book edited by Bradley and Esche focuses entirely on art movements in the US and Europe, even if they do use terms such as the 'globalisation of modernisation', and so the book's perspective on art is entirely western.

In his introduction to the book, Bradley highlights 'moments at which the desire for social change has led artists working within the sphere of modern art to align themselves with wider social movements, or to break with the established institutions of art' (p. 9). He notes that 'modern art' began in the latter stages of the nineteenth century because the growing wealth of the new bourgeoisie enabled them to find new sponsors and, as a result, they were 'emancipated' from state and religious institutions. The book traces a timeline through four major periods of social and political upheaval; starting with the Paris Commune of 1871, through the two Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, to the worldwide youth rebellions of 1968, to the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the subsequent crumbling of the Soviet empire. Like William Morris, Gustave Courbet strongly promoted the artist as a 'sovereign individual' and when he joined the Paris Commune in 1871 he urged artists and students to take control of the galleries, museums and academies. This has clear echoes in the youth uprising of 1968, again centring on Paris, and it focuses on the role of artists as agents for political change.

Lucy Lippard (1995) has also argued that new social and political movements of the late 1960s and 1970s opened up a new space for artists and she notes the particular influence of post-colonialism and feminism. Lippard notes an interesting paradox in that an 'aesthetics of poverty' emerged in the 1960s—in the form of Pop Art, Process Art and Conceptual Art—and yet only upper middle class people could aspire to be 'avant-garde' because such innovations were only taking place in a context accessible to an educated elite and the growing middle class created the market for such art. Very little of this art reflects 'working class cultural values', she noted (p. 125). Lippard suggests that women artists might be more inclined to 'cross class barriers, to consider their audience, to see, and respect and work with women who create outside the art world' (p. 127). 'Feminism's greatest contribution to the future of art has probably been precisely its *lack* of

contribution to modernism,' she wrote (p. 172). In contrast to avant-garde art, feminist art is 'a hybrid', Lippard argues, because '[f]eminist methods and theories have ... offered a socially concerned alternative to the increasingly mechanical "evolution" of art about art' (p. 172). Indeed, Lippard argues that women 'need to establish far more strongly our own sense of community' (p. 127) and this is why feminist art had a strong influence on community art in the 1970s.

In the introduction to an interesting book that she edited under the title *But is it Art: The Spirit of Art as Activism*, Nina Felshin (1995) describes the development of activist art as a specific form of cultural practice, with 'one foot in the art world and the other in the world of political activism' (p. 9). She describes activist art as a hybrid process, where the methodologies, formal strategies and goals are what sets it apart. While Goldbard, and others, trace the development of community cultural development practice from the social and political movements of the 1960s and 1970s, Felshin says that activist art has its roots in conceptual art. She says that the term New Genre Public Art can be also used to describe this new form of practice but this term is probably too broad and all-encompassing. She wrote that:

Activist art, in both its forms and methods, is process—rather than object—or product-oriented, and it usually takes place in public sites rather than within the confines of art-world venues. As a practice, it often takes the form of temporal interventions, such as performance or performance-based activities, media events, exhibitions and installations. Much of it employs such mainstream media techniques as the use of billboards, wheat-pasted posters, subway and bus advertising, and newspaper inserts to deliver messages that subvert the usual intentions of these cultural forms. The various uses of media [is] a key strategy of much activist art. A high degree of preliminary research, organisational activity, and orientation of participants is often at the heart of its collaborative methods of execution, methods that frequently draw on expertise from outside the artworld as a means of engaging the participation of the audience or community and distributing a message to the public (p. 10).

While this is far more political and artist-driven than the contemporary CCD practices described by Goldbard and others, there are some clear overlaps in the art-making processes and in the intention of artists to 'disrupt' entrenched ways of thinking about society and social life.

An understanding of the origins and trajectory of 'activist art' is clearly useful to those who are keen to understand the origin and trajectory of community cultural development practice in Australia but there several other terms in the literature of art criticism that should also be of interest, such as 'relational aesthetics' (Nicolas Bourriaud), 'dialogical aesthetics' (Grant Kester) and 'conversational art' (Homi Bhabha) because all of these shift the emphasis from artwork and artist to a process of exchange and relationship. Bourriaud—a French curator and art critic—published his writings on 'relational aesthetics' in 1998 and he described it as 'art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and *private* symbolic space'. Bourriaud describes an art form which takes 'being-together' as a central theme and in which the artist 'stands offering a number of services, works proposing a precise contract to viewers, and more or less tangible models of sociability' (p. 25). In his influential book *Conversation Pieces* (2004) Grant Kester analyses the work of three companies of artists and suggests that

... these projects all share a concern with the creative facilitation of dialogue and exchange. While it is common for a work of art to provoke dialogue among viewers, this typically occurs in response to a finished object. In these projects, on the other hand, conversation becomes an integral part of the work itself. It is reframed as an active, generative process that can help us speak and imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities, official discourse and the perceived inequality of partisan political conflict' (p. 8).

Kester also suggests that the work he examined 'affirm[s] certain beliefs associated with the avant-garde tradition (specifically, that the work of art can elicit a more open attitude towards new and different forms of experience) while challenging the notion that avant-garde art must be shocking or difficult to understand' (p. 8). Kester suggests that in the 1980s a 'second generation' of activist artists emerged (for example, in opposition to the policies of President Reagan in the US) and he also argues that provocative art needs to be funded through 'arts councils and private foundations' because this can provide 'an alternative to the market-driven sensibility of the gallery sector and the static traditions of established museums' (p. 126). In an exchange that took place on the online *Artforum* magazine, the well known art critic Clare Bishop (2006) has critiqued Kester's writings, arguing that there still needs to be an aesthetic critique of projects that emphasise dialogue and collaboration '[T]he social turn in contemporary art has prompted an ethical turn in art criticism', Bishop argues, because it changes what is seen as a work of art. However, Bishop is concerned that Kester's approach could lead to a situation where 'there can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved or boring works of collaborative art because all are equally essential to the talk of strengthening the social bond'. While debates like the one between Kester and Bishop are common in the realm of art criticism they may not often reach beyond that realm. The debate between Bishop and Kester certainly touches on dilemmas and tensions felt by CCD practitioners around issues such as process, product and quality. Yet there is little opportunity for CCD practitioners to participate in the wider debates on such concerns.

Perhaps Bishop comes closest to the way that Goldbard has described the practice of community cultural development. However, it is important to note that writers such as Bourriaud, Kester and Bhabha make much more use of philosophy and social theory than any published writing on community cultural development and the literature on CCD could be enhanced by more reference to such writings on socially engaged art.

Another 'turn' in art criticism that has relevance to community cultural development is the interest in 'site-specific' or 'place-based' art. Once again, US feminist art critic Lucy Lippard played a prominent role in depicting this trend in her influential 1997 book *The Lure of the Local*. In this book, Lippard looks at the work of a wide range of artists who have developed a 'deep and considered' relationship with the places in which they create their art. For such artists, Lippard wrote, 'a successful work would be one that reflects a deep connection with place, but also helps perform a realisation of such connections for the viewers and communities who live and work in the place where the art is commissioned. This occurs through strategies of provocation and defamiliarisation'. In *One Place After Another* (2002), Miwon Kwon suggests that Lippard's book 'seems unable to resist the nostalgic impulse' in that much of the work she reviews 'is conceived as a retrieval of a lost sense of place' (p. 159). Kwon suggests that the notion of 'site-specific art' was adopted rather uncritically by mainstream art institutions and discourses and that this tended to simplify the relationship between art and its site. She traces a shift from site-specific art to New Genre Public Art in which participation by the community

is seen as critical to the artmaking process and the relationship that is created between the artist and the community is seen as paramount. Kwon says that even artists working in this new tradition are often been guilty of imaging ‘communities of mythic unity’ when we really need ‘more articulation of diversity and difference in the conception of community’ (pp. 119-120). Kwon cites the work of French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy in saying that communities should be based on identities that are in negotiation. This certainly brings us back to the ways in which community cultural development practitioners are grappling with the complexities of contemporary local communities.

The Australian cultural historian Paul Carter has suggested that our encounters with places and landscapes in Australia are particularly problematic in that European explorers and early settlers carried with them the sensibility of the cartographer wanting to create two-dimensional representations of ‘empty’ places, which left them insensitive to the complexities of the places they traversed or the narratives already embedded in the land. He has been interested in the times when new narratives—often related to a journey—were imbued in particular places by the settlers. Carter began his exploration of people-place relationships in Australia with the award-winning work of history titled *The Road to Botany Bay* (1987) followed by a kind of sequel titled *The Lie of the Land* (1996). After that he turned his attention more to the practice of place-making by setting up a consultancy in place design and by joining the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at the University of Melbourne. In 2004 he published a book titled *Material Thinking* to reflect on his practical experiences in place-making in Melbourne and Sydney and in 2009 he returned to some of his broader historical and philosophical themes in the book titled *Dark Writing: Geography, performance, design*. We need much more dynamic and non-linear ways of understanding the places we shape and inhabit, he has argued, and we need artistic expression—such as lyrical writing and embedded art—to enter into a more meaningful dialogue with such places. We need to get beyond superficial marks on a page or the functionality of spaces that have been designed for easy and thoughtless passage in order to recapture the ‘dark writing’ that ‘indicates the swarm of possibilities that had to be left out when this line was taken’ (p. 1).

Taking his cue from Franz Kafka, Carter suggests that dark writing tries to capture ‘the leap and the instant between two strides’ (p. 1). We need to be more attentive to places and all the interesting stories that reside in them because when we do we notice that the ‘ghosts’ are speaking back to us.¹ There is a growing body of work in Australia that seeks to create new and challenging narratives of people-place relationships and prominent in this is the work of Sydney-based academic and artist Ross Gibson (see, for example, 2002). There is no doubt that community arts practitioners can help to capture and communicate a host of place-based narratives and that this should inform the practice of ‘place-makers’—urban planners and architects—in Australia. Australian poet and essayist Judith Wright once wrote that Australians need to feel ‘unsettled’ before we can hope to find a deeper sense of settlement in this land and there can be little doubt that local government authorities are in a position to enrich our understanding of places through a more creative use of place-based narratives.

¹ Paul Carter took this theme in a keynote address to the *ReGenerating Community* Conference held in Melbourne in September 2009.

3. Results of the Council staff survey

3.1 Introduction

A survey of staff in four of the five participating Local Government Authorities was conducted in the period May to August 2009. Liverpool Council declined several invitations to participate in the survey. The survey included 22 questions (see Appendix 1). It was conducted online with several emails urging staff members to respond. Each Council adopted a different sampling technique but the researchers were convinced that the samples were random. With fairly small numbers responding it can only be taken as an indicative survey. Those staff members who did not know about the Generations project in their local area were given the option of skipping questions directly related to the project. However, it is interesting to note that in all cases respondents came from a very wide range of Council departments and areas of work so the results are interesting because they reflect the views of staff members who would not normally be consulted about the impact and benefits of community art projects. The responses were as follows:

Charters Towers

Thirty-three completed surveys (11 per cent of all staff), with 14 staff members responding to questions directly related to the project. Respondents came from 17 Council departments or areas of work with seven from Engineering.

Geelong

Eighty-four completed surveys (4.5 per cent of all staff), with 44 staff members responding to questions directly related to the project. Respondents came from 37 Council departments or areas of work with a fairly even spread.

Latrobe

Forty-five completed surveys (5.5 per cent of all staff), with 14 staff members responding to questions directly related to the project. Respondents came from 20 Council departments or areas of work with a fairly even spread.

Wangaratta

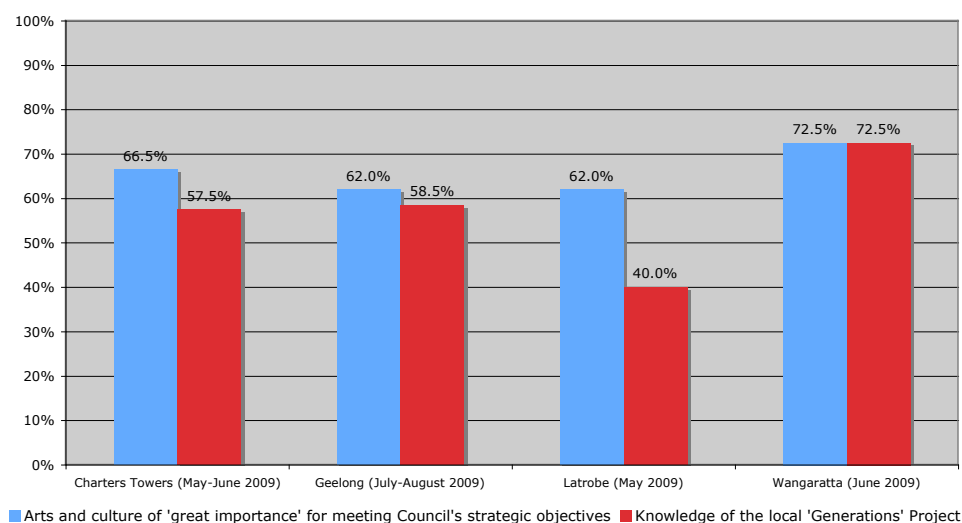
Thirty-three completed surveys (9.5 per cent of all staff), with 24 staff members responding to questions directly related to the project. Respondents came from 21 Council departments or areas of work with a fairly even spread.

3.2 Importance of arts and culture

As Figure 3.1 indicates a solid majority of staff members in all four LGAs said that arts and culture are of 'great importance' in enabling the Council to meet its strategic objectives, although in all cases except Wangaratta fewer knew about the *Generations* project in their local area. The most significant difference was in Latrobe where only 40 per cent of respondents knew of the *Generations* project, while 62 per cent said that arts and culture are of 'great importance' to Council. This may reflect the high turn-over of project leaders in the first two years of the project in Latrobe. This high turn-over partly explains why the project in Latrobe was slow to gather momentum in terms of high profile activities. As already indicated in chapter 3, the *Green Expectations* project in Latrobe gathered artistic momentum during 2009 and if the survey had been repeated later in that year there is no doubt that many more Council staff would have known

about it. However, it certainly took a long time for the project to 'gain purchase' within the wider organisation of Council and this probably reflects the complexity of the issues being addressed and also the late appointment of a lead artist capable of pulling together artistic activities that could catch the attention of people who otherwise show little interest in 'arts and culture' (in the way that these terms are commonly understood).

Figure 3.1 Importance of Arts/Knowledge of Generations Project



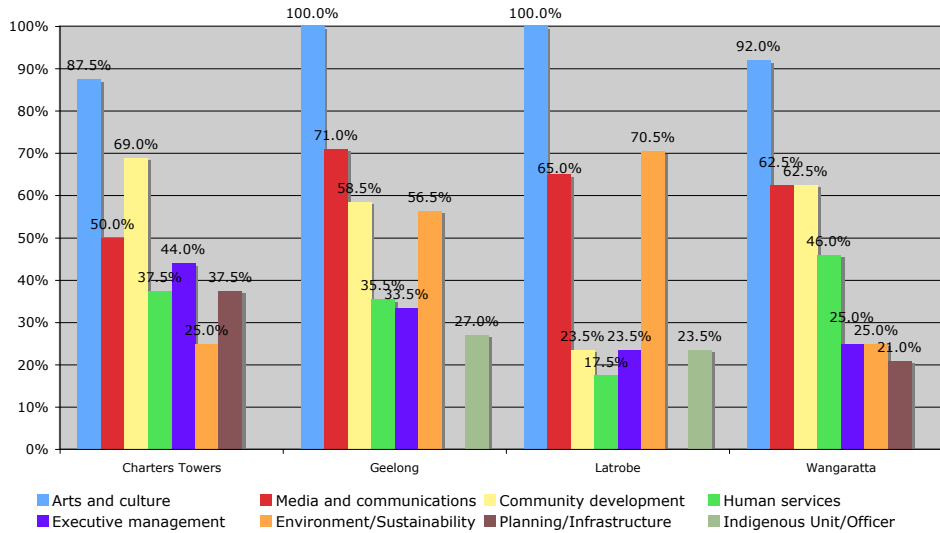
At the same time, it is interesting to note that a significant majority of staff members in all four LGAs said that arts and culture are of 'great importance' for Council, rather than 'little importance'. The numbers ticking 'little importance' ranged from 0.0 per cent in Wangaratta to 9.1 per cent in Charters Towers, while 24 to 34.5 per cent chose 'neither important nor unimportant' across the four LGAs. This is a very positive result for the importance of arts and culture in general and it is highly unlikely that similar results would have been obtained five or 10 years earlier. While this survey is indicative only it suggests that there may have been a rise in the importance of arts and culture in LGAs right across the spectrum in Australia.

3.3 Locating the work in Council

Figure 3.2 shows that most respondents across the four LGAs thought that the project belonged to Council's 'arts and culture' area of work, noting, of course, that areas of work are named differently in different LGAs. A majority (from 50 per cent in Charters Towers to 65 per cent in Latrobe) thought that it fell within the ambit of 'media and communications'. It is likely that many respondents felt that projects undertaken within arts and culture and media and communications are targeted at the wider community rather than the internal operations of Council. In the cases of Charters Towers, Geelong and Wangaratta a clear majority of respondents saw the projects as sitting within Council's 'community development' area. This was not the case in Latrobe (where only

23.5 per cent of respondents ticked community development) and this may reflect some confusion about the issues that *Green Expectations* was seeking to address. Not surprisingly, the project in Latrobe was seen as sitting within the area of ‘environment/sustainability’ by a significant majority of respondents (70.6 per cent). More surprisingly, 56.3 per cent of respondents in Geelong thought that the *Connecting Identities* project related to Council’s work on ‘environment/sustainability’ and this probably reflects the way that the project in Geelong came to focus on the journey from the mouth of the Barwon River up to the top of the overlooking You Yang range. In all cases except Latrobe ‘human services’ rated fairly strongly.

Figure 3.2 Involvement by Council Departments/Areas



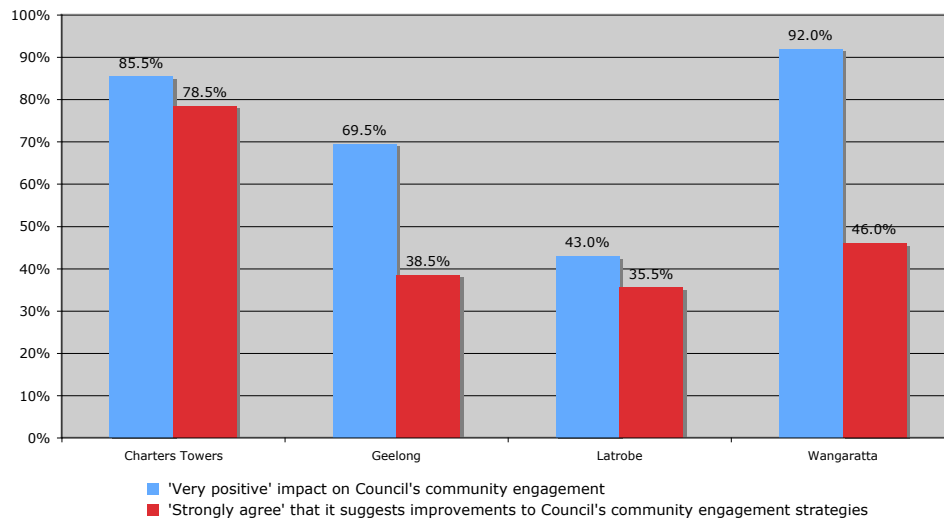
Involvement by ‘executive management’ ranged from 23.5 per cent in Latrobe to 43.8 per cent in Charters Towers. This is a rather surprising result for Latrobe because support for the project by senior Council leaders in Latrobe was never in doubt but this support and involvement may not have been as visible to staff members in Latrobe as it was the case in Charters Towers. Of course, the Charters Towers Council is significantly smaller than the Latrobe Council, even after the Council amalgamations in Queensland, and this may make the Council leaders more generally visible to their staff in Charters Towers. It is interesting to note that a high 37.5 per cent of respondents in Charters Towers thought that ‘planning and infrastructure’ was involved in the project and this may also reflect the relatively small size of the organisation in Charters Towers. Just over 20 per cent of respondents in Wangaratta thought the local *Generations* project fell within the ambit of ‘planning and infrastructure’ and this probably reflects the fact that the project partly addressed issues related to services and access for elderly and disabled community members. In most cases survey respondents did not think that the projects involved more ‘hard core’ areas of Council operation, such as planning or engineering. Significant numbers of respondents in both Geelong (27.1 per cent) and Latrobe (23.5 per cent) thought the projects related to Council work in regard to local indigenous communities and yet in both cases (and especially Latrobe) project leaders have expressed the difficulties or complexities they experienced in really involving the local indigenous communities in their projects. Of course, it is not easy to involve rather marginalised indigenous communities in wider community activities and this will be discussed further

in chapter 7. By contrast, the project in Charters Towers directly addressed relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous communities and yet only 25 per cent of survey respondents in that LGA ticked 'indigenous unit/officer' as a Council area involved in the project. This undoubtedly reflects the fact that there has been no indigenous unit or officers in that LGA, or the two earlier LGAs that were amalgamated to create the Charters Towers Council. The project leader in Charters Towers, Su McLennan, is probably the closest that the separate or amalgamated Councils have come to having an 'indigenous unit' (which explains why some people ticked that option). When Gudjala elder Patsy Dallachy was briefly employed by Council during the life of the project it was the first time that an LGA in this area had employed an indigenous person and this was seen as a significant breakthrough.

3.4 Enriching community engagement

As discussed in chapter 1, the national Generations Project was created to convince the local government sector in Australia that well-conceived community art projects could enrich the 'core business' of LGAs. In particular, it was suggested that such projects can greatly enhance the capacity of LGAs to engage with their local communities and that this, in turn, can enrich the capacity of such LGAs to carry out effective and socially inclusive strategic planning. As Figure 3.3 indicates, a very high proportion of survey respondents in Charters Towers (85.7 per cent) and Wangaratta (91.7 per cent) thought the local projects had a 'very positive impact' on Council's community engagement, while a significant proportion in Geelong (69.6 per cent) thought the same. A much lower 43 per cent of respondents in Latrobe thought the local project had a 'very positive' impact on Council's community engagement with 57.1 per cent suggesting it had 'no impact'. Again this probably reflects the fact that the project in Latrobe developed very late artistic momentum and that there may have been significant confusion about its aims. The challenges facing the project in Latrobe will be discussed more fully in chapters 6 to 8.

Figure 3.3 Community Engagement



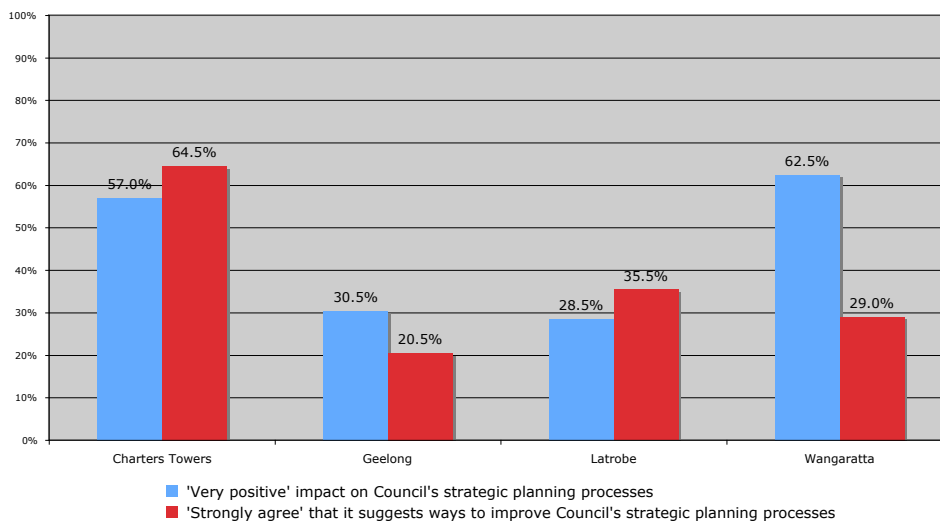
It is also noticeable that there was a significant discrepancy in both Geelong and

Wangaratta between respondents saying that the projects had a ‘very positive impact’ on community engagement and a much lower proportion expressing ‘strong agreement’ with the idea that the projects had suggested ways to improve Council’s community engagement strategies. This probably reflects the fact that many respondents saw the Generations projects as one-off projects that would not be repeated. It may also reflect the fact that Council staff members in Geelong and Wangaratta were not convinced that the organisation would have the capacity to replicate similar work—especially if project funding was hard to obtain. These results suggest that more work needs to be done within participating LGAs to secure the ‘legacy’ of the Generations projects and to focus on the organisation’s capacity to carry out similar work in the future, even when project funding is difficult to obtain. The question of project legacy will be discussed in the following chapters.

3.5 Community art and strategic planning

Figure 3.4 shows that survey respondents felt the Generations projects had less positive impacts on strategic planning within their LGAs. Only in Charters Towers (57.1 per cent) and Wangaratta (62.5 per cent) did a clear majority of respondents think that the local projects had a ‘very positive’ impact on Council’s strategic planning. The result for Geelong (30.4 per cent) was surprising given that a high proportion of respondents had thought the *Connecting Identities* project had a ‘very positive’ impact on community engagement. This may partly reflect the fact that the Geelong Council is a very large organisation and so the internal processes for developing strategic plans are complex. It probably also reflects the fact that many respondents would have seen *Connecting Identities* as a one-off project that helped to address the divisive legacy of an earlier LGA amalgamation rather than suggest new ways forward. However, the Geelong project may have struggled to create a clear link between community engagement and strategic planning and more work may need to be done to establish that linkage. Once again, there is a clear discrepancy in Wangaratta between respondents thinking that the project had a ‘very positive’ impact on Council’s strategic planning (62.5 per cent) while less than half of that number (29.2 per cent) felt it had suggested ways to improve Council’s strategic planning into the future. The reasons for this discrepancy are probably similar to the discrepancy in Wangaratta on community engagement, as discussed above.

Figure 3.4 Strategic Planning



In Charters Towers, Geelong and Wangaratta, a strong majority of survey respondents thought the Generations projects had a 'very positive' impact on how Council 'develops external partnerships with other organizations' (see Figure 3.5). This is an important finding if we accept the premise of 'network government' discussed in chapter 4 and a focus on 'external partnerships' might become more strategically important for LGAs in Australia. Again the result for Latrobe is much lower and the reasons are probably similar to those discussed above. As Figure 3.6 demonstrates it was only in Charters Towers where a significant number of survey respondents felt that the local Generations project had suggested ways to improve work in 'my department'. Again this may reflect the relatively small size of the organisation in Charters Towers.

Figure 3.5 External Partnerships

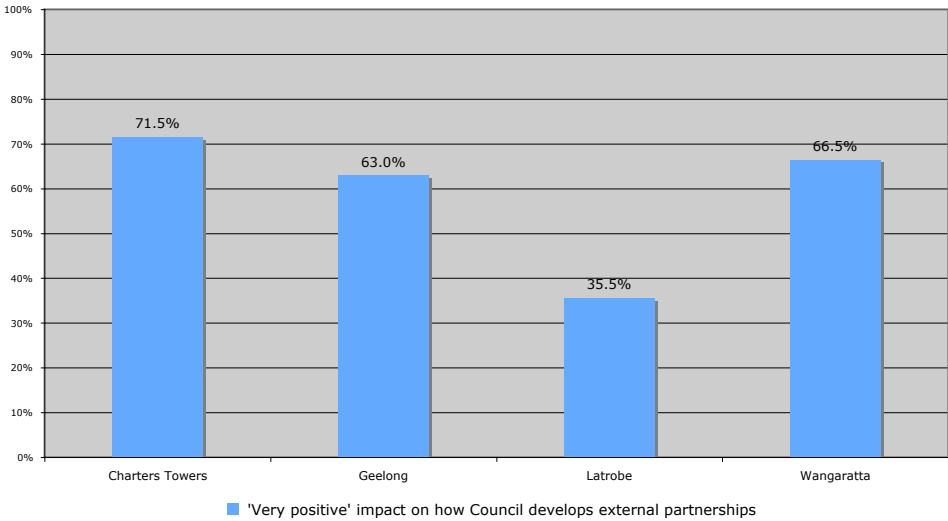
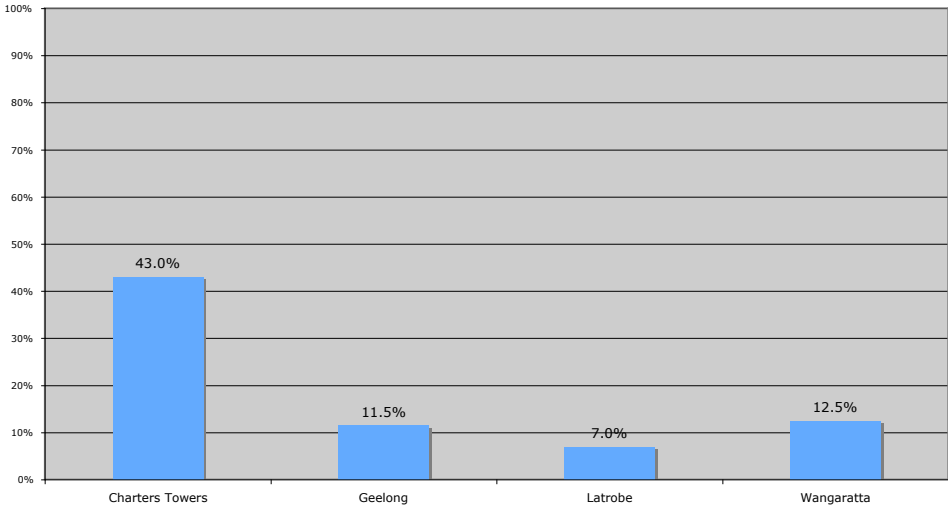
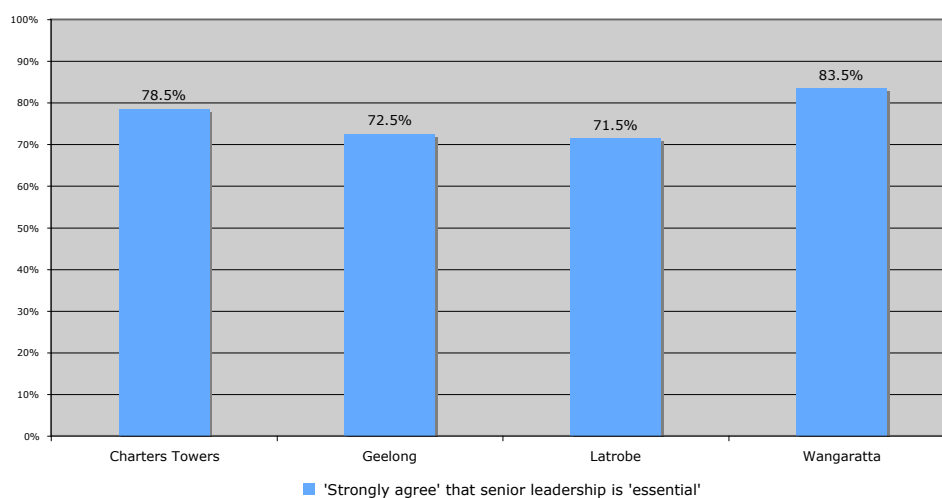


Figure 3.6 Ways to improve the work of 'my department'



As Figure 3.7 shows, the result was more uniform when it came to a question regarding the importance of senior leadership in making arts and culture 'core business' for an LGA. The proportion of respondents who expressed 'strong agreement' with this proposition ranged from 71.5 per cent in Latrobe to 83.5 per cent in Wangaratta. This suggests a discrepancy between those who thought senior leadership *should* be involved in making arts and culture core business and those who nominated 'executive management' as a section of Council that *had* been involved in the actual Generations projects (see Figure 3.2). Of course, the executive does not need to be involved in the implementation of projects to ensure that they have an appropriate impact on the core business of Council. However, this discrepancy may also suggest that support by the executive for the Generations projects in the four LGAs was not as visible to staff members as it might have been.

