



A U C E A

Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance
Refereed National Conference Proceedings 2005 (Online)

“Universities and Communities: Learning and Engaging through sustainable partnerships”

Melbourne, Victoria July 2005

ISBN: 978-0-9803610-3-2

Policies may be made in heaven but sustainable partnerships are borne, nurtured and maintained through good relationships between the partners.

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Key words: Cooperative Program, collaborative research, sustainable partnership

Abstract: The charter and mission of the University of Western Sydney (UWS) is to achieve excellence through scholarship, teaching, learning, research and service. Although the target audience includes international communities, there is a strong regional emphasis and a particular focus on the people of Greater Western Sydney. Similarly, the strategic direction for Penrith City Council (PCC) encourages links with educational providers in the immediate Local Government Area. However, whilst the imprimatur from the upper echelons of power in both institutions provides strategic direction, partnerships are developed, nurtured and sustained by the researchers and practitioners in middle management.

The UWS Cooperative Programs Unit mentors such partnerships. This paper describes its role in connecting PCC with UWS research staff and students in a sustained relationship that began a decade ago and has involved over 60 students undertaking a diverse range of research projects for PCC. As a case study we will use environmental projects, undertaken by four Honours students annually, to exemplify the PCC and UWS partnership.

The characteristics of the partnership are explored to identify the reasons for its development into a trusted, resourced, sustainable, and mutually beneficial, relationship. The personalities of the protagonists, the quality systems developed to ensure that the goals of the parties (PCC, UWS and students) are met and the measures taken to sustain the partnership will be discussed. The UWS and PCC relationship will be compared with that of other universities and their local Councils, as evident in contemporary literature.

The relationship's benefits are described with emphasis on its multiplier effect. There is reference to other relationships which co-exist between UWS and PCC (invariably developed by middle management staff from both organisations) which create synergies and generate additional ventures for both parties, with other organisations or authorities and educational institutions - the evidence of a thriving, sustainable partnerships.

The partnership

The University of Western Sydney (UWS) prides itself on being a university that engages with its region (Duke, 2000). The UWS mission affirms the importance placed on community engagement by stating that it aspires to be "a university of international standing and outlook, achieving excellence through scholarship, teaching, learning, research and **service to its regional, national and**

international communities, beginning with the people of Greater Western Sydney.” (bold added; <http://www.uws.edu.au/about/university/mission>). The University has six major campuses with additional satellites and some 37,000 students enrolled in 2005. The two campuses that have historically had the strongest environmental focus are in north western Sydney at Penrith and Richmond.

There has been an historical relationship between UWS and Penrith City Council (PCC) that emerged within the Nepean College of Advanced Education (Penrith) before three such Colleges were merged into the UWS in 1989. Indeed PCC, along with other western Sydney councils, strongly lobbied for the formation of a federated university in the region.

Before 1992, there had been many *ad hoc* links between UWS and PCC. Since that time there has been considerable effort to establish a unified, strategic partnership which has included PCC and UWS signing a formal joint statement pledging continued support and commitment to pursue common aims and objectives for the growth and development of the educational, cultural and economic life of the City of Penrith.

Whilst the imprimatur from the upper echelons of power provided the strategic direction, we have observed that it is the relationships between partners, developed and nurtured by the researchers and practitioners in middle management that has made the commitment a reality. The UWS Cooperative Programs unit has played a critical role as a catalyst in establishing these relationships in middle/senior management within both organisations, strengthening the partnership, ensuring its maintenance, and stimulating further links.

An exploration of the Cooperative Programs' model

Cooperative Programs was introduced at UWS in 1995 with the dual aims of helping to provide students with valuable industry research experience which would enable them to gain an edge in the competitive job market; and building new, and strengthening existing, links with organisations particularly in Greater Western Sydney. Over the last ten years Cooperative Programs has become a flagship program of UWS. It has arranged placements for over 1,000 students and established partnerships with over 400 organisations, mainly in Greater Western Sydney (GWS).

There are two main types of Cooperative Programs: vacation programs that provide students with paid research experience where they work independently within an industry and without academic supervision over a vacation period; and academic session programs where students work on an industry sponsored project during one or two academic semesters with academic supervision to gain either a credit or a grade for their work. The academic session projects are more intensive, over a longer period and students receive the additional support of academic

supervision. These projects permit a more sustained relationship with the partner organisation and most frequently are the basis of theses or dissertations at the Honours and Coursework Masters level, although they may also be the basis of independent learning within the final year of some undergraduate programs.

Organisations provide funds for Cooperative Programs to identify potential students and supervisors for projects and students are provided with an award to undertake the project. It has been observed that the exchange of money has raised the quality of the programs: students are more accountable and professional in their behaviour (no absences due to late nights!) and industry partners have a higher expectation and, in turn, they sponsor projects that are useful to the host organisation and treat students as consultants, rather than voluntary workers who are sometimes given trivial and/or routine tasks.

It should be noted that the majority of UWS students, which incidentally is also representative of the population profile of the Penrith Local Government Area, are the first members of their families to gain entrance to university and they are often from a lower socio-economic background than students who enrol in the "sandstone universities" of Eastern Sydney. Taking the student profile into account, along with UWS data which indicates that for most students a Cooperative Programs' project is their first professional experience, it is evident that a good student support program is imperative for the success of the collaboration.

In response to feedback, an extensive support program has evolved for every stage of the student project. For example, before the project commences, students are required to attend a professional development course which includes project planning and business communication. While more generally the University offers a range of support initiatives for students, during their Cooperative Programs' project students attend courses on project review, report writing, presentation skills and other more specific topics such as survey design and support to learn to use specific statistical packages. Individual assistance is given when required. Cooperative Programs' staff also monitor projects and keep in touch with students, industry partners and academic supervisors (if applicable). Most importantly, Cooperative Programs' staff establish a rapport with students who turn to them for professional and personal advice and assistance.

Penrith City Council is one of the most loyal of all the Cooperative Programs' industry partners. They have participated in Cooperative Programs since its inception and have provided more opportunities than any other organisation. In recent years PCC have funded a range of environmental projects through the Cooperative Programs to support their stormwater management program.

Case study from the stormwater management program

The NSW Environment Protection Authority issued a Direction under Section 12 of the Protection of the Environment Administration Act (1991) in 1998 for all Councils in NSW to prepare Stormwater Management Plans (SMPs) for their urban areas.

These SMPs were to be reviewed after 3 years. Penrith City Council was required to be involved in the preparation of 4 SMPs: the Blue Mountains, Upper Nepean River, Middle Nepean River and South Creek. These were prepared and adopted by PCC in July, 1999.

A major failing of these SMPs was that they were only required to deal with stormwater runoff quality issues from urban areas. No account was taken of flooding, agriculture, rural activities, sewage overflows or point source discharges from activities such as Sewer Treatment Plants. All of which had the potential to contribute to the poor quality of storm water in the area. To overcome these shortcomings in the original Section 12 Direction, PCC embarked on a series of reviews of its SMPs in 2001. These reviews were aimed at identifying specific actions to manage stormwater runoff using an Integrated Total Catchment Management approach, based on a number of sub-catchment stormwater management plans within each of the 4 urban SMPs.

The Stormwater Coordinator contacted UWS Cooperative Programs to see if students could assist with audits of the drainage networks. The academic session program was considered the most appropriate where Honours students could undertake the audits with academic supervision. The cost of participating in this program would be far less than employing a new staff member or contracting the work out. The University has a well-developed and internationally recognised Centre for Integrated Catchment Management and very good Science and Engineering faculties that are well versed on catchment management issues in the Hawkesbury-Nepean River catchment. Consequently the strengthening of the partnership between the two organisations was a logical step for PCC which had to update its SMPs, and UWS which was in need of opportunities for undergraduate and postgraduate students to undertake major research projects.

In 2001 PCC and UWS embarked on a cooperative program of sub-catchment audits utilising the skills of final year students in Engineering and Science. These audits were collated and ranked into a series of Action Plans that were incorporated into Council's Management Plan. Funding for the continuation of the partnership has been provided through an Enhanced Environmental Program (EEP) that has been financed through a General Rate Rise, the justification for which was based largely on the preliminary sub-catchment audits carried out by UWS students.

Whilst the sub-catchment audits provide information upon which Council is able to make operational decisions with regard to stormwater management issues, the audits themselves do not provide a sufficiently rigorous scientific research component to satisfy the requirements of an Honours Degree. Consequently it is necessary for some students to complete a research project, linked to an important issue, associated with the sub-catchment SMP that they are preparing. These research projects have included:

- A critique of the Section 12 Direction and the guidelines for preparing Stormwater Management Plans issued by the NSW EPA;
- The role of watercourses in the spread of weeds and their degradation post urban development;

- A methodology for assigning an economic value to natural assets;
- The role of legislation in the approval of stormwater management practices in NSW;
- The impact of urbanisation on the peri-urban areas of the Claremont Creek catchment;
- Water Sensitive Urban Design and its application in Western Sydney;
- Determination of an appropriate width for riparian areas using vegetation ecotones;
- Comparison of urban and rural community attitudes towards stormwater management in western Sydney;
- Evaluation of the success of the South Creek Stormwater Management Plan;
- An economic analysis of the value of the South Creek Riparian Corridor;
- Study into change in societal attitudes towards stormwater management in North St Marys;
- Assessment of erosion and accretion in small watercourses as a consequence of urbanisation.

Apart from these research projects, which are aligned to catchment management issues, PCC has undertaken a major research partnership with UWS investigating the abundance, diversity and bio-remediation potential of freshwater mussels in the Hawkesbury-Nepean River and its tributaries. To date these investigations have led to 3 scientific research projects through the Cooperative Programs Unit. They include investigations into:

- The categorisation of substrate and the presence or absence of freshwater mussels;
- The categorisation of riparian vegetation and the presence or absence of freshwater mussels;
- Guidelines for the construction of freshwater mussel habitat in constructed stormwater pollution control ponds.

The freshwater mussel project has received considerable attention from the media – local and regional newspapers and radio stations as well as the ABC and TEN television networks, and has attracted additional logistical and financial support from NSW Maritime, NSW DEC, NSW Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Sydney Catchment Authority, Penrith Lakes Development Corporation, Hawkesbury City Council and Wollondilly Shire Council. In addition to the support for the project from external organisations, Sydney University has provided additional research collaboration through A/Prof Maria Byrne, which has added to the scientific rigour of the investigations.

This environmental program provides the students with the opportunity to complete a worthy investigation that results in the award of a higher degree. The recommendations of their investigation are included in Council's Management Plan for implementation on a prioritised basis. Apart from the obvious benefit of fulfilling the need for students to carry out a major research project as a requirement for their Degree, PCC benefits from the completion of a review of the Urban Stormwater Management Plans, as required by the NSW Department of

Environment and Conservation (DEC) and the students gain valuable work experience and industry exposure.

The multiplier effects

The Action Plans that are produced by the students, as part of the preparation of the sub-catchment SMPs, have been used to prepare an Implementation Strategy for Capital Works projects within PCC's EEP. This is updated each year as more sub-catchments are audited and the Action Plans are completed. The Implementation Strategy in the EEP, funded through a 4.8% General Rate Rise, was approved by the NSW Department of Local Government in 2002. This means that the recommendations made by the students through their sub-catchment based Action Plans will be implemented shortly after the completion of their audit.

A reliable funding source and a pre-determined long term Implementation Strategy has allowed PCC to apply for grants to assist in the implementation of the EEP. Since the EEP commenced in 2002, PCC has received in excess of \$400,000 of grant assistance for actions identified in the EEP. It is doubtful if this level of funding support would have been forthcoming if the actions and funds had not already been earmarked in the PCC Management Plan.

Whilst working with PCC the students gain experience in the way in which local government operates and are required to make presentations to industry and government on the progress of their projects. The benefits of this approach to 'on the job training' are twofold: knowledge of the workings of local government and exposure to potential employers through their industry presentations.. Generally PCC employs 4 students through Cooperative Programs each year, and since the audit of the sub-catchments began in 2001 5 students have been employed by local government, 2 by private industry, 1 has been employed by UWS as a research assistant, and 3 have enrolled in PhD programs, whilst one other has taken the opportunity to travel abroad. A further six or seven Cooperative Programs students work on projects for other departments of PCC each year and many of these students have also continued to work at PCC beyond graduation.

Apart from working on their projects the students are also encouraged to participate in the Penrith Council Open Day, held annually, where PCC opens its doors to the public and invites the local community to engage in dialogue with staff. Displays featuring Council projects and works in progress are presented for public scrutiny and critique in an informal forum and the students have always been keen to actively participate in interacting with the community on these days. Each sub-catchment based SMPs incorporates a community survey component targeted to the local catchment area. The Open Day provides the opportunity for the students to further interact with the community and at the same time disseminate the findings of the community surveys. Both the community and the students have reported on these days in a positive manner. The experience allows students to develop their skills as well as providing them with a unique opportunity to expand

their community network. It also provides an opportunity for PCC and UWS to showcase one way in which each is fulfilling their strategic plans.

There are also other advantages for the University through the Program. During their projects students often are required to work with other local governments, state agencies and the local community. Through this process their abilities reflect on the University's reputation and also contribute to its commitment to Greater Western Sydney. In addition, it provides opportunities for researchers to build collaborations which enhance their ability to obtain funding.

It should be noted that PCC has partnered Cooperative Programs for students from various disciplines to undertake a range of research projects in addition to the environmental ones. Projects sponsored by PCC include economic analyses, web design, recording local history, social research, enhancing information technology capability and engineering studies. PCC and the local community have benefited in varying degrees from the completion of all these projects.

The collaboration is a 'win win win' for PCC, students and researchers of UWS who are fostered by Corporate Programs.

Replicating the model

The concept of students' learning being enhanced by work in their discipline is well established in areas such as teacher training (Charles Sturt University, Green *et al.*, 2004; Singapore National Institute of Education, Wong & Chuan, 2002); various medical disciplines (eg. medical students, University of Toronto, Hennen, 1997; oral health, Lalumandier & Molkentin, 2004; pediatrics, University of California, Sidelinger *et al.* 2005), engineering (Pollitt, 2004) and geoscience (Liu *et al.*, 2004). The concept has a substantial history within UWS (eg. agriculture, Bawden, 2005; teacher training, Vickers *et al.*, 2004). However, the focus of most previous initiatives has been to provide a specific discipline group with training within a recognised profession with funding support for the learning experience within a clearly defined target profession with funds provided by governments (eg. medical and teaching training) or multi-national companies with substantial resources (eg. geoscience, engineering). Within these industries the concept of 'on the job' training is well entrenched.

The students advantaged by Cooperative Programs' initiatives tend to be from less well defined disciplines and generally funds are obtained from a diversity of small to medium sized companies and agencies that are only able to absorb, at most, a small number of students annually and need to obtain 'value for money' for their investment. The program therefore relies, to a large extent, on building and maintaining networks among large numbers of local industries, often without a culture of providing student funding. It is beyond the ability of the academics to develop and maintain such a network of organisations and researchers. The success of such a network is derived from having a dedicated team, such as

Cooperative Programs, who seek out potential collaborators and nurture the network.

The benefits of Cooperative Programs

There are numerous and varied benefits for all the Cooperative Programs participants. Some are obvious, direct benefits while others are indirect, long term benefits. Both are equally important to the long term success of the collaborators.

There are many benefits to PCC in using the Cooperative Programs' to run their environmental science projects. In the selection process the academics on the selection panel have a clear understanding of the students' skills background because of their knowledge of the courses the students come from and, generally, the individual students are known to the academics. This minimises the chance of inappropriate selection. In selecting a student, PCC obtains the services of experienced researchers to support the research they wish to have undertaken at minimal cost to PCC. Flexibility is thus provided to PCC to choose among the students and research expertise of UWS, dependant upon the project skills required in any one year. Where expertise is required over the longer term for a particular project, PCC is able to 'try before they buy' and they thus reduce the potential to make inappropriate appointments. As a consequence, PCC is able to target specific skills from the University (students and researchers) for relatively short-term specialist research projects, saving the cost of employing full time staff to undertake the equivalent tasks. Further savings are provided because Cooperative Programs' students are insured by UWS and are on the UWS payroll, PCC also saves on salary on-costs.