Figure 3.7 Senior leadership involvement in making arts and culture 'core business' for Council



3.6 Survey strengths and weaknesses

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, survey respondents were given the option of skipping questions directly related to the local Generations project if they did not feel they had enough knowledge to offer a meaningful opinion. This meant that some questions had a very low response rate and this makes it impossible to offer any meaningful reading of the responses to those questions. The number of respondents who indicated that they had actually attended a Generations project event ranged from just one in Latrobe to 12 (out of 19 answering this question) in Geelong. A significant number of respondents in Geelong (47) responded to the question about the issue being addressed in the local project and only 40.4 per cent of them said they understood the issue. In Charters Towers, 10 out of 15 respondents said they understood the issue being addressed in the local project while 13 out of 24 respondents in Wangaratta said they understood the issue. In general this is not a high level of understanding of the issue being addressed. This might reflect the complexity of most of the issues or it might reflect the emphasis placed on activities rather than discussion of the focus issue. Perhaps more could have been done in all cases to clarify and communicate the issue being addressed. However, that question will be discussed more fully in chapter 6.

Survey respondents had heard about the Generations project in a wide variety of ways. Some had been briefed within their department or had received formal notification by email or intranet. However, word-of-mouth was the most common way of hearing—especially in the smaller LGAs—and only in Wangaratta did respondents nominate the local newspaper as a source of information about the project.

In conclusion, the on-line survey enabled us to reach LGA staff who would not normally be consulted about the impact and benefit of ‘arts and culture’ projects and responses came in from some surprising sources (eg, engineering and finance). This broad—but not deep—sampling of Council staff suggests that the local Generations projects may have penetrated more deeply into the organisation than most activities taking place in the ‘arts and culture’ area. Respondents tended to see the projects as ‘belonging’ to arts and culture, community development and media and communications—all areas that tend to be externally oriented. Yet it may still be significant that over 20 per cent of respondents, for example, thought that planning and infrastructure got involved in the *Generations* project in Wangaratta or that more than 12.5 per cent of respondents in Geelong thought that engineering was involved in the project. This might suggest that the local projects obtained a significant ‘reach’ within the LGAs and that there is at least potential for inter-departmental involvement in arts and culture projects. Certainly it was interesting to see that a substantial majority of respondents thought that arts and culture is of ‘great importance’ for LGAs in meeting their ‘strategic objectives’.

The survey results suggest that the projects in Charters Towers, Geelong and Wangaratta enabled those LGAs to deepen their community engagement, even if doubts were expressed in terms of the ongoing legacy of the projects in this regard. The results also suggest that the projects in Charters Towers and Wangaratta have demonstrated some ways in which community art work can enhance Council’s strategic planning and in all cases except Latrobe a clear majority of respondents felt that the projects had a ‘very positive impact’ on the way that Council develops external partnerships. Even though small samples mean that the survey results can only be taken as indicative, there is enough in these results to support some of the starting aims of the national Generations Project.

The decision by Liverpool Council not to implement the survey confirms the fact that this council was the least engaged of the five LGAs participating in the national project and the reasons for that will be discussed in chapter 6. The survey results also suggest that the project in Latrobe had less impact than those in Charters Towers, Geelong and Wangaratta. As already mentioned, the project in Latrobe struck early trouble with staff turnovers and it developed very late artistic momentum that was not picked up in survey conducted in the first half of May 2009. However, we will also be arguing in chapters 6 and 9 that the project in Latrobe was very slow in developing a strong artistic vision that could catch attention and challenge perceptions. We will argue that the project in Latrobe lacked an artistic ‘wow factor’ that was most evident in Geelong and Wangaratta and this reduced the impact the project had within the Council itself. At best, a survey of this nature poses some questions that need to be addressed when looking more deeply at how the five Generations projects unfolded and interviews with a very wide range of project organisers and participants will yield deeper and more enduring insights that will be discussed in the following chapters. Perhaps the key questions posed by the survey results are: 1) What accounts for the relative success of the projects in Charters Towers, Geelong and Wangaratta? 2) Why did the projects in Charters Towers and Wangaratta apparently have more success than the project in Geelong in regard to impact on Council strategic planning? and 3) What needs to be done to ensure that the projects have a strong legacy for Council business beyond the lives of the projects themselves? These questions will be discussed in responding to the key research questions in chapters 5 to 7.

4. Responding to Key Research Question 1

Increasing the strategic importance of community art

4.1 Introduction

Key research question 1 reads:

What can be learnt from the Generations Project about what it takes to encourage Local Government Authorities to place more strategic emphasis on cultural development as a praxis across the diverse sections and operations of council?

As noted in chapter 1, the national Generations Project was a rather ‘artificial’ creation in that specific LGAs were invited to participate and were given unusual help in obtaining generous project funding for their participation. By signing off on some fairly flexible aims and objectives with associated Key Performance Indicators, the participating LGAs were able to obtain project funding for a minimum of two years with an expectation that funding would extend for a further year provided progress had been satisfactory. The Cultural Development Network (CDN) took up the role of co-ordinating the five local projects in the five participating LGAs and staff in CDN offered both support and advice in the formulation of the projects focusing on the local issues and concerns that had been selected by the LGAs. CDN also initiated and led the planning for the regular forums at which project leaders and lead artists working on the five local projects could come together to share ideas and experiences in implementing the comparative projects. While participation in a national project aimed at informing future policies of the Australia Council put pressure on the participating LGAs to come up with strong projects and good outcomes, local project leaders had unusually long ‘lead times’ to develop the projects and unprecedented support in implementing them. Furthermore, local LGA leaders—CEOs, General Managers and sometimes Mayors—had indicated their support for the projects. There was a downside to all this in that the projects were rather artificially created in a fairly top-down way and those who were given the brief to develop the local projects felt that they were under quite intense scrutiny from the funding bodies, the research team and from those developing the projects in the other LGAs. Yet people with confidence in the power of community art were given a rare opportunity.

However, even though the local Generations projects had significant ‘buy-in’ at the level of LGA leaders, they all faced serious challenges in building and sustaining a profile for the projects ‘across the diverse sections and operations of council’. A major reason for this was turn-over of key personnel. For example, the supportive CEO at Wangaratta, Justin Hanney, left the organisation before the project really commenced and he was replaced by a CEO, Doug Sharp, who openly admitted that he had little interest in arts and culture. The supportive CEO at Geelong, Kay Rundle, also ‘moved on’ during the life of the project but in this case the change came late and the ‘acting CEO’, Stephen Griffin, was equally supportive. Liverpool Council had gone into administration in 2004, before the project even began, and only retained an elected Council in late 2008. Geelong Council had gone through a period of great turbulence in the period before the project began—with local media highlighting several scandals involving elected councillors—and leaders of the Council admit that public regard for the organisation was very low. Whereas Dalrymple Shire Council had begun the project centred on Charters Towers, it went into an amalgamation with the urban council at Charters Towers about midway through project implementation and this effectively ‘sidelined’ the project for nearly a year. The position of project manager for the project at Latrobe changed hands four

times in the first 18 months of project implementation. Perhaps there was unusual organisational turbulence for the projects at Liverpool and Charters Towers and unexpected instability in project management at Latrobe. However, staff turnovers are rather endemic within local government—including changes at the level of CEO or General Manager—and elections ensure a regular turnover of elected councilors. In such an environment it is clearly unwise to depend too heavily on the involvement of particular people and the challenge facing the local projects was to find ways to sustain the projects in the face of personnel changes.

4.2 Project development in Geelong

The local project started most slowly in Geelong and at the end of the first six months there was serious doubt as to whether or not Geelong's participation would continue. However, as Geelong project manager Kaz Paton has said, early doubts led to regular 'reality checks' when people advocating for the project asked 'should we be doing this project?' and when the answer was 'yes' new efforts were made to ensure that it would have adequate 'internal resources'. According to Kaz Paton, effective early work meant that 'we set up our budget really well' and took steps to ensure that there could be broad support for the project within Council structures and within the wider community. Kaz Paton and her manager Di Shaw worked hard to discuss the project aims with a wide range of Council departments and they established a project 'working group'—with representatives from 16 different Council departments—to oversee the development of the project. They also established an 'advisory committee'—made up of five program managers, the facilitator for the Western Wedge project and the senior research and policy advisor to Council CEO—to discuss the aims of the project at a more strategic level and this committee was chaired by the elected councilor with key responsibility for arts and culture, initially Cr Peter McMullin. While there was some turnover in representation on these committees over three years, both committees expanded a little during the life of the project. The Manager of Engineering Services became the sixth program manager to join the advisory committee in the second year and a representative of the Geelong Regional Library Corporation also joined that committee for the final phase of the project. Kaz Paton and Di Shaw got Melbourne-based social history film-maker



Malcolm McKinnon on board early to develop ideas for collecting stories related to the history and identity of the sub-communities in Geelong and they also discussed project aims with a range of local artists, including the high profile installation artist Glenn Romanis. So when Meme Macdonald was appointed artistic director for the overall Geelong project in early 2008 she had information about a wide range of local artists and community groups that could be engaged in the work.

Given that the central aim of the project in Geelong was to build stronger linkages between diverse local communities that had brought under the umbrella of the amalgamated Geelong Council in 1993, an early decision was made to ensure that the project would reach into the local communities. In a sub-project that eventually took the form of the Memory Bank, Malcolm McKinnon began collecting 'digital stories' reflecting some of the forgotten history of the diverse communities and he also began to work with some of the elected councilors. Meme Macdonald came up with the idea that the artistic vision for the project should reflect the structure of the Council itself in that activities should take place in each of the 12 wards of the LGA. In making her pitch to become the artistic director Meme suggested that work in the wards would need to culminate in a big and inclusive activity and she suggested the idea of a journey from the mouth of the Barwon River to the top of the You Yang range to trace what she has described as a 'contemporary songline'. Meme had already been involved with the Generations Project as the national artistic advisor and she knew that the Geelong project had started rather slowly. However, from her earlier experience as a board member of Regional Arts Victoria she knew that there were many talented artists in the greater Geelong area and she respected the work that Kaz and Di had done to embed the project within the Council, and she knew should could form a strong working relationship with them. Meme said that she wanted to move from being an advisor to being directly involved in creating 'great work' because she saw the opportunity to inspire herself and others in the knowledge that art can be 'this amazing, powerful, wonderful tool for personal development, for community development ... [and] just for the world'. She was worried about resource pressures when Di Shaw left the organisation in 2008 and Kaz Paton moved up to take her position as program manager. However, Duncan Ester, who had already been involved in the project as Kaz Paton's assistant in the Cultural Development Unit, took up the role that Kaz had been playing in a seamless transition which also demonstrated the benefit of the early work done by Kaz and Di in setting up strong teams.

However, it was undoubtedly the inspiring vision of the Mouth to Mountain (M2M) journey and the confidence in this vision that Meme was able to communicate that really brought the local Generations project to the attention of the Council as a whole. It is very clear from interviews with the 2009 mayor, John Mitchell, elected councilor Barbara Abley (who took on the role of chairing the project 'advisory committee' from Cr Peter McMullin), Acting CEO Stephen Griffin, and several other members of Council staff that they took the project much more seriously once they heard of the journey idea. Once that vision was taken to heart within Geelong Council this project quickly powered ahead of the projects in the other LGAs. Meme Macdonald identified local lead artists to work on particular components of M2M and it was their job to draw in other local artists. This resulted in commissions being given to a significant number of local artists to produce work for the project. Meme also found other people—such as horse trainer and rider Alison Stavenuiter and Barwon Heads resident Sam Spry—to work on the smaller components built into the different segments of the day's journey. Meme and Kaz set up meetings with all the elected councilors—which is not as easy as it sounds in view of

Council protocols about meetings between staff and councilors—and Meme insists that they were very keen to take on board ideas from the elected representatives about how the character of their communities should be portrayed through the project. In the end, 11 out of the 12 councilors participated in the dawn opening ceremony for the M2M journey and their presence gave the whole event more meaning as a ritual. Meme said that there was a serious glitch a few months before the M2M journey when Kaz Paton and other Council staff were diverted for a time into other work that senior staff deemed to be more urgent and this undermined a support-raising and media effort aimed at increasing participation in the journey. However, Meme's protests were heard—perhaps because she had learnt how to work within the culture of Council—and the project got back on track.

Councilor Barbara Abley—who was mayor for a period when Kay Rundle was Geelong Council CEO—told Pia Smith that Kay Rundle deserves considerable credit for the work she did over a number of years to break down silos within the Council organisation and to encourage staff to form project teams. On the other hand Meme Macdonald has said that Kaz and her manager Di Shaw provided a wonderfully supportive environment for her to work within and Duncan Esler, as a hands-on project officer within Council, developed a very strong working relationship with Meme. This was a truly enabling environment that gave Meme the confidence to promote a bold vision which, in turn, led to new engagements between Council and a broad spectrum of community members across the 12 wards of Council.

4.3 Project development in Latrobe

By contrast, the project in Latrobe moved more quickly to adopt a management structure which its advocates thought would create an 'enabling environment' but which proved to be less flexible in building support for the project across Council and in the wider community. A 'project control group' was set up early to create space for the project within Council and this group was asked to vet any proposals coming from the Community Reference Group or the non-local 'lead artist', Bridget Nicholson, who was appointed early in the life of the overall project. Local artist Shaun Gardner told Pia Smith in 2009 that he expressed his enthusiasm for the project as soon as he heard about it and so he was invited to join the Regenerators street theatre group soon after that idea was endorsed by the project control group. Along with another local artist, Shaun was invited to join the Community Reference Group but he commented that 'meetings bore me' and so 'I really did go to the reference group just to keep my hat in the ring and say, "I'm here and if something comes up that could be fun for me, I'm keen to do that"'. However, it was not until much later that Shaun's skills as a sculptor and installation artist were recruited to work on the 'pylon tree' that was prompted by a survey, initiated by Alison Taylor, of community feelings about the future and then turned into an art project by the Melbourne-based lead artist, Stefanie Robinson, who was appointed to work on for the last 12 months of the project in 2009. About a year into her position, Bridget Nicholson stepped down as 'artistic co-ordinator' because she took a position elsewhere, after some frustration about working within the constraints set out by the Project Control Group. By this time there had already been a change of project manager and there was a period of inactivity until Alison Taylor assumed the role of 'creative director' with Council's newly appointed Cultural Liveability Officer, Nik Salter, in the role of project manager. At this time most of the project ideas were coming from Alison and attendance at Community Reference Groups was falling away.

While local artists were invited to submit expressions of interest there appeared to be little follow-up dialogue about their ideas. Alison came up with the idea of ‘the grid’ to capture the link between local dialogues and state-wide dialogues about the future of the coal-fired electricity power stations, which was a turning point in her directorship of the project. However Alison and Nik Salter could not agree on how to build the project and Nik’s position in Council was not renewed at the end of the period of probation. Nik Salter subsequently told the researchers that she thought much more could have been done to engage local artists, including some fairly prominent artists living just outside the Latrobe shire boundaries in South Gippsland. There is no doubt that Alison Taylor, as project creative director, and Amanda Owen, as the fourth project manager, eventually formed a very strong creative partnership that gave *Green Expectations* some important late momentum. They took the decision to employ the experienced community artist Stefanie Robinson at the end of 2008 but when Stefanie said she wanted to meet with some kind of community reference group, Alison and Amanda said it was too late for that. While Alison and Amanda had initiated a number of specific projects under the rubric of *Green Expectations*—such as the Latrobe Sustainability Festival—Stefanie came up with bolder artistic visions focusing on the pylon tree and a community parade in late 2009, and the project began to capture more attention across Council and across the wider community. Stefanie used her past experience in community cultural development to engage more actively with schools and neighbourhood houses and she brought in a skilled choir leader to run very successful workshops with the Coal Valley Male Chorus. In crafting the spectacular community parade held in November 2009, Stefanie was able to draw in earlier initiatives and engagements that might otherwise have remained separate and more limited and as a culminating event it had a very positive impact on those participating and watching. Yet when Latrobe had its opportunity to present its project at the *ReGenerating Community* conference in Melbourne in September 2009 Stefanie was not invited to join Alison and Amanda on stage and the presentation began with a rather hierarchical presentation of the project management structure.

The results of the Council staff survey reported in chapter 4 suggest that the project in Latrobe lagged behind the projects in Geelong, Wangaratta and Charters Towers in catching the attention of staff working in diverse departments and areas of work in Council. Apart from interest in the Sustainability Festival—which was more like a trade festival with some art components than an arts festival—there also appeared to be limited enthusiasm in the wider community for the aims of the project and its activities, even if the ‘stakeholder’ organisations represented in the Community Reference Group stayed loyal to the project aims. In reflecting on why the project struggled to build momentum in its first two years, Latrobe Council senior manager and project ‘sponsor’, Paul Holten, said that the rather dramatic turn-over of personnel was the major reason. He also thought that strong support for Latrobe’s participation in the national project by himself and Council CEO Paul Buckley may have meant that the early project managers probably tried too hard to deliver what they thought senior management wanted rather than allow the project take its own shape. However, the comparison with Geelong suggests that the rather formalistic approach taken to project management and the delay in appointing an artistic director who could create a strong artistic vision for the project also explain why the project struggled to gain a clear profile within Council. In a sense the project was handled in a rather conventional way according to local government protocol, when something more innovative may have worked better.

4.4 Project development in Liverpool

While a conventional approach to project management in Latrobe may have limited the impact that the project could have across the diverse sections of that LGA, the approach adopted in Liverpool meant that broader Council engagement with the project fell away to almost nothing. The project came to Liverpool in a rather indirect way in that Judy Spokes from the Cultural Development Network approached WESROC—the co-ordinating body for LGAs in Western Sydney—and WESROC nominated both the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre (CPAC) and the Campbelltown Arts Centre—both run by LGAs—as likely participants. The approach came soon after there had been ‘youth riots’ in the suburb of Macquarie Fields and so a focus on ‘alienated’ youth seemed appropriate. The then-Executive Director of CPAC, Kon Gouriotis, said that the Campbelltown Arts Centre did not feel it was the right time for them to get involved, but when he discussed it with CPAC Artistic Director, Nicholas Tsoutas, and other members of his staff he found there was an interest in taking on the challenge. CPAC is a business unit of Liverpool Council but in this case the approach did not come through the General Manager; rather it was Kon who took the proposal to the Manager of Corporate Affairs and other unit managers within Council. Kon held a meeting with the Corporate Manager, the Deputy General Manager and the Manager of City Services—which is the unit in which CPAC sits—and after this WESROC called a meeting that involved the General Managers of both Liverpool and Campbelltown. Whereas the Campbelltown General Manager confirmed that there was insufficient interest in the project in that Council, Liverpool General Manager Phil Tolhurst said he was happy for CPAC to take on the project and it seems that he clearly saw it as a CPAC project, rather than one that would straddle various sections of Council.

In an interview conducted in 2007, Kon Gouriotis said that the focus on youth was adopted from the very beginning and that consultations with community service agencies suggested that the main ‘problem’ to be addressed was truancy from school and that this problem was most prevalent within the Arabic and indigenous Australian communities. Kon and Nick Tsoutas then appointed Khaled Sabsabi—a highly experienced Arabic multimedia artist who had previously worked in an innovative program in Sydney’s Cleveland Street High School—and Aroha Groves—an indigenous visual artist who had worked in schools in the Liverpool area—as the ‘lead artists’ on the project. Khaled has said that he, Aroha and Kon went out to a wide range of community services to talk about the project and he and Aroha spoke to teachers in some of the local schools. While they had initially thought of focusing the project on school students between the ages of 14 and 17, the strong advice they got was to focus on the 12 to 15 age bracket because this is the critical period when students either engage or disengage from formal education. Kon said that as they ‘drilled down’ into the community—largely through discussions with community-based agencies, inter-agencies and the police—‘demographics’ suggested the project should focus on the suburbs in the postcode 2168—with a focus on Miller—because ‘it’s a very transient community ...[where there is] criminal activity or drug-related [crime] or people who are low income or on social benefits’. Kon was enthusiastic about centring the project in the Miller area because he had grown up in the wider area himself. The choice also suited Liverpool Council because it had recently set up a Community 2168 Project (a community renewal and capacity building project set up in 1999) to focus activities on Miller and surrounding suburbs. This project has a 2168 Committee, at which Kon and Khaled spoke about their project, and a Police Citizens Youth Centre had just been established in Miller. Khaled and Aroha decided to use the name ‘Refill Project’ because, according to Khaled, the

aim would be to 'refill back into the community' and 'community cultural development is always about refill ... about working with communities to be able to support themselves'.

In one sense, the process for identifying the parameters for the project in Liverpool seem a bit top-down and 'demographic' —reflecting a welfare mentality—yet both Kon Gouriotis and Khaled Sabsabi insisted that the activities would only be worked out once Khaled and Aroha Groves had a clear group of young people to work with; that the ultimate direction of the project would be determined by the participants. Khaled also insisted that there was a wide network of skilled artists who could be involved and that he and Aroha might eventually step down as the 'lead artists' if the project went in a different direction. Kon, Khaled and Aroha insisted that the aim of the project would be to give Arabic and indigenous school students the opportunity to express themselves in ways that would build their own sense of identity and self-confidence. As well as making the link with the newly established PCYC club in Miller, Khaled and Aroha began making contact with the local high school and with the Department of Education. Formal approaches to the schools were too time-consuming and so Khaled and Aroha started to simply visit the schools for a chat with the principal and Aroha talked with teachers she had worked with on other projects. Negotiations with one high school reached an advanced stage until the school insisted that the program would have to run outside school hours and outside school grounds and Khaled's experience with the project in the Cleveland Street High School suggested that it would only work if it was in-school and within school hours. Just as Khaled and Aroha were beginning to lose hope about finding a place to start, a teacher from Miller Technology High School—right in the heart of the Miller 2168 area!—contacted them to say she had heard of the proposal and that she was certain her school would welcome it. Before long they not only had the approval of the principal but real enthusiasm from two teachers to get the program running in Miller Tech.

After Kon Gouriotis and Nick Tsoutas did a lot of work to get the project started they largely entrusted it to Khaled and Aroha, as experienced community artists. However, Aroha dropped out of the project after about a year for personal reasons and Khaled was left trying to finalise the arrangements with Miller Technical High School. Fortunately for the project, Miller Tech art teacher Sally Atkins was very enthusiastic about the opportunity being offered to the school and she took on a huge



Hip Hop trio MEB perform at Liverpool PCYC against a backdrop of artworks created by Refill participants
Photo: Pia Smith



Refill project participants filming and performing in a scene from their short film 'Attack of the Bullies', on location at Miller Technology High School
Photo: Curious Works

responsibility—outside her normal teaching hours—to set up studio space and establish the program with selected students. Khaled brought in the highly regarded, Arabic-speaking, indigenous Australian Hip Hop artist SieOne (Simon Menzies) and he also engaged the experienced Curious Works company of artists to work in the school. By this time the project was being supervised by CPAC Programs Manager Panos Couros and Khaled left to pursue other work and family commitments. Sally Atkins maintained her enthusiasm, and hence the project, but she told the researchers that she became very frustrated indeed when it took a year for the multimedia equipment that was promised by Council to arrive, and then the choice of equipment was no longer appropriate. Elias Nohra from Curious Works also told the researchers that the company had to take on much more project management than they would normally take on to make sure that the project got off the ground and stayed buoyant. Like Kon Gouriotis, Sally Atkins grew up in the Liverpool area herself and she has worked with a range of community organisations and joined the 2168 Committee. It was her personal commitment that enabled the project to hang on by a very thin thread when Khaled stepped down as project manager and was not replaced. Once the artists started working in the school the project built up a real head of steam and started to have the successes that will be discussed elsewhere in this report. After an absence of about a year, Khaled resumed the role of project manager. He immediately held meetings with Council CEO Phil Tolhurst and the newly elected Mayor Wendy Waller, and he began working on an exhibition for the project at the CPAC. The project went from strength to strength and the mayor, who represented the Miller area on Council, began to take a strong personal interest

Clearly, the very tenuous link between *Refill* and the broader Council organisation was not in line with the starting aims of the national Generations Project. Undoubtedly, Council General Manager Phil Tolhurst—who was working under the supervision of a government-appointed administrator—thought the project would be in safe hands at CPAC because they already had a strong orientation to community art. However, CPAC, in turn, increasingly took a hands-off approach to the project (in the face of major capital works projects and personnel change) and, as a consequence, almost allowed it to collapse. Although Liverpool Council had signed on to a national project that aimed to demonstrate that community art projects could relate more closely to the ‘core business’ of LGAs, Panos Couros said in an interview conducted in November 2008 that as far as he was concerned *Refill* ‘had elements of innovation’ but was not really any different to ‘stuff that’s been happening for a long time’. When Panos joined with Liverpool General Manager Phil Tolhurst and senior executive member David Tuxford in a subsequent interview with Pia Smith he said that projects such as *Refill*, which ‘work quietly away’ over a long period of time, are easily overlooked when CPAC has a busy schedule of exhibitions, artists in residence and a theatre program. The project had not only become largely invisible to the senior leaders of Council as a whole but even to the leaders of CPAC.

When Pia Smith conducted the interview with Phil Tolhurst and David Tuxford in November 2008 it was clear that they had very limited knowledge of the project. Indeed Phil asked Panos Couros to give them a briefing on the project when he arrived to join the interview. Phil said that it was difficult to pay attention to such projects while he was answerable to the administrator because ‘it’s fair to say that this kind of project would not have interested her’. He also said that it is quite common for senior leaders to sign off on a project and not know anything more until the ‘final report’ is delivered. Phil and David were very surprised to hear that an indigenous student at Miller Tech, Reece Doyle, had won a South Western Sydney Aboriginal Student Achievement Award for Leadership,

Citizenship and Community Services following his involvement with *Refill* and they were also surprised to learn that there was going to be a *Refill* project exhibition at the PCYC soon after the time of the interview.

Panos Couros made a valid point when he said that once *Refill* focused down to work in a particular high school it may have become more important to link the project with the state Education Department rather than Council. Yet Council could have promoted the project to the Education Department and looked at ways to build on the success of the school project to initiate similar projects in other schools or in community centres. Indeed, David Tuxford suggested that *Refill* probably needed the Council to become its 'White Knight' so that many more people could hear about its successes. As mentioned earlier, the project in Miller Technology High School showed measurable success as soon as Simon Menzies and the Curious Works artists started working regularly in the school and also once the equipment arrived and a proper workshop was set up. On the base of the success achieved in the second half of 2008, Panos Couros agreed to extend contracts for Simon Menzies and Curious Works to continue working in the school until the end of 2009 and Khaled Sabsabi worked hard to make a success of the exhibition of the project held at CPAC in July 2009. Once the mayor showed strong personal interest in the project Phil Tolhurst was obliged to pay more attention to it and both of them attended the *ReGenerating Community* conference in Melbourne in September 2009, where all five of the Generations projects had an opportunity to present their achievements to a national audience.

This interest, however, came very late in the day and no-one in Council, or even in CPAC, can take credit for the survival and blooming of the project in the 2007 to 2008 period. While the 2168 Committee may have helped to establish a useful link for the project with the Miller PCYC, opportunities were clearly missed to turn the school project into a broader community project. Kon Gouriotis left CPAC in 2008 to take up a position in the Australia Council and the position held by Panos Couros was abolished in an organisational restructuring of CPAC carried out in late 2008. The Acting Director of CPAC, Nikita Karvounis—who already had some knowledge of *Refill*—inherited responsibility for the project from Panos Couros, and he showed more enthusiasm for it. At the same time, the organisational restructure made it difficult for him to give the project the attention it probably needed and there was no wider project team within Council to fill the gap, although this improved once Khaled Sabsabi was reappointed. As already noted in chapter 5, Liverpool Council declined several requests to implement the survey of staff members that was reported in chapter 5. Despite CPAC's extensive involvement with community art projects and despite the early enthusiasm from CPAC for *Refill* under the leadership of experienced practitioners Khaled Sabsabi and Aroha Groves the project management processes adopted in Liverpool resulted in this project having the most tenuous links to the Council organisation as a whole of all the five Generations projects.

It is interesting to note that the rather dismissive attitude adopted by Panos Couros to *Refill* reflected the attitude taken by Kim Spinks from Arts NSW who attended the first two national 'forums' for people involved in the five local projects. In an interview with Pia Smith conducted in August 2009, Kim said that *Refill* is 'just a tiny, very, very, very small project' in relation to all the work being done by places such as CPAC, Blacktown Arts Centre and Campbelltown Arts Centre across Western Sydney. She suggested that the project is 'small bickies' for Liverpool Council because it puts \$1.5 million through CPAC a year and CPAC 'already has an education program where it engages with

schools'. On the basis of what she saw when she attended *Refill* exhibition at CPAC in July 2009, Kim agreed that Simon Menzies and the Curious Works artists had done some 'fantastic work' with 'the kids' and they had made a 'successful, in a sense extended, residency arrangement with the Miller school'. But she insisted that this is a 'very small project in our terms' and she had much more enthusiasm for projects such as Renew Newcastle that was trying to build a creative economic hub of a type that had never been successfully achieved in Australia. Kim pointed out that Arts NSW funds a position with the Local Government and Shires Association (LGSA) in NSW and part of that position 'runs a kind of conscious network through all the councils about arts and cultural stuff'. She also said that Arts NSW has a local government annual award arts and culture award which is presented at a 'huge dinner at Parliament House with all the councils' key staff and councilors there'. Kim said she felt frustrated at the first national Generations Project forum, held in Melbourne in late 2006, because she thought the national project lacked a 'strategy to ... really highlight it to key local government advocacy organisations nationally and within each state'.

On the one hand, Kim Spinks suggested that *Refill* was nothing exceptional as a community art project—especially in Western Sydney where there is a very large 'community sector' in arts and culture—and on the other hand she thought it had little significance compared to the work being done by a range of LGAs to set up high profile art centres. However, this misses the point that the national Generations Project set out to explore how good practice in community cultural development might help LGAs to address some pressing issues related to local governance. Furthermore, it is curious that people such as Kim and Panos Couros would place such a low priority on an opportunity to participate in a national project that could compare the contribution that community cultural development practice could make to local governance across a spectrum of LGAs, especially if they felt that there was already advanced practice in this regard in Western Sydney. As it was, *Refill* suffered from serious neglect from all but the people working on the ground and, as a result, it struggled to make the contribution it might have made to the key aims of the national project. The opportunity to demonstrate that CCD practice could make a valuable contribution 'across the diverse sections and operations of Council' was almost entirely lost, despite the clear positive achievements of the project.

4.5 Project development in Wangaratta

As already mentioned, a big problem for the project in Wangaratta was that the Council CEO who was enthusiastic about the *Generations* project, Justin Hanney, was replaced, even before the project had begun, by new CEO, Doug Sharp, who openly admitted he had little interest in 'arts and culture'. The project was put into the hands of a community arts officer employed at a fairly low rank within the organisation—Maz McGann—with support from her manager Di Mangan and the councilor with the arts and culture 'portfolio', Rozi Parisotto. A member of the Council executive team and Director of Human and Cultural Services, Ruth Tai, was responsible for the project at an executive level. An early decision was taken to appoint an experienced community cultural development worker as overall Artistic Director of the project and when Robin Laurie was recommended by the Cultural Development Network an agreement was reached that Robin would spend 20 weeks a year for each of three years working in Wangaratta. Robin and Maz McGann formed a very strong working partnership and they were given considerable room to move in terms of exploring and developing project ideas. Early in the project, Maz McGann and Robin Laurie set up a project Consultation Group which

included people from Council and from community groups. An important link was forged with the Wangaratta TAFE college and TAFE representative Ian Poole joined the Consultation Group. Some of those on the Consultation Group, including Ian Poole, were already serving on Council's 'Section 86' Arts, Culture and Heritage Advisory Committee, chaired by Councilor Rozi Parisotto. The *Generations* project was regularly discussed in the Arts, Culture and Heritage Advisory Committee, which Maz McGann and Robin Laurie attended when they could, and the minutes of those committee meetings provided a reporting mechanism back to the Council leaders and elected councilors.

What was particularly important for the project in Wangaratta, however, was that Maz McGann and Robin Laurie went out and spoke to a lot of community organisations with an interest in the issues related to ageing. As a person who was 'born and bred' in the Wangaratta area, Maz McGann had an extensive network of contacts, and Robin insists on beginning such a project with what she calls her 'big ears' phase. In the early phase of consultation Maz and Robin came across some ideas that they thought they could enhance and enact. For example, there had already been some talk of forming a Ukulele Band in the town and Robin and Maz saw it as a chance to get people of various ages working together on a fun project. So they set up the Wangaratta Ukulele Showband and over 60 people attended the first workshop. People who joined the showband told Pia Smith that they loved the opportunity to have fun making music with people they did not know, especially because the band participants ranged from school students to pensioners. Several of them pointed out that Robin made it even more fun by teaching people some circus techniques as well. For another project, Maz invited the Family History Society to have a representative on the *Generations* project Consultation Group and Robin and Maz started talking to that representative, Georgina Cusack, about being part of a steering committee to organise a Heritage Festival that would bring the Family History Centre and Wangaratta Historical Society (along with the Council and the library) into a rare working relationship. The result of this discussion was the very successful Heritage Festival of 2008 which was repeated in 2009. Robin Laurie has admitted that she initially struggled to find personal inspiration in the topic of ageing. However, in very moving speech at the 'grand finale' of the Wangaratta project in October 2009, she noted:

One of the things that struck me in listening to older people's stories of their lives in Wangaratta is that they are not just about other times but about other ways of living, other ways of being in the world and making meaningful lives. And given that I think climate change will create dramatic shifts in our living conditions, at the very least these stories ... are evidence that it is possible to live differently and live well.

In other words, Robin herself was inspired by the power of the stories she encountered and this enabled her to work more creatively towards the aim of getting others to think differently about the 'problem' of ageing.

According to Di Mangan, the *Generations* project Consultation Group in Wangaratta lasted for about a year. By that time key ideas had been worked out and effective networks had been established. Thereafter Maz and Robin tended to work separately with people who had been on the Consultation Group to develop a range of separate but thematically linked projects. Maz McGann had decided that the best way to convince a very skeptical CEO that the *Generations* project could be strategically valuable for Council was to get activities happening in the community that would progressively build community support to the extent that skeptical Council leaders would have

to take notice. She also decided that the best way to involve Council staff from other departments was to talk to them individually—and not always formally—about project ideas. The strategy was to involve Council staff members and sections of the Council in individual projects rather than the project as a whole. Maz and Robin were positioned within the Cultural Services department which itself is located in a building attached to the Art Gallery. This meant they were physically separated from the building housing most Council staff members. While the location had some advantages in terms of community access and even public profile for the work, it made it harder to talk to other members of Council staff. Maz said that she had to make a conscious effort to spend time in the other building so that she could at least have informal conversations with people from other Council departments and areas of work. Of course, it helped that she knew some of the people outside the work environment.

The *Generations* project in Wangaratta stands second only to the project in Geelong as being most successful in engaging people from across the diverse sectors of the Council organisation. This can largely be attributed to the networking skills of Maz McGann and Robin Laurie and to the fact that they developed a wide range of well-focused projects that succeeded in engaging different sectors of the community. By 2009 Mayor Ron Webb was a very strong advocate for the project and what it had achieved and senior Council leaders told Maz that the skeptical CEO had also been convinced that the project had been very good for Council. Sadly for Wangaratta, Maz McGann accepted a more senior position in local government in South Australia just as the *Generations* project was reaching its conclusion at the end of 2009. The test for Wangaratta will be to see if this kind of work can be sustained without the personal skills of Maz and Robin. However, these two, in combination, have modelled ways of working that could be replicated if the Council continues to place a high enough priority on the kind of work that Maz and Robin initiated. Further, some smaller projects initiated by the *Generations* project in Wangaratta are already finding their own subsequent independent iterations, and technical infrastructure—such as the digital quilt equipment, the cultural couch, the ‘big ear’ sculpture that houses the sound portraits—remains in the community for further use.

4.6 Project development in Charters Towers

The project in Charters Towers—aimed at improving relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous communities across three generations—was always going to be a bit of a minefield. Not only had the historic migration of Aboriginal people away from cattle stations and into towns and Aboriginal settlements created a greater physical separation from those settler families still living on farms but the introduction of Native Title legislation and associated rights given to ‘traditional’ Aboriginal land ‘owners’ had created new tensions and suspicions between indigenous and non-indigenous people in the region. Before council amalgamations in 2008 the project was in the hands of the Dalrymple Shire Council. Experienced local community cultural worker (and former art teacher) Su McLennan took the lion’s share of responsibility for the project, with active support from the Council CEO James Gott. After the amalgamations, James Gott was made CEO of the larger Charters Towers Regional Council and Su was positioned in a bigger and stronger community development area of work. In some ways, Su adopted an approach that was similar to that of Maz McGann in Wangaratta in that she relied heavily on her networking skills and looked for opportunities to build on some existing projects or project opportunities before launching anything new. The big difference is that Su also took on the role of project Artistic Director and so she did not have the opportunity that

Maz had of working in a strong creative partnership over a lengthy period of time.

Su McLennan and James Gott took a very cautious approach towards the involvement of 'outsiders' in their Generations project. Su decided that it would be best to begin with a narrow focus in order to build some creative relationships between the older generation of graziers, who are still on their farms, and the older generation of Aboriginal elders now living in Charters Towers. She thought she might be able to involve them in some storytelling sessions around a campfire, hopefully 'on country', and she also asked the grazier families for old photos from the times when many Aboriginal people lived and worked on their properties. While some of the families were happy to share their old photos and these were used for an early exhibition related to the project aims, they showed very little enthusiasm for anything more. Su and James later acknowledged that it had been a mistake to begin with such a narrow focus, resulting in loss of time and momentum. In a usefully opportunistic way Su changed focus to build links with the School of Distance Education that worked across a much broader region than that of the Council and also with the local schools and TAFE college. She was able to build a Generations component into some projects targeting younger people across the Council area.

Another problem facing Su was that the Aboriginal community in Charters Towers is divided into four groupings. After trying to work with several elders, Su eventually worked very closely with Gudjala elder and artist Patsy Dallachy and her husband Cordy Dallachy and their involvement certainly gave the project more artistic energy. Through Patsy, Su was also able to involve Townsville-based Aboriginal dancer and performer Jai Cummins and this attracted the involvement of younger members of the indigenous community in Charters Towers. Like Maz McGann in Wangaratta, Su had reckoned on the fact that an upsurge of creative activities within the community would attract the interest of people working across diverse sections of the Council. After all the Council is a relatively small organisation (with just 300 members of staff) and in rural communities news of community events travels far and fast. Furthermore, Su and James Gott had earlier initiated projects—such as the 'World's Greatest Band'—which consciously aimed at encouraging Council staff to participate in fun cultural activities and they felt that this had raised interest in arts and culture across the Dalrymple Shire Council. However, unlike Maz in Wangaratta, Su struggled to get momentum



Artists working in the Community Art Space in Charters Towers

Photo: Sue McLennan



The opening of the Yarning Circle, Lissner Park, Charters Towers

Photo: Su McLennan

on her project initiatives and the amalgamation of the two councils in 2008 caused further delays and introduced new distractions. Su has admitted that the project in Charters Towers may have collapsed without the support of the Cultural Development Network in Melbourne and without the pressure to have some work to report at the national Generations gatherings, especially when one was held in Charters Towers in September 2008.

After the council amalgamations Su had other staff in community development to work with on project initiatives, such as youth worker Jacqui Maslem. The Director of Community Services within the amalgamated Charters Towers Regional Council, Wayne Price, said in an interview in July 2009 that he initially found the concept of the Generations project 'fairly abstract' and wondered how 'Council's involvement might tie in with that'. However, as some of the individual projects developed—such as the plan to replace an old fountain in the centre of a public park with a 'yarning circle'—he became convinced that art and culture could introduce some new ways of working with the community and he said the project had 'broadened my understanding of ... community engagement'. Wayne also suggested that the fact that some of the project activities had got indigenous and non-indigenous people in Charters Towers talking to each other and working together was a major achievement because you could not expect more than that over a period of just two or three years. As with Latrobe, the project in Charters Towers gained some late artistic momentum in the last 12 to 18 months of project time. On the one hand, this demonstrates the benefits of having significant project development time, especially if the focus issue is very 'sensitive'. However, it seems that an opportunity was missed in not bringing in a skilled and experienced community cultural development worker—of the calibre of Meme Macdonald or Robin Laurie. It is not hard to imagine, for example, a very significant piece of community theatre that could weave together stories with dance and visual images, possibly performed 'on country'. A 'more dramatic' approach may have fostered more dialogue within the community and within the Council.

4.7 Embedding the work in Council

Obviously, a turnover of key personnel—as occurred in Latrobe and Wangaratta—and major organisational changes—as occurred in Liverpool and Charters Towers—presented big challenges for those trying to build momentum for the Generations projects in the five LGAs. However, staff turnover is common in the local government sector and periods of flux and instability often result from the pressure to perform and be publicly accountable at the same time. A stated aim of the national Generations Project was to move from an emphasis on individual projects in the area of community art to an embedding of this practice within the strategic aims of LGAs. Furthermore, this needs to be achieved within the context of change and periodic instability. Clearly, it is dangerous to rely too heavily on individuals—no matter how good they might be—and key learnings from projects such as the Generations projects need to be documented and passed on to other people working in the organisation. Efforts should be made to build effective project teams—even if this seems to slow progress at times—and to mentor members of staff who have a clear interest in community cultural development practice.

When community cultural development is positioned within arts and culture areas of Council work—as was the case in Geelong, Wangaratta, Liverpool and Latrobe—there is a danger that it can be seen as lying outside the 'core business' of an LGA and yet when it is positioned in a community development area—as was the case in Charters Towers

(perhaps because there is no arts and culture department in this small Council), then it might find itself outside the creative environment of the arts. Clearly there is no easy structural solution to this kind of dilemma. If community cultural development work is seen as an important way to strengthen Council's engagement with the community and to strengthen its strategic planning into the future, then commitments to continue the work need to be written into key documents and plans, with associated Key Performance Indicators that area managers have to address in regular reports. Meme Macdonald has said that senior staff at Geelong had to take an interest in the evolution of the project because project completion was included as a KPI for the Council CEO. However, a formal approach will not work if the organisations lack people with the skill and experience to undertake good CCD work, or if relationships are not built to support the work. Furthermore, as Maz McGann demonstrated in Wangaratta, separation in regard to organisational structure and even in regard to physical location can be overcome by building working relationships with people in different parts of the organisation. To attract the attention of busy people you have to have innovative ideas and both Robin Laurie and Meme Macdonald have had enough experience to know that the ideas have to have an inspirational quality. However, once you have caught their attention you have to suggest some forms of participation, as Maz McGann did so well in Wangaratta.

As already mentioned, there can be benefits for a CCD worker in being based in a venue that has public visibility and access by the community. But this means that more conscious effort needs to be made to build working relationships with people who are based in more internally oriented workplaces and work teams. Again a problem arises if a person who has built good working relationships leaves the organisation. However, given that this is a regular occurrence in local government the real task is to ensure that this way of working is valued and that suitable replacements are made. Succession planning can be built into the way that people work at all levels of an organisation. It would be highly desirable if more LGAs saw the benefit in employing skilled and experienced CCD workers who could work across more than one department or area of Council work. A key task of people with such experience and skill could be to mentor other people in the organisation who are interesting in acquiring similar skills. The project in Geelong showed the benefit in setting up relatively small but effective project teams to work on particular projects with the brief to develop working links across the Council organisation. On the other hand, the project in Wangaratta showed that a more informal networking approach can also work if an appropriate project manager is appointed and given enough space to concentrate on project development.

If CCD is going to remain within the sights of Council executives then it needs to be in the portfolio of a senior manager who reports regularly to the CEO or equivalent. However, again, a formal approach is no substitute for having 'champions' for this work within the senior executive team. Furthermore, the projects in both Geelong and Wangaratta showed how important it can be to have champions for CCD work among elected councilors and mayors. This, in turn, can put more pressure on Council staff to embrace the work and it was interesting that the General Manager of Liverpool Council, Phil Tolhurst, began to take more interest in *Refill* after the newly elected mayor of Liverpool embraced that project. Of course, there can also be regular turnover of mayors and councilors and responsibility might fall to other champions of CCD to brief newly elected councilors on past experiences and achievements in this area of work. Of course, successful CCD projects—such as those in Geelong and Wangaratta—will encourage a broader range of champions for this kind of work. However, more than ever before, LGAs can learn from the successes of other LGAs across Australia and even

internationally. If the growing advocacy for CCD work (as detected by writers such as Arlene Goldbard, 2006) can be matched by communication of research findings that can demonstrate the efficacy of the work for local government then each LGA does not have to 'reinvent the wheel' and the idea of cultural vitality as the 'fourth pillar of sustainability' may break through barriers of indifference.

4.8 Community development and community art

As Sue Kenny (2007) has demonstrated, community development praxis began in Australia as a radical challenge to the welfare orientation of the social work profession. It is important to remember that the term community development has only come into vogue in the last few decades and it has emerged quite rapidly as an important field of practice in local government. However, the 'professionalisation' of a once radical agenda has partly blunted its innovative character and there has been a tendency to return to a strong welfare orientation under the rhetoric of community 'empowerment'. As Kenny points out, there is still a radical wing of community development (CD) praxis and part of this practice has merged with older community art traditions to foster the emergence of community cultural development. In some ways, the bifurcation between welfare-oriented CD practice and a CD practice that tends towards a 'social justice' agenda mirrors the bifurcation between arts therapy and CCD. The drawing of this distinction is not intended to diminish the importance of welfare work, with its focus on individual needs. However, a welfare orientation can undermine the focus on creating community and community cultural development can help to strengthen that tradition within community development practice.

It was interesting that the Director of the Community Development Unit at Wangaratta Council, Louise Hazelton, said in an interview—conducted in October 2008—that the work being done by Maz McGann and Robin Laurie was 'not seen as an engagement alternative' but rather an arts project that could contribute some fresh ideas for enriching existing community engagement strategies. Louise saw only a minimal overlap between the *Generations* project and the work of her unit because 'their focus is arts and our focus is on responding to community needs and planning'. By contrast, Council Community Development Officer Kerry Craig said—in an interview conducted in July 2009—that the Scooter Challenge project and the By Myself project within the broader *Generations* Project in Wangaratta really changed her ways of thinking about how to engage with people and their stories. The Community Development Unit, Kerry explained, has to advocate for policy responses that can meet diverse needs within the community and 'we tend to do it through documentation which ... becomes a bit static and sterile'. By contrast, she thought the 'people focus' of projects such as the Scooter Challenge can be more effective in giving people voice and the 'artistic side of it gives it a bit of oomph and value'. Kerry said that community development is 'very much about hearing what a community's needs are' and she had previously thought that cultural development started from the position of 'we're the experts, we know best'. However, her close involvement with the Scooter Challenge, in particular, changed that perception and she saw great value in finding more creative ways to engage with communities.

Of course, the interview with Kerry Craig took place after several of the *Generations* projects had been able to demonstrate what they could do and Kerry had a direct involvement in one of the projects. However, there was definitely a shift from the way that Louise Hazelton spoke about the *Generations* project in Wangaratta to the way that Kerry Craig spoke about it. This may confirm a central premise of the

national Generations Project—that limited perceptions of CCD could be challenged by an experience of good practice. It also suggests that at least some of the projects in Wangaratta fostered a new and important dialogue about the overlap between community development and cultural development. Such a dialogue promises to challenge the prevailing emphasis on welfare—in other words, responding to ‘needs’—to include a more positive emphasis on celebrating diverse stories in the formation of a more inclusive sense of community. Again, the emphasis on individual needs is not less important—and both Louise Hazelton and Kerry Craig spoke of the need to take note of ‘who is missing from the table’ when a Council makes its plans for the future—however there is a significant difference between focusing on individual needs and on creating a more positive sense of community.

4.9 Clarifying focus and aims

At the beginning of the national Generations Project, participating LGAs were asked to nominate a challenging local issue that could not be adequately addressed with conventional local government tools and practices. No restrictions were put on the selection process and the approaches varied across the LGAs. In some ways, Geelong selected the most local issue in that the perceived need to ‘connect the identities’ of diverse local communities was largely posed by relatively recent council amalgamations and by the adoption of new economic development strategies for the city as a whole. Of course, there are other regional cities in Australia going through similar challenges, but the issue was framed as a distinctively local challenge. Several options were considered for Wangaratta and the CEO at the time, Justin Hanney, decided that the ‘ageing population’ issue presented particular pragmatic challenges for his Council while it also related to a wider policy debate about how to handle this issue at a national level. The future of the coal-fired power generation industry in the Latrobe was a fairly obvious choice for the Latrobe Council but Council leaders, such as CEO Paul Buckley, were determined to put a more positive spin on the issue by looking more broadly at ways to create a ‘greener’ future for ‘the valley’. It was always the intention of Council to demonstrate that the future of the coal-fired power stations is not just an issue for the local community.

In a similar way, Dalrymple Shire leaders picked an issue that clearly could not be resolved within a local context alone because national developments, such as the adoption of ‘equal pay’ for Aboriginal workers in the pastoral industry and the adoption of Native Title legislation, have contributed to a growing segregation of indigenous and non-indigenous communities in many parts of rural Australia. Clearly, Dalrymple Shire picked a very challenging issue which reflects a vexed history in the region and which tends to evoke defensive and sometimes emotional responses. It was then left to Su McLennan to find a non-threatening way to promote dialogue across ‘three generations’ of indigenous and non-indigenous people living across the region that became the territory of the Charters Towers Regional Council. This was never going to be easy. As discussed earlier, leaders of Liverpool Council handed the project to its business unit in the Casula Powerhouse Art Centre (CPAC) with the understanding that the focus would be on the ‘2168 area’, surrounding the suburb of Miller and on young people who might be inclined to turn to anti-social behaviour. CPAC Executive Director Kon Gouriotis then described a process of ‘drilling down’ into the community to develop the focus on working with Arabic and indigenous high school students in the 12 to 15 age bracket in order to reduce the problem of truancy. Kon and lead artists Khaled Sabsabi and Aroha Groves were determined to create a space in which people within this ‘target’ group

could develop their own self-expression, but there is a sense in which the focus was selected in a top-down, demographic way, even if Kon, Khaled and Aroha saw it as being a bottom-up approach. The selection process resulted in a rather narrow project focus with little obvious connection to strategic concerns of Council.

In retrospect, it seems that more work needed to be done to think through some of the issues selected and the responsibilities and opportunities that this issue could pose for an LGA wanting to demonstrate that it has a role to play in addressing issues that can otherwise divide local communities. Wangaratta had a clear focus and it was not hard to find a clear link to the core business of Council. Geelong defined its issue in a fairly loose way at first in order to allow for further discussion and 'ownership' of the issue across the departments of Council. However, the local context was clearly defined and the link to the core business of Council was evident. While a clear local issue was adopted in Liverpool more work needed to be done to think about how a project operating in a school could be turned into a broader community development project clearly related to the responsibilities of local government.

While the project in Liverpool became too narrowly focused and further work was needed to link it to broader agendas of Council, the opposite problem seemed to occur in Latrobe in that the starting focus seemed too broad and diffuse and more work needed to be done to relate it to the more narrow responsibilities and opportunities for local government. Furthermore, the framing of the issue for Latrobe included mixed messages about whether it was best seen as a local issue or one that could only be addressed at state and national levels. There was also a mixed message in that one intention was to challenge the 'demonisation' of the coal-fired power stations within the national debate on climate change while another intention was to look at some ways to get beyond a dependence on brown coal. Eventually the project succeeded in fostering some dialogue between the power companies, people working in the power industry, and people in the community who are getting increasingly concerned about the challenge of climate change, especially for their children. There is a clear role for local government in fostering such dialogues within their local communities but it took a long time to reach that point and more work could have been done earlier to clarify the local aims of the project and to clarify the links to core business of local government. Ambiguities in the way the issue was framed may have contributed to early difficulties in building project momentum. Furthermore, a lack of clear focus also makes it difficult to evaluate the success of any project.

In Charters Towers there was a very big leap from selecting a very big and 'sensitive' social concern to adopting a rather narrow and preconceived entry point into the issue. Those who were primarily responsible for designing the project in Charters Towers—James Gott and Su McLennan—acknowledge that their starting point was too narrow and inflexible and, as project manager, Su showed the capacity to change course as this became evident. However, the missing step between selecting the big issue and finding an entry point was the work needed to better define the issue in terms of local government responsibilities and opportunities and new agendas for effective local governance in the contemporary world (as discussed in chapter 3). As in Latrobe, there were some ambiguities in the way the issue was framed, perhaps reflecting a concern about the capacity of the issue to further polarise the local community. There are also similarities with Latrobe in that the project eventually stimulated some dialogue within a divided community but this might have been achieved much earlier if more work had been done to clarify the project aims and their relationship to the core business of

Council. In retrospect it seems that Su was asked to run with a project that had not been adequately defined.

As discussed in the review of literature in chapter 3, the role for local government is expanding in a world in which global uncertainties are increasing the need to constantly build more inclusive local communities. The Generations projects certainly addressed some emerging uncertainties—such as climate change, the ‘lost generation’ of youth, the ageing population. In some ways the local Generations projects tried to tackle issues that might otherwise be left in the ‘too hard’ basket for an LGA. In all cases, the projects eventually had some success in developing some fresh perspectives on such complex issues. However, in Latrobe, Liverpool and Charters Towers more work needed to be done to focus the issue on the responsibilities and opportunities for more effective local government.

4.10 The need for an artistic ‘wow factor’

As already mentioned, the projects in Latrobe and Charters Towers struggled to develop artistic momentum. The project in Liverpool developed considerable artistic momentum once it found a home in the school but by this time its link to the wider organisation of Council (within and beyond CPAC) was very tenuous indeed. The relative success of the projects in Geelong and Wangaratta suggest that good practice in CCD requires the development of an artistic ‘wow factor’. In Geelong the ‘wow factor’ came in the form of a complex and spectacular peak event—the Mouth to Mountain journey. In Wangaratta the ‘wow factor’ was more incremental and it came through the cumulative impact of a series of well-targeted, well-crafted and artistically enriched individual projects. In this case it was more like a ‘creeping wow’ that culminated in the public launch of the highly innovative ‘digital quilt’ for presenting the accumulated digital stories in a wide range of public settings and the ‘We’re All Ears’ project that enabled the public to listen to creative ‘soundscapes’ of lived experience in the area. This will be discussed further in response to key research question 2 below, but it is important to note here that some kind of ‘wow factor’ is needed to catch the attention of otherwise distracted LGA leaders. It was the vision of the M2M journey and then the capacity of project leaders to pull it off that eventually gave the Generations project in Geelong a high profile with all sections of the large Council organisation.

While some of the Generations projects did not have one clear artistic ‘wow factor’ they were all able to draw on some rich artistic resources, including an array of local artists and small community art companies—such as Curious Works in Sydney or Feral Arts in Queensland—that have become adept at working in a range of community settings. It is interesting to note the Curious Works developed their expertise working in urban settings such as Western Sydney but they expanded their repertoire by undertaking regular residencies in contrasting areas, such as within the Aboriginal community in the rather remote Western Australian town of Roebourne. Similarly, companies such as Feral Arts work in both urban and rural communities. The emergence of such companies with such a wide array of practice undoubtedly reflects the rather unheralded growth of the community arts sector in Australia and contemporary project managers certainly have more resources to call on than any of their predecessors. New technologies are also making it much easier for people to work across a range of communication platforms and to present multimedia work. This is providing new incentives for young people, in particular, to engage in community art work. However, the surge of interest in digital storytelling shows that this new interest is not confined to the young. All this means

that people working in the CCD field within local government have unprecedented artistic resources to draw on—no matter where an LGA is situated in Australia. This may have led to an overall rise in the quality of work being produced—certainly in terms of presentation. However, it has probably made it even harder to produce stand-out work that is very effective in terms of both content and presentation. If it has become more difficult to distinguish between work that simply looks good and work that is likely to have an enduring impact on a significant range of people, then it has probably become more important for people bringing CCD work into the realm of local government to have the capacity—however it is obtained—to draw that distinction.

A particular skill—which was well demonstrated by Robin Laurie in Wangaratta—is to work with ‘found ideas’ or existing projects and see a way to enhance them artistically and help them reach a target audience. Robin was able to inject a wry sense of humour into many of the projects in Wangaratta and this undoubtedly works well in rural Australia, in particular. She was also able to draw in skilled artistic practitioners who could work with local people to build the artistic quality of the project. Such subtle skills can turn promising ideas into effective practices that can reach a much wider audience.

4.11 Evaluating outcomes

One reason why many LGAs may be reluctant to embrace CCD practice is that it is harder to evaluate its outcomes compared to projects that might have measurable outcomes such as increased use of bicycle paths, reduced littering, or demand for services offered. As Charters Towers CEO James Gott has said, people in local government are always looking for ‘tools’ that can help them achieve measurable outcomes but he said that the Generations project had helped him understand a need for more ‘qualitative’ tools that are more focused on processes rather than outcomes. In an interview conducted in July 2009 James said that if they had their time again with the local Generations project he would want to reduce the emphasis on outcomes to focus more fully on processes that could have very long-term and rather indirect outcomes. LGAs have little experience in the use of ‘qualitative’ tools, James suggested. ‘We know [that such tools] have applicability’, he said, but it will only be through more practice that the applicability will be understood. In a similar vein, the Director of Community Services in Charters Towers, Wayne Price, said in an interview also conducted in July 2009 that it had taken him a long time to understand what the local Generations project was trying to achieve but he now understood that a long process that focused on engagement rather than outcomes meant that the project eventually ‘opened some doors’ that could not have been opened in any other way. When you allow time for a deep process of engagement—focusing on communication and improved understanding—you can ‘spend a lot of time without really achieving substantial-looking outcomes’, Wayne said. However, he felt that the project in Charters Towers eventually ‘achieved a fair bit’ because people from the grazing families and the indigenous communities are ‘now talking to each other, they’re actually communicating’ and ‘there is certainly a lot more knowledge and understanding out there than there was when we first kicked off’. According to Wayne, the project got the Council involved in work it had never done previously, probably because it did not know where to begin. The ‘arts focus’, he said, had made new communication possible.

As the authors of this report have argued in earlier writing (Mulligan and Smith 2007) inappropriate language and inappropriate understandings of causality can cause serious problems in trying to evaluate the outcomes of community art projects that have aimed

to create space for novel expressions related to a diversity of lived experiences. Indeed, it is the very unpredictability of art that enables it to shift perceptions and the impacts on individuals and communities of people can be varied and 'slow burning'. While it can be appropriate to suggest that the Generations projects have given the participating LGAs some new tools for engaging with communities, it is misleading to think of art as a 'tool'. According to Meme Macdonald, it is critical to keep your focus on work that can inspire people in a wide range of ways and at a range of levels because that will have 'ripple effects'. It is the 'power of arts to transform', she said, that should be seen as 'the destination' and not as a means to something else. In other words, the focus should be on creating work that can grab people's attention and leave a lasting 'legacy' that can be built upon, rather than working towards some preconceived outcomes. Of course, it is important to distinguish between work that has little impact and work that can leave a lasting legacy and this will be further discussed in chapter 8. .