Besides the skills flexibility provided by students, PCC staff build a working relationship with researchers that has endured over many years, despite constant changes in students and research projects. This retains continuity that is fostered by Cooperative Programs. Thus, although the familiarity is maintained, different dynamics are introduced each year, unhampered by the workplace culture. Exposure to research students provides on-going access to the cutting edge research from the scientific literature which may otherwise be missed by practitioners busy with day to day management priorities. This knowledge partnership has also meant that decisions made by PCC are underpinned by quality research. This in turn has benefited the local area.

Many of the Cooperative Programs' students have been employed by PCC where they are immediately able to take on their designated role without a 'settling in period'. This has been well demonstrated by a recent retirement in PCC and his replacement by one of the Program's past students. Those not required by PCC are often employed by associated local government areas, agencies or consultants and thus become advocates for PCC within their broader network.

It is the 'learning-knowledge partnership' between PCC and UWS that is probably the paramount benefit of the relationship between the two organisations. The

stimulating mix of academic staff, practitioners and bright students generates new ideas and keeps all of the parties at the cutting edge of research in environmental management. This is evidenced by the substantial media coverage and scientific interest in the freshwater mussel research project. The collaboration in this project has provided for a much broader approach than would have been possible if the partnership did not exist. Researchers have been able to review the current knowledge base and undertake the day-to-day ecological research on the mussels while innovative practitioners are able to identify the potential for these animals to act as bio-remediators of storm water. Neither party in the partnership could have achieved their desired outcome without the skills and knowledge of the other. Academic staff are sometimes described as living in their ivory towers, but these projects ensure that researchers and students are kept in touch with the 'real world'.

The academic supervisor plays an important role in the knowledge partnership, providing information that leads to a cross fertilisation of ideas. The supervisor also acts as a conduit for the PCC to access resources from the university and to link with other staff in related disciplines. As Marina Peterson succinctly commented in Ennever (1997):

“The program delivers the ‘lateral thinking’ of academic brainpower which is unique to the University environment. A particular problem can be viewed collectively by experts from different disciplines such as civil engineering, chemistry and biological sciences. It’s also good to be in a position to simply call up an expert in your field of interest and ask ‘what do you think’ without having to approach a consultant or pay exorbitant charges. This program offers the industry, academics and students an opportunity to network and nurture contacts for future ventures”.

The learning-knowledge partnership has the added benefit of increasing the credibility of the research over similar research undertaken by either PCC or UWS independently. Frequently PCC and UWS staff and students publish papers and present their research at both national and international conferences which raises the profile of both institutions. For example, the research work on the freshwater mussel project was presented at the Ecological Society of Australia’s Annual Conference in December 2004. On a previous occasion presentations on stormwater projects were made at a DOTARS workshop on "University-Regional Community Engagement Policy Directions" in Canberra in July 2001.

Small Cooperative Programs projects have built the framework which has almost serendipitously led to other projects. As Chris Duke (2000) in his paper Regional partnership – building a learning region stated: “The sense of trust and common purpose built up through continuously talking and working together on many sometimes small projects proves essential. One activity and partnership supports and cross-fertilises others. Players find that their multiple public and private roles intersect in useful ways.” This is certainly true of the stormwater project. Once the high standard of work of the students and their quality reports were recognised by PCC, further projects were sponsored in related areas. The stormwater

management projects easily led to other projects such as the freshwater mussel investigations.

When the neighbouring Blacktown City Council became aware of the stormwater management conducted by UWS students, they also sought to participate in UWS Cooperative Programs and sponsored two students to work on a riparian management plan in 2003. Wollondilly Shire Council and the Department of Planning and Natural Resources have similarly sponsored projects after observing the standard of research undertaken by UWS students for PCC. These organisations have also employed Cooperative Programs students beyond graduation.

The learning partnership influences the region in many ways. The environmental science projects involved community education and the students met members of the community and discussed environmental issues. Anecdotal evidence has indicated that these students raised the general awareness of the community on issues such as water saving and environmental management which had a greater impact than would have been achieved through more formal directives.

The impacts of the various relationships between the Council and the University are extremely important as Penrith City evolves into a 21st century city. Chris Duke (2000) referred to this change as “the transition from a historically quite parochial, not to say red-neck, country town and railway depot, to an internationally recognised, networked and prosperous...university city”

A recipe for success

An analysis of the essential elements of this program can provide the basic framework for involving academic institutions and industry to deliver community outcomes. These elements include:

- Fostering good relationships and trust between the industry partner and academic institution;
- Identifying community projects that fit within the capabilities of the academic staff and the curriculum;
- Structuring the project to provide academic credits for the students whilst meeting the requirements of the industry partner and achieving the needs of the community;
- Viewing the project as a commercial venture, where the students are treated as employees and are remunerated for their work. The agreement takes the form of a consultancy with the benefit of independent academic review to maintain rigour and industry supervision to ensure relevance to the industry partner and the community;
- Selecting students on the basis of their ability to deliver the outcomes and subjecting them to a rigorous interview and culling process;

- Involving the industry partner in the interview process, during which time the project is explained in detail and the student is encouraged to provide input into developing the project outline and milestones;
- Encouraging the successful student to make presentations to industry, academia, fellow students, the community and politicians;
- Convening regular meetings between the academic staff, industry partner and the students to ensure that the project is kept on track and the needs of all parties are met;
- Linking student payment to project milestones;
- Adopting the outcomes and recommendations from the project.

A very important component of these programs is that the student's work is recognised as a consultancy by the industry partner and that their work is given the same status. For the student this is seen as the fulfilment of the years of study and validation of the vocational relevance of their course. It is the recognition of the value of the students' work and the implementation of their recommendations by the industry partner that guarantees the continuance and success of these programs.

Conclusion

The Council and the University have had a long standing 'town and gown' relationship in various spheres. For example, UWS has representatives on Council entities such as the Penrith Regional Gallery and Lewers Bequest and the Whitewater Stadium. They are partners in the Data Sockets project which led to the establishment of the Centre of Advanced Systems Engineering. They had a key role in the development the Western Sydney High Performance Computer Node project; involvement in Community Olympic Cultural Events and participation in a delegation to Xicheng District of Beijing City with which Penrith has a formal relationship, based on mutual cooperation for the purpose of economic and business development. These and other partnerships have all played an important role in the relationship and 'value added' for both organisations.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Cooperative Programs partnership, as compared with many others, is its sustainability. Cooperative Programs has developed and nurtured the partnership over time and has assumed the role of a catalyst in bringing the two institutions together. It takes on the task of finding suitable academic supervisors and links them with appropriate staff at Council. They identify enthusiastic staff who are committed and likely to get on well together. This is crucial to the success of the program. The right mix results in projects achieving far more than the original brief and triggers new ideas and further developments – the 'ripple effect'. It is this role of Cooperative Programs that has ensured a thriving, sustainable partnership between the University of Western Sydney and Penrith City Council that has strengthened over the past decade despite changing personnel, institutional restructures and shifting political priorities.

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The University of South Australia's community engagement in a low socio-economic area to create significant and lasting change

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The University of South Australia's community engagement in a low socio-economic area to create significant and lasting change

Abstract: community engagement partnership sustainability

The University of South Australia's Northern Adelaide Partnerships (UNAP) program is a highly commended example of successful community engagement. The program received an AUQA commendation in 2004. In the same year, the Peer Mentoring program in which UNAP is involved won an institutional award in the Australian Awards for University Teaching (AAUT) and the Pathway for Adult Learners program, UniSA-PAL, won the Chancellor's Award for Community Service. The Robotics Peer Mentoring Project won the 2003 Australian Engineering Excellence Award. Other UNAP-sponsored projects have gained significant funding from ARC Linkage and Sustainable Regions grants. This paper will describe how UNAP came into being, its role in the University and the community and its focus on engagement that is long-term and sustainable. Two examples of projects will be used to illustrate how UNAP works at the ground level.

1. Introduction

The literature on Community Engagement describes various case studies from which models, criteria or principles for successful engagement as well as barriers to successful engagement have been developed. This paper describes a model for engagement in place at the University of South Australia. It was designed in response to the needs and the situation of a particular community, northern Adelaide. The paper explains how the University's Northern Adelaide Partnerships (UNAP) program came into being and how it operates to achieve sustainability by involving the University in partnerships with all levels of government and government agencies to bring about positive community outcomes.

2. The Northern Adelaide region

The program is currently focused on three municipal areas in northern metropolitan Adelaide – Salisbury, Playford and Gawler. It is one of Australia's most highly concentrated manufacturing regions with General Motors Holden, their suppliers and significant defence companies providing employment. This area coincides with that of a State Government initiative through the Office of the North. A September 2000 Discussion Paper described it as a region 'consistently across all postcodes well below the national, State and the ASD (Adelaide Statistical District) average' (Salisbury, Playford & Gawler, 2000, p. 2) according to the SEIFA Index of Disadvantage and measurements of employment, welfare dependency, and education, skill and income levels. This pattern is shown by the data below taken from information on the community profile of the City of Playford (SEIFA Index) and from *A Regional Profile: Playford Salisbury Region* (DOTARS, 2003).

SEIFA index of disadvantage

Local government areas in the Adelaide Statistical Division
(ranked from greatest to least disadvantaged)

SEIFA index of disadvantage

Playford (C)	873.92
Port Adelaide Enfield (C)	909.52
Salisbury (C)	931.04
Charles Sturt (C)	979.12
Gawler (M)	985.28
Onkaparinga (C)	995.60
West Torrens (C)	1,002.96
Marion (C)	1,005.84
Campbelltown (C)	1,021.84
Tea Tree Gully (C)	1,046.64
Norwood Payneham St Peters (C)	1,054.40
Prospect (C)	1,060.72
Holdfast Bay (C)	1,064.40
Adelaide (C)	1,066.96
Mitcham (C)	1,088.40
Unley (C)	1,091.68
Adelaide Hills (DC)	1,091.92
Walkerville (M)	1,108.40
Burnside (C)	1,114.40

Australian Bureau of Statistics, Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), 2001.

Characteristic	Reference period	Playford/ Salisbury	South Australia	%
Estimated resident population (no.)	June 2001	183 892	1 514 854	12.1
Persons aged less than 15 years (no.)	June 2001	42 509	292 555	14.5
Persons aged 65 years and over (no.)	June 2001	18 346	220 466	8.3
Birthplace United Kingdom and Ireland (no.)	2001 Census	25 191	127 274	19.8
Sole parent families (no.)	2001 Census	9 929	62 133	16.0
Public sector rental housing (no.)	2001 Census	8 338	44 686	18.7
Household income < \$500 per week (no. of households)	2001 Census	22 489	192 094	11.7
Centrelink income support customers(b) (no.)	June 2001	52 064	384 368	13.5
Persons unemployed(c) (no.)	June 2001	10 090	59 892	16.8
Employed persons with university degree (no.)	2001 Census	4 231	100 675	4.2
Employed persons with trade/vocational qualifications (no.)	2001 Census	15 453	130 935	11.8

(a) Latest data available.

(b) Source: Department of Family and Community Services.

(c) Source: DEWR, Small Area Labour Markets.

Figure 1, Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (City of Playford, n.d.) and Selected Summary Indicators (a) Playford/Salisbury Region as a Proportion of SA (DOTARS, 2003)

While many residents work locally, well over half (36,800) commute to workplaces outside the Region. Conversely, around 23,600 people commute from other areas to work in the

Region. Of the 50,500 jobs identified as being located within the Region at the 2001 census, they were distributed between the following industries:

12,800	Manufacturing
8,000	Retail trade
4,300	Government administration and defence
4,200	Health and community services
4,100	Education

Nearly 80% of workers with university degrees commute from areas outside the Region. Conversely, those workers with skilled trade qualifications or with no qualifications are more likely to live locally.

As a recent briefing prepared for the Northern Adelaide Economic Development Alliance (NAEDA) pointed out, the region is unique. It has growth in advanced manufacturing employment and an associated skills shortage accompanied by higher than state and national averages in unemployment, low Year 12 retention rates and very low participation in further and higher education.

The University of South Australia, in particular the campus at Mawson Lakes that includes the Division of Information Technology, Engineering and the Environment (ITEE), is a member of the northern Adelaide community. The campus has been significantly refurbished and re-developed in keeping with the growth and potential development of both the University and the region. It abuts a trendy new residential area (Mawson Lakes) and Technology Park, a high profile symbol of the desired future direction of the region, i.e. widening the industry base with highly skilled workers and technologies. The School of Education moved to Mawson Lakes this year and the School of Business will move there in 2006. In 2005, the University of South Australia employs more than 500 continuing staff at the Mawson Lakes campus and provides undergraduate and postgraduate education for more than 4,500 students.

3. Government and northern Adelaide

The 2000 Discussion Paper on human services led the municipal councils and the State Government to undertake a long term strategic approach to 'restore the strength of the community, to build the economy and to rebuild the sense of security and opportunity'. This resulted in the establishment of the State Government 'Office of the North' in August 2002 and subsequently, other structures. Two important ones are, Northern Futures and the Northern Adelaide Economic Development Alliance (NAEDA). The former focuses on youth aged 12 to 25 years and has a mandate to take up any issues that affect this group of residents. Community participation in education is a predominant issue. NAEDA is a peak committee representing business, unions, government and non-government organisations that was established in 2005. These peak bodies were established with the active participation of UNAP.

In addition to becoming a focus of the State Government, in 2001, the combined Playford and Salisbury area was selected as one of only eight 'proto-type regions' included in the Commonwealth 'Sustainable Regions' program. Playford/Salisbury is the single South Australian region included in the program. The significance of this designation can be

gauged from the magnitude of 'Sustainable Regions'. It is a \$100.5 million program designed to help regional communities address priority issues that they identify. The program emphasises community involvement and an integrated approach to projects. The program is managed by a local Sustainable Regions Advisory Committee (SRAC) that reports directly to the Deputy Prime-Minister.

The degree of commitment of all levels of Government to the northern Adelaide region can also be measured by the amount of money (up to \$12 million for Playford-Salisbury under the Sustainable Regions Programme alone) and other resources put into the programs there, as well as by the degree of collaboration with the community achieved through new governance structures and forums. For example, in addition to the peak groups described above, the State Government established a 'Northern Ministers Group' and an 'Elected Members Forum' that includes Mayors and MPs within a single consultative group. It was planned that other collaborative bodies would come into being as the Northern Partnership of the three levels of government came to focus on different age groups (birth to 12; elderly) and industries. Flexibility and evolutionary practice of the State Government program is in keeping with the theme of the Sustainable Regions Programme - 'Devolution and Regional Solutions', a model of collaboration that actively encourages community capacity building and partnerships through joint initiatives.

4. The University and northern Adelaide

When the University created UNAP, engagement in the northern Adelaide area was not new. Historically, UniSA has enrolled more students from this area than the other South Australian universities. A 2002 audit of University community engagement activities revealed that a large number of staff were already interacting with the community in teaching, research and service activities. The audit itemised: 52 existing initiatives driven by University staff in northern Adelaide; 23 projects under discussion or planned; and 10 ideas for future action. This engagement was highly successful but was uncoordinated, frequently depended on individual staff and involved relatively short-term projects.

Following the audit, a University Task Force, chaired by the Pro Vice Chancellor of the Division of ITEE, recommended to the Senior Management Group that a special programme be established to create partnerships with the community to promote social inclusion through education, training, research and consultancy. Specifically, it recommended that:

- 1) a member of the Senior Management Group lead the project and champion the program in all corporate planning and priority setting processes of the University
- 2) the program be made an integral part of all University activity with incentives for student and staff participation
- 3) an office with a Director, administrative support and a project officer be set up
- 4) each Division and Portfolio nominate an academic staff member to liaise with the office
- 5) the office be located at Mawson Lakes.

A budget of \$250,000 annually for 3 years (2003 – 2005) was sought and obtained and UNAP was made a corporate priority in University planning. Through UNAP, the

University would embark on engagement with northern Adelaide in a more focused and sustainable way to achieve the University’s vision and social justice agenda.