As discussed earlier in this report, the national Generations Project was rather artificially constructed. LGAs were invited to participate and to pick an issue they might want to explore. For reasons that have been discussed, they were given fairly easy access to substantial project funding and they were also allowed the luxury of having three years to develop and implement project ideas. All of this created some problems for properly embedding the initiatives within the local communities concerned and within the five Council organisations. However, as an 'experiment' in how to raise the profile of CCD work within LGAs it worked a treat because there is much to be learnt from the different approaches taken and ways of thinking about the outcomes.

It was interesting to get the reflections of Generations Project initiator Judy Spokes after she had attended the *ReGenerating Community* conference in Melbourne because she had nothing to do with it from 2005 to 2009, after taking up a position as Senior Advisor, Cultural Services at Redland Shire Council near Brisbane. She said that she was very pleased by what she saw at the conference because it convinced her that the national project had 'established a new agenda for discussion and development of the practice' in the local government sphere. Judy was pleased with the presentation of research findings at the conference because 'almost without exception, [they are] the kinds of intellectual ideas that we were looking to inject into the thinking of policy makers and planners at local government so that space would be opened up for more strategic and more fulsome engagement with communities through creative arts processes'. Judy said that there was excellent work going on in many LGAs across Australia in the area of community cultural development but the Generations Project had been very timely because it could provide national impetus for the work going on locally. Judy said that senior people in local government should welcome the outcomes of the Generations Project because it shows that good practice in community art can help 'local government do its own job' in that 'local government [must] sustain and enrich its community and that is the main business of this specialist area of arts practice'.

Judy Spokes pointed out that the Generations Project had demonstrated the benefits of allowing a long development time for complex community art projects and that her early experience of the project convinced her to negotiate a three-year timeframe for an innovative project she had developed in the Redland LGA. As discussed above, most of the local Generations projects went through periods of inactivity during the first two years of development—often caused by changes of personnel or other unexpected distractions. However, the relaxed timeframe had allowed them to rebuild some project momentum and ensure that early development work was not entirely wasted.

As Judy Spokes said, ‘Sometimes good research and good experimentation requires a capacity to fail a little as well as succeed’ and that is why the people who initiated the national Generations Project had wanted to ‘create the space’ that would enable participating LGAs to work through some successes and failures. According to Judy, more LGAs should think about the benefits of allowing an ‘elongated’ period for project development—up to three years—so that there would be enough time for ideas to ‘emerge and be developed conceptually and then managed systematically’. Certainly all the project managers in the local Generations projects said that the three-year timeframe had enabled them to recover from some early setbacks and achieve significant outcomes in the final year. Even project critic Kim Spinks, from Arts NSW, said that the three-year timeframe had been valuable because ‘you can build deeper relationships and you can have bigger outcomes, and you can create other sorts of networks because you have the benefit of time’. Many people working on the various Generations projects also said they found the three-year timeframe challenging because of the stamina involved in maintaining interest and momentum in a project over that length of time. One element common to many artistic projects is also the pressure of a production schedule—or a short-term project schedule. It is possible that without being able to rely on this external pressure, some projects lost direction—as mentioned by Elias Nohra from Curious Works in reference to *Refill*, and also Robin Laurie in Wangaratta. One way to counteract this—as occurred in Geelong—was to apply an ambitious and complex project structure, mapped out over a sustained period of time to ensure that the pressure of a production timeline was maintained (and thus the enthusiasm and momentum) over the build-up to a major culminating event.

5. Responding to Key Research Question 2

Building effective partnerships

5.1 Introduction

Key Research Question 2 reads:

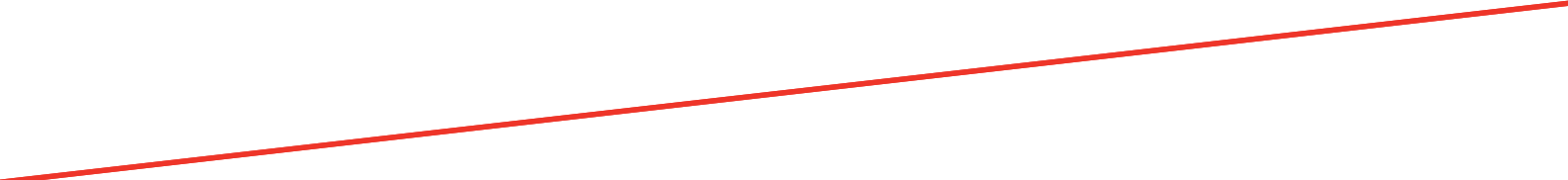
What can be learnt from the Generations Project about forging more effective partnerships between artists, arts organisations, community groups and LGAs?

A great deal can be learnt from the five local Generations projects about how LGAs— with fairly hierarchical structures and cautious operating protocols— can work with artists who thrive on the creation of new opportunities and the unpredictability of project outcomes. Of course, a key starting point is the recognition of some big ‘cultural differences’ in these ways of working and some compromise is necessary on both sides of such ‘partnerships’. The outcomes were very mixed in regard to the creation of effective partnerships between artists and LGAs and this difficult, yet potentially rewarding, partnership will be the focus of much of the discussion below. However, it is worth noting that partnerships can operate at and across many levels, from the local to the national, and the Generations Project offered many experiences in partnership building across layers and across cultural differences. Indeed the word ‘partnerships’ has become far more prevalent within the lexicon of social policy discourse in Australia in recent times and this probably reflects the wider desire to rethink processes of governance in the contemporary world that was discussed in chapter 4. This focus on partnerships affects the way that government and semi-government agencies working at national or state levels in Australia try to engage with governmental and non-governmental agencies working at a local level. The clear aim of this focus on partnerships is to achieve better outcomes by sharing experience and knowledge that can improve the design of projects and policy initiatives *before* they are implemented.

5.2 Partnerships at the national level

As was noted in chapter 1, the national Generations Project itself developed as a partnership involving CDN, Australia Council, state arts funding agencies, and participating LGAs. CDN played the leading role in facilitating this partnership and the most innovative features were: a) the convening of six national ‘forums’—held in each of the LGA locations plus Melbourne—to discuss the experiences of project development across the five local projects; and b) the convening of the national *ReGenerating Community* Conference, held in Melbourne in September 2009, which provided an opportunity for presentation and discussion about the nearly completed local projects. Our discussion of what can be learnt from the Generations Project about the construction of effective partnerships will begin, then, with some reflections on how the project itself worked as a partnership across the three tiers of governance in Australia. We will then turn our attention to the kinds of partnerships that were forged at a local level, where the notion of ‘network government’ may have its strongest appeal, and then finish with the discussion about what can be learnt from the Generations Project about partnerships between artists and LGAs.

In regard to the national ‘Generations Forums’, all the local project managers told the researchers that they had been valuable, especially when they were asked to host the gathering in their own area. As already mentioned, there was considerable turnover of project managers in Latrobe and Liverpool and in some cases the roles of project



manager and ‘creative director’ overlapped, yet even those project leaders who attended just one or two of the gatherings said they had helped to give them a much better sense of the overall project aims. Nick Tsoutas and Panos Courous—representing the Casula Powerhouse Art Centre in Liverpool—said that they were unclear about the real purpose of the gatherings and Meme Macdonald—when she was acting as artistic advisor across the five local projects—said that rather mundane discussions about project management did not leave much room for artistic inspiration, although she said she enjoyed the opportunities to hear practitioners such as Robin Laurie, Khaled Sabsabi, Malcolm McKinnon, and Curious Works members talk about their practice.

Alison Taylor—the ‘creative director’ of the project at Latrobe—said that she was encouraged to think more creatively when she attended the gathering at Wangaratta in 2007 and a discussion with Paul Holten in the car on the way back from that gathering gave her the idea of focusing the project in Latrobe around the meaning of ‘the grid’ that connects all local households and communities back to the generation of electricity. In an interesting observation, Paul Holten said that he had left the first few national gatherings feeling that the project in Latrobe was making better progress than many of the other projects but the presentation of the Geelong project at the gathering at Charters Towers in September 2008 made him feel that they had actually fallen way behind. A surge of doubt in Latrobe may have contributed to the tensions that saw Nik Salter leave the project and the Council soon after the gathering in Charters Towers but, more importantly, it encouraged Alison Taylor and Amanda Owen (as the incoming project manager) to seek more artistic input, and an advertisement in the online Arts Hub led to the appointment of experienced CCD worker Stefanie Robinson for 2009.

Su McLennan, in Charters Towers, said that support from John Smithies at CDN was critical for the very continuation of her local project when she had felt a little overwhelmed by the challenges and a heavy workload, especially when council amalgamations also caused a major distraction. Su said she was very determined to host a successful Generations gathering at Charters Towers in September 2008 and she responded to this pressure by finding some ways to breathe new life into some of the project initiatives. Furthermore, Su added, the fact that Charters Towers hosted such a national gathering made the mayor and other community and Council leaders pay more attention to the local project. Robin Laurie said that the national gatherings helped her maintain enthusiasm during the difficult ‘settling-in’ phase for the project in Wangaratta and they encouraged her to think more deeply about how to add artistic value to some of the ‘found’ projects in Wangaratta. There is no doubt that participating artists and project managers appreciated the rather rare opportunity provided by the national gatherings to share ideas and discuss difficulties with people facing similar challenges. Furthermore, participation in the national project created some useful pressure to produce decent project outcomes and to have those outcomes compared. Previous research by the Globalism Research Centre (see Mulligan et al 2006) has highlighted the fact that community art workers and cultural development practitioners often feel very isolated in their work and many complain of the lack of opportunity to participate in forums and activities with other practitioners.

In a sense, Su McLennan’s reliance on John Smithies and CDN led to a significant oversight when Queensland Arts did not receive an invitation to attend the gathering

in Charters Towers, even though they were identified as a project partner. Both Su and John had assumed that the other would issue such an invitation and Deb Miles and Erick Noakes were very frustrated when they only heard about the gathering when John called in on his way to the gathering in Charters Towers. Erick said that he read the regular reports on the project in Charters Towers that were submitted by John Smithies but he said they were not very informative and simply urged Queensland Arts to continue the funding because the national project was largely on track. Deb said that she had a strong interest in what the national project was trying to achieve but did not feel there was any real opportunity to contribute ideas for the development of the project in Charters Towers. Both Su McLennan and John Smithies have said that they did not want to put pressure on Queensland Arts because it is a small organisation with large responsibilities but there was clearly an opportunity missed to better include them in the national partnership.

The national Generations Project also failed to include Arts NSW as an active partner but in this case the lack of engagement came from Arts NSW itself. As mentioned earlier in relation to Key Research Question 1, Arts NSW Manager for Arts Strategy, Kim Spinks attended the first two national forums but they did not convince her that the project should be a high priority for Arts NSW because 'we already have a good relationship with local government in NSW'. Kim thought the national project should have started with a clear strategy to 'highlight [the project] to key local government advocacy organisations nationally and within each state', while others thought that the projects needed development time and that a key purpose of the national forums was to share experiences and ideas in regard to project development. Kim did not accept invitations to attend subsequent Generations Forums and she told Pia Smith in an interview in August 2009 that she saw no point in attending the *ReGenerating Community* conference in Melbourne because 'the kind of conference that RMIT and CDN will run, and the kinds of people who will be there, will be pretty much the kinds of people who know about this sort of work anyway'. Clearly, Kim did not think Arts NSW had much to gain by participating more actively in the partnerships that were forged through the national gatherings and the *ReGenerating Community* conference.

By total contrast with this, Mandy Grinblat from Arts Victoria said that she found the national gatherings 'absolutely fascinating'. She thought they provided a rare opportunity for 'people to be able to share experiences and talk quite honestly and openly about what is going on'. She thought that they 'certainly were not boring meetings' and they only served to increase her regard for 'quite remarkable people' with 'highly developed community engagement skills' who 'just don't get recognised often enough'. Mandy said that it is very easy for people working in 'bureaucratic structures' to get separated from 'community-based practice'. She said that her attendance at the Generations Forums had helped her to think about the rest of her work in the Community Partnerships program at Arts Victoria, although she noted that 'partnerships' is a 'bit of a flavour word' and she preferred to think about building relationships.

It is worth noting that Mandy had significant experience in community-based arts practice—as an administrator not a performer—before joining Arts Victoria. Andy Miller had preceded her as Arts Victoria representative at the early Generations Forums and he succeeded her on the committee organising the *ReGenerating Community* conference when Mandy left Arts Victoria in late 2009 to take up a position in local government in regional Victoria. However, Mandy's involvement in the overall project began quite early when she was asked, in her role as head of Arts Victoria's Community Partnerships program,

to provide funding for the local project in Geelong. When Pia Smith subsequently asked Mandy if she had been concerned about the slow beginning to the project at Geelong she said that her early discussions with Kaz Paton convinced her that they had plenty of experience to pull off a really good project and after that she had 'trusted their process', sensing that good early groundwork would pay longer term dividends. Although Mandy was most directly involved with the project at Geelong she took an active interest in all the other local projects and other people attending the Generations Forums said they appreciated her interest and active participation.

It should be noted also that Lynda Newton attended all the Generations Forums while she was responsible for the Generations Project within the Community Partnerships area at the Australia Council. Like Mandy Grinblat at Arts Victoria, Lynda showed a keen interest in all the local Generations projects and she worked closely with John Smithies at CDN to monitor their progress. However, her position at the Australia Council was not filled when she left in mid-2008, and the Australia Council participation in the Generations Forums became more spasmodic thereafter. The Community Partnerships committee at the Australia Council was able to rely on regular updates from John Smithies and annual progress reports on the funded research. In the second half of 2009, it commissioned one of the project initiators, Anne Dunn, to interview the LGA leaders in the five participating LGAs about their views on the project outcomes. The Australia Council sponsored the *ReGenerating Community* conference, at which the organisation's CEO Kathy Keele spoke about the importance of the project. However, the involvement of the Australia Council in the Generations Project became more formalised and remote after the departure of Lynda Newton. This may have reflected a stretching of the organisation's human resources rather than a downgrading of the project's importance but it certainly changed the nature of the partnership.

There was some initial resistance on the part of artists, in particular, to participation by representatives of funding bodies in discussions about project development and at the first Generations Forum, held in Melbourne in late 2006. Indeed, at this time, the participating artists insisted on having a session when they could speak more freely about project ideas without the presence of representatives from funding bodies. However, this mood changed over the life of the project as practitioners seemed to warm to the idea that they could work in partnership with funding agencies. No doubt more could have been done



Spirit Birds, Big Rock, the You Yangs, M2M Journey



River of Dreams banner and participants, M2M Journey, Geelong
Photo: Andrea Rotondella

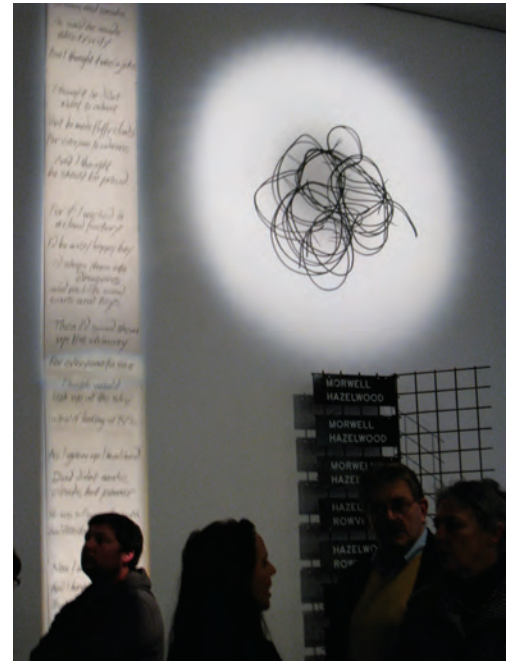
to involve Queensland Arts more actively and perhaps more could have been done to convince Arts NSW to adopt a more patient attitude. However, the active participation by Mandy Grinblat and Lynda Newton, in particular, suggested that it is certainly possible to build a more trusting relationship between funders and practitioners, provided the representatives of funding agencies have a clear interest in community-based practice. In other words, respect for good practice, can be the common ground for building an effective partnership between funders and practitioners.

The *ReGenerating Community* conference was organised by a committee that included representatives from CDN, RMIT University, and Arts Victoria, with former Geelong mayor Peter McMullin acting as co-chair with RMIT's Professor Paul James. The committee worked on conference plans for over a year and it was successful in getting a grant from Arts Victoria for a significant artistic component, which included installations, performances, workshops and presentations by artists. Over 350 people attended the conference with the majority coming from the local government sector. A further 50—including mayors, local government CEOs and elected councilors—attended the opening session and civic reception. Of those who completed the evaluation survey, 77 per cent thought the overall event was either Excellent or Very Good and 80 per cent thought that the presentations were either Extremely Interesting or Very Interesting. A high 71 per cent thought the conference had given them some 'new thinking about your work' and many said that they found it very interesting to hear about the Generations projects and the research on the project by the team at RMIT. The conference organisers were very surprised by the response to the Call for Presentations with over 90 people wanting to make presentations on community art projects or programs or research related to such projects or programs. Presenters came from all states of Australia, except the Northern Territory. There seems little doubt that the conference was successful in drawing attention to the Generations Project and its outcomes.

5.3 Partnerships between Council and local organisations

As already discussed in response to Key Research Question 1, the *Connecting Identities* project in Geelong mirrored the structure of local government and the LGA was clearly the dominant partner in all phases of project implementation. As Artistic Director, Meme Macdonald appointed 'lead artists' to work on aspects of the project in the 12 Council wards; for example, asking the story vessel sculptors to consult the local communities about the design of the 'story vessel' that would link that ward into the longer M2M journey. However, Meme and Kaz Paton had held discussions with the elected councilors about how to involve local organisations and Duncan Esler took care to ensure that community-based organisations known to Council were invited to local meetings at which the project was discussed. In the end, a host of local organisations and networks—from horse-riding and kayaking groups, to car enthusiasts and those involved in the redevelopment of a local railway station, to a local landcare group and range of local schools—got involved in planning the M2M relay. In some cases, this consolidated some relationships that Council staff members—such as Di Luscombe from the Environment and Natural Resources Department—had already forged with community-based groups. However, many of those involved in the community-based interest groups who got involved with M2M told the researchers that they had been pleasantly surprised to find that the project had been initiated by Council and some said it helped to shift their negative perceptions of Council's limited and reactive role in the community.

However, while the project in Geelong probably did the most to improve the profile of the Council with a wide range of community-based organisations, the *Generations* project in Wangaratta probably did most to consolidate some important strategic partnerships between community organisations and Council. A good example of this was the steering committee that Maz McGann and Robin Laurie forged to create the Heritage Idol project and the successful Heritage Festival. For the first time, the Wangaratta Historical Society and the Family History Society worked closely together on a project—rather than feeling like they were competing for resources—and formed a strong working relationship with the Council and the Wangaratta Library. The success of this project encouraged the Council to adopt a similar idea—50 Idols for 50 Years—when it launched the celebrations for the Council’s fiftieth anniversary. The By Myself project led to an interesting social history project/photographic exhibition with the area’s Italian community—staged as part of an inaugural ‘Viva Italia’ Festival—that promises to become a regular event (both the festival and the exhibition component). The Scooter Challenge led to the formation of a very active Scooter Users Association which worked with the Council’s Community Development Unit. The Digital Quilt and the We’re All Ears project created new partnerships between the Council library and a range of businesses that agreed to put the storytelling interfaces into their premises or in the street nearby. Several projects involved a strong working relationship between the library and the TAFE college and the *Generations* project in Wangaratta undoubtedly strengthened the Council’s Section 86 Advisory Committee on Arts, Culture and Heritage. It is notable that all these partnerships were either created or consolidated around creative and innovative projects that could raise the profile of the partner organisations with the community at large. Interviews with representatives of participating organisations also show that Maz McGann and Robin Laurie were very adept at building good working relationships with individual people within the participating organisations, largely because they were very interested in diverse stories of lived experience. Several interviewees noted that Maz and Robin were good listeners as well as being good creative thinkers. For them, community-based organisations are made up of people with some fascinating and often neglected stories to tell.



Pylon Tree Installation event detail, Latrobe Regional Art Gallery
Photo: Pia Smith

5.4 Beyond local organisations

In her role as Creative Director for the *Green Expectations* project in the Latrobe valley Alison Taylor also succeeded in building some new partnerships between Council and some community-based organisations. A range of local organisations—including a significant credit union—sponsored the inaugural Sustainability Festival and the success of the festival led to the idea that it would be held in different locations across the wider Gippsland region—in other words, beyond the boundaries of the Latrobe Council—and involve a wide range of local businesses. Alison also put a big emphasis on working with local schools. However, the most interesting partnership was the one formed with the power wholesale company SPAusnet, which creates the markets for the power generated in the Latrobe Valley and elsewhere. In early 2009 Alison and project manager Amanda Owen went to Melbourne to SPAusnet's Sustainability Co-ordinator Mercedes Ramirez to talk about 'the grid' project and seek funding for prize money for a short film competition they were planning as part of a suite of activities planned for 2009. In an interview with Pia Smith, Mercedes Ramirez said that SPAusnet is very aware that the future for power generation based on the burning of 'dirty' brown coal is very limited and that the company is keen to explore other ways to generate electricity. She also said that the company is keen to give something back to the community in terms of sustainability initiatives and it has encouraged employees to start 'sustainability groups' that work with community organisations. Mercedes Ramirez was impressed with the presentation by Alison and Amanda because she feels that an 'arts vocabulary' allows people to talk more freely about their fears for the future and about how to think about new opportunities for local communities. Alison and Amanda had been keen to do create some kind of industrial sculpture at the Powerworks Energy Technology Centre in Morwell, which is funded by corporations in the power industry, and it was Ian Southall, Powerworks' General Manager, who suggested that they go to see Mercedes Ramirez in Melbourne. Powerworks was identified early as a 'stakeholder' in the *Green Expectations* project, with Ian being an early representative on the Community Reference Group. However, the meeting with Mercedes Ramirez—alongside earlier discussions with trade unions representing power industry workers—opened up new possibilities for bringing the project to the attention of people working within the industry in the Latrobe Valley.

The idea of constructing a 'pylon tree' grew out of a community survey that Alison Taylor and Stefanie Robinson implemented soon after Stefanie started as the artistic director for the project in 2009. The survey posed some questions about how people are feeling about the future and what kind of image might best capture their hopes about the future and Alison and Stefanie got help from the unions covering workers in the power industry to distribute the survey to union members. With the survey results in hand, Alison then ran 'a big brainstorming session where we had members of the community, the project control group and council all together brainstorming how they might represent the sentiment expressed in survey results' and the majority of people opted for the symbol or image of a tree. Stefanie combined this with some earlier thinking within the Latrobe project about industrial art and came up with the concept of the pylon tree. Alison and Amanda followed up on their meeting with Mercedes Ramirez to ask her if they could collect scrap material from the power stations to build the tree and Mercedes arranged for them to visit the scrap metal heap at the Hazelwood Power Station. Amanda has said that she finds the industrial landscape in the Latrobe Valley strangely beautiful and Mercedes told the researchers that the men who look after the scrap metal at Hazelwood were utterly amazed when Alison and Amanda came and talked enthusiastically about how 'beautiful' the scrap materials were. 'Look at the colours; look at the form', Mercedes

reported Alison and Amanda saying as they scrambled among the scrap materials. 'Our linesmen are people who work in the bush, they are hard men,' Mercedes told Pia Smith. 'They are not the ones who drink cocktails and get into poetry or those types of things. But nevertheless they got touched by these people, it was unbelievable. Every time I go over there I am asked "How are the girls?" and "What are they doing with the metal? How does it look?'"

This was a real breakthrough because most of the people working in the power stations also live in the community in the Latrobe valley and their growing interest in the art project probably got them more interested in being involved in community discussions about the future of the power industry and possible alternatives to reliance on brown coal. Certainly Alison Taylor has insisted that there has been a shift in the tone of conversations about the impact of climate change since she began working on the Generations Project in 2007. People understand the issues better than they did three years earlier, she said, and they understand it is a global issue and not just a threat to local jobs. Alison feels there is a growing desire for the community to have a more inclusive conversation about what the future holds and feedback from the trade unions suggested that workers in the power industry want more say in the future because there has been a growing sense, said Alison, that 'government policy gets done to them rather than them having an opportunity to say what they want the future to look like'. In this context, Alison continued, the opportunity for the *Green Expectations* project was to use art as a medium 'for the community to have some safety around those expressions, so rather than writing a letter to the newspaper and putting your name to it, it's about pulling people together to share what they feel ... and then having some expression about that to the wider community'. The focus on artistic expression of community sentiment enabled SPAusnet to become a more active partner in the project, as the interview with Mercedes Ramirez confirms.

5.5 Dealing with cultural differences

The Generations projects in the Latrobe Valley and Charters Towers, in particular, helped to confirm the long-held view that participation in art projects can help to stimulate some dialogue across past differences and past divisions. In all cases, the local projects helped to challenge negative community conceptions concerning the role and function of local government, although community knowledge of the role played by Council in the project in Liverpool was very limited. Many people who had participated in projects related to the local Generations projects told the researchers that they had been pleasantly surprised to find that their Council has initiated such activities. Geelong Council undoubtedly got the greatest benefit in regard to community perceptions because the Council had not been held in high local esteem after the amalgamations of 1993, followed by a number of corruption scandals and sustained hostility from the local media. Several people who got actively involved in at least one component of the M2M journey told Pia Smith that they were quite amazed that Council could pull off such an event, let alone one with such beauty and meaning. Such renewed goodwill towards Council must surely improve the prospects for good working relationships between Council and a wide range of community-based organisations, and a range of people who had actively participated in M2M said they looked forward to having further opportunities to work with Council on future projects.

As mentioned earlier, local government in Australia tends to put a heavy emphasis on protocols and procedures. In part, this reflects the rather limited charter given to LGAs

when they were established by the various state governments and the historic dominance of engineers and planners in fulfilling that limited charter. While the roles and responsibilities of local government have slowly increased in recent decades there has been a growing pressure for LGAs to become much more 'professional' and accountable and an even more recent emphasis on risk minimisation has meant that the emphasis on procedures and protocols has become even more constraining. As LGAs have grown to resemble corporations, more leadership responsibility has fallen to highly paid CEOs or General Managers and their 'executive teams', creating a more hierarchical structure and culture. While many LGAs across Australia have appointed community arts or arts development officers in recent decades, the prevailing local government culture has not been conducive for people with strong backgrounds in the arts and cultural creativity.

Three of the most experienced community artists working in the local Generations projects—Robin Laurie, Meme Macdonald and Khaled Sabsabi—all said that their past experience of working with communities had led them to think of LGAs as obstacles rather than collaborators. Indeed, Meme has said that before she was asked to join the Generations Project as an artistic consultant she had generally believed that 'the last place I would base a project would be Council'. Before working in the Latrobe project, Stefanie Robinson had worked on some projects for the City of Whittlesea, where the experienced community cultural development worker Mahony Kiely has been established as the Program Co-ordinator of an innovative 'community development through performance' program. Stefanie told Pia Smith that it was only when she had more direct experience of working in the LGA at Latrobe, that she learnt to appreciate how much work Mahony had done to create an open space for artists to work in at Whittlesea.

Meme Macdonald explained that her past reluctance to work closely with local government came from the fact that most communities she had worked in previously had very negative perceptions of their Councils and so a close association with Council could make it harder to build good relationships inside the communities. Her previous experience had suggested that Council departments tend to be 'reactive to community requests ... which is not to say that people working in Council don't want it to be different'. It is just that Meme had found the culture of local government to be reactive rather than proactive. Meme said that she was keen to take up the position in the *Connecting Identities* project because she knew, and trusted, people she would be working with most closely, including Kaz Paton, Di Shaw and Malcolm McKinnon. She knew that they valued her experience and skill and Meme said that Kaz and Di did so much to make her feel comfortable in the job that she sometimes felt like a 'princess'. However, Meme suggested, the culture of local government is so strong that it becomes ingrained in the way people work and they don't even stop to think about it. 'You write emails with "we" not "I"', she noted, and 'only a certain level of management speaks to a councilor directly'. There were times, Meme noted, when she had to remind Council staff that she was working as a consultant and not a staff member and that she had to be able to speak directly to people who would be critical for community engagement in the project. Furthermore, she said, as artistic director she insisted on being able to talk directly to people who would be part of the 'cast' for the M2M 'performance' so that she could actually do the casting and directing work of an artistic director.

Meme said that she learnt to think of the Council as a community itself, with its own rules and ways of working. She learnt to see that Council can be a 'great community to work in' with some 'great' and 'talented' people. She learnt from others in Council that there are some creative ways to work with protocols and procedures to ensure

that serious concerns have been addressed. She said it was useful to think of Council as a community that overlays, yet is somewhat separate to, the wider community it seeks to serve and that she learnt to be patient in convincing Council—as a complex and multilayered community of people—to embrace her vision for the M2M journey. However, Meme said there were certainly some advantages in retaining her independence. For example, at one point she had to kick up a fuss when a sudden decision was made to ‘take the project management team off *Connecting Identities* and onto another project just when Mouth to Mountain needed management in earnest’ and her protests were heard before it was too late, preventing this from derailing the project. She also had to convince Council staff that some artists with considerable experience in working with communities of people—such as installation artist Glenn Romanis—have developed ways to minimise risks and ensure safety without paying much attention to forms and protocols. Similarly, David Roberts, the Ranger in Charge at the Yon Yongs echoed this in a telephone interview with Pia Smith after the M2M event in 2009. He said he had been unwilling to allow the Council to use marshalls and fencing in the park as risk-mitigation for the event’s finale at Big Rock in the You Yongs. He believed that people were capable of taking great responsibility for themselves, and that there were ways to avoid risk that worked better with the natural environment and the creativity of the event, such as by using lighting. Meme felt that her patient approach helped people in Council get a much better appreciation of the skills that some community art practitioners have acquired, even if they use a different, more ‘sensory’, ‘intelligence’ in the way they work with people. At the same time, Meme came to admire the creative way that people such as Kaz Paton and Duncan Esler have learnt to work within Councils.

5.6 Artists learning to work in local government

Meme Macdonald made an important point when she said that artists will have much more success working within local government if they have an unshakeable confidence in their own abilities and equal confidence in the power of good art to overcome all obstacles. ‘Money will follow good ideas’, she suggested, but artists are more likely to successfully negotiate the difficult terrain of local government if they have enough confidence to be patient with the culture of LGAs. Similar sentiments were expressed by experienced CCD practitioner Mahony Kiely—who is currently working within local government at the City of Whittlesea—when she said that the processes are often very frustrating and you have to trust your intuitive judgements to find a way though. Yet the rewards can be great, Mahony said, when you see the way the community responds to projects and then the way that people in Council—including the CEO and mayor—respond to the community sentiment.

Robin Laurie said that she felt very ‘uneasy’ about working in a local government environment at the start of the project in Wangaratta. She assumed that when management speak of the ‘challenge of an ageing population’ it is really code for the ‘problem’ of having more old people to look after and initially she found that some people in Council were too busy to talk and those who were not busy were ‘very hard to connect with or move’. She said that you sometimes have to make an arrangement a month in advance to meet busy people and that means a whole month has gone by before you can start the conversation you wanted to have with that person. Robin also noted that Council rooms that were made available for meetings and workshops associated with the *Generations* project in Wangaratta often had a poor ambience for creative conversations. Robin has said that she was relieved to find that Maz McGann

had developed very good 'strategic thinking' skills in regard to the Council and that she knew 'who to go to in order to present an idea ... and had good personal relations with a lot of people'. As discussed earlier, Maz was able to use her networking skills to work in a fairly informal way within Council and this enabled her to give Robin some creative space to work in without Robin having to pay too much attention to protocols and procedures. However, as has also been noted already, Maz and Robin were both impeded by the fact that the CEO, Justin Hanney, who was enthusiastic about the Generations Project, had left to be replaced by a CEO, Doug Sharp, who admitted that he had little interest in this area of work. For this reason, Robin and Maz decided to simply start creating projects within the community that would eventually come to the notice of senior Council staff and this strategy began to pay dividends when the Cultural Services Manager, Di Mangan, told Robin and Maz that the success of the Heritage Idol project prompted Doug Sharp to make a positive comment about the Generations Project as a whole in his report to Council.

Robin and Maz worked in a small office behind the Art Gallery and so they were physically separated from the main body of staff in Council. Robin thought this was 'preferable' because there was access to the community but it did mean they were 'a bit out of the loop'. For a while they were being overwhelmed by administrative work associated with the project but when they made the decision to employ a person one day a week to look after most of that work, they were able to concentrate on project development. Robin said that Di Mangan was happy to let Robin and Maz work independently because she had trust in what they could do and she concentrated on making sure that they had access to resources, such as a car. However, they needed considerable self-confidence to believe that their work would engage members of the community and then, indirectly, show Council what could be done. Robin said that only a handful of people in Council ever attended events held at the Art Gallery and she quickly came across community groups who said that they would have 'no truck' with Council because of past bad experiences. However, Robin and Maz had a good working relationship with the Council library and with the TAFE and were confident that they could produce good work.

As part of their work, Maz and Robin organised some 'sustainability talks' in the community and as a result of these Robin had a meeting with the manager of the Environment Department, Bronwyn Chapman, and the manager of the Community Development Unit, Louise Hazleton, about how to build on that initiative. However, Robin felt that the onus to come up with a new idea in that discussion fell too heavily on her when 'there was a process within Council that needed to happen first'. She thought that people inside Council needed to do more work on what Council might be willing to do before talking to an outsider such as herself. She was not sure what came of the discussion although she noted that a document had been produced and the CD unit was proceeding with some kind of community engagement around that document. On the other hand, it was notable that Council did not seek input from Robin when they employed another consultant to work on a future vision for Wangaratta that would involve community input. Robin said that the strategies the consultant came up with were basically good, although fairly conventional, and that consultation with her may have been unproductive unless there had been a decision made to have some artistic projects associated with the community engagement. Once again, Robin insisted, people inside an LGA need to be clear about why they want to engage artists before doing so.

Stefanie Robinson said that it took her quite a while to get used to working within the framework set up for her in Latrobe. She said she found it quite constricting compared to her experiences working in projects with Whittlesea Council where the experienced CCD worker Mahony Kiely had developed a range of innovative projects. By the end of 2009 Stefanie said that she had learnt much more about how to work in the local government culture during the year and she said that the project leaders increased their trust in her when they saw what she could do for them.

5.7 Leaving a legacy for local government

In October 2008 Robin Laurie was not convinced that the *Generations* project in Wangaratta would leave a lasting legacy within Council as an organisation. She said that she did not think that the processes that she and Maz had modelled would 'find their way into anyone's KPIs' and she said that people in Council are still afraid of the language related to art. 'It's a small group of people who go to a lot of stuff', she noted. After this interview the projects in Wangaratta continued to build momentum and the Scooter Challenge, in particular, had a big impact on the mayor and the Community Development Unit. The last two projects—the Digital Quilt and We're All Ears—were launched at a well-attended final event in October 2009 and, by then, Council had incorporated the concept of the heritage idols in its celebrations for 50 years of Council history. The strategy adopted by Maz and Robin had succeeded as well as it could. In speaking at the final event Robin Laurie thanked all those who had 'courageously shared your stories' without even knowing what might be made of them, because 'all change requires a daring leap of some kind'. She expressed the hope that the *Generations* project had 'planted some seeds that will keep growing' in Wangaratta. However, the event in October 2009 marked the departure of both Robin and Maz and it remains to be seen if their work can have a lasting impact within Wangaratta Council.

Not surprisingly, Khaled Sabsabi's concerns about working within local government were not really reduced by his experiences with *Refill* in Liverpool, although he said he was pleased to be involved with the project at a national level and had gained a better impression of local government from hearing about the development of all the local projects. At an interview in February 2008, Khaled said that 'the biggest challenge' for him was still the challenge of 'working in the council structure' and that funding bodies need to be aware of the 'inflexibility of council structures' in 'delivering' projects. One big frustration for Khaled and Miller Technology High School teacher Sally Atkins was the huge delay in getting the equipment that Council promised. Khaled said that he not only had to source the equipment and get three quotes to make the request to his manager at the CPAC but that request then had to be passed on to someone else in Council and from there to the IT people, who ultimately said they were unable to support that particular technology. The message from the IT department was then fed back, through the same long chain, to reach Khaled months later. In all it took nearly a year for the promised equipment to arrive and by then it was pretty much out of date.

Khaled Sabsabi said he had good initial support from the Executive Director of the CPAC, Kon Gouriotis and that he and Kon talked the project up as much as they could to people inside Council. In the early stages Khaled, as project co-ordinator, was submitting weekly project reports to CPAC and less regular artistic reports for the CPAC board meetings. However, Kon soon became preoccupied with the re-opening of CPAC following capital works going on there and Khaled and Aroha were left to get on with the project with reduced support. They did not have a strong link with the 2168 Committee

that Council had established in the Miller area, which Khaled described as a committee of service providers, and the Miller PCYC was so new that it also had little to offer in regard to community linkages. Khaled said that he soon got tired of the tyranny of reporting to everyone from CPAC and Liverpool Council to Arts NSW, CDN in Melbourne and the Australia Council. He said that such time-consuming reporting requirements can further disadvantage people working in emerging or low socio-economic communities where funding is limited. Khaled suggested that there is an opinion among cultural workers operating in Western Sydney that arts funding can be used to silence critical voices.

According to Khaled, community cultural development should be 'about activism ... about challenging and working with something that is relevant or representative of the community you are working with'. It is particularly hard, he added, when you are working in communities that are commonly labelled in the 'rubbish media' as being drug dealers or terrorists. Khaled said he was very proud that *Refill* had succeeded in getting really good artists into the Miller Technology School and that the project had encouraged Sally Atkins and Miller Technology music teacher Duane Critcher to become active in the 2168 community, and Sally Atkins to join the Community 2168 Committee. He thought the project at Miller Technology 'might live two years' but that would be an achievement he could be proud of. However, he said that community cultural workers are tired of being treated as guinea pigs for some change or other when there is so little money made available from the federal government to support work within the communities.

Khaled Sabsabi took a break from *Refill*—for personal reasons—for nearly a year and when he came back he worked hard on the exhibition of the project held at CPAC in 2009 and on the presentation of project outcomes at the national *ReGenerating Community* Conference in Melbourne in September 2009. He was enthusiastic about what the project had achieved for the young people involved and he was able to convince Liverpool Council General Manager Phil Tolhurst and newly elected Mayor Wendy Waller of these achievements. As in Wangaratta, the quality of the work itself finally forced Council to take more notice and this, in turn, may have given Khaled more confidence to sell the project to the Council leaders. However, *Refill* essentially tells a story of opportunities lost in terms of how an LGA can learn to engage with skilled, community-minded CCD workers.



Members of the Wangaratta Ukulele Showband perform
Photo: Maz McGann



Heritage Idol polling booth, Wangaratta
Photo: Maz McGann

By contrast, Meme Macdonald and Malcolm McKinnon were given relevant support and a clear creative space—relevant to the needs of Council—to work in. In turn, Meme Macdonald was able to offer similar creative space for a wide range of local artists who all felt positive about their experience in the project. The project team in Geelong Council set the benchmark for what a Council can do to make the engagement work. While there was similar senior support for the project in Latrobe Council—and Alison Taylor was given considerable room to move in her role as ‘creative director’—the engagement of an experienced CCD worker came very late in the process. Furthermore, when Stefanie Robinson said that she wanted to re-establish some kind of community reference group in order to check the relevance of her ideas, she was told that it was too late for this and she was given a rather constrained ‘space’ in which to work. Eventually Stefanie said she learnt how to work within the local government culture and that project leaders seemed to show more trust in her when they saw what she could do but it took a while to develop trust and confidence. The project in Charters Towers gained momentum when the artist Patsy Dallachy was given several ‘spaces’ to work in and, as discussed, Maz McGann almost single-handedly created space for Robin Laurie. However, outside Geelong, the onus fell on the artists themselves or their supportive project managers to create the space they needed to produce their best work.

5.8 Artistic leadership

Meme Macdonald and Robin Laurie have been able to demonstrate the benefit of having skilled and experienced community artists playing the role of Artistic Director on substantial projects that are trying to address rather complex social issues within local communities. In both these cases, the decision to employ an ‘outside’ artist to play this role was vindicated because they were able to draw on extensive experience in working within other communities and they both had the skill and aptitude to work effectively with local artists. Whereas Meme had a wealth of local talent to work with in the greater Geelong area, Robin sometimes felt the need to bring in other ‘outside’ artists but she made sure that they played a role in mentoring interested local artists. Meme has suggested that it ought to be self-evident that if you want a really good performance then you need an artistic director and not just an event facilitator: you wouldn’t expect to see a good performance in the theatre if it was put together by a facilitator rather than a director. A critical role for an artistic director, Meme asserted, is in ‘casting’—in other words, finding the best person for particular roles in the event or events that you are directing—and she mentioned the example of a country music singer who played a starring role as an MC for a particular event that took place during the M2M journey, even though his proposal for a musical contribution had not been accepted. Meme correctly guessed that he had both the credibility in his local community and the ‘stagecraft’ to do the job confidently and he was delighted to have been given a role, even if it was not the one he had proposed.

In a sense, Khaled Sabsabi played the *de facto* role as artistic director of *Refill* at Liverpool and he brought in a range of skilled artists who have worked across the western suburbs of Sydney and beyond. The need for an artistic director was talked down in the early stages of the project at Liverpool—partly because Khaled and Aroha Groves preferred to be seen as joint ‘lead artists’. However, this—along with the selection of the topic—may have contributed to the sense that it would be a very focused project of relatively limited ambition compared, for example, to the project at Wangaratta. In retrospect, we can say that both Su McLennan (in Charters Towers) and Alison Taylor (in Latrobe) lacked the experience and skill to take on the role of artistic director of an ambitious project and

confusion over their roles—as ‘creative director’ or ‘artistic co-ordinator’—only served to deflect attention from the need to appoint a suitable artistic director. In the case of Charters Towers, local knowledge was considered more important than artistic skill and experience, especially because Council had chosen to address a rather ‘sensitive’ local issue. In Latrobe, the project control group also decided that local knowledge was more important than artistic skill or experience following the departure of Bridget Nicholson, an ‘outside’ artist who had been appointed as the first ‘artistic co-ordinator’. In both cases, the decision to favour local knowledge over artistic skill and experience made it much more difficult for the projects to establish artistic momentum and this was confirmed by the fact that the project in Latrobe gained much more artistic momentum after Stefanie Robinson was appointed as artistic director for the final year.

Of course, an Artistic Director can only work effectively when there is some clarity about project aims, target audiences, project budgets and other available physical and human resources. The project team in Geelong Council worked for more than a year—employing Malcolm McKinnon to run the Memory Bank project during this time—before Meme Macdonald could be given clear space to work as overall Artistic Director. By contrast, Robin Laurie had a fairly frustrating time in the early stages and things only began to work for her when she had built a strong working relationship with Maz McGann. In a sense the project aims were probably defined too tightly in the case of Liverpool, the starting point was too narrowly conceived in regard to Charters Towers and the project aims were defined too loosely and rather ambiguously in the case of Latrobe. At any rate, the whole process of moving from first ideas to developing the clarity needed to employ an Artistic Director was only carried out effectively in Geelong (where it should be noted that the eventual artistic director was the initial artistic advisor to the national project, and so had experience of the early stages of the Geelong project), even if Maz McGann and Robin Laurie found a way to manage their own process in Wangaratta. The Geelong experience demonstrates the benefit of having a lengthy time for project development and, as already mentioned, the three-year timeframe enabled all the local projects to achieve some outcomes despite all the difficulties and wrong turns along the way.

It also needs to be noted that experienced community cultural development workers tend to bring their own ways of learning about the communities in which they are working. Robin Laurie has her ‘Big Ears phase’ when she does little but listen to a wide range of ideas and opinions while she also walks around trying to get her own sense of a place and its people. Malcolm McKinnon has said that through many years of experience he has developed a sense for figuring out who he needs to talk to in small communities to get a sense of their history and character and, of course, he has a good ‘nose’ for interesting, and probably rather neglected, stories. Meme Macdonald also loves to collect stories from a wide range of people and she loves to find people who share her passion for ritual and performance; she loves to inspire people with an artistic vision and get some ideas on how it might be realised. Khaled simply likes to show young people what he can do and find out what they can do and then work from there. Stefanie Robinson said that she would have felt more comfortable having a functioning community reference group to work with but she also shares Meme Macdonald’s passion for going out to community groups to talk about artistic ideas and how to realise them. Meme and Malcolm McKinnon stressed the need for all artists to have some space in which to exercise their own creativity and set themselves an artistic challenge. However, they also expressed a strong desire to be well briefed on the overall project aims and requirements and to have some certainty in regard to budgets and resources.

Malcolm McKinnon thought that the word 'partnership' does not accurately describe a productive relationship between an LGA and an 'outside' artist. 'It would be more accurate to say that I was a kind of interventionist', even a 'gun for hire', Malcolm told Pia Smith in August 2008. 'I come in to do a particular job ... and my role is to go in there and do something, make something, help facilitate a process'. 'Council is an excellent conduit into the community', Malcolm suggested, but 'they have long-term interests in the place and I don't' so that is why the word 'partnership' is not accurate. In an interview conducted in 2007, Malcolm suggested that there is an important role in local communities for 'useful outsiders' and, of course, he has developed considerable experience in being both useful and respectful by working in a wide range of small and local communities across Victoria and beyond.

Of course, there could well be local artists with the skill and experience to play the role of artistic director on an ambitious community art project, although the skills required are often under-estimated or poorly understood by project initiators. There are clear benefits in trying to build this kind of capacity within local communities by giving people an experience of working with more experienced 'outside' practitioners. However, it should be noted that people who have gained experience in a particular area or community might move on anyway and so the distinction between local and outsider tends to become blurred. At the same time, the brief for an artistic director should be to use as many local artists as possible, for obvious reasons, and this is something that may require constant thought on the part of the artistic director rather than just a one-off call for expressions of interest. A good artistic director may see a way to use the talents of particular local artists in ways that may not be apparent to others.

5.9 Phases, spaces and 'network government'

At different stages in the development of any significant project it may be community-led, artist-led or led by the organisation that is providing the resources. Perhaps the key thing is to have a shared understanding of the phases in the development of a creative project and to know when different forms of leadership are required to ensure that the project as a whole is developed through effective partnerships.

Physical space also needs to be conducive for good artistic output and, as already noted, Robin Laurie found that many meeting spaces provided by Wangaratta Council did not have the ambience she was looking for. On the other hand, the community art space that was made available by the Charters Towers Council was so attractive that people who barely knew each other started working in close proximity to each other and, as a result, they began to take an interest in how others were interpreting local places and local experiences. In this instance, the conducive physical space was the key.

In the era of 'network government', LGAs obviously need to pay constant attention to the strategic partnerships they need to build and to take time to ensure that those important working relationships are kept in good order. It is a big shift for LGAs to move beyond the idea that they are *the* local authority in order to embrace the concept of 'network government' in a more than rhetorical sense. Within their own ranks, LGAs may well have people with advanced networking skills—the kind of skills demonstrated by Maz McGann in Wangaratta—and these skills probably ought to be more highly valued by the LGA. Commonly, people who work in community development or community cultural development have to hone their skills in forming partnerships and in building networks. Such people may best understand the difference between formal partnerships and robust working relationships that can be forged in the pursuit of common aims, despite cultural differences in the ways in which people work. Many experiences within the local Generations projects confirmed that artistic expressions of shared or overlapping experience can help people to find common ground on which to forge robust working relationships. In other words, creative collaboration can build working relationships.

6. Responding to Key Research Question 3

Community engagement

6.1 Introduction

Key Research Question 3 reads;

What can be learnt from the Generations Project about ways in which arts-based projects and initiatives can enhance the capacity of LGAs to engage with their communities across diverse areas of council work and responsibility?

In interviews with Pia Smith, senior staff in several of the LGAs participating in the Generations Project said that traditional local government practices for consulting with their communities—such as public notices or information sessions—only reach a very limited ‘audience’. They also agreed that there is a ‘squeaky wheel syndrome’ in operation in that a limited number of people and organisations know how to get the attention of Council—often through their elected councilors. As Charters Towers Regional Council CEO James Gott put it, when you work for Council you need to make sure ‘you are not just listening to squeaky wheels but you are seeking out new commentary, other points of view’. James told the researchers that the Generations project in Charters Towers had prompted him to think about the difference between consultation and conversation:

I can go through an intricate and theoretically sound process with regards to consultation, talk to a whole lot of people and tick all the boxes with regards to consultation, say I have done all the things that need to be done, but never really commit myself to the organic engagement that was available to me, where you argue and you modify and you change and learn and develop.

Furthermore, a range of people working for the LGAs participating in the Generations Project told Pia Smith that public perception of the role of local government is often very limited and yet there is a tendency to blame Council whenever things go wrong with local services and facilities, even when they may not be the responsibility of the LGA. The problem with negative community perceptions of Council may have been most acute in Geelong where the local media had long run hostile campaigns to ‘expose’ corruption and inefficiencies. Furthermore, the ‘distance’ between Council and the community is probably greater in large urban communities—such as those in Geelong and Liverpool—than in smaller rural communities. Elected councilors may see it differently and Cr Barbara Abley in Geelong said that she thought it was a good thing that people in Geelong seemed to have ‘no trouble’ in expressing their thoughts forcefully to Council. However, a range of people working for the participating LGAs said that the community tends to get very annoyed at what they see as the shortcomings of Council and so they are sometimes even reluctant to tell people that they work for the local Council. As Meme Macdonald noted, there tends to be a widespread view within local communities that LGAs are reactive rather than proactive and that they tend to pursue rather narrow and selective agendas.

Of course, people working in areas such as arts and culture, recreation, and community development are likely to have different kinds of interactions with ‘the community’ than those working in areas such as planning and infrastructure. Some people are lucky enough to be involved in delivering programs and services that are popular with the community, rather than enforcing regulations, and community development workers normally see it as their responsibility to broaden the agendas and engagements

of Council. For example, Louise Hazelton and Kerry Craig, from the Community Development Unit in the Wangaratta Council, both said that they are constantly asking ‘who is missing from the table?’ when important issues are being discussed. However, as discussed earlier, this approach tends to focus on people’s needs and problems—in other words, a welfare approach—rather than the interesting and often neglected stories that they can tell. Kerry Craig subsequently said that there was ‘a lot of learning for me’ in the fascinating stories told by old people living on their own in Wangaratta’s By Myself project. However, the broader problem here may be that in shifting towards more ‘corporate’ practices and cultures—to enhance ‘professionalism’ and transparency—LGAs have come to see residents as ‘clients’ rather than people with interesting stories to tell.

6.2 Memory, heritage and stories

When Malcolm McKinnon was brought in to help develop the Generations project in Geelong in 2007 he was told that the emphasis was on ‘looking at how people deal with major change’ because the city of Geelong—both in its CBD and the surrounding areas—had undergone radical transformation in recent years. Malcolm said that his starting point was to think about ‘how memory and the stories that people tell about their places ... can provide a sense of orientation throughout that process of change’. He said that stories help people understand ‘what they have as a cultural resource ... for reinventing a new identity in the face of change in order to survive and have some kind of positive future’. Malcolm worked with Council staff and some elected councilors to identify particular communities to work in and he started by asking himself ‘What are issues that are controversial? Who are the people driving change? Who are the people who are most critical in these places at the moment?’ And ‘who will have some interesting things to say about those places ... [that provide] a valuable perspective on those places?’ He then began asking people in the community who might have an interesting story to tell, such as ‘the woman who runs a local newspaper in Barwon Heads’ who ‘gave me a list of a dozen names’. Of course, once you enter a community at this level there is no shortage of stories to collect and Malcolm had to use his experience and artistic sensibility to make his shortlist. He augmented the stories with archival material and when some of them

Uncle Vince Massey
at the Opening
ceremony of the
Yarning Circle,
Lissner Park,
Charters Towers »
Photo: Su McLennan



were shown at the well-attended launch of the Memory Bank Project held at the National Wool Museum in Geelong in 2008, people were amazed at seeing stories that seemed to have been forgotten and some of the film footage brought tears to the eyes of some of the older residents.

Malcolm McKinnon in Geelong and Robin Laurie in Wangaratta were quickly able to demonstrate the power of good storytelling. Malcolm said that soon after he started working in Geelong Di Shaw arranged for him to present a workshop on storytelling for some senior Council staff and he said the response to the workshop was very positive indeed. Malcolm said that in his work in Geelong he 'deliberately sought out people who would characteristically not be heard, people who aren't going to come along to community consultation forums that Council would ... run'. As an example, Malcolm said he was determined to get some stories from teenagers living in the 'disregarded' 'industrial backblocks' of Geelong's northern suburbs and he managed to capture the story of a rather troubled young man who only finds peace when he goes fishing in a spot that is his own 'little bit of paradise'. Stories like this, Malcolm noted, help people working in a large organisation to get an insight into what life is like for people living in rather neglected part of their city. Malcolm said that bringing people together to collect and share stories can have a 'classic community development component' because a 'cross-fertilisation' happens when people see how differently people think about their stories and identities.

Perhaps the thing about stories is that they can prompt discussion and even dialogue without a need for debate or resolution. They tend to be seen as a 'gift' from the person telling the story — perhaps with the help of a skilled storyteller — and there is a clear understanding that they will mean different things to different people. Rather than giving neglected people a 'seat at the table' they enable all sorts of people to talk from their own experience in a way that can promote reflection rather than reaction. Many stories were collected across the range of Generations projects in Wangaratta and they have been put into circulation in a range of ways — from photo exhibitions (such as the *By Myself* project, carried out by lead artist Ruth Maddison and local mentored artists Cate Long and Kelvin Ford) to the 'digital quilt' that was circulating around a range of public spaces. Many of them were very 'touching' and some were told by people who passed away while the stories were in circulation. In sum, they can certainly shift public perception about the contribution that older people can make to a broader sense of community. Furthermore, as interviews with a range of participants in the Wangaratta projects showed, the projects also helped to shift public perceptions of a Council that initiated this way of sharing community stories. Similarly, a range of participants in the projects related to *Connecting Identities* in Geelong also said that they were pleasantly surprised to learn that the projects had been initiated and sponsored by Geelong Council. This suggests that this kind of proactive work by Council can challenge some negative community perceptions of local government in general and the local Council in particular.

By contrast to the situation in Wangaratta and Geelong *Refill* in Liverpool sought to find new ways of telling stories that might appeal to young people from rather 'marginalised' communities. That is why it was critical to have artists who have previously worked with 'marginalised' young people to lead the project and why such artists used 'new media' for storytelling. A range of the students from Miller Technical High School who participated in a number of the activities run by people such as Khaled Sabsabi, Simon Menzies and the artists from *Curious* told Pia Smith that they had been encouraged to

use their own voice—whether it be in creating Hip Hop performance or in making a short film about their experiences at Miller Technology. Several participants said they were amazed to find that there were so many ways in which they could represent their experiences and they were also amazed to find that other people were interested in their experiences, especially when they began to create exhibitions and performances from late 2008 onwards. One participant, Khaled Mariam—who had a key role in a short film made by the students—said that he had become quite famous in his own community after the film had been screened at a couple of exhibitions, noting that ‘when people come and see our names everywhere, our artworks, we get more famous in the community’. Students were able to display and perform their work at exhibitions held at the PCYC in Miller, at the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre and at the *ReGenerating Community* conference in Melbourne. Some of them had opportunities to participate in other gigs locally and elsewhere in Sydney. Several of the participants told Pia Smith that they enjoyed the experience so much that they definitely wanted to continue with similar artistic work in the future. The MEB (Middle Eastern Boys) Hip Hop ensemble formed during the project was able to use a professional recording studio to record their first track, *Pain*, and performed at a number of public gigs in 2009. As discussed earlier, the original approach for selecting a topic and ‘target group’ for the Generations project in Liverpool was rather welfare-oriented, but the outcomes should have convinced people working in a range of Council departments that there are other ways to think about the capabilities of people living in ‘problematic’ communities, and other ways to understand what is important to them. Unfortunately, very few people working for Council had direct exposure to the project and its great outcomes, and the opportunities to learn new techniques for engaging with ‘problem communities’ were largely missed.

6.3 Enabling people to use their voices

Community development practice often pursues the explicit goal of ‘giving voice’ to marginalised people and communities. The Generations projects in Liverpool, Wangaratta and Geelong suggest that it might be better to think about ways to create spaces in which people can ‘use their voices’ to tell stories that can move, tantalise or even challenge—in relatively non-confrontational ways—other people who might live in the same broader community. All local communities are more complex and multilayered than they might at first appear. The *Connecting Identities* project in Geelong set out to celebrate the diversity of local communities and sub-cultures that make up ‘greater Geelong’ but even the organisers were surprised by the extraordinary array of people and groups who participated in the Mouth to Mountain journey. The project in Charters Towers sought to bring together communities—across three generations—who have become increasingly segregated over the last 30 years or so, yet there is no such thing as a single Aboriginal community in such a large area and the organisers of the project learnt to think more flexibly about how to create a diversity of spaces in which people of different generations and groups could come together to share their representations of people and places. As discussed earlier, the project outcomes in Charters Towers might have been more modest than expected after the project had to change tack to find new entry points into the complex community. However, as Mayor Ben Callcott put it, ‘More people in the street can simply acknowledge each other on a first-name basis [so] something has begun’. This was achieved by shifting the emphasis from ‘problems’ and conflicting interests to an exploration of shared experiences that could be understood and represented differently.

According to the CEO of Charters Towers Regional Council, James Gott, the Generations project changed tack from the promotion of dialogue to the fostering of many conversations, or a 'multilogue'. Of course, an interactive conversational approach is likely to slow down processes of consultation but the experience of the Generations project in Charters Towers might suggest that it is better to take time to build some trust and find secure common ground rather than 'tick all the boxes' in order to 'say that things are done', as James Gott put it.

6.4 Ways of organising community input

As discussed in regard to Key Research Question 1, Latrobe Council adopted a fairly conventional local government approach in setting up its local Generations project. It established the 'project control group' within Council and a 'community reference group' to consult with 'the community'. In part, the community reference group was seen as a way of engaging with representatives of organisations that could become key 'stakeholders' in the unfolding project and this worked to the extent that a major regional credit union sponsored project activities and the General Manager of Powerworks put Alison Taylor and Amanda Owen in touch with Mercedes Ramirez at SPAusnet (as discussed in regard to Key Research Question 2). However, the role of the community reference group was rather passive and it was mainly used as a sounding board for ideas developed by the project control group. It was more like a consultation process than an engagement process. Local sculptor and installation artist Shaun Gardner joined the community reference group early and he helped to get the 'Regenerators' street theatre group going. However, he told Pia Smith that he had to play a waiting game to see if there would be other project proposals that would interest him. Not surprisingly, attendance at meetings of the community reference group fell away after the early meetings and in 2008, Alison and Amanda decided that it had fulfilled its purpose.

Something similar happened in Wangaratta in regard to a community reference group that was established at the beginning of the local *Generations* project: it fizzled out after the first year. However, the difference was that some people from the reference group—such as Ian Poole from TAFE—had become actively involved in several Generations initiatives and Robin Laurie and Maz McGann had found ways to work with a range of community-based organisations in the development of projects and initiatives. In this case, the consultation phase



Mosaic detail from the Yarning Circle, Lissner Park, Charters Towers
Photo: Su McLennan



Jai Cummings and Indigenous participants at the launch of the Yarning Circle, Lissner Park, Charters Towers
Photo: Su McLennan

quickly morphed into a phase of active collaborations with a wide range of people and organisations. In other words, there was a clear transition from consultation to active engagement.