5. The University and UNAP

Although UNAP has an office located at the Mawson Lakes campus, organisationally, it sits within the Chancellery. UNAP has a staff of three – a Director (Mike Elliott), a project officer and an administrative officer. Its mission is to fulfil responsibilities of the University set out in its Act of Parliament in relation to this particular geographic area. The Act establishes an explicit responsibility to provide programmes for disadvantaged groups within the community. The University had expanded this responsibility into a vision:

“to build the capacity and resilience of the communities in which we work through innovative, collaborative and enterprising activities”
(UniSA 2010)

Both the State and Commonwealth programs fit comfortably with the University’s interest in empowering the community (building capacity and resilience), with current approaches to teaching and learning and with best practice in university community engagement.

Thus, when UNAP came into being, a powerful alignment of government and university objectives in relation to northern Adelaide was established, all directed at achieving long term sustainable change for the community rather than short term gains for individual institutions. From this situation, its synergies and potential synergies, there has emerged a model for community engagement that emphasises flexibility, evolutionary development and longer term performance measures as well as institutional commitment to achieve more effective engagement in the region.

6. The development of UNAP

The University Task Force had identified the exclusion of too many people from the opportunities that the area has to offer as an underlying problem in northern Adelaide. It expressed the need for the University to go to the ‘heart of inequality and economic and social exclusion rather than dealing with its symptoms and effects’. It saw that building capacity and capability was the key to achieving social and economic inclusion. To this end, it established four main themes or program objectives around which University activities in the north would be focused:

Theme	Goal
Pathways to Higher and Further Education	Increase school retention and assist people from all age groups and backgrounds participate in higher and further education
Capacity building	Enhance professional development, governance, leadership and the evolution of learning communities

Building regional skill levels	Bring together education and training providers so as to meet regional skills shortages and boost local education and skill levels
Social Capital	Increase the resources available to the community for building networks of mutual support and well-being

The Task Force used a matrix to show how existing activities would be assessed for inclusion in UNAP. The matrix also addressed the issue of how the activity would be mutually beneficial to the community and the University. An example of the matrix applied to one activity identified in the audit, peer mentoring, is shown below. This activity will be used later to illustrate how UNAP operates at the grass roots.

Current Activity:	Paralowie/Mawson Lakes student mentoring program (commenced May 2002)
Potential UNAP Project	Expansion of the Mentoring project (via the Higher Education Participation Program)
External Resources	DETE/ ECEF/ DEST
Meets UNAP criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-University Partnership: local school communities and UniSA • Capacity Building: provision of classroom assistance to teachers • Social Inclusion: providing UniSA student role models to encourage future participation by local students in further studies
Assign to UNAP Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathways to Higher and Further Education
UniSA Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Graduate Qualities: UniSA students working as socially responsible members of the community, developing communication skills and enhancing personal development. • Increased enrolments from the Northern Area • Serving the Community
Key Performance Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of students involved in

	program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of schools involved in program • School retention rates for participants • University and tertiary education entry rate for participants
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The audit/matrix method for focusing activities more strategically is one that could be applied to engagement in other regions.

7. The role of UNAP: overview

UNAP was set up to be the first point of contact on matters relating to northern Adelaide. UNAP works internally and externally. It brings northern Adelaide needs to the attention of the whole University:

- creating new partnerships
- facilitating the development of programs and research to meet community needs
- seeking adjustments to existing academic and entry programs
- promoting northern Adelaide in staff consciousness and University decision-making
- publicising partnerships.

Externally, UNAP brings the whole University to the community by:

- participating in governance structures, formal partnerships, community projects
- facilitating research and evaluation activities
- collaborating with all levels of government and government services, with education providers, business, industry, and the professions.

UNAP is not a deliverer of education or services but a facilitator, an agent for connecting people and ideas to achieve positive change for people in northern Adelaide. Benefits may not always flow immediately to the University of South Australia. For example, students might enrol in other universities and TAFE.

UNAP has identified four major ways in which it achieves the program objectives:

- governance
- partnerships
- projects
- research.

While each of these is important, governance activities have been the most important in the establishment phase of UNAP. Governance is a major activity because by gaining representation on community bodies, ongoing involvement is achieved. This provides opportunities for the community to come to know University people (students and staff),

develops trust and mutual respect and helps overcome negative perceptions of universities often held by the public.

The number of committees in northern Adelaide on which the University is represented is a key performance indicator (KPI) for UNAP. In June 2004, representation on 11 external committees had been achieved; by March 2005, this number had increased to 17. Representation is not restricted to UNAP staff but includes staff from across the University. At present, UniSA representation is provided by staff from ITEE, the Division of Health Sciences, and the Library as well as UNAP and the Chancellery. UNAP also provides representation on ad hoc committees for special purposes (eg literacy) or geographic areas (eg regional forums).

Representation in itself is not the only goal. In addition to achieving University representation, UNAP plays an active role in the redefinition of existing bodies and the formation of new ones to improve the effectiveness of governance.

Representation of UNAP on university committees is another aspect of establishing governance relationships. The composition of the UNAP Steering Group provides a simple way of inserting UNAP effectively into University planning and decision-making. The UNAP Steering Group is chaired by the Pro Vice Chancellor: Organisational Strategy and Change and includes the Pro Vice Chancellor: Access and Learning Support, as well as the Pro Vice Chancellors who head the four academic divisions: Education, Arts and Social Sciences; Health Sciences; Information Technology Engineering and the Environment (ITEE); and Business. The Steering Group is an ideal forum for floating ideas, suggesting strategies and identifying opportunities within the University for achieving UNAP's mission. Administrative procedures, eg criteria to be addressed in course proposals or course reviews, provide another way of embedding the UNAP agenda into core activities and the Steering Group is able to identify these opportunities as they arise. The seniority of the membership also ensures UNAP is considered in other capacities such as in assessing internal research applications.

Another way of achieving sustainable engagement is by creating formal partnerships between the University and a variety of external agencies through a memorandum of understanding. UNAP has developed three memoranda in relation to health and wellbeing, libraries and middle schooling. Such formal collaborations outlive personalities and short term projects and embed the engagement both in the community and in the University. Partnerships provide a framework for managing joint programs and projects and for getting better results because of synergies, cross-fertilisation and increased energy and mass. Partnerships can lead to more projects that directly benefit the community and help seed new relationships and research.

8. The impact of UNAP: two examples

UNAP projects are documented on the UNAP web site. Rather than describe the range of projects in which UNAP is a partner, this section will describe two examples to illustrate the impact that UNAP is having at the grass roots and ways in which the University is working to sustain them.

Peer Mentoring and Tutoring

Collectively secondary schools in the northern suburbs of Adelaide have a very low rate of secondary students completing school and gaining TAFE and university entry. Increasing the community's participation in education is a goal of the University and of the Northern Partnership which is supported by the role of the Office of the North to 'assist communities, schools and training providers to work together to improve skill formation and learning outcomes in schools, TAFE and Universities with concomitant improvements in employment outcomes' (Sandeman, n.d.).

The University is addressing this goal in a number of different ways. One that is most effective involves University students acting as mentors for school students in northern Adelaide. The Division of Information Technology, Engineering and the Environment (ITEE) based at Mawson Lakes has led the way. The Dean of Teaching and Learning in the Division, Associate Professor Brenton Dansie, established a Peer Tutoring Program to give UniSA students background knowledge and skills to act as peer mentors. The purpose of the program is to:

- assist secondary students improve their academic achievements while at secondary school, and
- provide university role models/mentors for secondary students.

UniSA students participate in peer tutoring and mentoring programs on either a voluntary or an enrolled basis (gaining academic credit for peer tutoring). The programs are currently provided in northern Adelaide in three forms, each of which provides opportunities for University students to work with students at school.

The Tutoring program places University students in school classes. Working with the subject school teacher in fields in which they have knowledge, they provide assistance to school students.

The University Orientation Program (UOP) was delivered for the first time during the second semester of 2004. The course exposes school students to a university experience. The Program was an outcome of the highly successful Tertiary Preparation Studies Course, a life skills subject, delivered in 2003 at Smithfield Plains High School with UniSA peer tutor participation. Following on from the preparatory course, UOP has made the format of the life skills subject available to more schools in the northern suburbs. It provides more meaningful university learning experiences for secondary students. Several northern schools have incorporated UOP into SACE (SA Certificate of Education) studies.

The third program, Robotics Peer Mentoring, provides hands on experience in robotics, electronics, science and engineering for secondary school students. It links university undergraduate mentors with secondary teachers to deliver a robotics program that develops:

- a higher level of skills in electronics, the use of advanced technology such as micro-controllers and associated programming tools.

- an appreciation for the underpinning Science and Mathematics of electronic applications and their importance in the development of higher level engineering skills
- greater interest in, and understanding of, advanced manufacturing in South Australia as a major contributor to the future development of the South Australian economy and as a significant employer.
- *a better understanding of career opportunities and the various education and training pathways available to achieve a range of employment outcomes in the Industry.*

The success of this program has seen it spread from northern Adelaide schools where it was begun by UniSA to schools right across Adelaide. Key industry partners are Clipsal Integrated Systems, Codan, Entech, Tenix, SAAB Systems and Holden. The project is being undertaken by a core group of education partners including the two other South Australian universities, the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS), the Australian Science and Mathematics School (ASMS) and eLabtronics. The program has achieved leading edge collaboration of government, industry and education. It is not surprising that it won the prestigious 2003 Australian Engineering Excellence Award: AusIndustry award for Innovation as well as the AAUT award for provision of educational services to the community.

Northern Adelaide Health and Wellbeing-Professional Placement Program

University engagement with communities through placing students in professional practice settings is not uncommon. Such placements help fulfil the need Universities have to provide students with opportunities to develop particular skills relating to their profession and to expose them to clinical and other real workplace experience. In northern Adelaide, there is a high and unmet demand for health and wellbeing services. In response to this need, rather than approaching agencies to "take some of our students" for professional placements as has happened in the past, UniSA is developing ongoing health and well-being service delivery programs in collaboration with northern Adelaide agencies in order to meet specific community needs. University students placed in the region under supervision offer significant assistance to the community:

- to improve health and well-being outcomes in a highly disadvantaged community
- to increase the number of university graduates prepared to work in northern Adelaide
- to expose young people in northern Adelaide to a range of career options
- to provide a high quality learning experience for university students.

The University encourages multi-disciplinary, multi-agency programs wherever possible.

An example of how UNAP projects are having an effect on the community at the grass roots level is the engagement of the University with the Swallowcliffe Schools (Swallowcliffe Junior Primary School and Swallowcliffe Primary School) in Davoren Park in northern Adelaide. Here, University students from a range of health science disciplines – social work, human movement, physiotherapy and occupational therapy - have undertaken professional placements. The human movement and physiotherapy students have worked

with children suffering from Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD). Despite the difficulties facing school students with DCD, waiting lists at local Health Services were excessive and the availability of specialist help within the Department of Education and Children's Services was limited. University students working under supervision have been able to help meet the need by providing what the Principal of Swallowcliffe Primary acknowledged was 'a significant new service for the local community'. Other needs the University students are helping to address relate to self-esteem and friendship and the provision of individual counselling for students. They also facilitated a peer-mentoring program. An evaluation of these programs is currently underway, but verbal feedback from the school and the participating university students has been positive.

Achieving project sustainability

Given the significance of these projects in relation to increasing social capital as well as community participation in education, it is particularly important that they are sustained over time. A major challenge is to ensure that effective projects continue after initiators are no longer involved and "pilot" money is expended.

There are three strategies UNAP employs to achieve sustainability.

Immediate success of a program can lead to extension and adaptation of the program to suit other communities or groups within them. For example, a variation of the University Orientation Program is being considered for delivery to cohorts of adults and indigenous students at the Para West Adult Campus in Smithfield Plains.

Another avenue to sustainability is through engagement in governance arrangements UNAP has established and the opportunities these provide for keeping the programs and goals on the agenda at many different levels and across many different organisations. Governance arrangements that help sustain peer mentoring and tutoring projects include University representation on the:

- Science and Technology Academy Curriculum Committee (an offshoot of the Northern Adelaide State Secondary Schools Alliance [NASSA])
- Northern Advanced Manufacturing Industry Group (NAMIG) which coordinates industry interaction with education
- Northern Futures Committee which acts as a peak regional coordinating group on all matters relevant to 12 to 25 year olds in northern Adelaide and
- Northern Adelaide Economic Development Alliance (NAEDA), the peak economic coordinating group in northern Adelaide.

Through these structures UniSA is communicating with all levels of education and industry in discussions ranging from broad regional strategy to curriculum detail.

Similarly, the programs at the Swallowcliffe Schools are the subject of discussion that occurs in layers of governance structures. While the University is working with the schools directly, subregional involvement and considerations are incorporated through collaboration at other levels, including the suburbs of Davoren Park and Smithfield Plains. At another level, the University has a Memorandum of Understanding that takes in all of the major health and well-being agencies in the northern Adelaide region. This has created another forum (and variations from within it) for initiating activities including student professional placement, professional development programs for agency staff and collaborative research, and for seeking agency input into UniSA academic programs. The

University is represented in all strategic regional bodies affecting health and well being. In addition, within the University there are internal structures to coordinate the involvement in northern Adelaide including a committee that deals with student placements in the region. This crosses academic divisions as well as disciplines.

Finally, UNAP looks for ways of embedding programs in the curriculum of both the University and schools, as has occurred in relation to the tutoring and mentoring projects described above.

9. UNAP success

UNAP is now in its third year and in line with the conditions on which it was established, this year the University will evaluate its performance. In the meantime, the annual planning and review process has indicated success in UNAP's:

- high profile in northern Adelaide and in the University
- facilitation of UniSA involvement in projects
- the number of agreements entered into with community-based organisations (Memoranda of Understanding)
- the establishment of governance relationships (UniSA representation).

Statistics on school retention and census data on a range of indicators (education levels, employment, income, health) will be examined when they are available. There has also been a satisfaction survey of internal and external UNAP clients that reported the following assessments of UNAP's perceived impact on the region:

- increased awareness of UniSA activities in the region
- introduction of activities which support and extend opportunity in the north
- increase in clinical placements and communication with health agencies in the region
- work to link agencies with each other and UniSA
- more open dialogue between organisations
- active participation in progressing concepts
- objective input into regional processes
- a willingness to work together.

There have been other very positive external assessments of this program. In 2004, following an audit of the University by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) the program received a commendation and an entry on UNAP will shortly appear in AUQA's Good Practice Data Base. In addition to the awards for the peer mentoring program (referred to above), the Pathway for Adult Learners program, called UniSA-PAL, which UNAP supports, won the Chancellor's Award for Community Service. The latter program originated in the northern Adelaide area before UNAP existed. It was the outcome of the University working with a particular part of the community (Para West, a community that ranked 288 out of 290 national rankings for tertiary participation in a 1999 DETYA study) to meet a specific need (Ramsay, 2004). The collaboration led to a new pathway that is already being replicated and adapted and expanded by UNAP as reported in Ramsay. Creating a UniSA-PAL for Indigenous people in northern Adelaide is a major priority for UNAP. Other UNAP projects have gained significant funding from ARC Linkage and Sustainable Regions grants.

10. Conclusion

A commonly acknowledged barrier to successful university-community engagement is the need to produce results and to do so quickly. One of the significant aspects of the University's engagement with northern Adelaide is its commitment to the long term and its emphasis on outcomes for the community rather than for the University. This is not a

‘university-centric’ model of engagement, but one that has been described as a ‘friendship’ (Sunderland et al, 2004, p. 11). It involves a shared vision rather than a one-way reaching out and it arises from ‘a common love of the good’. In northern Adelaide, the University, three levels of Government and government and non-government agencies are all working to achieve the same goal – an economically vibrant, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable region. At the University of South Australia, community engagement has been arranged organisationally to reflect its strategic importance and to maximise benefits to the community. Engagement with northern Adelaide is deeply embedded, championed by the Chancellor and is focused on long term sustainable change.

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Keeping the Romance Alive - The Four 'Rs' of Relationship Building

Professor Kaye Schofield

ABSTRACT

This paper explores nature of community – university partnership building from a community perspective. RMIT Hamilton is a partnership between RMIT University in Melbourne, and the community of Southern Grampians. In developing protocols for engagement, four 'Rs' are discussed – Resourcing, Responsibility, Respect and Reflection.

There are rewards for universities and communities in bringing the academy closer to the grassroots, but in reality is any kind of equal relationship possible? Balance of power is central to any relationship. Unless there are key strategic or philosophical reasons driving relationships with communities, then the balance of power rests on resources and power. Such a prosaic framework seems almost contradictory when ideally, strong relationships are built on mutual respect.