In the case of Wangaratta, the broader reference group was replaced by more specific project committees and the engagement process spilled out to the consolidation or creation of networks. For example, Maz McGann set up a steering committee of four key organisations with an interest in heritage to work on the Heritage Festival and the Heritage Idol project. A key person on this committee was Wangaratta Library manager Loueen Twyford and she told Pia Smith that the project steering committee worked so well that she developed strong new partnerships with groups such as the Family History Group and the El Dorado museum (in the small town of El Dorado). 'I think we have made lasting links, so I think we will work together outside this project easily', Loueen said. She felt the Heritage Festival and other Generations activities had really helped to consolidate the library as an important 'hub of the community' and she noted that 'people are starting to come in' and say 'I've got this great idea, can I come in and do a talk in the library?' or 'Can I display my work?' Like Ian Poole from TAFE, Loueen Twyford has served on the Council's Section 86 Arts, Culture and Heritage Advisory Committee and she said that the Generations project had created new networks for that committee as well. Another person who was convinced by Maz McGann to serve on the steering committee for the Heritage Festival was 79-year-old Val Gleeson from the Historical Society, whose father and husband had both been mayors for three terms each. Val herself was an elected councillor for eight years. Val said she is reluctant to attend meetings because 'I am pretty busy' but she said that Maz can be 'pretty persuasive' and she ended up enjoying the project immensely. The festival 'far exceeded our expectations', she suggested and since the festival she had been saying to people she knows: 'you must not let this go, keep it going, it is wonderful for so many facets of Wangaratta and district'. Val suggested that people in Wangaratta 'don't like change very much' but the *Generations* project should have given Council some ideas about how to talk about changes that could benefit the community.

6.5 Creative engagement

It needs to be noted that the experience of Generations projects suggest that it might take something innovative or creative to convince people and organisations of the need to engage more actively with each other. Interviews with project participants in both Wangaratta and Geelong make it clear that people were attracted by the boldness and creativity of the projects that were presented to them. They were also attracted by the subtle sense of humour that Robin Laurie and Meme Macdonald were able to embed in their projects and in Geelong there was great appeal in the sense of occasion and ritual grandeur of the Mouth to Mountain journey. In Charters Towers, the engagement of Gudjala artist Patsy Dallachy began to give the project more artistic appeal and momentum once her workshops began in earnest, and in Latrobe the *Green Expectations* project began to stimulate more public discussion about the issues involved after it became 'the Grid project' and gained more artistic momentum under the artistic direction of Stefanie Robinson. In particular, the creation of the pylon tree, with people's messages inscribed on its 'leaves', and planning for the community parade in November 2009 began to give the project and its aims a much higher profile within the community. As discussed above, the exhibitions and performances of the students involved with *Refill* at Miller Technical High School certainly created some possibilities for 'outsiders' to rethink the ways they might engage with the community in and around Miller. At

the same time, Year 7 Aboriginal student at Miller Tech Reece Doyle wrote of how he had been inspired by two Aboriginal artists working on *Refill*, visual artist Steve Barton and Aboriginal Hip Hop artist SieOne (Simon Menzies) for the *My Deadly Hero* writing competition run by the *Deadly VIBE* magazine, and he became the youngest member of the Community 2168 Youth Committee, initially established by Council, as a youth representative. In other words, Reece had been inspired to engage with his broader community.

In part, the most successful Generations projects were focused on simply creating spaces in which people could create and share their stories of their lived experience. However, it can't be just a matter of collecting the stories because thought also has to be given to the ways in which they might be presented to a wide audience. With big improvements in relevant technologies, digital storytelling has become very popular in Australia. However the question becomes what can you do with hundreds of individual stories after they have been collected in this way? The Generations projects in Wangaratta and Geelong demonstrated some ways to link digital storytelling to broader conversations within communities—for example, the challenges posed by an ageing community. They also showed how the artistic use of digital stories can create both community events at which the stories are presented in some interesting ways (as with the launch of the Memory Bank in Geelong) and ongoing opportunities for people living in a community to reflect on the experiences of other community members made available through accessible stories (as with Wangaratta's 'digital quilt'). In other words it is the sharing of stories that turns them from expressions of individual experience to reflections on community life.

6.6 Creating inclusive communities

In our review of the literature in chapter 3, we noted that a sense of local community may not even exist in the multilayered contemporary world unless efforts are made to create community and publicly celebrate its existence. For this reason, LGAs who see the need to build cohesive—in other words, less divided—local communities cannot simply consult people who already have a sense of community but rather find ways to create a stronger and more inclusive sense of community. Individuals can hardly 'represent' communities if they are barely evident or badly divided and this is why the initiative of the Blair Labour government in the UK to put 'representatives' of 'disadvantaged communities' onto the boards of government and semi-governmental agencies failed. LGAs should learn from this in understanding that people can only represent their communities wherever a clear sense of community exists. Furthermore, in the absence of an inclusive sense of community, narrow consultation process with a narrow range of people, can exacerbate differences rather than help to find common ground. Community consultation might better be seen, then, as the 'art' of creating a more inclusive sense of community rather than a rather mechanical process of box-ticking, as described by Charters Towers CEO James Gott.

As already discussed, the local Generations projects tackled some issues that tend to divide local communities. As also discussed, senior people in the Charters Towers Regional Council felt it had been quite an achievement for the project there to get some indigenous and non-indigenous people talking to each other in more respectful ways. The project in Latrobe appears to have been successful in getting people working within the power industry and people in the wider community who might be concerned about the future for their children sharing their concerns and their hopes for the future of the community. As SPAusnet's Mercedes Ramirez suggested, in reflecting on that experience,

art can create a 'new vocabulary' for dialogue. Miller Technical High School teacher Sally Atkins said that Arabic and indigenous students in the school tend to avoid each other and it had been a real challenge to get indigenous students into workshops that tended to be dominated by the Arabic students. However, there were some modest, yet ground-breaking, successes in fostering creative collaborations across this divide. In tackling some rather chronic social divides, the success of the local Generations projects should be measured in terms of their capacity to make a difference where other forms of 'intervention' have clearly failed. In such circumstances modest successes can be seen as a considerable achievement but they might be no more than 'beginnings' that will need further attention if they are not to wither and die. They should be seen as the beginnings of a process of engagement and, as James Gott from Charters Towers suggested, it might be important for LGAs to understand that these ways of generating engagement are focused on processes and not outcomes.

The Animating Democracy movement in the USA has put great emphasis on the capacity of community art to foster dialogue in local communities that are already divided or potentially divided and there are many examples of projects that have this aim highlighted on the Animating Democracy website. This works when art projects foster self-expression by individuals or groups of people rather than commentary on how others might behave and artistic expressions of lived experience can be seen as something that does not require commentary or debate. Artistic projects can encourage people to be more open to the ways in which other people represent their lived experience and this can help to challenge negative prejudices. There is clear evidence to say that a wide range of the Generations projects helped to reframe the way that people thought about other people or groups of people in their local community. There are clear lessons in this for LGAs wanting to foster dialogue rather than divisive debate, by putting the emphasis on listening to the way that other people represent their lived experience. Experienced community cultural development workers involved with the Generations projects demonstrated that there are many techniques that can be used to achieve this aim.

6.7 A stronger sense of belonging

It was interesting to note that a number of LGA staff—especially in Geelong—told Pia Smith that their participation in the local Generations projects had given them a stronger sense of belonging to the communities in which they live and work. Perhaps this reflects the fact that the relatively recent emphasis on the 'professionalism' of LGAs has fostered a sense that Council staff are separate—at 'arm's length'—from the communities in which they live, especially if they live in the area of the Council they work for. While it is clearly important to maintain a degree of 'professional distance' there is an equal danger in deepening a 'them and us' separation between Council and community. A sense of belonging to an inclusive community that aims to resolve conflicts in respectful ways might actually help Council staff to maintain 'professional distance' without losing their capacity to really understand how the conflicts or concerns have emerged. In other words, a renewed sense of belonging to community can increase empathy without reducing the capacity to act fairly and respectfully within the community.

Another thing that emerged most clearly in Geelong was the suggestion that the Generations project had enabled Council staff to think of Council itself as being a fairly large and complex community of people. Of course, Geelong Council is a large organisation, with almost 2000 members of staff, and the setting up of the broadly based project working group and advisory committee within Council meant that more

was done here than anywhere else to properly embed the project within the Council organisation. *Connecting Identities* Artistic Director Meme Macdonald said that it really helped her, as an outsider, to think of Council as a community with its own rather unconscious culture and agreed ways of working. From the 'other side of the fence', Duncan Esler, who played an increasingly significant role as a project leader within Council, said that the project had given him a new appreciation of the organisation as a whole. Duncan said he came to the realisation that the Council is 'actually a large community of 2000 people' and when you have so many people 'trying to work together with all the excitement and challenges that that involves' you need a better understanding of how all the diverse elements of the organisation work and you need to appreciate that the 'community members are extremely diverse in their needs'. Bringing artists to work inside Council gave Duncan a better appreciation of what is often taken for granted within the Council community and a better appreciation of how to address the needs and concerns of people working in other sections of Council. As an example, Duncan mentioned that people working in the 'marketing and events unit' are very attached to the concept of 'branding' while that word tends to be 'very scary' and 'soulless' for artists. At first the marketing people wanted to impose rather severe constraints on things such as logos and wording within project publicity but patient dialogue meant that some of these constraints were loosened up and in the end Duncan said that 'the guys [from marketing] who were working on the website came up with some beautiful imagery ... [and] a superb wordmark that was extremely iconic'. Duncan said that when he made it clear to the people in marketing that he understood their need to work within clear and negotiated guidelines they became more open to innovation and they undoubtedly drew inspiration from artists working on the Generations project and made significant creative contributions themselves. As in broader community settings, a focus on creative collaborations can foster dialogue rather than conflict within the community of Council.

6.8 Community as a means of local government

As mentioned in the review of literature in chapter 2, there has been a growing perception that western democracies have been struggling to sustain the engagement of their citizens and, in this context, there has been considerable discussion about how to increase 'civic participation' or 'civic engagement', particularly at the level of local government. However, these are rather flat terms that also frame the challenge for local democracy in a rather negative way. The term 'animating democracy'—used with some success in the USA—has more appeal but in this report we are arguing that the challenge for local government is nothing less than the creation, and constant recreation, of inclusive and dynamic communities. This gives a more creative edge to the challenge of 'animating democracy' and the local Generations projects have certainly suggested some artistic ways to create a more robust and inclusive sense of community.

In many ways, Key Research Question 3 relates to the least difficult challenge for the local Generations projects. Finding interesting and creative ways to 'engage' communities of people has essentially been the *raison d'être* of the community art movement over the last 30 to 40 years. The capacity of 'good' community art to stimulate and motivate people and the capacity of creative community events to generate a stronger sense of community are well known and this probably explains why local government has shown an increasing willingness to embrace community art, or community cultural development, over the last 10 to 20 years. The challenge now is to demonstrate that community art is not just good for the community but good for local governance as well. In other words,

the challenge is to create a link between the proven capacity of community art to engage communities and the need of LGAs to find better ways to engage communities in order to constantly create a stronger sense of community. As a whole, the local Generations projects have once again demonstrated that good community art projects can lift morale and open up some new possibilities for engagement. The key principles of good practice have been discussed above, without suggesting that there is a simple or single 'recipe' for success. However, the real challenge now is to see if LGAs are willing to make the creation of community a high enough priority and if they then have the patience and skill to take advantage of small beginnings.

7. The Evidence for Good Practice

7.1 Introduction

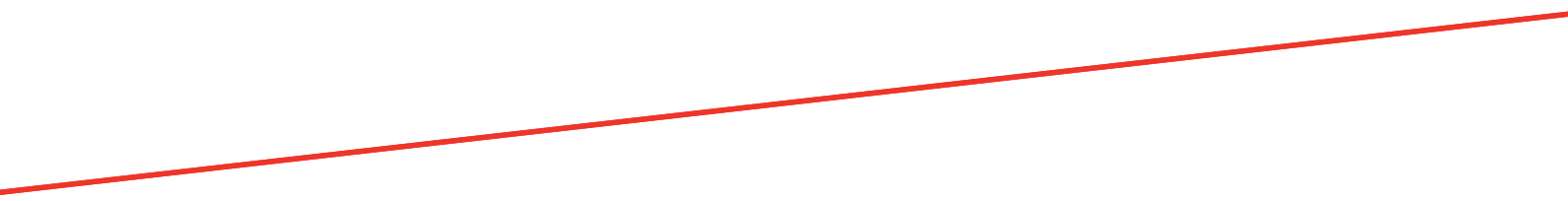
As mentioned in discussion of Key Research Question 1 in chapter 6, the authors of this report have previously written on the dangers of adopting an excessively ‘instrumental’ understanding of the social impacts of community art (see Mulligan and Smith 2007). This line of argument does not dismiss the use of community art as a ‘tool’ that can have some clear and fairly predictable outcomes. However, it suggests that such outcomes are like the tip of an iceberg because there are many less overt, more ‘intrinsic’, outcomes that can be very hard to detect—at least in the short-term—let alone measure. The argument suggests that the social impacts of good practice in community art can be unpredictable, indirect and slow-burning. It also suggests that a profound impact on individual people could have much more enduring benefit than a more ephemeral impact on a greater number of people and this is why a purely quantitative assessment of the impacts of community art projects and programs is not very useful and could, indeed, be misleading.

The authors of this report have joined with others (see Mulligan et al 2006) in arguing that it has not been very useful to counterpose ‘extrinsic’ and ‘intrinsic’ outcomes in regard to the social impact of art because these categories of outcome can overlap and intersect with each other. However, we have suggested that there has been too much emphasis on ‘extrinsic’ or measurable evidence to assess the impact of ‘socially engaged’ art and it has become very important to broaden our understanding of what constitutes the ‘evidence’ for good practice. As the mathematician Albert Einstein once said, the things that can be counted often count for little while the things that matter most often can’t be counted. Furthermore, the authors have argued, a narrow, rather linear, conception of causality—in other words, the exploration of linkages between cause and effect—will fail to capture all the indirect, unpredictable, unconscious and slow-burning impacts that an engagement with artistic practices can have for individuals and communities of people (Mulligan and Smith 2007).

This chapter includes a discussion that relates developments in community cultural development to broader trends and discourses within art because this provides a broader grounding for what might be considered good practice.

7.2 Art as the goal not the means

As already mentioned in chapter 7, the Artistic Director for the *Connecting Identities* project in Geelong, Meme Macdonald, has argued that you don’t have to wait for measurable ‘outcomes’ to know when art is having a ‘transformational’ impact on people who are engaging with it and so the practice of art should be ‘the destination’ rather than a means to an end. Of course, you can always refine your practice, and learn from past experience, but Meme Macdonald suggested that the actual practice of art will have a ‘ripple effect’ on many levels that can be difficult to predict. Meme suggested that when you treat art as being ‘secondary to achieving other things’ then the practice and the outcomes will both suffer. Of course, it is important to point out that Meme is an experienced and skilled community art practitioner and she was surrounded by other skilled artists in the Geelong project. As Generations Project initiator Anne Dunn told Pia Smith in 2007, there are ‘countless examples of high quality [community art] projects led by skilled practitioners who fully understand what they can achieve’ and so



the focus needs to shift to ways of better taking advantage of the ‘wonderful things’ that such people can do for local communities. As suggested earlier, the number of skilled community art practitioners has undoubtedly grown in Australia over the last 10 to 20 years but that number is still limited because there are very few ‘career paths’ for such practitioners and it is hard to sustain the practice when such people are undervalued in terms of pay and other forms of acknowledgement. Those who have accumulated experience and honed their skills for the practice rarely get a chance to mentor new or emerging practitioners and so it is still crucially important to understand the ‘physiology’ of good practice and find ways to communicate lessons and insights.

7.3 Understanding new ‘tools’

An aim of the Generations Project was to give more people working in local government—including people working at senior levels—an opportunity to directly experience the work of experienced and skilled community art practitioners. As already discussed in chapter 7, the opportunities for this kind of direct experience varied enormously across the five local projects, with the projects in Geelong and Wangaratta providing the best opportunities. Yet, even when the local projects struggled for artistic momentum, some of the Council leaders acknowledged that they were encountering ‘tools’ and processes that were unfamiliar to them. As Charters Towers Regional Council CEO James Gott put it, local government is much more familiar with ‘quantitative’ rather than ‘qualitative’ tools and he thought that the Generations Project had demonstrated that ‘qualitative tools’ can sometimes do things that are beyond the scope of the more familiar ‘quantitative tools’. James Gott went on to say that the Generations Project in Charters Towers had helped him understand more clearly that it is sometimes very important to focus on good processes rather than outcomes, especially when trying to tackle difficult and sensitive issues.

The distinction that James Gott has drawn between ‘qualitative’ and ‘quantitative’ tools reflects, of course, a much longer discussion within the social sciences about the distinction between quantitative and qualitative social research. There has been a huge growth in the literature on ‘qualitative research’ over the last 10 to 15 years and university libraries and bookshops have begun spilling over with countless ‘manuals’ on how to do qualitative research. Indeed, at a time when there is still an emphasis on using ‘quantitative methods’ for collecting the evidence needed to assess social policy impacts, many areas of social research are now favouring qualitative research methods and methodologies. As suggested in chapter 2, it seems pointless to counterpose quantitative and qualitative research because all research methods have their strengths and weaknesses and this makes it preferable to use a combination of methods that can complement each other in regard to their strengths and weaknesses. The research methodology used for our research on the Generations projects can offer some insights into ways of collecting the ‘evidence’ regarding good practice in community cultural development and we will begin the discussion below on that point. Some methods for collecting evidence can be built into the practice itself and it is certainly important to constantly monitor and assess CCD projects and programs in order to learn from experience and refine the practice.

It is important to note that when you use a range of quantitative and qualitative ‘tools’ for collecting data that can be turned into evidence you will end up with different forms of evidence. For example, quantitative surveys yield an analysis of a set of statistics. In working with stories you will end up with the stories themselves and interpretations of those stories, as evidence. Similarly, photonarrative techniques will yield both images and some commentary on the selection of images. Lengthy semi-structured interviews will yield lengthy transcripts which can be analysed in a fairly structured way using appropriate computer software or in a more interpretive way by ‘interrogating’ the transcripts with particular questions or topics of research in mind. Quantitative tools allow for broad sampling but produce fairly shallow evidence. Qualitative tools produce rich and multilayered data for interpretation but can be biased in terms of sampling. Because each tool has its strengths and weaknesses in terms of the data and evidence it will yield it is good to use a combination of tools. In social research, the principle of ‘triangulation’ suggests that is highly desirable to use three ways of examining the question/topic/phenomenon that you are exploring. Time and funding constraints may make this unattainable but it is certainly good to collect different forms of evidence in regard to any evaluation of practice. The discussion below is focused on the research methods used in this study and it aims to introduce some useful tools for the collection of diverse forms of evidence.

Following the discussion about ways of collecting the ‘evidence’ needed to constantly assess and refine CCD practice within LGAs, we will return to the discussion of what can be learnt by closely observing the ways in which good practitioners work. The Generations Project has offered a rare opportunity to track the ways in which some very experienced practitioners have worked over a significant period of time—from project development to implementation. It has also offered the opportunity to see how such practitioners might rise to a new challenge in terms of working within the culture of local government and in trying to tackle some rather daunting social concerns.

7.4 Methods for collecting evidence of effectiveness

As already indicated, there is a vast body of literature about quantitative and qualitative research methods and methodologies. There is probably more involved in learning how to use any one method well than most people realise and there can be no substitute for practice in learning how to use each and every technique. In particular, it is critically important that the ‘data’ collected is in a form that can be clearly analysed and so data collection must be linked to a process of analysis, which can turn the data into evidence. As mentioned above, it is good to use more than one method of data collection; even to ‘triangulate’ forms of data and evidence when possible. However, many considerations come into play in knowing when and how to use a particular method for collecting data.

Perhaps the most obvious—and ubiquitous—tool for collecting data on the impact of a community art project or program is a survey of participants. This will always be an important way of ‘sampling’ the experience of those for whom a project or program may have been designed and checking the perceptions of participants against the assumptions of the project/program designers. Surveys are easy to implement and can be used repeatedly. It is important to ensure that the questions asked can evoke clear and unambiguous responses and it may be wise to get expert opinion on this. Of course, small numbers mean that the statistical analysis of the responses is subject to various kinds of distortions and so small surveys are not very ‘robust’ in terms of what they reveal. We could not implement a single ‘participant survey’ for the local Generations

projects because they varied so much in target audiences and forms of participation. Such surveys could have been implemented at the level of particular projects or activities and this would generate useful information for the LGAs sponsoring such projects and activities. We were, however, able to design a survey of Council staff in four of the five participating LGAs in order to relate experience with the local project to the overall aims of the national project. The numbers of respondents meant that caution needed to be applied in interpreting the results and on its own the survey would not have been very reliable or incisive. However, it did serve to confirm some impressions gained by other ways of assessing project initiatives and it posed some questions that could be explored in examining the qualitative data that was collected by other means. In other words, the survey of Council staff was useful as an indication of things that might require further exploration and so it worked well in combination with qualitative research methods that could explore experiences in much greater depth.

For some of the participating LGAs the staff survey was a bit premature in that major events related to the local project were yet to occur. It would be interesting to repeat the same survey after all the activities have been completed. 'Outside' researchers rarely get the opportunity to conduct follow-up surveys but LGAs do not face the same constraints in regard to timing.

As 'outside researchers' we faced a similar problem of timing in regard to the technique of collecting stories related to community cultural development 'interventions'. In conducting similar research for VicHealth—as presented in the *Creating Community* report (Mulligan et al 2006)—we made extensive use of 'found stories' relating to past practices in community art and community celebrations. It was much more difficult to find stories related to the local Generations projects. In part, this might reflect the fact that the projects were brought into the community in a fairly 'artificial' way—as discussed earlier. However, it might also reflect the fact that there had not been enough time for such stories to emerge organically by the time the research was completed. The difference is that in the VicHealth project we were examining past practice and in the Generations project we were looking at unfolding practice. This suggests that stories related to the Generations projects are yet to emerge and there could be an opportunity to collect and analyse such stories at a later time.

As already mentioned in chapter 2, our research on the Generations Project relied most heavily on a wide array of 'strategic' interviews and 'response' interviews. We prefer to use the term 'strategic conversation' rather than 'strategic interview' in order to highlight the fact that there is a very active role for the interviewer in the way the conversation unfolds. Clearly, the interviewer evokes certain kinds of responses in the way that questions are posed or in the direction the conversation takes and so it is probably better to openly acknowledge that such interviews are not designed to capture 'objective' responses from the interviewee but rather to allow an 'inter-subjective' exploration of experience. As a technique, these interviews can be described as 'semi-structured' interviews which can cover set topics and questions and also veer off in some unexpected directions. However, in acknowledging that the exploration is 'inter-subjective' we situate this method in the 'hermeneutic' research tradition that was principally pioneered by German philosopher Martin Heidegger. We also borrow from the 'critical theory' most closely associated with the work of Jurgen Habermas in that we lead interviewees through a cycle of reflection on actual, rather than anticipated, experience. It is not enough to simply acknowledge that qualitative research often relies on subjective interpretation of experience because the researcher must develop the capacity to take

some 'critical distance' in order to become more conscious of how subjective judgements are influencing the interpretations—a process that is sometimes called 'metacognition'.

In conducting lengthy 'strategic conversations' with practitioners involved in community cultural development—for both the Generations Project and the foregoing VicHealth research—we were often told that the experience had been valuable for the practitioners because they rarely had the opportunity to reflect so systematically and openly on their experience and practice. Interview transcripts help to show how the conversations were 'structured' and the method can clearly be learnt. It is important to note that care must be taken to ensure that the conversations can be both relaxed and reflective. Such conversations will generate lengthy transcripts and prior thought must be given to the process of analysis—for example, 'mining' the transcripts in order to address specific research questions or topics.

In our research 'strategic conversations' are held with people who have been most closely involved in the design and implantation of projects and activities. As mentioned in chapter 2, we were also able to conduct a wide range of shorter 'response interviews' with people who were less centrally involved in project design and implementation and even shorter interviews with a range of 'participants'. Response interviews and participant interviews clearly provide an opportunity to cross-check claims made in the 'strategic conversations' by 'key players'. At the same time, they often reveal some unexpected 'outcomes' that were not anticipated, or even noticed, by project initiators. Transcripts of response and participant interviews can also be 'interrogated' in relation to research questions or topics and the best results are probably achieved when the 'analyst' can sit with all the compiled transcripts in order to retain a sense of all the perspectives that have been collected in relation to particular experiences or questions.

Our research on the Generations Project suggests that people who are involved in designing and implementing CCD projects would benefit enormously from having time to properly reflect on their experiences. Some of our interviewing techniques could help to deepen that reflection and generate 'data' for further analysis. Furthermore, participant interviews—perhaps in the form of 'vox pop' interviews—could be incorporated into the design of many community art projects.

For the research conducted for VicHealth (Mulligan et al 2006) we were able to use a photonarrative technique that we were not able to use in relation to the Generations Project. This technique revolves around getting people to take photographs that they see as being related to a particular topic or question followed by a discussion of the images they have captured and what they mean to the photographer. This technique is very useful for delving into rather unconscious or difficult to articulate experiences and perceptions of experience. It can also be a good technique for getting 'data' from people who may not be otherwise consulted in regard to an issue or topic (for example, the perspective of young people on the nature of the communities in which they live). A strength of the technique is that it can generate data in the form of images as well as words and evocative images—like rich stories—can be interpreted in a range of ways by different people. It is not hard to imagine how photonarrative techniques could be incorporated into the design of many community art projects and activities.

There are, of course, many qualitative research methods that we have not used in our research and we have confined this discussion to techniques that we have used, often on many occasions. It is better to use a few techniques well than to use more techniques poorly and they all require practice. Hopefully, however, we have been able

to demonstrate that there are many tools that can be used to collect 'evidence' as to what constitutes good practice in CCD and many of them can be incorporated into cycles of project design and evaluation.

7.5 Understanding the 'physiology' of good practice

Medical practitioners know that it is not enough to study charts and books to learn how complex human bodies work. Nor is it enough to dissect bodies that are no longer functioning. You can learn much from the anatomy of body parts—particularly when they can be observed in functioning order. But the anatomy of the brain does not tell us much about how people think or feel. We need to observe the integrated physiology of a living person—to see how that person might react in different circumstances—to understand 'being' (to borrow the term popularised by Martin Heidegger).

In conducting research on community art practice across four diverse Victorian communities for VicHealth (see Mulligan et al 2006) we reached the conclusion that there are many skilful practitioners whose work has not attracted the interest it deserves. Instead of focusing entirely on projects and activities we tried to look at the work of good practitioners and gain a better understanding of what good practice looks like. The Generations Project has given us an even better opportunity to closely observe the work of some very experienced and skillful CCD practitioners, over a period of three years. In particular, we can single out the work of Meme Macdonald, Robin Laurie, Malcolm McKinnon, Khaled Sabsabi, Simon Menzies, and a group of artists working for Curious Works. To a lesser extent—because her involvement began much later than the aforementioned people—we have been able to observe the work of Stefanie Robinson and we were able to interview a person she worked with previously in the Whittlesea LGA, Mahony Kiely. We have already discussed the work of such practitioners in relation to key research questions in chapters 6, 7, and 8. Our intention here is to draw from their ways of working in order to pick out some key operating principles of good practice in community cultural development. This will certainly not be a comprehensive analysis and the transcripts of interviews with many of the people mentioned contain many other insights that will escape our attention here. Our rather modest aim here is to foster a deeper understanding among people working in local government regarding the 'physiology' of good practice in this rather complex and mercurial field of work. The discussion below will make it clear that there is no single 'recipe' for replicating good practice but there is much to be learnt from watching good practitioners at work.

The first point to note may be that good CCD practitioners develop ways to establish 'points of engagement' with the communities in which they are seeking to work. Arabic-speaking Aboriginal Hip Hop artist Simon Menzies commented that the project at Miller Technical High School was almost designed for him and the Arabic and indigenous students could easily identify with him and feel inspired about what he had achieved as an artist. Other artists working in *Refill* also had past experience working with the 'target audiences' for the project and they were able to establish a quick and easy rapport with the students. By contrast Robin Laurie admitted that she initially struggled to think of what she might have in common with elderly people living in the Wangaratta area and Malcolm McKinnon has said that his interest in people living in diverse local communities in the Geelong area was more professional than related to any longer-term interest in these communities. However, both Robin and Malcolm have an obvious interest in people and their stories and they have clearly developed a strong capacity for talking to people about their stories. Robin told the researchers that she always starts

with her 'big ears' phase and many people who participated in the Generations projects in Wangaratta commented that she was a very good listener. Similarly, a range of people involved in the Mouth to Mountain journey in Geelong told Pia Smith that Meme Macdonald was clearly interested in their views and ideas about how to ensure that the relay would really reflect the character of the diverse local communities and she was able to establish a strong personal rapport with a wide range of people who were asked to play significant roles in the various stages of the long journey.

The work of Robin Laurie and Meme Macdonald, in particular, suggests that good CCD practitioners are not only interested in establishing points of engagement with people living in the communities in which they are working but that they are keen to constantly check that their 'reading' of the local communities is sufficiently incisive to ensure that artistic expressions of community life will pleasantly surprise the people they are working with. This is a form of community engagement that is ongoing rather than ever completed and this helps to explain why Stefanie Robinson was keen to re-establish some kind of community consultation forum when she started working in the project at Latrobe. Perhaps the idea of a new group would not have worked anyway and Stefanie found other ways to consult people and community groups about her ideas. However, she clearly felt the need for an ongoing form of engagement.

Above all, it would seem, skilled community cultural development practitioners are driven by a rather relentless curiosity about people and how they interact with other people to create communities. In the Generations projects this also related to an interest in places and, to a varying degree, the history of those places.

A starting point for wanting to engage people in artistic practices is probably an underlying belief in the inherent worth of all people and in the way that artistic self-expression can make them more interesting to other people. Out of this flows an interest in the way that people might interact with each other to create a shared sense of identity and belonging. This is in line with what Gerard Delanty (2003) and others have said about creating a sense of community in the contemporary world and an interest in the creative potential of human interactions is, therefore, related to an interest in the creation of community. Experienced CCD practitioners understand that community is an act of collaborative creation; an attempt—no matter how imperfect—to articulate a shared sense of identity and belonging. All the practitioners mentioned above showed a clear interest in moving from the articulation of individual stories to an affirmation of community. In wanting to create a sense of community that is rooted in creative self-expression, it might be said that such practitioners are driven by a deep-seated humanitarian ethos. They certainly show an unshakeable belief in the idea that creative collaborations can bring out the best in people and can help people put aside old prejudices and resentments to find what they have in common with other human beings.