Instead, in community-university partnerships, voice and power are critical in tipping the balance. Who determines priorities? Who is listened to? How are community and university agendas aligned? In developing equal partnerships, is it possible to bring the divergent strategies such as the university's research and teaching priorities and communities' social and economic strategies together?

Often it is the liminal stages, before roles, process, commitment and costs are finalised, where the most passion and excitement exists. This is the 'courtship' phase which merely sets the scene for long term and mutually beneficial relationship that may or may not become sustainable. The complexities that emerge as the relationship consolidates are a challenge for individuals, communities and organisations alike. This paper looks at some of these challenges. The insights gained may lead to more productive alliances if partners have the capacity to reflect and build on what has been learned. It is this reflection which may bring about the maturing of community – university partnerships.

The paper is based on research conducted during the development of RMIT Hamilton and draws heavily on community voice, aspiration and expectation.

Keeping the Romance Alive – The Four 'Rs' of Relationship Building

Introduction

In an environment where policy encourages and indeed drives collaborations between organisations, and communities and institutions, some understanding of the relationships upon which these collaborations are founded, may be constructive. Whilst there are many aspects to relationships which could be investigated, (for example, motive, purpose, history, compatibility,

agendas, values), this paper focuses only on certain aspects which relate to the relationship which underpinned the development RMIT University at Hamilton. This Case Study arises out of the experience of collaboration between one university and one rural community. The initial aim of the collaboration was to seek mutual benefit for both institution and community. Rural community sustainability or regeneration, including community access to higher education was one, but only one, of the key planning themes at the beginning of the relationship. This was a powerful motivator for the community people involved. However, the university's agenda was somewhat different as it sought initially to add value to the experience of international students visiting the region but then broadened out to encompass a raft of issues, including that of equity. Nevertheless, the agendas were compatible, mutually beneficial, and powerfully inspiring. As the community-university partnership developed, agendas changed. This paper explores the community perspective in the relationship.

The paper is based on an action research project conducted at RMIT Hamilton. RMIT Hamilton is a small university site incorporating a flexible learning centre, research, and a large number of partnerships with the local community. It could adequately be described as a partnership between a rural community and an urban university. The formal collaboration - that is, one that is expressed as an identifiable university presence - is now five years old. But, in fact, the relationship goes back seven years before that. The partnership began with an informal relationship, and initially, was based on personal relationships. This initial relationship defined the emerging community-university partnership. This paper mostly reflects on the experience from the Hamilton perspective and, in particular, the perspective of one who sits uneasily in the role of a community instigator and a local RMIT Hamilton employee. The research arose out of a PhD project based on years of involvement with the partnership, and on conversations conducted with community members, local colleagues and fellow students.

The Four 'R's':

There were four (at least) 'R's which kept reappearing during this research. These were Respect, Resources, Responsibility and Reflection. In fact, many more could be added to the list, but these four appear to encapsulate critical aspects of the developing relationship that has now become RMIT Hamilton. This is not to say there are not many other important elements. Indeed when the conversation is opened up to the broader university, community and funding bodies there seemed to be many more 'R' words, including: representation, reward, recognition, roles, having the right people at the right time. These are touched on briefly in this discussion.

The following paper, like the partnership project itself, draws on community voice, aspiration and expectation. It alludes particularly to the challenges of incorporating these into an institutional framework so that the 'romance' between community and university is not only maintained but can flourish into a mature and sustainable partnership.

RMIT Hamilton Partnership:

RMIT Hamilton is located in south western Victoria. It differs in its resemblance to 'traditional' university campuses, and indeed there has been considerable discussion as to whether the word 'campus' should even be used in association with RMIT Hamilton. Ambivalence in using the term in some ways impeded community understanding about what the university presence actually is. In other ways it enables a flexibility in characterising the entity which is very much still in an evolutionary phase. But like any relationship, it is not fixed to a solid point. With the passage of

time, people, policies and situations change, and so the relationship also reflects these changes as it evolves. Notwithstanding all of this, most locals refer to RMIT Hamilton as a campus, so for convenience that term is used in this discussion, but advisedly.

The campus is a refurbished former government veterinary laboratory, the university's purchasing of which injected considerable enthusiasm to a community reeling under a severe economic downturn in the 1990s. Activity at the campus falls into three main areas:

- 1) Research. RMIT University's only regional research centre, the Centre for Regional and Rural Development, is located at Hamilton. Research is conducted locally, nationally and internationally. The Centre undertakes some teaching, facilitates workshops, and conducts project and consultant work. Engaging the community is inherent in the Centre's work;
- 2) Teaching and learning. A Bachelor of Nursing in flexible delivery mode is the campus's main academic program - a priority is to attract at least one more. Several other teaching programs, including Advanced Diplomas in Business, and a cluster of a postgraduate program in education (by project) make up most of the higher education offerings. These programs and smaller 'taster' programs, have both a professional development objective and a learning community role. RMIT's School of Nursing also conducts some research locally and engages with community partners. For example the U3A act as 'patients' in the nursing laboratory for some low level clinical practice.
- 3) Community engagement. Clearly community engagement is integrated into most campus activities. Nevertheless, there is a formal community engagement process through the Community Advisory Network. (The Community Advisory Network is the main interface between the university and the community.) In addition, a considerable range of activity, of partnerships, networks and projects, is evidence of the emphasis on the community interaction integral to the community-university partnership.

However community engagement at RMIT Hamilton might better be described as 'community partnership' - a term possibly closer to both goal and approach. Community engagement as a term has connotations of something 'we' do to others. In terms of a community-university partnership, it signals a 'top-down' agenda. Engagement has been defined as 'redesigned teaching, research, and extension and service functions that are sympathetically and productively involved with the communities universities serve.' (Aakhus, Kellogg Commission, 1999, p.9) Whilst there are similarities between the language of Community Engagement, and of Partnership, Eversole and Martin (2005) suggest that the former can 'reflect many different levels and intensities of involvement by stakeholders...', whilst Partnership implies a formal, structured relationship among particular stakeholders in which none of the partners dominates the others - although in practice this may be arguable. RMIT Hamilton was based on a community-university partnership initiated in the beginning by both partners. It was jointly funded and jointly conceived, but RMIT University has day to day carriage of the project now that the partnership is recognised primarily as a bricks and mortar manifestation, though this too is arguable as some programs, including teaching and learning and research, are carried out off-campus.

Background:

Initially, a relationship was established by university staff, international students, and in the first instance, local farmers, in the early 1990s. This relationship was based on mutual need - some inspirational people at the university saw opportunities for staff and students in a community partnership. Similarly, community people saw opportunities in bringing a major urban institution closer to the 'grassroots'. As connections between the two entities increased and the number of

joint activities accrued, it became evident that the ‘project’ had the capacity to consolidate. Subsequently, funding was sought, and the partnership – or RMIT Hamilton as it is now known – opened for business in 2000.

Like other communities, Southern Grampians is a complex social structure. There are eight small towns as well as Hamilton (municipal centre), many organisations, and people who have no interaction whatever with the University, whilst others are involved in multitudinous ways. There are parallels with the university community which is itself an extremely complex organisation, appearing to outsiders as labyrinthine. Certainly, University is vastly bigger than Southern Grampians. RMIT’s student population is around 60,000, with 3,500 staff, contrasting with Southern Grampians’ entire population at just under 17,000. Geographically, RMIT is located in Melbourne city, Brunswick, Bundoora, Vietnam, and sites and partnerships in East Gippsland and Hamilton and also in several other countries. On the other hand, Southern Grampians Shire is around 6,800 square kilometres in area. It should not be assumed that because this community is small it lacks complexity and subtlety. Hasty or superficial assessments of either entity based on numbers and scale are not helpful in developing a relationship. Understanding this is a key to one of the ‘R’s, Respect, and yet difficult to achieve for relationships between disparate partners.

Bringing Academy Closer to Grassroots – Matchmaking?

Consistent with ‘community conversations’ conducted during the research was the notion, though perhaps expressed differently, of ‘bringing the academy closer to the grassroots’. Indeed this was the appeal for farmers and others who came to recognise that RMIT was a practical university, and one that had a commitment to applying knowledge, but at the same time was creative and innovative – in other words, prepared to ‘have a go’. This original community group, initially comprising a small group of farmers grappling with the impact of recession, was encouraged by the interest the university took in the community. The community, in dealing with the consequences of change, isolation, marginalisation and economic recession felt as though they were drowning in bureaucratic red tape, over-run by consultants, and that generally a sense that top-down driven bureaucracies were also driving change and yet were out of touch with ‘ordinary people’. By contrast, RMIT has a reputation as a university where there is “...a particular type of creativity which comes from learning by doing...concerned by the problems and questions in the world as we find it now’. (Gardner, The Age, 2005, p.10)

[We felt] a sense of worth. That RMIT thought we were worth doing something with.” (Community Conversation)

Possibilities for new educational opportunities emerged as the partnership evolved, leading also to changes in the nature and motives of the relationship. It could entertain inspiring and aspiring visions of the future. Marrying these threads with the practical realities of managing and resourcing the emerging entity become the real challenges of the partnership.

Our sense of community, of place, in our regions, towns and neighbourhoods, built on generations of commitment and belonging, history, family and friendship, and a concern for the present and the future, provides an important crucible that shapes the capability for innovative achievement and resilience in times of economic change. (Garlick, 1998, p.15)

A central characteristic of this partnership is that it is a *rural/urban* partnership. Some understanding of rural communities may be assistance to the reader. Gray and Lawrence (2001),

Lockie and Bourke (2001), and Sher and Sher (1994) provide very helpful accounts of rural Australian history and conditions, and notions of change and sustainability. Much of the literature suggests rurality connotes some link with the land. Hamilton has a strong connection to the pastoral industry and has been, and still is, vulnerable to commodity downturns and the vagaries of nature, like other bush communities.

There is some tension that rural Australia faces comparatively limited access to the education, research and engagement opportunities of the metropolitan regions. Yet underlying a strong, sustainable natural resource base and one of the nation's most valuable export earning sectors should be a strong commitment to a well educated, vibrant and connected rural community. Partnering with an urban university makes sense in considering the local to global connection, the capacity for applying and transferring knowledge and for bringing much needed skills into the bush – despite the relative low population numbers. For the urban partner, the benefits are clear for students, graduates and researcher. These include the capacity for community and university to work toward a more informed understanding of the critical place of rural Australia in exploring problems, questions and solutions for succeeding generations of Australians - an interdependent approach to sustainability.

We simply do not have access to the range of educational opportunities. You have to go somewhere else to get that. (Community Conversations)

A crucial challenge for this university–community partnership is to visualise how to frame an institutional arrangement that carries the relationship forward cooperatively. The issue does not just refer to any perceived inadequacies of institutions to reinvent themselves. Rather it refers to how re-worked institutional and policy arrangements can assist by injecting a level of creativity, capacity and enthusiasm into communities where burn-out, small and aging populations, and sometimes complacency, are limiting factors to human resources. Sometimes people 'take for granted' what is familiar and are 'not being creative enough at any level to visualise new institutional arrangements that might prepare ['us'/them] better for a more complex and uncertain future' according to Edgar (2001, p.5). This is a critical issue for small rural communities in Australia and elsewhere (Osborne et al, 2005, p.4) because of the small pool of human (and other) resources. It also points to the realities of institutional change. When universities struggle to come to grips with change within themselves, how high a priority is community engagement?

Nevertheless, the university–community partnership has a role to play, initially as catalyst – or matchmaker - in community revitalisation and, more particularly, in developing a local learning culture. Its access to human capital through the extensive resources the urban university offers is particularly valuable to communities 'on the outside'. To achieve this, processes and resources need to be in place. Much depends on the ability of the community to be able to participate as partners. Sometimes it seems they expect too much of the university, but a steadily emerging culture that supports the relationship will build the community's capacity to engage.

In an increasingly global community, networking of people with courage, vision and imagination will become more important than ever before. (McCrae-McMahon, 2001, p.115)

To counter some of these challenges, knowledge should be considered a principal asset and in a joint partnership can form part of the partners' capital. Where the partnership is one of integrity and based on mutual respect (and one expects partnerships to be so!), knowledge would be jointly owned, acknowledged and shared, for the following, and other reasons:

- By providing opportunities for rural dwellers to be part of the discourse;

- By providing skills training so that they are *able* to speak for themselves;
- By providing platforms where community people can have an informed, active voice and be open listeners;
- By providing a platform upon which to jointly develop ideas and perspectives that contribute to a better understanding of ourselves, the community and each other.

The 'Getting to Know You' Phase:

When the small community group first considered approaching a tertiary institution back in the early 1990s, the wool crisis was hitting them hard. They recalled:

We were worried if our community had a future.
 Quite a few people left the district. We were concerned about both the community and ourselves as businesses.
 We thought if we could start with our own community, we might be able to make a bit of a difference. (Community Conversations)

They were impelled to act, and wanted a say. Yet rural Australia has tended to be represented by powerful farm lobbyists (Sher and Sher, 1994). These are not always representative of rural communities and yet it seems often the case that they carry significant power in the determination of rural policy (Gray and Lawrence, 2001, Sher and Sher, 1994). Rural people, like other sectors of the community, have their own unique perspectives and it is appropriate that their voices are heard in academia – not as laboratory rats, but as partners. The space where the academy and the grassroots converge and what might be learned and achieved in such a space, has the tantalising appeal of mutual attraction! Yet, in a partnership between rural community and urban university, how does the balance of knowledge, power and voice that resides in each partner, work? In the Hamilton research, it was apparent that there were perceived and real imbalances: between the power vested in academic knowledge and structures, and the tacit, local knowledge held and valued by local people.

Said (1985) warns, in his treatise *Orientalism* of the political and moral implications of knowledge production through 'mining' communities by researchers. At RMIT Hamilton, situating a research centre within the community, and nurturing a local learning and research culture is one way of mitigating against Said's scenario. Yet Osborne, Beattie and Williamson (2005, p.3) ask, whose voices are listened to - finding that few community members in their study had a 'formal mandate from their community' to speak on its behalf. Other writers (Ansley and Gaventa, Rappaport, Reason, Zeichner and Noffke) refer to the inclusive, empowering and democratising aspects of participatory Action Research in communities. Such methodologies bring people together through learning and reflection. A deeper understanding of issues thus provides community members with a platform for informed action. On the other hand, people can become frustrated when their desire to determine their own future is undermined by their inability to do so. Misunderstandings also can also result in a polarisation of viewpoints.

It became clear that the quality of the relationship could therefore be influenced not only by the terms of engagement (including clear, formal and jointly agreed upon processes) – the pre-nuptial agreement – but also by the empowering qualities of inclusive and reflective practice through research and teaching and learning. In the Hamilton experience, there came times in the developing relationship where passion was overtaken by power, policy and politics, not to mention expediency. At this point, facilitation and leadership were important.

Through experience, it was apparent that without some background knowledge of higher educational structure and arrangements, the community's ability to join in planning and discussion as equal partners was limited, inhibiting the level of participation. In reflecting on the Hamilton experience it seemed that it was the dialogue before commitment where the most innovative and optimistic discussion had taken place. This was the liminal stage – before roles, processes, commitment and cost have been tested, and where the passion and excitement exist. This is where everything is possible, because at this stage, it is just words. The courtship, or 'getting to know you' stage of the relationship.

Testing the Strength of the Relationship:

Arguably, partnerships are about resources and power. In developing the Hamilton campus, what was initially a dispersed and informal range of projects and objectives needed to be linked with the community engagement, teaching and learning, and research strategies of the university. This has implications for resourcing, and for roles and protocols. Articulating the value of the partnership to community and university is critical at this stage of the relationship.

During the transition from incubation to implementation, according to Henton *et al* (1997, p.151), many community efforts disintegrate. Initial leaders are worn out and new champions are emerging. There can be a loss of momentum and those '... who actively participated in the idea-generation process do not hear from the process leaders about next steps and go onto something else...the easy part is the visioning exercise...plans end up on the shelf. You need to make sure you have your champions identified.' (Henton, *et al*, 1997, p.151)

In these, still early, stages of the relationship, consistency is important. Henton *et al* highlight pitfalls not uncommon in developing projects. At this stage, confirmation of commitment is important, as is celebrating successes. Stakeholders' roles change as they accommodate different stages of development.