Robin Laurie, Meme Macdonald and Stefanie Robinson all showed a strong interest in working with 'found ideas' and unrealised hopes and they were able to draw on different modes of artistic expression to turn some of these into activities that could resonate with a wide 'audience'. Many of the Wangaratta projects involved an artistic enhancement of existing ideas and hopes and Robin knew when to bring in outside artists to turn ideas into innovative and appealing projects. Stefanie Robinson brought in a skilled chorister to enhance the capacity and confidence of the Coal Valley Men's Chorus—in the tradition of Welsh male choirs—and she found artistic ways to add meaning to the selection of a tree as the metaphor for thinking about what the future might hold. A capacity to work with, and enhance, what you find suggests a rather organic way of engaging with local communities.

By contrast, Meme Macdonald told Pia Smith that she likes to use a 'coathanger' principle, meaning that she likes to introduce a strong artistic framework on which people can hang their work and from which a variety of things can stem. So, in Geelong, the Mouth to Mountain journey became the framework that many people could embellish. Perhaps this interest in structure reflects Meme's background in community theatre, whereas Robin Laurie—with a more diverse background in community art—seemed to work in a much less structured way in Wangaratta. Meme's 'coathanger' approach probably worked well in Geelong, where a strong, unifying, project could help engender a sense of community across a large, diverse and largely urban community. However, Robin Laurie's more organic approach may have worked better in a fairly conservative rural community with a relatively small 'art community' and an LGA that was rather skeptical about the benefits of arts and culture. In other words, experienced CCD practitioners are likely to have very different approaches embedded in their work and it is important to find a good 'match' between their ways of working and the context in which they will be asked to work. Perhaps both Meme Macdonald and Robin Laurie are more adaptable than this discussion suggests but it is important to note that each artist brings a certain way of working and their record of past achievements should make this clear.

Robin Laurie in particular, but all the experienced practitioners in their own way, showed that a robust sense of humour can add interest and appeal to community art projects. In part, this relates to the need to make projects fun in order to get people interested in participating but at a deeper level it probably reflects a need for people to be able to laugh at themselves in order to find an identity with other people. Ironically, a capacity to laugh at oneself probably helps people to preserve their human dignity as they search for ways to better understand the experiences of other people. As noted in chapter 2, a wry sense of humour probably works well in rural Australian communities but it might also be noted that presentations and performances by students involved in *Refill* at Miller Tech were often driven by a cheeky, irreverent sense of humour. Curious Works artist Peter Cossey noted that when the students started doing things such as making 'funny films about bullying' it was not what they considered to be art, as it had been previously taught to them. In a sense, the humour got them started in a process that they only subsequently understood as a process of making an artwork. It has already been noted in chapter 9 that artistic self-expression can help to initiate dialogue within divided communities. In a similar way, humour can also help to lower barriers to communication across difference. Sometimes humour can enable people to speak of painful or humiliating experiences in non-confrontational ways. Subtle humour helped to break down age barriers in Wangaratta and it enabled some of the students at Miller Tech to bolster their self-esteem.

Of course, people such as Meme Macdonald and Robin Laurie are now part of the 'old guard' of CCD practitioners in Australia—part of the 'first wave' of practitioners who started out in the early 1970s. Even though Khaled Sabsabi works primarily with young people and 'new media', he might be considered part of a 'middle generation' of practitioners, who started out in the late 1980s. It is interesting, then, to look at the ways in which some of the newer and younger practitioners are working and Pia Smith interviewed four members of Curious Works—Elias Nohra, Shakthidharan, Peter Cossey and Aimee Falzon—in November 2008 to get a sense of how they were approaching their work with the students at Miller Tech. Like Khaled Sabsabi, they are interested in the ways in which new and accessible media can help young people express themselves but they probably take an even more creative approach to the technology itself in that they

ran workshops on making things such as ‘infrared’ graffiti spray cans that use softdrink containers with infrared circuit to act as a virtual spray can, portable ‘sticky speakers’ with battery-powered amplifiers and even small robots. According to Shakthidharan, Curious Works has a strong ‘do-it-yourself ethos’ as demonstrated in a do-it-yourself animation project that they introduced at Miller Tech. In a sense these artists are trying to adapt existing technologies—for example, to make them more portable and accessible—and also trying to give young people more control over the technologies they might want to use. The emphasis here is to teach yourself and teach others rather than bring in ‘outside experts’ and they are more likely to draw on a wide range of artforms and communication media in order to create an artistic synthesis.

Shakthidharan also said that Curious Works is driven by a determination to ‘leverage the cultural activity that is already in the community’. The Curious Works artists themselves come from a range of cultural backgrounds and they work well in communities in which there are a range of cultural traditions. Like Khaled Sabsabi they have a very strong appreciation for the kind of art that can come out of a multicultural community context, but they are probably even more interested in ‘ephemeral’ work that can be circulated through the new communication channels such as YouTube, Flickr and OpenOffice. They are more aware that ‘online space’ enables people to communicate with more people and ‘share values and knowledge’, as Shakthidharan put it, and so they aim to create opportunities when ‘they just turn up, they have ideas, they do things’. As well as using digital media, the Curious Works artists were using theatre games and improvisations and warm-up exercises. Shakthidharan said that the students enjoyed some of the group work in a big open room so much that when they went back into a classroom to work on their own some of them said: ‘Why aren’t we back in the big room doing the theatre?’ The emphasis may be on enabling people to ‘tell their own stories’ but this can turn into a community activity when people ‘want to have control over ... how their community [is] represented’.

So there may be a greater emphasis on spontaneity and fast turnover in the way that the artists in Curious Works operate. However, they noticed that the students started to get bored quickly when working on their own to develop new skills—because it was too much like a ‘normal classroom’—and Elias Nohra said that he and his colleagues were delighted at the way the students responded to opportunities for public performance. Some of them were ‘very shy kids at first’, Elias noted, but after work with theatre games in a group setting there came a time ‘when we put a camera in front of them and they would take on the character without shame’. Peter Cossey said that Curious Works has learnt to rely on ‘short, iterative work cycles as a way to get outcomes’. While they may use some different techniques compared to ‘old guard’ and ‘middle generation’ CCD practitioners, this new wave of practitioners continue to emphasise creative collaborations and the importance of public performance or presentation. It was interesting to note the heavy emphasis that Curious Works puts on creating records of what has been achieved in each project; whether that be in the form of film footage, art works or notes. They use a range of ‘new media’ to create raw material that can be used to reflect on practice or create new works of art and in this they have an advantage over artists using ‘old media’.

7.6 Challenges, risks and evaluating outcomes

Experienced CCD practitioners—of all generations—know that it is important to raise the bar fairly high in order to challenge themselves and those they are working with.

Obviously people will feel more pride in what they achieve if they have been able to rise above what they had earlier expected of themselves and 'audiences' will be surprised and delighted if performances and presentations clearly exceed their expectations. Often participants in community art projects will discover that what they can achieve by working in collaboration with others will exceed what they could hope to achieve on their own. There can be a thrill in inspirational public performance for both performers and audiences alike and that is something that all artists want to achieve for themselves and those they are working with. Perhaps the young students at Miller Tech gained the most from their opportunities for public performance and presentation. However, people involved with the Ukelele Showband in Wangaratta also talked very fondly of their opportunities to perform and older people whose story was told in film or in photo exhibitions said they were amazed and delighted to see that people were interested in their stories. Something similar happened for those people whose 'digital stories' were shown at the big public launch of the Memory Bank project in Geelong. The Mouth to Mountain journey in Geelong was like a huge exercise in 'ritual theatre' and many of the participants told Pia Smith that they had felt inspired to be part of such a monumental public performance. Some kind of public performance or presentation of work can give focus and impetus to artistic production and many of the outcomes of community art projects—directed by experienced practitioners—deserve to be presented to bigger and wider audiences. No doubt there is a role for LGAs in building the audience for such performances and presentations, just as they built audiences for more mainstream art in earlier times.

At the same time, experienced CCD practitioners know that is important not to set people up for a likelihood of failure or embarrassment. Audiences may be more forgiving than they would be for a 'professional' performance but CCD artistic directors need to make sure that participants have been given a performance role that can feel confident about. As mentioned in chapter 7, Meme Macdonald has said that an artistic director has a critical role in 'casting' people in appropriate roles, and she mentioned the example of a country singer who was able to perform very well as an MC during the Mouth to Mountain journey. Obviously, a skilled CCD practitioner needs to be good at motivating people to work towards something that will stretch their abilities—as Meme did so well in Geelong—but this needs to be complemented by an ability to 'cast' people appropriately and to ensure that people are ready for their performances or presentations. Experienced artists know that people working in challenging projects are likely to go through mood swings and they develop techniques for addressing anxiety and frustrations. They understand that people are often bothered or distracted by things happening outside the project and so they develop some skills in counseling, or in referral. There are so many skills that people can learn by working with a very wide range of people in a wide range of circumstances, particularly when they are asking people to do things they have not done before. Undoubtedly, people need to have an aptitude for this kind of work but experience also needs to be valued.

At a more basic level CCD projects sometimes put people into situations where they run the risk of injury. As discussed in chapter 7, LGAs tend to take a very conservative approach to risk management and they have adopted elaborate protocols to minimise public risk. By contrast, artists are more likely to take risks in order to set an artistic challenge and yet, as mentioned in chapter 7, Meme Macdonald has pointed out that experienced artists who regularly work with the risk of injury understand the risks well and they have probably developed their own ways to minimise risk. Meme Macdonald suggested that artists like Glenn Romanis have acquired a 'sensory' awareness of risk,

even if they may not be so good at reading protocols and filling in forms. The success of the Mouth to Mountain project in Geelong showed that it is possible to negotiate across different ways of thinking about risk. However, a starting point needs to be an acknowledgement that experienced CCD artists are aware of the problem.

As discussed in chapter 7, skilled CCD practitioners tend to be more focused on good practice and good process rather than final outcomes. This is not to say that they are not working towards some effective public presentation—or presentations—of the work but rather to note that they are confident that good practice will result in good outcomes. This focus on process enables them to be more attentive to subtle changes—for example, new possibilities, mood swings. The practitioners are aware that good outcomes must come out of good processes—rather than the other way around. This is an ‘emergent’ way of working in that the outcomes only become evident as a result of the practice. There may indeed be more opportunities for performance and presentation than had been imagined—as was the case in Wangaratta—or there may be a need to work towards more modest, or just different, outcomes—as was the case in Charters Towers.

Good practitioners are not afraid of rigorous evaluation of their work, provided suitable evaluation tools are used and provided there is a broad understanding of what constitutes the evidence of success, as discussed in the first part of this chapter. Indeed many practitioners build their own forms of evaluation into their practice, at least in terms of taking time to think deeply about what is working and what is not working, a benefit of focusing more on processes than outcomes. As noted earlier, some of the ‘new media’ artists—such as Curious Works—place a very heavy emphasis on creating a record of work so that everyone involved can review what they have achieved. Indeed, people become good practitioners because they have worked hard—often without help—to constantly improve their practice. In conducting the research for this project and for the earlier study for VicHealth (Mulligan et al 2006), the authors have been told by many experienced CCD practitioners that they welcome the opportunity to discuss their work with people who have a clear interest in what they are able to do. Many practitioners have told the authors that they are rarely provided with opportunities to reflect deeply on their own practice or to talk about their practice with other practitioners. It needs to be noted that most practitioners have had an experience with rather token evaluations—such as acquittal reports for funding—and this has made some of them feel rather cynical about the whole concept of evaluation. However, there can be little doubt that they would welcome forms of evaluation that would enable them to further improve their practice and to communicate with others about what constitutes good practice in this field of work.

For too long now—more than 30 years—experienced and skilled CCD practitioners in Australia have been left to their own resources. The Generations Project has provided another opportunity for some such practitioners to demonstrate what they can do when given space, resources and a decent time frame in which to develop meaningful work. LGAs could play a big role in delivering more certainty to the practitioners and their field of practice within local communities provided they acknowledge that the creation of more inclusive and dynamic communities has clearly become core business of local government in the contemporary world.

7.7 A deeper understanding of ‘socially engaged art’

As mentioned in chapter 3, the community cultural development field in Australia seems to have developed with little reference to broader international traditions and debates

related to socially engaged art. Some of the experienced practitioners working in the Generations Project—notably Meme McDonald and Robin Laurie—talk of influences ranging from Augusto Boal's 'theatre of the oppressed' to new forms of 'ritual theatre'. Meme, in particular, acknowledges the influence of pioneering community theatre practitioner Neil Cameron. Newer practitioners—not involved with the Generations Project—refer to the writings of people such as Grant Kester and Clare Bishop (see section 3.4). However, there has been little opportunity for Australian practitioners to be exposed to wider debates and discourses in art theory and practice. There is certainly a good body of literature about community arts practice in Australia now but it is rarely informed by art theory. One point of overlap between contemporary community art and broader notions of socially engaged art is a shared interest in taking more art out of galleries, theatres and museums and into the public spaces. However, this also raises many challenges about how to ensure that such 'public art' is truly engaging.

Of course, not all community art aims to affect wide social change, as art movements such as Dadaism or 'situationism' did. Most practitioners do work with notions of 'community empowerment' which can be traced back to the work in the 1960s and early 1970s of Paulo Freire. Practitioners such as Khaled Sabsabi are proud to acknowledge that their 'grassroots' approach to community empowerment is a form of social activism and much of the practice in community art is probably driven by notions of social justice. However, notions of social change in community art practice in Australia have probably been driven more by a commitment to participation in art-making and artistic expression and less conscious thought has been given to the forms of art that can affect broader social change. It is probably important here to note a difference between political commitment to social change—and we noted in chapter 3 that community cultural development in Australia has often been politically motivated—and a kind of 'civil society' interest in enhancing civility and sociality. The latter is a much less functional approach to social change and it brings into question deeper philosophical questions about being, identity and creativity, which we cannot address in this report. However, it does suggest that it is important to think of art in less functionalist terms in relation to social change and this is a point that Meme McDonald emphasised in her interviews with Pia Smith.

This is not to malign political art because our review of the history of community art in Australia shows that the sector probably would not exist at all without the contribution of politically motivated art at different times in its history. Furthermore, in one sense art-making is almost always political in that relates to questions of production and communication. However, we probably need to think more broadly about the role that art can play in relation to the wellbeing of individuals, communities, and society. This again highlights the importance of avoiding a narrow interpretation of the social 'outcomes' of CCD projects and programs.

As mentioned earlier, Mercedes Ramirez of SP Ausnet put it rather well when she said that art can give people a 'vocabulary' to communicate about things that they might have in common. However, we need to go beyond this to understand the aesthetic experience—for example the impact of a symbolic sculpture that can integrate dissident elements or the bonding experience of participating in a beautifully crafted community ritual. What kind of art can touch us emotionally and lift us out of the everyday while, at the same time, giving us new perspectives on the everyday? These are some of the questions that preoccupy the work of art criticism and the constant reflections of dedicated art practitioners. Those who want to employ artists to build stronger and more

inclusive communities need to understand that good art will be driven by a restless interest in the aesthetic experience and this requires a level of understanding that is not easy for a novice to attain. There are principles and practices—a discipline within the creativity of art-making—that can only be acquired through dedicated practice. At the same time, artists—including emerging artists—need time and space in which they can give due attention to the aesthetic experience of those who will ‘consume’ their artistic creations.

In Australia, the complex and sometimes vexed relationships between people and places provides excellent material for art-making, as we have seen in the way that Australian cinema has developed over the last 30 years. As mentioned at the end of chapter 3, writers such as Paul Carter and Ross Gibson have demonstrated that there is an endless supply of place-based stories to work with artistically and such stories can be ‘unsettling’ in the way they make us think more deeply about identity and belonging. Within the national Generations Project the local project in Geelong was most directly concerned with place and identity and the artistic device of constructing a moving pageant in the form a journey from ‘mouth to mountain’ provided the connecting thread—the ‘contemporary songline’, as Meme McDonald has called it—to explore different spatial layers of place, identity and belonging. The creation of a connecting ‘songline’ refers, of course, to the artistic practices of indigenous Australians and this reference to the ancient matched the emphasis on re-energising community rituals in a contemporary setting. Geelong’s very dynamic exploration of people-place relationships was certainly influenced by traditions in ritual theatre and community theatre going back to the work of Neil Cameron which began in the early 1970s but the project in Geelong also highlighted the importance of taking this sort of work out of theatres and museums and into the streets and public spaces. The Geelong project provided a good example of how to effectively ‘locate’ engaging art in public places.

Of course, the project in Geelong was guided by a confident practitioner in Meme McDonald and her confidence in the artistic vision engendered confidence in all the other participating artists. It is important to note that the concept of the Mouth to Mountain journey only emerged after more than a year of project development and experimentation. For this reason, the artistic vision was well grounded in local contexts and local possibilities. Then came the hard work of being able realise the vision.

In her work in Wangaratta, Robin Laurie demonstrated the benefits of having a very sound knowledge of her craft and a strong ‘armature’—to use Arlene Goldbard’s term—to give effect to her ‘core beliefs’. There is a clear philosophy in the way that Robin works and she is able to articulate that philosophy and name many of the people and practices that have helped to shape her philosophy. Of course, a hallmark of Robin’s work in Wangaratta was that she was able to be flexible and adaptable in order to work in a rather challenging social and organisational context. She was able to forge a strong working relationship with Maz McGann, based on shared values and a confidence in being able to formulate engaging expressions of lived experience. They also shared a sense of humour, a deep sense of empathy and a pragmatism that left a strong stamp on the impressive body of work that they created. The danger might be that Robin’s self-deprecating style—connected to her sense of humour—might make this work look easier than it is. Many of the projects initiated by Robin and Maz did not even ‘look like’ art events—for example, the Scooter Challenge—and yet it took theatrical awareness and aesthetic sensibility to craft events that could truly capture the imagination. In contrast to Meme McDonald in Geelong, Robin Laurie created a body of diverse work that can only be properly

appreciated in its entirety rather than by focusing on any particular activity or individual project.

Latrobe Valley lead artist Stefanie Robinson brought with her traditions in site-specific ritual theatre that can also be traced back to earlier work of Neil Cameron. Like Meme McDonald, Stefanie had been influenced by the work of Neil Cameron and she brought in other artists who had worked under his tutelage. Stefanie told Pia Smith that knowledge of such work gave her a lot of self-confidence in her own practice. Before Stefanie's involvement the project team in the Latrobe Valley were trying to enact what Grant Kester would call 'dialogical art' —in other words, art that might stimulate more meaningful conversations within the community. However, there was not enough artistic experience in the team to turn this impetus into works of art, such as the 'pylon tree' or the theatrical street parade.

Similarly, in Charters Towers the local project team was probably working towards what Grant Kester would call 'dialogical art'. They were able to work with strong local traditions in storytelling and 'yarning' which could have been woven into artistic practices that might reflect Kester's interest in art that can enhance communication and exchange as its major aim. As Kester has put it, artists can bring with them a capacity to think in 'uncommon' ways and to 'think critically and creatively across disciplinary boundaries' (2004, p. 101). As discussed earlier, there is evidence to suggest that the various projects in Charters Towers—especially those in the last phase of the project—did stimulate new forms of dialogue in a divided community and Kester would argue that this is a good outcome. However, the team in Charters Towers also lacked the overall experience of artistic direction or creative production to 'elevate' their projects into something more stimulating and usefully provocative over the duration of the project.

As discussed above, the Curious Works artists—some of whom worked in the project in Liverpool—probably represent a new generation of community artists in Australia, compared to people such as Meme McDonald, Robin Laurie and even Stefanie Robinson. They work with a wide range of artistic 'tools'—such as drama games and theatre exercises—and new forms of technology to 'skill up' young people, in particular, for self-expression. They are more interested in non-conventional or ephemeral art than enduring traditional works. They are certainly interested in taking art out of galleries, theatres and museums and they may be part of a generation of practitioners who are able to forge new traditions in public art that will have greater appeal to younger generations for whom multiculturalism and postmodernism have simply become part of their everyday experience. Certainly art needs to be open to new ideas and new approaches and this applies as much to community cultural development as it does to other forms of art.

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Appendix 1

Social profiles of participating LGAs and their communities

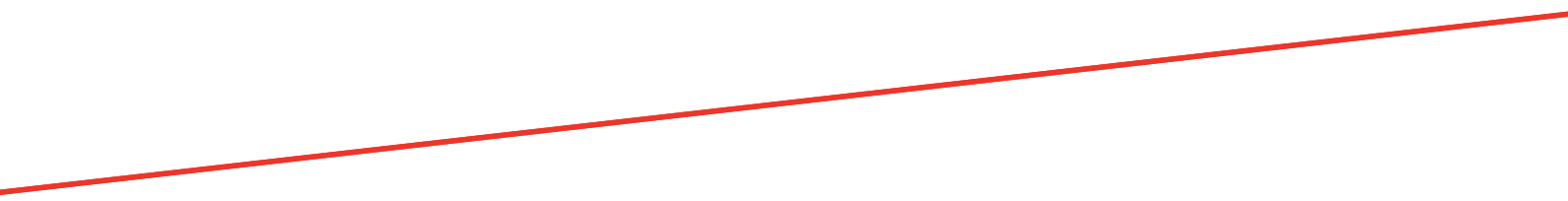
In order to understand the ways in which the Generations projects played out in each of the participating local government areas, it is very useful to have an understanding of the history of each area and the social profile of the local or regional communities. In each of the five LGAs project leaders were given unusual space and time to develop well-grounded local projects, and the fact that they adopted very different approaches provides a strong basis for comparative case study research. The following presentation of local contexts includes both a potted history of the area and its communities—drawn from a range of published books and websites—and a very concise review of important demographics, taken primarily from the 2006 national Census results.

Charters Towers region

When the local Generations project started the Charters Town Council was a separate entity to the surrounding Dalrymple Shire Council, even though both LGAs had their headquarters in Charters Towers. The two LGAs were amalgamated in 2008 to form the Charters Towers Regional Council. Charters Towers is not the oldest European settlement in the region; that honour goes to the small township of Darymple that was established at the junction of the Fletcher Creek and Burdekin River during the time when pioneer pastoralists were establishing their 'runs' in the district in the 1860s. Charters Towers was the product of a gold rush that began in 1866 and centred on the town of Ravenswood, south-east of Charters Towers, and the Cape River goldfields, south-west of Charters Towers. It is interesting to note that the discovery of gold in the Cape River area in 1866 provided an enormous boost to the struggling port of Townsville and enabled Townsville to overtake Bowen as the pre-eminent regional centre in north Queensland.

The Charters Towers region is focused on the broad catchment of the Burdekin River. To the east it is bounded by a series of ranges that make up the coastal highlands and these serve as a natural boundary between the coastal region and the more arid inland. In the north the Burdekin River flows through the Burdekin Upland and by the time it passes close to the site of Charters Towers it is still some 500 metres above sea level. The western boundary is formed by the Great Dividing Range and the Cape River flows out of this range and passes through flatter country before joining the Burdekin at the large Lake Dalrymple. The region is in the tropics and it lies between the wet coastal region and very dry region west of the Great Dividing Range. The region normally has a hot, wet summer and a warm, dry winter with most of the rainfall occurring between December and March. Most of the region can be characterised as open savannah although the vegetation varies between the basalt country to the north and west of Charters Towers and the drier western region centring on Pentland.

Before the arrival of European settlers, the Gudjal (pronounced Goodjal) people lived in valleys of the Burdekin and Broughton Rivers and around the basalt country where lagoons ensure that water is plentiful. Further to the north were the Gugu Badhun people and there were strong connections through marriage and ceremony between the Gudjal and the Gugu Badhun. The ill-fated explorer Ludwig Leichhardt passed through the district on his first major expedition in 1845 and early pastoralists began to arrive around 1861, coming from as far away as Victoria and New South Wales, and many of them with some experience in livestock farming in England. Initially the pastoralists brought sheep but they were not suited to wet summer conditions—suffering from footrot and other



conditions related to high humidity—and so they made a successful switch to cattle. By the 1880s there were over 10,000 head of cattle in the district. There was a ready market for meat as the population in the goldfields grew rapidly after 1866, and in the 1890s successful experiments in refrigeration enabled the cattle farmers to export meat through the port of Townsville.

Not surprisingly the pastoralists came into open conflict with the Gudjal people and extracts from the diary of pastoralist Frank Hugh Hann from 1874 record the rather chilling details of a massacre of Gudjal people accused of killing cattle in an area just north of the Cape River goldfields. The successful pastoralists came to be seen as ‘the establishment’ by farm labourers and miners in the district and they certainly enjoyed some boom times—for example, in the period immediately following World War I. However, they also suffered long periods of depressed markets and livestock farming in tropical conditions was never easy. The northern pastoralists undoubtedly had to work harder than many of their equivalents in south-east Australia and they also faced the tyranny of distance in some rather remote parts of the sprawling district. Compared to their counterparts in Victoria and NSW the graziers in the Charters Towers region had trouble getting enough farm labourers and they came to rely heavily on Aboriginal men and women who lived on their properties and worked for little more than rations.

As in other parts of Australia, gold-mining in the Charters Towers area passed through boom and bust cycles. Between 1869 and 1872 Ravenswood grew to become a substantial town and the pre-eminent centre of the gold-mining district, but then went into decline as the quality of gold extracts declined and attention shifted to Charters Towers following the discovery of gold there in 1874. Ravenswood then went through a revival in the 1890s, when new smelting techniques improved gold yields, and the population grew to around 5000 by 1905 before the town experienced another sharp decline. The booms and busts of mining were evened out somewhat after silver mining began to prosper in several locations during the 1880s and Charters Towers eventually overtook Ravenswood as the regional centre for the mining industry. At the height of the goldrush in Charters Towers it became the second largest settlement in Queensland. The national census of 2006 showed that there were more than four times as many people employed in mining (total of 394) in the Charters Towers region than in agriculture and forestry (a total of 86).

The arrival of the pastoralists drove most of the Gudjal people from their traditional lands and over the following century Queensland government policy resulted in forced removals to places such as Palm Island (near Townsville) and Yarrabah (near Cairns). On the other hand, Aboriginal people from other parts of the state were brought to Charters Towers to serve in the police ‘Black Trackers’ unit that was set up in Charters Towers to maintain law and order on the goldfields. Indeed, the police maintained Black Tracker units at Charters Towers and Clarke River through to 1929. It is a little ironic that an Aboriginal man credited with helping to find gold at Charters Towers in 1874—Jupiter Mosman—came from somewhere in south-east Queensland. He became an adopted hero of the Aboriginal community in Charters Towers and helped set up the Aboriginal Reserve. Today he is honoured in the naming of the Jupiter Morrison Community Co-operative Society, which seeks to provide affordable housing for Aboriginal people living in Charters Towers. Although Charters Towers is clearly located on Gudjal land the forced removal of people and the importing of people from elsewhere in the state makes

the indigenous community more mixed and more potentially divided. Furthermore, the adoption of Native Title legislation in the mid-1990s not only created new tensions and divisions between Aboriginal people and the pastoralists in the Charters Towers region, it also opened up the division between 'traditional owners' and the 'historic' Aboriginal people who could trace their origins to other parts of Queensland.

Local government began in the Charters Towers area when the Queensland government established a Town Council in 1877, under the provisions of a Municipal Institutions Act of 1864. In 1879 a form of local government was extended to rural areas. A Divisional Board was elected for the Dalrymple region and it held its first meeting in Charters Towers in 1880. Dalrymple Shire Council was proclaimed in 1902, and in 1909 Charters Towers was awarded the status of a city. Dalrymple Shire Council continued to operate as a 'doughnut' council—in other words, surrounding the municipal centre in which it was based—until 2008 when it was amalgamated with the Charters Towers City Council to form the Charters Towers Regional Council.

The total population for the Charters Towers at the time of the 2006 Census was 7,978. Compared to other areas in this study there was a relatively high proportion of the population under the age of 17 (30.4%) and relatively less in the 18 to 64 age bracket (54.9%). Compared to the other areas there was a low percentage of people born outside Australia (5.7%) although it is interesting to note that there were people born in more than 22 other countries, with many of them working in mining. The Census suggested that there were 829 indigenous Australians living in the region, representing 10.4 per cent of the total population. For the indigenous population the average number of people per household was 3.4 compared to 2.4 for non-indigenous households and yet the median household income for household with indigenous people was \$634 per week compared to \$875 for households with non-indigenous people. Only 24.2 per cent of indigenous people were living in homes owned by indigenous people while 66.6 per cent of non-indigenous people were living in owner-occupied homes. While 72.7 per cent of the indigenous people were living in some form of rental accommodation (compared to 29.6 per cent of non-indigenous people) the indigenous households were paying a slightly higher median rent—\$135 per week compared to \$130 per week. Clearly more indigenous people were living in poverty than non-indigenous people and the median age for the indigenous population was just 17 compared to 37 for the non-indigenous population.

The overall unemployment rate in the Charters Towers region was 5.9 per cent. The majority of those employed were working in mining, construction, administrative services and public administration or accommodation and food services. Just 5.2 per cent were employed in agriculture and forestry. For the population of the Charters Towers area a relatively low proportion—28.5 per cent—had reached Year 12 or equivalent in terms of school education and a further 28.7 per cent had reached Year 10 or equivalent. This is reflected in the fact that a high proportion—38.7 per cent—had trade certificates and only 18 per cent had achieved a Bachelor degree at university level. Of those born overseas—449 people in all—only 3.3 per cent were not fluent in English. A high 71.5 per cent of the population described themselves as Christian, with just 1.2 per cent classifying themselves as belonging to a non-Christian religion and 17.2 per cent saying they had no religion at all. In other words—putting the indigenous population aside—the population of the Charters Towers region had a relatively low level of linguistic and cultural diversity. It should be noted that there were 12 people who still used an Aboriginal language as their primary language and most of these people had little proficiency in English.

City of Greater Geelong

The national Census of 2006 confirmed that Geelong is the twelfth-largest city in Australia and the second largest in Victoria, with a population just under 200,000. It was built on the land of the Wautharong people who comprised 15 clans stretching from the Werribee River to the Bellarine Peninsula. The Wautharong, in turn, were part of the broader Kulin alliance of clans and they had language links with surrounding clan groupings. The Geelong area has many attractions for human settlement. It has the natural port at Corio Bay, reliable supplies of fresh water flowing out of the high country to the north and it is at the edge of the largest basalt plain in the world, making the soils relatively fertile for farming. Further to the south, in the direction of Cape Otway, thick forest provided habitat for abundant wildlife and a source of timber for European settlers.

The first Europeans to arrive at Geelong were the explorers on board the exploration vessel *Lady Nelson*, which docked in Corio Bay in early 1802. Rather ironically, the escaped convict William Buckley arrived in the area soon afterwards following his escape from a party that had landed at Sorrento before heading further south to the site that became Hobart Town. As the only European in the area, Buckley managed to live with the Wautharong people for 32 years before making contact with the settlement established at Indented Head by John Batman in 1835. A township survey for Geelong was carried out in 1838 but by this time there were already 545 people living in the settlement. In the early years the attraction was that Corio Bay offered a natural port and from 1835 onwards ships began to carry people and sheep across from older settlement areas in Van Diemen's Land. By 1850 Geelong had become the fifth largest settlement in Victoria. One of those who made the move from Van Diemen's Land to the Geelong area was England-born farmer Thomas Austin. Soon after crossing the Bass Strait in 1837 Austin joined the Victorian Acclimatisation Society, which aimed to introduce 'useful' plants and animals from England to Victoria. Many of these experiments failed but in 1859 Austin brought 24 breeding rabbits to release on his property near Geelong. Initially these were introduced as game for hunting parties but the experiment soon exceeded all expectations and Austin earned the dubious distinction of being the person who introduced rabbits to Australia.

Geelong experienced a further growth spurt after gold was discovered near Ballarat in 1851, and between 1851 and 1853 the population grew from around 8,000 to 22,000. In 1853 work on a railway line connecting Melbourne and Geelong was completed and this became the first non-metropolitan railway line in Australia. In 1862 a railway link between Geelong and Ballarat was also completed and Geelong became the port for Victoria's second biggest city. It is interesting to note that when Peter Lalor first arrived in Australia from Ireland in 1852 he worked on the Melbourne to Geelong railway line before heading to Ballarat where he became famous as the leader of the Eureka rebellion. Geelong and Ballarat have strong historic links. Largely as a result of the goldrush in Ballarat, Geelong enjoyed a period of prosperity. The Geelong Grammar School, first established in 1851, became one of the most prestigious schools in the state and grand ornamental buildings were established in the centre of the emerging city. Geelong was given city status in 1910.

Geelong also has a proud history in regard to Australian Football. The Geelong Football Club was set up in 1859 on the recommendation of a co-founder of the code, Thomas Wills—a successful cricketer who wanted to create a unified code of football to keep cricketers fit during the winter. The early establishment of the club makes it the second

oldest in the Australian Football League, after the Melbourne Football Club, and there is a very strong history of support for the Geelong Football Club in the Geelong community. A retired Geelong footballer with a high community profile, Billy Brownless, is often referred to as the 'unofficial mayor' of Geelong. The club had considerable success in the 1960s but experienced a long lean period until recent successes in 2007 and 2009. However, the club gained a reputation for competing hard and this continued to be a source of pride to the community when the city went through the tough times discussed below.

A major event in the life of Geelong was the establishment of the Ford Motor Company plant at Norlane in 1925. This grew to become one of the largest manufacturing enterprises in Australia and further industrial development followed the establishment of the Shell Oil Refinery at Corio in 1954 and the Alcoa aluminium plant at Point Henry in 1963. While it continued to be the home of prestigious institutions such as Geelong Grammar School and arguably the finest regional art gallery in Australia, Geelong gained a national reputation as a working class town. The community suffered badly from the collapse of the Pyramid Building Society, which had been headquartered in Geelong, in 1990 and ongoing cutbacks to the operations of the Ford Motor Company plant. The regional economy stagnated during the 1990s and fears of corruption were confirmed when former mayor Frank De Stefano was sentenced to 10 years jail in 2003 for fraud in relation to the disappearance of \$8.3 million. Under the directions of the state government led by Premier Jeff Kennett, eight LGAs were amalgamated to form the Greater Geelong Council in 1993. However, the amalgamation was carried through at a time when there was low public confidence in local government in the area and the new Council faced a huge challenge to restore community trust.

The 2006 Census indicated that there were 197,477 people living in the Greater Geelong area. Of these 15.8 per cent were born overseas and 0.7 per cent—1,430 people—were indigenous Australians. A total of 24.6 per cent were under the age of 17, and 60.1 per cent were between the ages of 18 and 64, meaning that there was a higher proportion of the population in the mid-range compared to Charters Towers. As elsewhere the age structure for the indigenous population was much younger than for the population at large. At the time of the Census the unemployment rate stood at 6.3 per cent. Nearly 10,000 people (9,869) were employed in manufacturing—21.3 per cent of the workforce—and this was followed by people employed in construction and in retail. After that there was a fairly even spread of people employed across a wide range of sectors. The median household income was \$886 per week. Just over 36 per cent of people beyond school age had reached Year 12 or equivalent while a much lower proportion—18.6 per cent—left school after Year 10. Of those who had obtained qualifications after leaving school, 36.2 per cent had trade certificates, while 18.9 per cent had obtained Bachelor degrees at university level.

Of those born outside Australia the biggest proportion by far—just over five per cent of the population as a whole—were born in the UK. People were born in more than 36 different countries and outside the UK the biggest numbers came from Italy, Croatia, Germany, Netherlands and New Zealand (in that order). A fairly high proportion—8.1 per cent—were not fluent in English and many of these people would be working in manufacturing. Clearly Greater Geelong has much more cultural and linguistic diversity than the Charters Towers region but much less than Liverpool local government area. Despite the deep recession in the 1990s the manufacturing sector is still strong and the regional economy was able to bounce out of trouble. There has been a population drift to areas such as Barwon Heads and the region has attracted a significant community of skilled artists. Because of its unusual history the Greater Geelong region hosts a surprising diversity of local communities.

Latrobe City

With a population just under 70,000 the highly dispersed Latrobe 'City' has the second highest population for an LGA outside Melbourne; second only to Greater Geelong. It has three major urban centres—Moe, Morwell and Traralgon. The valley is formed by the passage of the Latrobe River between the Baw Baw Plateau to the north and the Strzelecki Ranges to the south, on its way to Lake Wellington, near Sale and the system of lakes that stretch north to Lakes Entrance. This was the land of the Gunnai/Kumai people and the area was kind to them with access to lakes, inlets and estuaries. They were able to feed on kangaroos, possums, waterbirds, eels, fish, the occasional beached whale, and a proliferation of mutton birds and their eggs during the annual breeding season on offshore islands. However, the coming conflicts between European settlers and the Gunnai/Kumai were among the most violent in Victoria.

The first white man to travel through the Latrobe Valley was a Scottish Highlander named Angus McMillan who made his first journey down from the settled Monaro district of NSW in 1839. A devout Calvinist, McMillan had arrived in Sydney at the end of 1838 carrying a letter of introduction to a fellow native of the Skye District, Captain Lachlan Macalister who had arrived in New South Wales as a member of an army regiment. In 1834 Macalister left the army to take up a grant of land near Goulburn, in an area that was 'infested' with bushrangers and hostile Aborigines. It seems that Macalister took to the frontier wars rather willingly—he was wounded in a battle with bushrangers in 1831—and he was able to expand his land holdings in the Goulburn area. In 1837 he pushed further south to take up a new holding in the Monaro District and when Angus McMillan arrived, full of zeal, in 1839 Macalister instructed him to take a party to explore the country even further to the south. According to Don Watson's incisive account², McMillan was not a man who enjoyed journeys of exploration—seeing them more as an ordeal to find a place that the 'hand of civilization' had not yet touched. But he was so enamoured of what he found beyond the Great Dividing Range that he named the area 'Caledonia Australis' and returned to tell Macalister of his exciting discovery. Word spread among the Highlanders in Australia or yet to come and there were many Highlanders among the settlers who began to arrive in the district in the mid-1840s. The name Caledonia Australis may have only existed in Angus McMillan's head because broad district was given the official name Gipps Land in 1843 and Edmund Hobson became the first settler from the Port Phillip to take up a 'run' in the new district in 1844 when he established his property at the site of what is now the 'city' of Traralgon.

While McMillan may have been the first white man to traverse the district a man much better suited to exploring, 'Count' Paul Edmund de Strzelecki, made several journeys through the district in 1841 and 1842 providing detailed information on landscapes and resources. Strzelecki—who was famous for discovering and naming Australia's highest mountain, Mt Kosciusko—had a genuine scientist-like curiosity for the landscapes he encountered. However, Don Watson has argued that the Calvinist zeal of the settlers from the Scottish Highlands set the tone for the violent conflict with the Gunnai/Kumai people.

Traralgon became the first town in the region as other settlers followed in the footsteps of Edmund Hobson and by 1846 a reasonable track had been established to connect Melbourne to the Latrobe Valley. In 1858 Duncan Campbell established the Travellers

² Don Watson, *Caledonia Australis: Scottish Highlanders on the frontier of Australia*, Vintage Books, Australia, 1997.

Rest Hotel in Traralgon and for a while in thrived on the business of people heading for a small goldfield at Tanjil. As the goldrush petered out in Victoria, land was opened up in Gippsland for former goldminers and the 'selection' process resulted in rapid and widespread land clearing. Grazing gave way to dairy farming in the 1880s and by this time Traralgon had become an important educational, administrative and legal centre for the district. The township of Boolarra, nestled in the foothills of the Strzelecki Ranges, began to grow as a centre for the sawmill industry in the late 1870s and at its height it had three general stores and three hotels. After the railway link from Melbourne through Traralgon to Sale was completed in 1879 Moe began to develop as another centre for the farming and timber industries. Moe became a railway hub with branch lines going off to Thorpville, Walhalla and Yallourn, and Morwell also began to grow as a key point on the railway line, with a branch line going to Mirboo North.

Brown coal was first discovered in the Latrobe Valley by Henry Godridge in 1874, while he was searching for new gold deposits, and in 1889 the Great Morwell Coal Mining Company was formed. Between 1920 and 1960 six phases of the Yallourn complex of power stations were built to the north of Morwell, and between 1964 and 1971 the giant Hazelwood Power Station was built to the south of Morwell. In the 1980s the Loy Yang Power Station, on the outskirts of Traralgon, was also constructed, completing the transformation from a rural to industrial landscape. While there continues to be a dairy industry in the Latrobe Valley, open-cut mining and power generation have become dominant. The town of Churchill was built in 1964 to house workers from the nearby Hazelwood Power Station. It is interesting to note that Churchill was going to be called Hazelwood because this was the established name for the area in which it was constructed, but Winston Churchill died at the time the town was being constructed and the new name for the town was announced in 1965; much to the annoyance of long-term residents of the area. Until the 1990s the power generation industry in the Latrobe Valley was run by the State Electricity Commission but the state government led by Premier Jeff Kennett initiated the process of privatisation, which netted the government a surprisingly high \$23 billion.³ At the height of its operations in the valley, SEC employed around 10,000 people and trained 500 apprentices a year.⁴ By 2009 the number employed by the private power generation companies had shrunk to 2,500. By the end of the 1990s it was estimated that one in three young men in Morwell were unemployed and the whole region experienced a pronounced downturn. The population of Latrobe municipality dropped from 75,000 to around 70,000.

Local government began in Gippsland when the Borough of Sale was established in 1863. By 1869 the western section of this borough—the Rosedale Road Board—became a separate Rosedale Shire and it extended as far west as Morwell. In 1877 Rosedale Shire was divided to create the Traralgon Shire and a year later the Narracan Shire was established in the area from Moe to the edge of Melbourne. In 1892 the Shire of Morwell was established between Narracan and Traralgon. Moe split from Narracan in 1955 to become the Borough of Moe and in 1963 it was given the status of the City of Moe. Traralgon was also given the status of a city in 1964 and the urban area was separated from the surrounding rural Shire of Traralgon. Morwell also gained city status in 1990 and there were now three adjacent cities along the valley. In 1994 an amalgamation of the three city districts began and a new La Trobe Shire was created to take in the three cities, Traralgon Shire, and bits of the shires of Rosedale and Narracan. The transition to a single LGA was completed by 1996 and at this time the name was changed to Latrobe

³ According to a report by Royce Millar in the *The Age* 'Insight', Saturday, December 12, 2009.

⁴ *ibid.*

City Council, in view of the fact that 85 per cent of the population live in the three urban centres. At this time it was confirmed that the name would be Latrobe and not La Trobe because the valley and the river were called Latrobe.

According to the national Census of 2006 Latrobe City had 69,328 residents, still well down on the peak of the early 1990s. Despite the fact that the Gunnai/Kumai people were so forcefully removed from their land by the early settlers there were still 870 indigenous people in the district; many of them descendants of the Gunnai/Kumai. A relatively high 13.2 per cent of the population was born outside Australia, with most of these people working in the power industry. The age structure of the population was similar to that of Geelong with 25.5 per cent under the age of 17 and 60.4 per cent between the ages of 18 and 64. In the Census data only 286 people are listed as working in the mining industry but manufacturing and construction combined make up 33.4 per cent of the workforce and the majority of these people would be working in the power industry. Only 505 people—3.2 per cent of the workforce—were employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing. After manufacturing, construction and electricity, gas, water and waste services the biggest sector for employment was retail and this employed 9.7 per cent; in other words, three times the number employed in agriculture and forestry. The median household income in the Latrobe area was \$784 per week; a little less than that for households in the Geelong area. The unemployment rate was 8.4 per cent, which was higher than that for Geelong.

Of those people in the workforce, a relatively low 29.3 per cent had reached Year 12 or equivalent at school while 21.2 per cent left after Year 12 or equivalent. This is closer to the situation in Charters Towers than in Geelong. Indeed there was an even higher proportion of the workforce in Latrobe with trade certificates—44.7 per cent—and this reflects the dominance of the power industry. Only 13 per cent of the workforce in the Latrobe area had obtained Bachelor degrees at university level.

Of those born overseas the biggest number were born in the UK; 4.6 per cent. However, there was a more even spread of countries of birth than there was in Geelong, with 34 countries listed. A fairly low 4.8 per cent of the population was not fluent in English and only 2 per cent listed their religious affiliation as non-Christian. While cultural and linguistic diversity was similar in Latrobe for what it was in Geelong, a higher proportion in Latrobe was fluent in English and a slightly lower percentage—8.3 per cent—had arrived in Australia since 2001 compared to Geelong where the equivalent figure was 10.7 per cent.

Liverpool City

At the time of the national Census in 2006 the population of Liverpool city was estimated at 164,603 and population projections released by the NSW government suggested this would grow to 266,000 by 2033. A very high 38 per cent of the population was born overseas, more than for Sydney as a whole (31%). The city is built on land that belonged to the Cabrogal people of the wider Darug language group. In one sense the Georges River forms a kind of boundary between the Darug ('wood tribe') and the neighbouring Tharawal ('coast tribe'), however, Aboriginal people thought of rivers and streams as meeting places rather than boundaries.

The Georges River takes a bend to the east near where Liverpool township was first established and the first land grants in this area were taken up in 1798 by several 'free settlers'. Prominent early settlers were Eber Bunker—the 'father of Australian whaling'—

who built a homestead called Collingwood in 1810, and Thomas Moore, who established Moorebank in 1804-05. Governor Lachlan Macquarie officially founded the township of Liverpool in December 1810, naming it in honour of the Earl of Liverpool who was, at the time, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The early naming of Liverpool made it the fourth oldest town in Australia, behind Sydney, Parramatta and Hobart, and it was the first settlement planned for free settlers. After establishing a Town Square, Governor Macquarie commissioned the famous emancipated architect Francis Greenway to design an appropriate church and Macquarie himself laid the foundation stone for St Lukes Church in 1818. Greenway also designed the original Liverpool Hospital, which is now the Liverpool TAFE College. By the time Macquarie left the colony in 1822 his town contained a 'handsome brick-built church, a brick-built hospital, a provision store, barrack, school-house, parsonage house, gaol and several other government buildings'.⁵ In 1828 Liverpool became the first country town in Australia to have its own post office and by 1841 the population had reached 2000. The railway connection from Granville to Liverpool was completed in 1856.

Over the next 50 years the population only grew slowly and at the time of federation in 1901 it stood at 3,900. Although Eber Bunker established what might have been Australia's first paper mill at his property, Collingwood, in 1868 and Henry Haigh built a 'wool scour' in the same year, it remained primarily a farming district. However, in 1913 the Army acquired a large block of land at Holsworthy and when World War I broke out an internment camp for Germans living in Australia was set up at this site. A training camp for soldiers preparing to go to the front was also established and Holsworthy became the home for the 3rd Light Horse Division. German interns were kept at Holsworthy until 1919 when an influenza outbreak killed many of them. At the same time, a Returned Soldier Settlement Scheme for farms was set up at Chipping Norton and Hillview. On the eve of World War II, the Army greatly expanded its holdings at Holsworthy and during the war American troops were stationed on the Warwick Farm Race Course. By 1947 the population of Liverpool had grown to 12,692 and by 1960 this had increased to around 30,000. A significant amount of public housing was built in the area and Green Valley was opened as a 'model' low-cost housing development. In 1991 around 20 per cent of all dwellings in the Liverpool area were public housing units but the proportion had shrunk to under 10 per cent by 2006. The area gained higher national prominence when Gough Whitlam, representing the electorate of Werriwa, became Australian prime minister in 1972 and Whitlam's association with the area was acknowledged with the opening of the E.G. Whitlam Centre in 1983.

Local government began very early in Liverpool with the establishment of the Liverpool District Council in January 1840. It became an official municipality in 1872 with Richard Sadleir elected as the inaugural mayor. A Liverpool Chamber of Commerce was established in 1918. In 1982 the old Casula Powerhouse was converted into an arts centre under the management of the Liverpool Council.

As mentioned above, the 2006 Census showed that Liverpool City had a population of 164,603 with a large 38 per cent of the population born outside Australia. The Aboriginal population stood at around 1 per cent of the total population with 2,194 people. A fairly high proportion of the population was under the age of 17—29.4 per cent—while 55.6 per cent were in the age range of 18 to 64. The biggest areas of employment in Liverpool City at the time of the 2006 Census were manufacturing, construction, and

⁵ See the Liverpool timeline on the Liverpool City website.

transport, postal and warehousing. There were also significant proportions working in retail and public administration. Between them manufacturing and construction made up 33 per cent of the workforce. The unemployment rate was 7.1 per cent, which was higher than the rate for Sydney as a whole (5.3 per cent) but lower than the rate in Latrobe Valley. It is interesting to note that the median household income in Liverpool was \$1,082 per week compared to \$882 per week in Geelong, although this partly reflects the fact that the median household size was larger—3.1 persons compared to 2.5 in Geelong. Furthermore, the cost of living was higher in Liverpool with median housing loan repayments coming in at \$1,733 per month compared to \$1,100 per month in Geelong. Rental accommodation was also more expensive with the median rent in Liverpool coming in at \$195 per week compared to \$160 per week in Geelong. Obviously, households with relatively low household incomes would be concentrated in areas with high levels of public and low-cost housing and the suburbs of Liverpool vary considerably in this regard.

A relatively high proportion of the workforce in Liverpool had completed Year 12 or equivalent at school—41.4 per cent—while 23.8 per cent had dropped out after Year 10 or equivalent. The proportion of the workforce with trade certificates was fairly high—at 34.8 per cent—but this was lower than for Geelong or Latrobe Valley. The proportion of people in the workforce who had obtained a Bachelor degree at university level—16.8 per cent—was significantly higher than for Latrobe but less than for Geelong.

The most notable thing about the population of the Liverpool area, however, is its cultural and linguistic diversity. As already mentioned the 2006 Census suggested that 38 per cent of the population was born overseas with the biggest concentrations coming from Fiji, Vietnam, Iraq, and Lebanon (in that order). There were people from 157 different countries living in the municipality and 75,491 people—45.8 per cent—spoke a language other than English at home. The main languages spoken other than English were Arabic, Vietnamese, Hindi and Italian. However, only a small number of people—152 in all—stated that they had little or no proficiency in English. Compared to the other LGAs in this study, there was a high proportion of people with a non-Christian religious affiliation—19.5 per cent of the population. The main non-Christian religions, in order, were Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Liverpool City has a long English heritage but when it became a centre for public and low-cost housing in the 1960s and 1970s it became attractive to people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

In 1999 the NSW government's Ministry for the Arts launched its Strategy for the Arts in Western Sydney. In turn, this prompted greater commitment from local governments in the region to arts funding. Fourteen local governments, including Liverpool, form the constituent area for the strategy, which has seen a growth in cultural infrastructure and which aims to foster 'the growth of increasingly robust arts organisations of local, state and national significance, an increased level of confidence within the arts sector of the region, and increased regional co-operation'.⁶ Cultural infrastructure funding has seen the development of key organisations, such as Casula Powerhouse and similar facilities in Parramatta, Bankstown and Campbelltown. These have clearly become hubs for arts development on a range of levels including community-based arts.

The Cronulla riots of 2005 drew media attention to racial tensions in Sydney and placed the Western Sydney region, with its high middle-eastern population and significant

⁶ 'The Arts in Western Sydney: 2006 Progress Report on the NSW Ministry for the Arts Western Sydney Arts Strategy', http://www.arts.nsw.gov.au/Portals/0/documents/WS_%20PROG_%20REPORT.pdf

mosque in Lakemba, under a spotlight, and ongoing tensions exist as witnessed by the debate around the proposed establishment of a Muslim school in Camden. In 2009 two films were released which, while not specifically focused on Liverpool, were set in the Western Sydney region and had this ongoing tension as part of their subject matter: *The Combination* and *Cedar Boys*. These films are only part of the diverse cultural output originating in the Western Sydney region: countless other examples can be highlighted, including leading theatre company Urban Theatre Projects, the ongoing theatre and visual arts programming at organisations such as Casula Powerhouse and Campbelltown Arts Centre, and the Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE).

The Rural City of Wangaratta

Because Wangaratta was officially declared to be a 'city' in 1959 the term 'rural city' is used to describe the municipality but this tends to mask the fact that it has an interesting diversity of rural townships. The 2006 national Census indicated that the municipality had a total of 26,392 people and it is estimated that 16,845 of these live in Wangaratta itself. Wangaratta is situated at the junction of the Ovens River—which flows out of the alpine area near Mt Hotham—and the King River—coming from further south in the alpine region of Mt Buller. Flowing out of the high country the Ovens River skirts around the Warby Range on its way north to join the Murray River, forming Lake Mulwala on the Murray, near Yarrawonga. At the head of the Ovens valley are popular tourist destinations such as Bright and Mt Buffalo. High valleys support the growing of cool climate wine grapes and as the valley opens up in the area of Wangaratta it supports a wide range of agricultural industries. The Warby Range offers a number of natural lookouts and it ends at a hill overlooking Glenrowan where scouts for the famous bushranger Ned Kelly must have been watching for trains arriving from Melbourne as Kelly and his gang made their last stand in the now-famous railway town, just south of Wangaratta.

The Ovens valley was once the home of the Pangerang people. In the nearby highlands were the Ya-itma-thang and the Pangerang joined other lowland clans for an annual pilgrimage into Ya-itam-thang country on the Bogong high plains where they were able to feast on the large Bogong moths, roasted on the end of sticks held in the fire. Surviving Pangerang elders report that while they were living downstream in the Ovens valley, the natural lookouts on the Warby Range gave them the advantage of knowing when other people approached their country. Indeed the junction of the two rivers—Ovens and King—lies in a gap between two mountain ranges and this makes in a natural pathway for people travelling between southern Victoria and NSW. The first Europeans to pass this way were Hamilton Hume and William Hovell on their way from Sydney to Port Phillip in 1824 and they named the Ovens River after the then Chief Engineer of NSW, Major John Ovens. In 1836 the explorer Major Thomas Mitchell led a much larger party past the current site of Wangaratta on his way to the area that he called 'Australia Felix' and Mitchell's glowing account of the land that he traversed in south-western Victoria encouraged a surge of settlers to follow the 'Mitchell trail' from NSW into that part of Victoria.

The first of the settlers to stop near Wangaratta was George Faithfull in February 1838 when he and his brother decided that it would be a good area for the herd of cattle they had brought from NSW, while they sent their sheep further south. It was George Faithfull who coined the name Wangaratta for the homestead he built in 1838 and he made the name by combining what he thought to be two local Aboriginal words; 'wang' meaning the bird cormorant and 'ratta' meaning to sit. The two rivers hosted large

rookeries of cormorants. Perhaps Faithfull's gesture in using a local Aboriginal name for his homestead suggested that he thought he could live in peace with the Pangerang. However, in April 1838 a party led by George Faithfull's brother was attacked by Pangerang men who resented what they saw as an intrusion into their land, and it was reported that several members of the Faithfull party were killed in the incident. Another early European settler in the district was Reverend Joseph Docker, who had also been inspired by Mitchell's reports to leave his home at Windsor near Sydney and head for Australia Felix. Docker also settled in the Ovens valley and reportedly encouraged local Pangerang people to work for him. However, the arrival of the settlers proved to be a disaster for the Pangerang and their numbers quickly dwindled.

The first European to settle at 'Ovens Crossing', near the current site of Wangaratta, was Thomas Rattray and he operated a punt to help travelers across the stream. However, one traveller—who happened to be the wife of Van Diemens Land governor John Franklin making her way north to Sydney—noted that Rattray's real interest was in operating a sly grog operation. The first respectable settler was William Clark, who built a timber slab store at Ovens Crossing in 1839, and he is often referred to as the 'father of Wangaratta'. A small township began to cluster around Clark's establishment, with a post office being set up in 1843, but in the early 1850s it emptied out as residents headed for the newly opened goldfields at Ballarat and Bendigo. Gold was also found at nearby Beechworth and the rather hopefully named El Dorado. However, Wangaratta quickly rebounded as an important stopover for people making their way to the goldfields. In 1855 a bridge was built across the Ovens River and the town grew steadily after that, especially after 1874 when it became an important stop on the railway line that linked Melbourne and Sydney. By 1884 Wangaratta had 1400 residents with four churches, three flour mills, a tobacco factory, two breweries and a host of other small businesses.

Of course, Wangaratta has a famous association with Ned Kelly and his gang, especially after they made their last stand at nearby Glenrowan in 1880. Well before Kelly the area had been terrorised for a period by the appropriately named 'Mad Dog' Morgan. Morgan made the mistake of lingering too long at a homestead he had bailed up just south of Wangaratta in 1865 and after a posse of local settlers managed to surround and kill him his body was put on public display in Wangaratta before the head was cut off and sent to Melbourne for 'phrenological studies' to determine what makes some people violent. Kelly was the last of the bushrangers and Wangaratta experienced another period of growth after the national economic depression of the 1890s. In 1902 an iron and steelworks was established and by 1914 it employed 60 people. More importantly for the long term, the first wool processing mill was established in 1923 and by the 1960s the woollen mills were employing around 500 people, many of them migrants from Europe. A rather famous 'son' of Wangaratta was World War II hero Edward 'Weary' Dunlop, who was born in Wangaratta in 1907.

The steady demise of Australia's wool industry from the late 1970s onwards undermined Wangaratta's economic vitality and for several decades many young people were obliged to leave the area to find work. More recently the regional economy has become more diversified, especially with the arrival of a gourmet food industry at nearby Milawa and in the King River valley. Noting that the area needed some kind of boost, a group of locals—including only one jazz enthusiast Bob Dewar—pitched the idea of a Wangaratta Jazz Festival to then CEO of the Wangaratta Council, Greg Maddock in 1989. The choice of jazz seemed a little arbitrary but the proposition noted that local jazz festivals had succeeded in places such as Newport in Victoria and Deniliquin in NSW. It also noted,

of course, that the country music festival in Tamworth had become a major boost to the region's economy and Wangaratta might succeed as a music festival venue because of its setting, the presence of gourmet foods, and its relative proximity to Melbourne. The first festival in 1990 was a fairly modest affair but it grew rapidly in the following years and by 1993 highlights were being screened on ABC TV. By 1995 accommodation was being booked out months in advance and the festival was able to attract major Australian and international jazz musicians. In 1997 it won a Victorian Tourism Award for the Most Significant Regional Event.

The national Census of 2006 recorded a population for the Wangaratta local government area of 26,392 and only 207 of these were Aboriginal people. A total of 8.5 per cent were born outside Australia. A notable feature of the population for the Wangaratta area is that the median age was 41, compared to 37 in Latrobe valley and 38 for Geelong, for example. The proportion of people over the age of 60 was 22.7 per cent in Wangaratta compared to 19 per cent in Latrobe valley and 21.2 per cent in Geelong. This confirms that there is an older age demographic for Wangaratta than for the either Latrobe or Geelong, although the difference is not dramatic.

The median household income in Wangaratta—\$803 per week—was a little higher than in Latrobe (\$784/week) but less than Geelong (\$888/week), although housing loan repayments and housing rents were higher in Wangaratta than in Latrobe valley, meaning that disposable income was similar. However, the unemployment rate in Wangaratta was much lower than in Latrobe valley—0.01 per cent compared to 8.4 per cent. A surprisingly high 35.6 per cent of the workforce in the Wangaratta area was employed in manufacturing and construction; a higher proportion than for Latrobe, or even Liverpool. At the same time, 11.8 per cent were employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing and this is more than double the proportion employed in this area in Charters Towers and nearly three times the proportion employed in such traditional rural industries in Latrobe valley. A greater proportion of people in the workforce in Wangaratta had completed Year 12 or equivalent than in Latrobe—31.3 per cent compared to 21.2 per cent and less dropped out after Year 10 or equivalent. A fairly high proportion—second only to Latrobe—had trade certificates (40.3 per cent). A fairly modest 16.5 per cent had completed a Bachelor degree at university level, compared to 18.9 per cent in Geelong.

The Wangaratta area had the second lowest proportion of people born outside Australia of the five case study communities (8.5 per cent compared to 5.7 per cent for Charters Towers). Of those Wangaratta area residents born outside Australia, a significant number—466 people—were born in Italy, making this second only to those born in the UK (616 people). The Italian community in Wangaratta was well established and 431 of the 466 born in Italy had arrived in Australia before 1991. The Census suggests that there were 689 people speaking Italian at home. This significant Italian community has probably been rather neglected in terms of the district's public profile. As with most Australian communities there are a scattering of people born in a wide range of countries, but the numbers are not high. The majority of Italians are Christian so there was less religious diversity in Wangaratta than for the other case study communities, with less than one per cent of those surveyed in the Census saying that they had a non-Christian religious affiliation, while a high 69.5 per cent nominated themselves as Christian. A fairly high 30 per cent of the population in the Wangaratta area claim affiliation with the Catholic Church (compared to 25.5 per cent for Latrobe, 28.3 per cent in Geelong and 34 per cent in Liverpool).



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