In the complex landscape of communities and universities facing ever accelerating rates of change, this transition period is challenging. Personnel, policies and plans change regularly in both partners – particularly at the university. But during the time of the first phase of the relationship between Hamilton and RMIT, the community itself went from bust to boom thereby completely changing outlooks and attitudes. The initial impetus of rural recession diminished as conditions changed. Even though most stakeholders commented on the value of the partnership, had a vision for its future, and articulated clearly the role of the university in regional sustainability, the fact is that the original 'burning desire' has gone out of the relationship. It did not diminish the need, but this to some extent resulted in a less 'driven' impetus amongst a few of the community members.

What is so very apparent is the complexity of community-university partnerships, if the Hamilton experience is redolent of other similar partnerships.

The paradox of community consultation is who do you listen to? When is it appropriate to listen to the community, and when is it appropriate to lead? Expectations are now much bigger – there's now a sense it was more than a local project. Expectations exceeded early projections or visions but still keep growing so there's always a sense of disappointment. The real frustrations are however much the university says it wants what you want, most people can't do it – working with a rigid bureaucracy.

People have got to be involved and most won't – either because of time pressures, or

Achieving a whole of university, whole of community (Garlick, 1998, p.66) approach to regional (or community) partnerships has its challenges. It is ambitious in scope, and core relationship protocols must be understood, including Responsibility, Resourcing, Respect and Reflection.

Responsibility:

A vision of a holistic partnership reflects the ‘messy interconnectedness of real world problems’ (Ansley and Gaventa, 1997, p.2), and the ‘bewildering complexities’ of natural and social systems referred to by Suzuki and Dressel (2002). There will always be questions of conflicting accountabilities, ownership and legitimacy (Dalziel and Saunders, 2004), links to strategies and the question of priorities, of resource and commitment RMIT University’s Performance Portfolio (2003, p.58) recognises the challenges of bureaucratising processes, and the importance of ‘...specialist initiative’, and ‘...sustainability built on trust.’

Apparent from the experience of those involved in the Hamilton and other similar initiatives is that attitudes of individuals involved at all levels of the engagement process are important. When it comes to blending institutional structures with the liminal aspects of communities the challenge of managing the relationship increases exponentially. Questions of how to apportion responsibility are integral. If protocols are too prescriptive, then prospects for an open and trusting relationship, the possibilities offered by the space, the aspiration, inspiration and dynamism, will be limited. Some of these themes are expanded upon further into this paper.

Critical questions are: Who leads these initiatives? How are priorities decided upon? These questions hold true for all stakeholders including the university, and the schools and departments involved in the partnership. These questions need to be clarified up front at university and community level.

Of particular relevance to community-university partnerships is the role of those involved in the managing activities at the local level. It is these people whose accountabilities, roles and loyalties are most often convergent, and it can be a stressful role. For the people who occupy these positions, the rewards can be direct, but more than likely they will always have the sense of not being able to fully satisfy either the university or the community. In the words of one local staff member:

Our role as I see as a conduit between the university and the local community. It allows a two way flow of ideas. The university can affect the knowledge base of the community but the community can also shape and inform the university’s way and knowledge of dealing with rural and regional ideas. (Community Conversations)

A related issue for these university staff, and also for some community members who may wear ‘many hats’ in the community, as representatives of an organisation, students, interested community members, or volunteers, relates to the blurring of the ‘professional’ or ‘business’ agendas and the social and personal lives of leaders – and the led.

Commitment, roles, decision making, priorities, outcomes, accountabilities. These are all areas where partners must determine where the carriage of responsibility lies.

Resourcing:

Can resources – both community and university – realistically ever match rhetoric? When universities invite communities in, they need to be prepared to follow through with some commitment – or be clear of the offerings at the outset.

“A real problem is the insistence on concrete outcomes. What is your target?”

“Everyone has something to contribute, something to learn. But in a market economy, people are measured by their dollar value and their dollar cost.

An (Community Conversations) numbers
(income, students, academic programs), and if there is an imbalance of power. Yet often, the real gains may not even be visible at university level. Similarly at Hamilton, success may be gauged by how many cars there are in the car park. How many new courses are planned, and how many students are seeking to be housed. Yet community members may not see and cannot measure, the incremental nurturing of scholarship, of learning and of connections that occurs that are not so visible.

Despite these challenges, community members and university colleagues drive some very positive initiatives, even where resources are strapped, and where official supportive policies may be lacking. Sustaining a partnership in this way is unlikely in the long term. Osborne, Beattie and Williamson (2005, p.1), warn of the high transaction costs of engagement in terms of time and resource commitment in the early stages of negotiation and relationship building. However they also point to the strong potential for innovation arising from the interaction of the ‘complex web of inter-organisational networks’. Social capital developing from continued interaction between individuals within both the institute and the community builds over time – and just like the partners’ development of joint knowledge (above), this becomes part of the partnership’s capital, or as Garlick (1998) suggests, reduces partnership transaction costs. Again these matters are complex and difficult to quantify to the academy, and not always easy to articulate to sections of the community.

Leadership - in universities and communities - is a significant factor in relationship building, at strategic level, and at the level where most of the engagement takes place. The subject of leadership in community engagement processes warrants more attention as a range of related issues are relevant. The notion of liminality, or leadership from the margins (McCrae-McMahon, 2001) introduces the prospect of people on the threshold of a new possibility rather than as a victim of the present situation, or of change. Cox (1997) discusses leaders as agents for change. Kilpatrick (2002) looks at stages of partnership development and the roles key individuals as different stages of the cycle. Whilst Osborne *et al* (2005) acknowledge that leadership is important for effective communities, they also warn of loss of knowledge when leaders move on. This is a pitfall in community development initiatives. An over reliance on strong leaders may mean that good processes are not embedded into operations (Dalziel and Saunders, 2004), yet absence of strong leadership can leave partnerships floundering. In the initial stages of the Hamilton partnership, liminal leadership was significant, but as the project moved along, leaders with different styles were called for. Community leaders who best interact with the university may not always be the most obvious. For example, the local council does not lead community interaction, but leaders of some other organisations are very closely involved.

Eva Cox however points to an advantage that she refers to as a ‘whole life agenda’ – ‘the integration of the public and private in both business and government so that decision making can include more perspectives and eliminate blind spots.’ (Cox, 1996, p.238) If the people involved can effectively deal with relationship shifts, this is an important benefit of the blurred role. This is

one way where thinking about the partnership, or engagement as a 'relationship' potentially is problematic, if the proponents are unable to deal adequately with the role. Staff involved in engagement, especially when located in the community, need to tread cautiously. However, there are rewards in being closely and passionately involved. Many local staff, and Melbourne colleagues as well, have an interest in RMIT Hamilton that goes well beyond a 'nine-to-five' commitment, because they believe in, and/or enjoy, or are committed to, the success of the relationship, and they are extremely visible in a small community.

Respect:

Trust is an important aspect of relationship building – and is more likely to be present if there is mutual respect. It is often inhibited by 'formal objectives, targets and funding regimes of regeneration partnerships' (Osborne *et al*, 2005, p.4). The importance of trust in building partnerships, social capital and so on is mentioned by many writers (Cox; Cavaye; Putnam; Garlick and Pryor; Edgar). Care needs to be taken however that in building trust the system and priorities ensure outcomes are more than rhetoric. The importance of trust is indisputable and is the glue holding networks and communities together.

Here we were a concentrated bunch of community driven people. Plus especially we were a group of friends. Trust was already there. (Community Conversation)

As Cohen and Prusak espouse: "Trust is the key ingredient. Shared interests and shared tasks can help develop trust, but when trust is lacking or has been betrayed, no amount of enthusiasm for a subject or advantage in joint work can hold these collective entities together." (2001; p.51) Critically important then is not only the necessity of building that trust as a core value, but equally, developing webs of relationships – a partnership as delicate as the university/community partnership cannot rely on just a few key relationships. To build trust between an 'institution' and a 'community' is a very big task. The way the institution can satisfactorily achieve this is to deliver on its promises and show goodwill. The community must also take responsibility though – but who in the community does that responsibility sit with? Language too, can be a sticking point. Academic and institutional jargon can leave communities out in the cold. This includes not just the jargon and acronyms. The academic language of research carried out in the communities arguably serves to appropriate local knowledge (see above). Responsibility, resourcing and respect are interconnected, essential ingredients of successful partnerships. Difficult to assign and manage sometimes though they may be, a practice of continuous reflection may assist the process.

Reflection:

If effectively employed, this can be a powerful tool for learning and managing emerging and sustainable relationships. During the Community Conversations, reflection proved useful for telling the story of people involved in the development of RMIT Hamilton, of thinking about the lessons learned, as well as clarifying views of the future. Reflection can be a formal process, such as an evaluation tool, but with a narrative or case study component. Or it can be a relaxed debrief following completion of a project. Celebration, communication, respectful discussion, listening, and incorporating lessons into new learning are all important to reflection.

In too many cases though, the idea of reflection is subsumed by evaluation. In their study, Osborne *et al* found that evaluation was the area of 'greatest weakness identified' (2005, p.5), and they feared that lessons would be lost. They said that the majority of monitoring methods were concerned with accountability of public money and not focused on enhancing community learning

and sustainability of community involvement (2005, p.5). They also commented on the importance of celebrating early successes, which is itself a form of reflection.

Gray and Lawrence (2001) call for rural reflexivity as an important ingredient in rural renewal. The reflection component of the Hamilton Master of Education Action Research program, as well as the reflective processes integrated into other forums during the research project highlighted the value of Reflection as a key element in building better relationships – and a conclusion that I arrived at was that an ongoing reflection process would be a valuable asset in the maturation of the community-university partnership. This should be built in at individual project level, and into research, and teaching and learning programs.

Conclusion:

The benefit of community-university partnerships such as the one discussed here, are by nature integrated and multi-faceted. If relationships that lead to the exploration of mutual learning can be nurtured in an environment built on commitment, trust, information, an understanding of interdependence and opportunity, then the potential for the investigation of solutions for community sustainability may begin to be realised. Through partnerships, we can bring together research, applied knowledge and practice with local, tacit knowledge. The **Responsibility** for these partnerships lies with all of us, but clarifying the channels and accountabilities is painstaking and no 'one size fits all' model exists due to policy determinants, and the individual characteristics of communities and institutions. **Resourcing** is a major issue in establishing commitment, and a factor in establishing a balance of power and responsibility. The resourcing question, while not just a question of dollars, is possibly the biggest stumbling block in cash challenged community engagement work. But confidently and clearly articulating the benefits of partnership may be part of the process. **Respect**, relies to some extent on both responsibility and resources, but also on simple human attitudes, including the willingness to embark in a trusting and mutually beneficial relationship. Academics can nurture their respectful voice in the way that they conduct research in the community, and the way in which they treat their partners. **Reflection** is the 'R' that is open to all of us. In the experience at Hamilton, it often seems in short supply because we forget to practice it! But when we do, our experience, our learning and our humanity is utterly enriched. For academics, community members, and 'ordinary' university practitioners, this is surely an R worth nurturing.

Peter Senge suggests our goals erode if we are not willing to live with emotional – creative – tension. This notion invokes the idea of a successful relationship as a 'Romance'. Exciting, satisfying, rewarding. At the sharp edge of community engagement, it is probably wise to remember Senge's words from time to time when relationships, as they inevitably do, get complicated. Goethe urges us to be committed, because until then, there is hesitancy. We need to nurture the romance, and to be bold.

(It takes) "...a lot of energy. A lot of positive people working towards it. We need a few champions We need the resources. The main blockers are often *who* the people are."

'Time and again, we have seen how excited faculty, administrators, and community members become when they are provided with the space and time to work together on real problems', extol Ansley and Gaventa (1997; p.7). The rewards – one of those other 'R's, can be profound when they occur – when we have time to stop and reflect. During this research project, a tea-room conversation was recorded at RMIT Hamilton in my reflective journal:

In the tea-room this morning, there were a heap of conversations happening – DK and BW about the solar car. DH and the others about the multicultural party. DJ trying to balance two conferences – one ours, another an approach from one of the schools. S said that JM had gone to talk to the Shire about a research project. JB and JK were talking about the IOMMM website. KM excited about the nurses and their results. JM about the Cert IV. On and on it went. I said to M what a buzz it was. She said, yes, but some people would say this wasn't the point of the university. My response was that if we can study community engagement and the scholarship of, then we should be able to practice it.

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Acknowledgements:

Staff at RMIT Hamilton who assisted and participated in the original research;
Community members at Woodhouse/Nareeb and Hamilton who participated in the community conversations;
Robyn Eversole, Bill Vistarini;
RMIT Hamilton Masters Cluster;

Refereed Paper to "Universities and Communities: Learning and Engaging through Sustainable Partnerships" Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance (AUCEA) National Conference 2005

Professor Colin Hocking

Key Words: ecological sustainability, trans-disciplinary, pedagogy, interdisciplinary, ecology, higher education, ecoliteracy

Abstract: University engagement with community has been partly limited by the capacity of Universities to combine knowledge and expertise across discipline boundaries. Community enviro-social sustainability initiatives are one area where discipline silos have impeded development of effective knowledge and practice. The origins of social sciences as oppositional to natural and technological sciences, and the apparent separation of pedagogical approaches between the disciplines, can help to understand problems in developing community sustainability training and research. In more developed countries at least, environmental management is constructed mostly around the pedagogies of objective knowledge and technological engineering. Community development and engagement, in comparison, are more constructed around comparative knowledge, including social construction / post-structuralism.

Practical experience of building community engagement for sustainability at Victoria University has revealed how some of these silo approaches interplay with other restrictions on Universities to limit effective engagement. Alternatively, developing trans-disciplinary community engagement projects of this type may be just what Universities need to overcome the impeding influences that Universities appear to be having on finding ecologically sustainable solutions. Suggestions are made as to how Universities might deal with these destructive silo tendencies, and some institutional, academic and practical changes that would assist in their dissolution. One example explored is how discipline divides might be partly overcome by recognising underlying pedagogical themes across disciplines that might allow discipline specific knowledge to be accommodated within shared pedagogical themes.

Iramoo Sustainable Living Precinct at Victoria University

For the past seven years, a sustainable living centre called Iramoo has been under development and consolidation at VU St Albans campus, on the Outer West of Melbourne. The purpose of Iramoo is:

“ to exemplify and encourage ecologically and socially sustainable living and cultural harmony in the interconnections between Victoria University, western Melbourne and the global community ”

The precinct, which consists of three hectares of University land in the north west of St Albans campus, and associated crown land reserves constituting in total approximately 50 hectares of native wildflower grasslands (Craigie & Hocking 1999), includes:

- Three major Iramoo Wildlife Reserves – containing several nationally threatened animal and plant species
- A series of buildings: an education discovery centre, an indigenous plant nursery, a green lab practical working space

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- Gardens & seed orchards for local indigenous species, and a world herb garden for Chinese, Western and Aboriginal herbs
- The Moondani Balluk indigenous cultural centre
- Education trails, including the Iramoo Reconciliation Rocks
- Integrated with a series of major reconstructed community wetlands
- At the interface between older migrant and newer aspirational communities
- Employing staff across environmental repair, indigenous plant growing, community engagement and cultural development around indigenous and multicultural themes

The people most engaged in the running of Iramoo are:

Staff & students from the Sustainability Group at Victoria University

Staff and volunteers associated with Moondani Balluk indigenous services

Staff & students (Higher Education & TAFE) from: education, community development, Chinese & Western herbal medicines, events management, information technology

Local schools – primary & secondary

Community groups & projects: Sustainability Street, Friends of Iramoo, Friends of Kororoit Creek

Iramoo has explored how University and community can come into partnership and engagement, via association with land and common purposes, in seeking ecologically and socially sustainable futures. Issues encountered include: the purposes of Universities and their facilities and resources; how Universities and communities view the common environment we share; the potential for using University community engagement to address problems of socio-environmental sustainability, and the barriers to this potential; what might be involved in overcoming the divides between disciplines, sectors and management levels in universities in pursuit of community engagement that also includes ecological sustainability.

The experiences, achievements and challenges arising from Iramoo, and attempts to develop integration of University, community and environment inform this discussion paper. In particular Iramoo provides useful practical examples of the ways in which the outlooks and structures of Universities in their current manifestation in Australia and more developed countries in general contribute to disjunctions and barriers that are inclined make eco-social sustainability difficult to achieve.

University Mission – Transformation in the Region and Beyond

The purposes of Iramoo are broadly in line with the overall strategic mission of Victoria University, which is:

“ To use the power of education to transform the lives of individuals and the capacity of industry and communities, within the western Melbourne region and beyond.”
(www.vu.edu.au).

Victoria University is the result over ten years ago of the amalgamation of two institutions, both with strong history, base and connections in West: Footscray Institute of Technology and the Western Institute. The twelve campuses of the University are spread throughout the west, and into the city centre. No other post-secondary institution has a campus in the west of Melbourne, so there are strong reasons for Victoria University to address its base in the broad western region, which constitutes up to a third of the population of Melbourne.

Sustainable Living – Why?

There are many reasons why we need to urgently address our relationships with our environment, and to take action for ecological sustainability. Most of these are set out in the State of the Environment Report (Lowe 1996). Here are just a few:

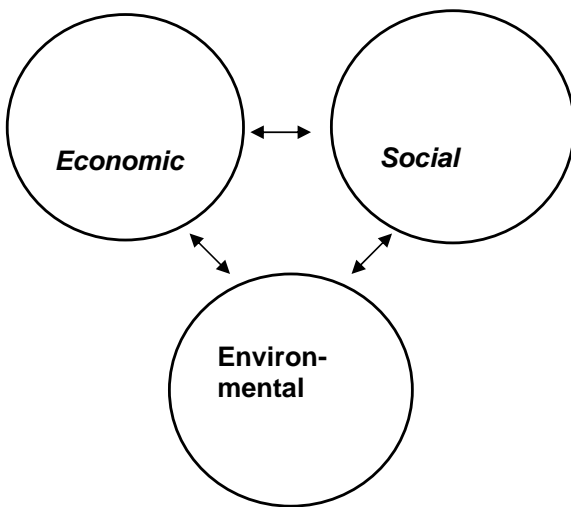
- Australians are amongst the largest per capita users of water in the world – and we live on the driest continent
- Adelaide will be without drinkable water two days per week by 2014 - largely because of unsustainable water use by Victoria and New South Wales
- At least ten species of plant will go extinct in wild in the Melbourne region in the next five years
- Western Melbourne will see increases in excess of 70,000 new houses by 2010, one of Australia's largest housing booms - the environmental effects and infrastructure costs for maintaining this development will be enormous

Sustainable Living – How?

According to the State of Environment Report, Australia (Lowe 1996), perhaps the biggest challenge for ecological sustainability is 'to get the majority of the population to see themselves as part of the environment, instead of separate from it'. Most ecological sustainability approaches focus on one or more of water, waste or energy. However, underlying these is the reliance of ecological systems on biodiversity, which is one major focus of Iramoo in the west, interlinked with the other three. The relationship between people and the environment is arguably at its most difficult in the distances that exist between the majority people and the majority of other species.

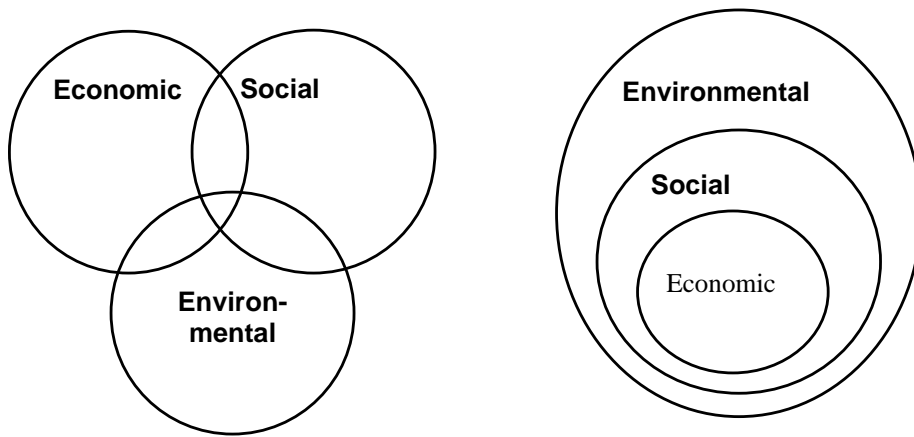
Deleted: (Lowe 1996)

The State of the Environment Report frames the challenge for ecological sustainability in terms of the current and future relationships between economic, social and environmental parameters. Previously these relationships have been changing from the traditional perception that the economic, social and environmental have had some peripheral influence on one another:

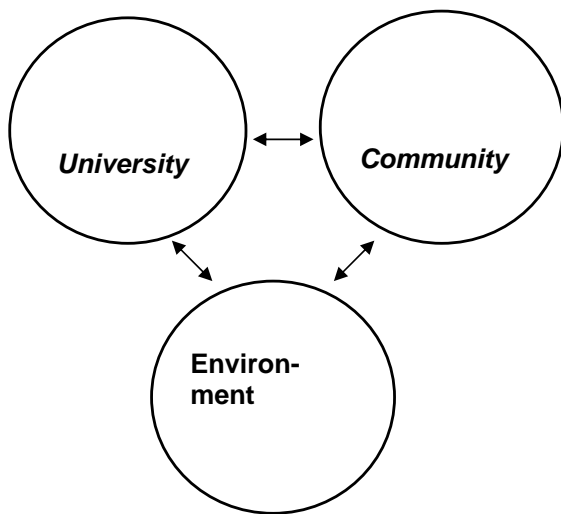


More recent views of these relationships suggest that there are large areas of overlap and interconnection between these three, and point to a new framing of these

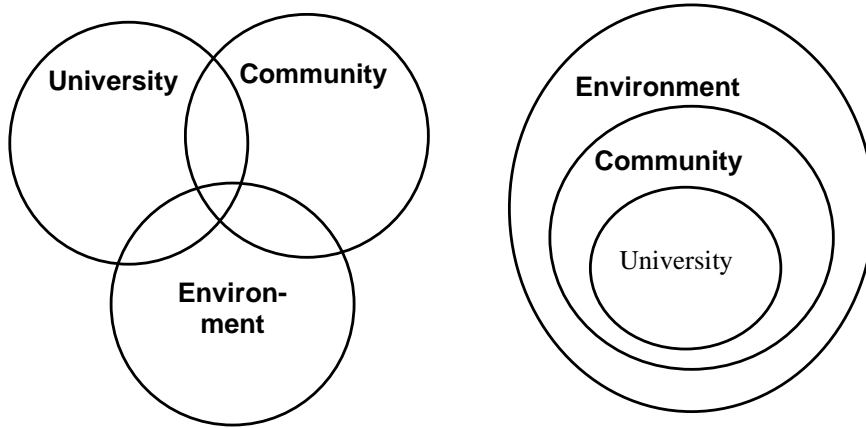
relationships, in which it is recognised that the economic and social both occur within an total environmental context from which we cannot exclude any other activities:



In a similar way, the relationships between University, community and environment might be considered:

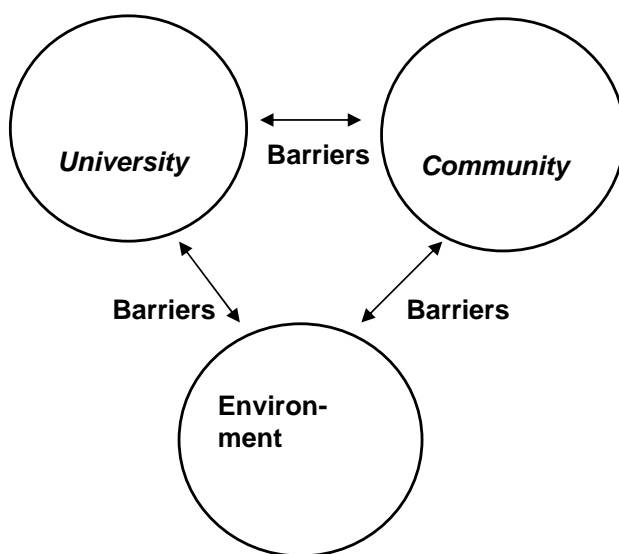


Over time, the potential is for Universities to recognise the inter-relationships that exist between University, community and environment – at the operational level, and in the generation of frameworks, skills and strategies for moving towards more ecological communities. Ultimately, the potential is for Universities to envisage themselves as seamless sub sectors of both communities and the environment within which these communities exist.



However, to achieve this potential for engagement, Universities will need to develop deliberate strategies around both social and environmental engagement themes, and re-frame some of the ways that knowledge and actions are developed within regional contexts, by drawing on and combining understandings across disciplines and sectors.

Iramoo has experience of the barriers that occur within each of these sets of relationships that hinder the engagement of Universities with each of the community and the environment.



University – Community Barriers

These are now increasing the subject of investigation, through a renewed focus on University – Community engagement (see other papers arising from the “*Universities and Communities: Learning and Engaging through Sustainable Partnerships*” conference). Commonly reported barriers, which are also the experience of Iramoo staff, students and volunteers include:

- Academic distancing – including objectification of community problems, including those related to community and environment
- Valuing ‘detached’ research & development – including ‘data mining’ and narrow notions of what constitutes ‘real’ or ‘valuable’ research and development
- Discipline silos: which limit inter-disciplinary approaches needed in community engagement for enviro-social sustainability
- University confusion over the extent to which it is part of the community, and if so in what ways.

University – Environment Barriers

Victoria University is like most other large institutions, which are in the early stages of developing waste, water & energy practices towards sustainability. In this institutional, corporate style framing of sustainability, biodiversity is often referred to as ‘the base’ of sustainability (as it is in the State of Environment Report) yet often in practice it is envisaged ‘at a distance’.

Victoria University (VU) is not atypical in terms of the relationship of universities to the environment. VU has twelve campuses spread across a range of environmental settings in inner and western Melbourne. At St Albans campus, the third largest campus by equivalent full time student numbers, areas of national biodiversity significance have been identified and incorporated into reserves, which have been recognised on the official University campus plan. Plans for more efficient waste, water and energy usage are also under consideration, with some initiatives already instituted. In summary VU, like most universities, is still struggling to come to terms with its relationship to environment, and compared with other industries and institutions of similar size in the west of Melbourne (including some large housing estate developments) can be characterised very much as a follower than a leader. This raises the question of the extent to which Universities can and should be leaders and examples in their communities for the development of eco-social sustainable practices, and the extent that Universities will be able to capitalise on ‘practical’ experience and opportunity of initiatives such as Iramoo.

Community – Environment Barriers

As identified in the Australian State of the Environment report (Lowe 1996), the lack of awareness at a community level of the ecological underpinnings of social well being is a major issue for achieving sustainability in the long term. This dissociation is not assisted by the separation between disciplines that are a feature of most Universities. In particular, authors such as (Irwin 2001) and (Orr 1992), have identified the nature and extent of this discipline separation, which for more developed countries has led to scientific-technological approaches to attempt to solve many of our environmental problems. The social sciences, community development and related disciplines have largely been divorced from the practices of ecological sustainability and the distances that communities feel from environmental contexts is left intact (for analysis of this from an environmental education perspective, see (Bader 2004).

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As key stakeholders in the generation and dissemination of knowledge, it is perhaps useful to question the extent to which universities have a special responsibility to address this separation of disciplines and practices. In a parallel way, it may be useful for universities to consider where eco-social sustainability fits within community engagement.

University Barriers to Engagement With Community and Environment

Academic distancing - valuing 'detached' research and education

There is already much discussion within University and Community Engagement literature about the detachment of socially related research and education from the problems of the real world. It is beyond the scope of this paper to review this literature comprehensively, but a few examples will illustrate the point. (Brown & Muirhead 2001) trace the changes in University education, in Australia at least, away from intellectual inquiry and research towards vocational studies to the 'democratisation' or mass implementation of University education, beginning with the Whitlam government in the early 1970's and accelerating with the changes of the Dawkin administration and with the subsequent Liberal government fee increases:

Deleted: Brown and Muirhead (2001)

" ... the successive imposition of higher monetary costs on the students meant that it was even more imperative, from their perspective, to simply get in, get out and get a job. Nowhere in this equation does, social or civic responsibility, beyond that of the compliant and productive citizen, figure." (pg. 15).

It is important for the university-community engagement sphere to recognise the impacts of this detached approach in limiting education and research that will contribute to eco-social sustainability. However, even within the university-community engagement literature itself, the division between social and environmental/scientific domains is gaping. For example, a key paper discussing Universities as sites of citizenship and civic responsibility in the USA, interprets citizenship and civic responsibility in purely social terms, while at the same time pointing out the major split in outlook between social and scientific disciplines in relation to engagement with education around 'citizenship':

Deleted: Teune (2001)

" ... certain disciplines are more conducive to the teaching of democracy and its ideals, and to the active promotion of civic values and civic engagement. The social sciences and humanities as a rule do a better job of both teaching and promoting these civic objectives than the natural sciences ... " (pg. 16)

Likewise, a paper for the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education (Goddard 1998) which frames key questions for engagement, refers to social and political dimensions only, under the heading closest to environmental considerations:

Deleted: (1998)

"Geographical identity: What are the unique features of the region to which the university can contribute? While there are global, economic, technological, social and cultural dimensions drivers of the development process, these interact very differently with specific regional development trajectories. The university will need to develop a collective understanding of its region in order to identify particular opportunities for engagement."

In Australia, the current federal government (Nelson 2002) recognises and promotes the importance of university – community engagement in terms of universities' "role in social, economic and cultural development" – no direct mention of environmental considerations here either.

Deleted: (Nelson, 2002)

This exclusion of environmental considerations from the notion of university-community engagement is not surprising when it is considered that the majority of literature in this field is generated from university staff from the social sciences, and the degree of separation of social sciences from technologically oriented environmental considerations

(Irwin 2001). However, it is an issue that is in need of urgent rectification, if the definition of university-community engagement is going to avoid a narrowing towards the promotion of 'civics', 'democracy' and '(socially oriented) community development' – concepts, incidentally, which themselves have been directly linked to environmental sustainability via the United Nations Report: Our Common Future (Brundtland 1987) and a library of literature since which links democracy, civil society and peace directly with environmental concerns and the need for environmental sustainability as one of the foundations of these aspirations.

To emphasise that this need not be the case for university-community engagement, the University of the Free State (South Africa) has as the mission (slogan) for its Community Service Policy (UFS, undated, pg 19): "We learn and serve in partnerships for sustainable development" and elsewhere in their policy it is clear that they are referring to environmental as well as social and economic sustainability:

"These programmes must be based on interdisciplinary, inter-sectoral efforts to find local solutions to the national and international challenge of safeguarding all people through environmentally sustainable actions." (pg. 18)

Worldwide there is now recognition of the importance of learning about sustainability within social and geographic (place) contexts. For example, according to Lang (2004):

"The challenge which faces Australia is the need not only to *engage* communities but also *enable* communities to work towards sustainability. This will require the Australian Government and its citizens to further re-vision the present to create a new and sustainable future. The approach Australia uses will need to continue to work on developing multiple perspectives for working towards sustainability to be inclusive of all its citizens. These multiple perspectives and ways of knowing and working will be fostered if learning, creativity and innovation for sustainability are nurtured and supported."

The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the lead agency for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD 2006-2015) launched its DESD Implementation Plan on in October, 2004. Behind this development are concepts that align directly with many of the concepts and outlooks central to university-community engagement:

"Education for sustainable development is an emerging but dynamic concept that encompasses a new vision of education.

There is a need to refocus many existing education policies, programmes and practices so that they build the concepts, skills, motivation and commitment needed for sustainable development.

Education is the key to rural transformation and is essential to ensuring the economic, cultural and ecological vitality of rural areas and communities.

Lifelong learning, including adult and community education, appropriate technical and vocational education, higher education and teacher education are vital ingredients of capacity building for a sustainable future. " (UNESCO, 2002, pp. 5-6)

Learning within practical contexts

The limiting nature of Universities to the development of practical learning and ideas for sustainability has been well summarised by Orr ((Orr 1992), pg 103):

“A genuine ... education will foster a sense of connectedness, implicatedness, and ecological citizenship, and will provide the competence to act on such knowledge. In what kind of place can such an education occur? The typical campus is the place where knowledge of other things is conveyed. Curriculum is mostly imported from other locations, times, and the domains of abstraction. The campus as land, buildings, and relationships is thought to have no pedagogic value... It is supposed to be attractive and convenient, without also being useful and instructive.

Four years in a place called a campus culminates in no great understanding of the place, or in the art of living responsibly in that or any other place ... students frequently refer to the outside world as the “real world” and do so without any feeling that this is not as it should be....

Orr (1992) also links the disconnection of University with environment is also linked to the disconnection with community; for example:

“Students also learn indifference to the human ecology of the place and to certain kinds of people: those who clean the urinals, sweep the floors, haul out the garbage, and collect beer cans on Monday morning.” (pg. 104)

Discipline silos limit inter-disciplinary approaches to university-community eco-social sustainability

University community engagement projects and approaches tend to be defined within existing social science frameworks, in which environment is either left out, or defined separately as science-technology approaches ‘helping’ community to find technical solutions – the less preferred community service model of community engagement referred to by Muirhead et al., (2002). Other authors also refer to the difficulty of bringing science-based disciplines into the sphere of the more preferred university-community engagement. For example (Teune 2001) in reporting on “Curriculum Issues” in a USA States Study of Universities as Sites of Citizenship and Civic Responsibility notes that:

“There was a consensus that certain disciplines are more conducive to the teaching of democracy and its ideals, and to the promotion of civic values and civic engagement. The social sciences and humanities as a rule do a better job of both teaching and promoting these civic objectives than the natural sciences.”

This statement, while resonating with general academic experience when viewed within a narrow frame, fails to take into account two major issues:

1. That civic responsibility is being defined in ways that exclude responsibility for the effects of science (for example, attitudes, values and ethics and the intersection of science and society); and
2. The importance of environmental stewardship and health as a key civic virtue for all of society, and therefore as a key plank in university-community engagement strategies

In the 1930's one of the founders of modern ecology, the University of Wisconsin agricultural academic Aldo Leopold developed what he called the Land Ethic, which included the notion of expanding the concept of (human) community to include other species and ecological relationships. It is perhaps beholden of universities in general, and university-community engagement approaches in particular, not to perpetuate the discipline silo problem of seeing environment as separate from social communities. The impacts of discipline silo-ing on the development of effective approaches to environmental sustainability has been well summarised by Orr (1992):

“[Ecological literacy] ... must overcome the ‘fatal disconnection of subjects’ ... The academy, with its disciplines, divisions, and multiplying professional jargons, has come to resemble not so much a *university* as a cacophony of different jargons ... Disconnectedness in the form of excessive specialization is fatal to comprehension because it removes knowledge from its larger context. Collection of data supersedes understanding of connecting patterns, which is, I believe, the essence of wisdom.”
(pg 101)

This call for contextualisation and specific relevance has recently been re-iterated and amplified in the framing of approaches to the Decade for Sustainable Development (UNESCO 2001 – see below for more detailed discussion). As summarised by Lang (2004) this framing encompasses:

“the view that sustainable development is grounded in the local community [which] implies that education for sustainable development will also reflect the unique needs, concerns and priorities of the local community. This situated context ... provides for new ways of knowing and working to emerge as learning and doing is engaged by the local community. Sharing of knowledge and practice between communities will become more important to build our understandings of education for sustainable development to work towards achieving sustainability.”

Many authors (e.g. (Fien 1993; Orr 1992; Tilbury et al. 2002) have repeated the importance of the local or regional contextualisation of enviro-social sustainability research, knowledge and practice. In contrast, most if not all Universities, through their administrative practices and tacit support for ‘business as usual’ contribute actively to the barriers between disciplines that inhibit civic engagement and rounded education, including education for enviro-social futures. Tuene (2001), commenting on civic education in the USA (pg 19) has summarized what is widely acknowledged also in Australia:

“In the absence of strong administrative leadership or financial incentives, faculty commitments to developing or participating in civic engagement initiatives is constrained by the ‘compartmentalization’ of a reward structure that had traditionally valued individual efforts within traditional disciplinary-based department organisations.”

There is rich ground for universities engaged with communities to include enviro-social sustainability as part of their engagement platform and to build a platform of meaningful engagement in ways that currently appear rare.

Common pedagogies to link university-community engagement with eco-social sustainability across disciplines and across university-community boundaries

Pedagogies for university-community engagement

Either implicit or explicit in the definition of university-community engagement are several pedagogical approaches, which can be summarized as:

1. Reciprocal research and learning, that genuinely includes recognition of the knowledge that resides in the community
2. Research and learning in context
3. Reflective and transformational research and learning
4. Trans-disciplinary approaches to research and learning

Reciprocal research and learning

Clarke et al (2001 – in(Muirhead, Graham & L. 2002)) provide a broad definition of engaged universities as being institutions that ‘enter into reciprocal relationships with the communities of which they are a part ... to combat the problems of their local communities.’

This definition strongly implies a flow of ideas and information back and forth between university and community representatives. The Community Service Policy and Strategy of the University of the Free State (Mangaung) in South Africa frame this approach more directly (UFS undated):

“The UFS acknowledges the importance of the new paradigm of open systems of knowledge, and the production of knowledge in dynamic interaction with the interests of communities. This paradigm is included in integrated [Community Service] programs and research.” (pg. 17).

Research and learning in context

Likewise, there is strong recognition of the value within university-community engagement of research and learning in context:

“The engaged university enriches the student experience and changes the campus culture by creating a learning community [and] enlarges opportunities for both faculty and students to access research, internships, and learning opportunities in organizations and communities.” (Muirhead et al., (2002).

A variety of authors, amongst them Lowe (1994) whose primary focus of research and development is enviro-social sustainability, recognise the importance of developing what (Coady 1998) describes as ‘intellectual virtues’ as being central to healthy democracies, to excellent scholarship, and to effective citizenship (Muirhead et al., (2002). Similarly Harkavy and Puckett (2000) argue that a more engaged approach to research, in which communities are partners rather than research objects, results in an increase in the quality of research and teaching within the university, and concomitantly outcomes which have more relevance to community development and renewal.

Reflective and transformational action research and learning

Finally, while there appears to be no explicit statement of the value of action research in the university-community engagement literature, a wide range of academics involved in scholarly engagement with communities adopt action research and reflective practice as key processes that value the knowledge within communities and provided a pedagogical and epistemological approach to research (Wadsworth 1984), as well as learning, which fits well with university-community engagement. It is apparent that further investigations

of university-community engagement processes using the frame of action research and learning may reveal some useful pedagogical approaches that are consistent with other aspects and aspirations of university-community engagement.

Pedagogies for community engagement for environmental sustainability

The four elements of university-community engagement outlined above overlay well with recent literature emerging at all levels as to the most appropriate ways to approach community engagement and change for sustainability. These four elements emerged at a Colloquium on Skills and Concepts for Community Engagement for Sustainability held in Melbourne in November 2004 (Hocking & Wilkinson 2004).

Reciprocal research and learning, and contextual learning

In summarising key frameworks for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, Lang (2004) reports as follows:

“... the view that sustainable development is grounded in the local community implies that education for sustainable development will also reflect the unique needs, concerns and priorities of the local community. This situated context ... provides for new ways of knowing and working to emerge as learning and doing is engaged by the local community.”

The importance of contextual research and learning to enviro-social engagement is well state by Orr (1992):

“Ultimately our survival will depend as much on *rediscovery* as on *research*. In this category I would include knowledge of justice, appropriate scale, the synchronization of morally solvent ends and means, sufficiency, and how to live well in a place ... let us at the same time abandon our superstitious beliefs about knowledge: that it is ever sufficient; that it can of itself solve problems; that it is intrinsically good; that it can be used objectively or disinterestedly.” (pg 152)

Reflective and transformational action research and learning

A recent report on whole school approaches to sustainability by the Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability (ARIES 2005) which reviewed education for environmental sustainability worldwide, concludes that in relation to pedagogy:

“Pedagogical approaches, such as student-centred learning, action learning, and co-operative learning are required to reflect the content and process of EFS. Most programs recognise that skilled educator are essential in whole-school approaches to sustainability as they require new modes of teaching and learning.” (section 3.6.7)

Bader (2004) outlines comprehensively the most recent arguments around the inclusion of reflective approaches to environmental education and research, and how these are connected to social contextual learning:

“... the frameworks of [several authors including (2004) and Fien (1993)] appear to be based on a determination to flatten out the social hierarchy of knowledge [across sciences and social sciences]. For these authors, being critical means primarily developing a conception of reality as a contextual social construction,

wherein science is in the service of democracy and the common good... [T]he first step [for] EE would consist in triggering a reflexive grasping [by educational leaders]in the ways they] ... conceive of the production of scientific knowledge and, more specifically, certain aspects of the social character of science ... so that communities of students could function, to a certain degree, like those of researchers, including engaging in reflections on the values given priority by this community of young researchers. This approach to teaching science would provide a basis for proposing a picture of scientific process as being riddled with negotiations, tensions and critical arguments, not to mention value choices.”

As outlined in Lang (2004), change is central to any definition of sustainable development that challenges us to reorient or re-vision our ways of thinking and doing. Change can only occur if learning is engaged and for this reason pursuing the processes associated with sustainable development requires learning. It is this connectivity with change and learning that the role for education in sustainable development becomes evident. As made clear by Fien (2001) this has implications for learning and education because it challenges educators to engage in deeper learning and teaching.

This view of education as a vehicle for societal transformation is endorsed from a university-community engagement perspective in a major USA study by Teune (2001):

“Nearly all the sites of this study reported what one researcher called ‘moments of agreement’ ... These represent a consensus on principles of free speech, the potential of the university to effect social transformation, and valuing democratic decision making ... There is general agreement on [sic.] that the university can and should serve as an agent of social transformation.” (pg. 29)

Trans-disciplinary approaches to research and learning

According to the report on frameworks for the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development:

“... sustainable development is framed around four pillars, education for sustainable development (ESD) also encompasses these four interrelated, systemic pillars supported by their underlying principles as depicted in [the following] Table - adapted by Lang (2004) from Fien (2001); UNESCO (2001).

The four pillars of sustainable development and its underlying principles informing ESD

Pillar	Associated principles
Ecological sustainability	conservation, ecological diversity and integrity
Economic sustainability	appropriate development
Socio-cultural sustainability	peace, tolerance, cultural diversity, social justice, equity
Political sustainability	good governance, democracy

Orr (1992) outlines some of the main ways that discipline boundaries negatively affect the development of effective education and research for sustainable development, and ways in which this can be overcome:

“The contemporary curriculum continues to divide reality into a cacophony of subjects that are seldom integrated into any coherent pattern... [W]e routinely unleash specialists on the world, armed with expert knowledge but untempered by any inkling of the essential relatedness of things ...” (pg 101)

“Environmental issues are complex and cannot be understood through a single discipline or department. Despite a decade or more of discussion and experimentation, interdisciplinary education remains an unfulfilled promise. ... a more promising approach is to reshape institutions to function as transdisciplinary laboratories ... Part of the task ... of Earth-centred education is the study of interactions across the boundaries of conventional knowledge and experience.” (pg 90)

It is the hope that this paper has demonstrated firstly, the importance of universities engaging with the development of enviro-social sustainability, and secondly, that there is a strong match in pedagogies and approaches to university-community engagement and to the development of education and research for enviro-social sustainability. A second hope is that those driving the university-community engagement agenda will themselves be able to overcome the social science bias inherent in existing engagement approaches, to be able to embrace and integrate enviro-social sustainability as a seamless element in what constitutes the university-community engagement debate. At a recent conference in Australia (Beyond Declarations: Baton Forum, Manly NSW, March 2005 – see www.batonforum.org.au), representatives from universities, community, local government, agencies and business came together to discuss and plan ways to act in partnership to advance genuine and practical strategies to achieve enviro-social sustainability. The principles and practices addressed at the conference were consistent with the discussion outlined above. To all intents and purposes it could easily have been a meeting organized around university-community engagement. Which begs the question: “Are we creating another set of silo’s by continuing to treat the environment as ‘other’?”

A final word: healthy, enviro-social sustainable societies

In eco-social sustainability terms, considering the wide range of environmental problems that are now upon us, and the gulf that exists between the majority of communities and the environment that supports their lifestyle and quality of life, it would appear that we do not have much time to decide whether universities will be part of the solution, or continue to be more a part of the problem. The notions of health and well-being as core goals of university output, and achievable objectives for university-community engagement are widespread in the relevant literature. For example Harkavy (2001) frames USA universities’ key responsibility in terms of the civic well-being of the city, region, or community in which it is embedded. Likewise, in Australia, Macintyre (1999) envisages universities as continuing a tradition as “nation building institutions that nourished crucial civic virtues”, and Coady (1998) defines universities’ mission as the recognition, development and maintenance of civic goods such as ‘health, freedom from grinding poverty, enjoyment, friendship, love, the care of children’ which are ‘not merely instrumental, but which are definitive of healthy communities’ (note again the absence of inclusion of environmental sustainability in this definition of community health). Likewise, emerging literature around environmental sustainability addresses attitudinal change, development of virtue and enviro-social health as key concepts to practically frame policy, strategy and action, for example by Callicott (1999):

“The concept of health, both in its literal and figurative senses, is at once descriptive and prescriptive, objective and normative [for human relations to environment]. Health, literally, is an objective condition of an organism capable of more or less precise empirical description. But it is also an intrinsically valuable state of beingFor Plato, health is good for the body, its appropriate condition of internal order. Similarly, Plato argues, virtue is good for the soul, *its* appropriate condition of internal order or organisation [or health]. And, further extending the same metaphor, justice is the intrinsically good, healthy state of the body politic. Today, we could add the ecosystem to Plato’s series of analogies. Ecosystem health is the condition of internal order and organisation in ecosystems that – no less than analogous conditions of the body, soul and society – is both intrinsically good and objective (and specifiable in principle).” (pg. 334)

The vision for higher education to contribute to community engagement for sustainability, as set out by Orr (1992) is not difficult to image, but the feat of widely attaining it across our current University system seems immense:

“A genuine ... education will produce whole persons with intellectual breadth, able to think at right angles to their major field; practical persons able to act competently; and persons of deep commitment, willing to roll up their sleeves and join the struggle to build a humane and sustainable world. They will not be merely well-read. Rather they will be ecologically literate citizens able to distinguish health from its opposite and to live accordingly. Above all they will make themselves relevant to the crisis of our age, which in its various manifestations is about care, nurturing, and the enhancement of life.” (pg 108)

Thank you for your attention to these ideas, on behalf of the organisms, which inhabit the non-human parts of the environment.

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University-Regional Partnership
in a Period of Structural Adjustment:
Lessons from Southern Adelaide's Response
to an Automobile Plant Closure

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¹ The authors wish to thank Ms Jenny Launer and Ms Julianne Cleworth for their assistance in collecting the primary data that informs this research. We also thank Ms Vanessa Brownrigg for entering the data. Finally, and most importantly, the authors extend their thanks to the members of the Southern Suburbs Industry Development Working Group for their participation in this study.

University-Regional Partnership in a Period of Structural Adjustment: Lessons from Southern Adelaide's Response to an Automobile Plant Closure

Abstract:

This paper examines some of the issues that arise out of partnerships between universities and regions. It draws upon the experience of Flinders University in working with a range of regional agents in responding to the closure of the Mitsubishi Motors Australia Limited (MMAL) plant at Lonsdale in Adelaide's southern suburbs. The paper suggests that there are a number of hurdles to the establishment of effective partnerships that include: the perception that universities behave in ways that are different to either public or private sector organisations; the absence of universities from the networks and communication protocols central to the work of economic development practitioners; the sporadic nature of university engagement with regional issues; and, the gap between university funding models and local economic aspirations. The paper also finds that government-established mechanisms for regional development may be flawed, especially if they are dominated by representatives of the public sector. The research concludes that current policy preoccupations with the development of commercially valuable Intellectual Property results in a heavy discounting of other economic impacts. Finally, the paper argues that a pathway for effective engagement between universities and their regions can be established, but such initiatives require considerable time, patience and understanding on the part of all parties. Periods of regional economic stress may not be the most appropriate periods for establishing these working relationships.

Introduction

Contemporary regional policy and theory emphasises the significance of universities within regional economies as a source of skilled labour, innovation (Saxenian 1994) and technology transfer (Beer, Maude and Pritchard 2003). Research and policy have focussed on the capacity of universities to generate Intellectual Property (IP) that can be commercialised and contribute to the establishment of new enterprises and industries (Stephen *et al* 2004; Feller 2004). Silicon Valley in California is commonly held up as an example *par excellence* of the capacity of universities to serve as a source of regional innovation and technology-based growth (Saxenian 1994) but comparable processes are observable in other North American locations such as Tuscon, Arizona (Wright 2004) or the M4 Motorway in England (Cooke and Morgan 2000). Universities not only contribute to regional growth through their capacity to serve as a focus for new business formation, they also perform a valuable role in boosting the human capital within their region; they serve as a significant employer of skilled and unskilled staff; and, there are significant multiplier effects associated with their daily operations. Universities are therefore a potentially significant driver of regional economic growth but the relationship between these institutions and their regions is often clouded by processes and circumstances that result in outcomes not meeting expectations. These factors include the absence of a history of engagement with regional institutions; nationally-based funding models that privilege relationships with national and international organisations over regional bodies; a focus on 'pure science' or theoretical research instead of applied research; and, strained university budgets that significantly restrict the capacity to collaborate with public and private sector bodies.

This paper explores these issues through the examination of one university's - Flinders University – engagement with regionally-based responses to the closure of the Lonsdale Plant of Mitsubishi Motors Australia Limited (MMAL) and the loss of a further 300 jobs from its Tonsley Park assembly plant. The paper reports on the outcomes of a survey of the attitudes of key decision makers who are members of the Southern Suburbs Industry Development Working Group (SSIDWG). The paper demonstrates that these decision makers have well developed views about the role universities should play in the development of their region and that the relationship between the university and regional actors is confounded by differences in focus and communication styles. The paper also shows that universities are somewhat marginal to the communication networks embedded within regional development practice in the southern part of metropolitan Adelaide. This peripheral position is a significant impediment to a more productive relationship between the university and its region.

The Relationships between Universities and Regions

Since the 1990s the relationship between universities and regions has experienced profound change. Reform of tertiary education in the early 1990s massively expanded the university sector by increasing the number of universities and raising the number of undergraduates such that 40 per cent of school leavers now attend university, compared with 10 per cent a generation earlier. These changes were accompanied by a rise in the number of campuses as universities sought to secure market share amongst domestic undergraduates by increasing their presence in distinctive geographic markets. In Australia this resulted in a significant increase in the number of non-metropolitan campuses (for example, the Dubbo campus of Charles Sturt University; the Hamilton campus of RMIT) as well as some expansion in metropolitan sites. More recently, there has been contraction in university presence within regions, with Melbourne University foreshadowing the closure of some of the former agriculture colleges it incorporated into its operations in the 1990s. Australian universities have a mixed record of engagement with their regions and the community at large. The oldest universities such as the University of Adelaide, the University of Sydney and the University of Queensland have not sought to develop strong links with particular regions, though they are commonly associated with particular industries. At the other end of the spectrum,

the universities that were created in the early 1990s – who badge themselves as the Advanced Technology Universities – often have very well developed links with the regions in which they have a presence. Other universities occupy intermediate positions.

The growth in regional campuses has contributed to a growing interest in the role universities can play in advancing the well-being of their regions (Garlick 1998). At the same time there has been a greater awareness of the importance of universities as a driver of growth, both as a source of broad scale social and economic innovation through the education of the population, as well as the more immediate and tangible benefits associated with the commercial development of research outcomes. Much of the well known literature on this issue (see, for example, Saxenian 1994) highlights the positive aspects of university/regional engagement but the relationship between university academics and their communities is not always positive, especially in non-metropolitan regions (Millmow 2005). It is important to understand, therefore, how universities relate to regions and what constitutes models of good practice in this field.

The relationship between universities and regional development processes needs to be examined within the context of broader changes in the way governments seek to develop their regions. As a number of authors have argued (Haughton 2003), there has been an identifiable trend over the last 30 years for governments to eschew centralized approaches to regional development and instead promote regionally-based responses involving partnerships between the public and private sectors, a focus on local level governance (Eversole and Martin 2005), and in some instances a philosophy of self help (Gray and Lawrence 1996). Jessop (1990; 1997) has suggested that public policy approaches to regional development have been shaped by four tendencies whose roots can be traced to neo-liberalism. The first tendency identified by Jessop is the move away from hierarchical forms of *government* to more porous forms of *governance*. That is, central governments increasingly seek to mobilise the resources of, and pass responsibility to, other government bodies and/or private sector organisations in responding to regional economic challenges. In Australia this process has often found expression in the creation of special purpose regional development agencies and in the transfer of responsibilities from Federal to State to local governments (Beer and Maude 2005). The second tendency identified by Jessop is the subordination of social policy to economic policy (Jessop 1997). Economic concerns are afforded pre-eminence over social development or environmental impacts and regional development discourse is commonly couched in the language of commerce (Haughton, Beer and Maude 2003). Regions and regional development initiatives are judged against key performance indicators (KPIs) and the management structures of regional development agencies mirror the private sector, rather than the public agencies that provide most of their funding

A third key tendency (Jessop 1997) concerns the ‘vertical’ reworking of policy powers, away from the pre-eminence of the nation state in economic management. This has seen powers, responsibilities and resources reallocated vertically, both upwards to bodies such as the World Trade Organization, and downwards to local governance bodies. This rescaling of policy in combination with the horizontal shift of powers to non-government institutions, is sometimes said to have led to a ‘hollowing out’ of the nation state. Jessop, however, argues that the state has retained its influence through its ability to set the new rules of the game, that is, metagovernance. Rather than the state directly involved in many areas of policy, it increasingly sets out to determine the regulatory and policy frameworks for others. In short, it seeks to ‘steer’ not ‘row’, or it directs rather than directly implements. It is the state which decides how much money is to be made available, for which time period, to which types of regional development initiative and what policy remit each new enterprise should be given. In Jessop’s (1997) terms the state is both strategic and selective, whilst as Jones (1997) has pointed out, the state is also spatially selective, in terms of which levels of sub-national governance it focuses its reforms on. A fourth tendency concerns the move towards the internationalisation of policy development. Increasingly governments and regional development agencies seek to borrow regional solutions and policies from places that are

seen to be successful on the global stage. In the mid and late 1990s regions around the globe rushed to embrace industry clusters on the basis of a limited number of regional 'success' stories. While the promotion and proliferation of industry clusters has had its own dynamic, the processes evident in that sphere can also be observed in other areas of regional development: in the promotion of export schemes; the focus on endogenous development and in the use of Web-based strategies.

To a greater or lesser degree the tendencies identified by Jessop (1990; 1997) find expression in current debates about the relationship between universities and their regions. Regions are increasingly expected to shape their own destinies and they in turn look to local universities to play Stanford University to their Silicon Valley. The potential economic benefits of university activity are highlighted over their wider role within society or their mission of advancing education *per se*.

Universities, Regions and Economic Growth

Research suggests that universities have the potential to contribute to a region's economic social and cultural development through processes that extend beyond the multiplier effects from the university's day-to-day operations (Garlick 1998). The benefits for universities and regions alike can be substantial as the tertiary education sector represents a significant part of the national economy. Cabalu *et al* identified three major ways of measuring the economic impact of a university: the income and employment generated in the nation through its teaching and research activities (including the generation of export income); the enhancement of the nation's human capital through its education of university graduates; and, the creation of wealth through the spillover effects to government and business of its research and developments activities (Cabalu *et al* 2000 p. v). Phillips Curren applied this approach to South Australia in 2001 and estimated that the university sector in that state contributed \$1,738 million to Gross State Product in 1999. Universities can also significantly contribute to the community's social and cultural development.

Garlick (1998) argued that universities must take a more active role in the economies of their region if they are to achieve an economic benefit beyond the multiplier effects associated with direct employment. The Lambert Review in the United Kingdom (2003, p.65) identified several reasons why universities should seek engagement with regional economic development including the need to improve a regions' competitive advantage by being more innovative; the increasing prominence of universities arising from the decline in manufacturing and the rapid expansion of higher education; the critical role of universities within the science base; and, the critical role of research-active universities within successful business clusters.

Partnerships between Universities and their Regions

Partnership is an important dimension of strategies designed to maximise the economic outcomes associated with universities. However, partnership development remains problematic because of the differing expectations, incentive structures and 'languages' of economic development practitioners and academics. Often genuine partnership is difficult to achieve, a fact recognised by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2002) which noted that

Engagement – real engagement – in which institutions of higher education and communities form lasting relationships that influence, shape, and promote success in both spheres is rare. More often than not we see evidence of unilateral outreach from universities, rather than partnerships based on true mutual benefit, mutual respect and mutual accountability.

Effective engagement of universities and their communities can be described in many ways. The W. K. Kellogg Foundation (2002) list five lessons for effective community programs

- community ownership;
- targeted foci;
- rigorous selection processes that include community readiness;
- achieving early results by harvesting low-hanging fruit to maintain motivation of participants; and;
- having patience with the way the communities work and honouring the pace of change.

Successful partnerships between universities and their region need to be built on a mutual understanding of expectations, roles and preferred outcomes. However mutual understandings take time to develop and require a strategic approach by all parties. Often the community will have higher expectations of the university than it can deliver. This unrealistic expectation of universities can lead to tensions in the partnership. Goddard (1998 p.12) noted the need for a community to develop a better understanding of its university and the university's need to understand regional dynamics in order for effective dialogue to take place. Successful partnerships which are built on research can lead to distinctive partnerships in community service. These opportunities allow universities to contribute more broadly to national, regional, social and cultural agendas. McKinnon *et al* (2000) noted that 'until recently few universities had developed a formal strategy of community service as a means of enhancing their external impact'. Many universities now recognise an academic's service to the community as part of the formal promotion process.

An additional way of expanding this community service partnership is through student involvement. There is considerable scope for growing partnerships through student work placements and volunteering schemes where students work with schools, the disabled, the unemployed or the sick. The increased emphasis on workplace learning for students has often involved professional associations. This in turn has helped to enhance the partnership between universities and professional bodies, however these partnerships bring with them similar tensions to those identified between universities and businesses. It is important that universities cultivate these partnerships as a substantial percentage of university teaching is directed towards the professions, with many degrees requiring professional accreditation. A university's engagement with its community is multifaceted and complex and the relationship is not always effective. A successful partnership will require a detailed understanding of the operations and expectations of each partner; a mechanism for meeting and working together; a commitment by the university to the region and the region to the university; a process for sharing outcomes and engaging mutual learning; and, a focus for the partnership – research, community development or environmental action – that meets the needs of both parties.

Context: Job Losses from Mitsubishi Motors Australia Limited and Regional Responses

In April 2004 Australia's Prime Minister John Howard – flanked by South Australian Premier Mike Rann and Mr Tom Phillips, CEO of Mitsubishi Motors Australia Limited (MMAL) – announced that the Lonsdale plant of Mitsubishi Motors Australia Limited (MMAL) would be closed with a loss of 700 jobs, with a further 400 voluntary redundancies from MMAL's Tonsley Park assembly plant. The loss of just over 1,100 jobs in the southern part of metropolitan Adelaide was recognised as a major shock to the regional economy. The Federal Government responded by announcing a \$45 million assistance package for the region – called the Structural Adjustment Fund (SAF) – as well as enhanced employment assistance for retrenched workers. This assistance was to be delivered via the Jobs Network, Australia's network of Federally-funded labour market providers. In addition, the South Australian Government committed \$10 million of assistance to

displaced workers, mainly in the form of enhanced access to services. The loss of jobs from MMAL in 2004 can be seen to be part of the longer term restructuring of the automobile industry, and manufacturing more generally, in Australia. In the mid 1970s manufacturing employment accounted for 25 per cent of the workforce but by 2001 it had declined to 12 per cent of labour force, even though the value of production had increased. Where once car making plants could be found in all state capitals except Perth, by the year 2000 motor vehicle production had consolidated into a limited number of sites with Toyota and Ford assembling vehicles in Melbourne and Mitsubishi and Holden building cars in Adelaide. Holden also builds engines in Melbourne.

The announcement of job losses from MMAL was accompanied by the establishment of a new institutional structure to deal with the consequences of the plant closure and employment loss. A new body was established – the South Australian Government Advisory Group – to provide the government with industry-relevant advice under the chairmanship of a former President of General Motors Japan (see Appendix A). Four sub-committees were also established:

- Lonsdale Facility Assets to advise on the best possible use of the vacated Lonsdale Plant;
- Outplacement Opportunities to provide guidance on labour market programs and issues;
- The Southern Suburbs Industry Development Working Group (SSIDWG) to assist with the further development of the southern region economy, and,
- Tonsley Park Utilisation which was charged with identifying strategies to ensure the ongoing financial viability of MMAL's remaining factory.

From its inception considerable importance was attached to the work of the SSIDWG. The closure of the Lonsdale Mitsubishi plant was seen as a significant loss for the regional economy, and one which compounded the adverse impacts of other processes. The southern region of Adelaide – defined as the jurisdictions of the City of Onkaparinga and the City of Marion (Figure 1) – was perceived to be economically vulnerable as a consequence of the MMAL job losses because: the labour force being shed was mature and tended to be concentrated in neighbourhoods close to the MMAL factories. There was therefore a real prospect that those who left Mitsubishi would not find paid employment and that the consequences of employment loss would be confined to a relatively small area. In addition, the region as a whole does not have a strongly developed manufacturing base, with the majority of new manufacturing enterprises established in northern Adelaide. Businesses within the Southern region of Adelaide tend to be small-scale and relatively mature (Kearins 2002). The Mobil refinery at Lonsdale had closed two years previously with significant loss of employment; and, the wine industry in the southern part of the City of Onkaparinga (McLaren Vale) faltered in 2004 and 2005 as the national supply of grapes for wine production exceeded demand.

SSIDWG commenced meeting fortnightly in May 2004 and began to address an ambitious program of work including: planning for a Southern Summit to raise the profile of the challenges confronting the Southern Region; preparation of a regional economic development strategy that embraced the two council areas – The Blueprint for the Future; research into the availability of land for further industrial development; contact with businesses and other organisations interested in investing in southern Adelaide or in applying for money from the Structural Adjustment Fund; and, planning for an Innovation Centre in the south.

Figure 1 about here

In many ways SSIDWG is typical of the forms of regional governance that have sprung up across Australia (Martin and Eversole 2005) as central governments have struggled to deal with the challenges of a globalised economy and its unequal spatial impacts (Beer and Maude 2005). SSIDWG attempted to operate both as a co-ordinating agency and as a regional *animateur*: encouraging others to invest, looking to enhance information flows and reduce bottlenecks to development (Morgan 1997). Significantly, it has not had direct control of a program budget, nor has it enjoyed a mandate to take direct action towards furthering the growth of the region.

SSIDWG's membership has changed and grown over time such that by April 2005 there were 15 members compared with the ten or so who participated in the first meeting. Initial membership was comprised almost entirely of state and local government officials, as well as one union official and an academic. Its membership broadened to include at least two private sector representatives, members from other parts of the state bureaucracy and Australian Government officials. However, the membership of SSIDWG has been dominated numerically by senior state and local government officers. Flinders University had representation in the initial meeting of the Working Group, but that membership was meant to reflect technical knowledge of regional development processes, rather than serving the interests of the university. It was not until September 2004 that a member of Flinders University's senior management group joined SSIDWG.

The establishment and operation of SSIDWG raises important questions about the relationship between universities and their regions. Flinders is the only university in the southern part of Adelaide and it is the second largest employer in the region. Its participation in the Working Group should therefore serve as a model of regional engagement. However, the processes of engagement have not resulted in appreciable outcomes for either the university or the region, or improved communication flows between the university and other actors within the region. This research therefore set out to investigate the attitudes of the non-university members of SSIDWG to the university sector as a whole. Universities have changed substantially since 1990 and the research investigated whether attitudes established in the 1970s and 1980s – when most SSIDWG members completed undergraduate degrees – continued to influence perceptions of the university. It also examined their views on the role of universities within society and their possible contribution to the growth of individual regions. Finally, the research sought to measure the strength of the relationships between individual members of SSIDWG as a way of evaluating the pattern of information flows.

Methodology and Outcomes of the Survey

Methods

Interviews were sought with all non-university members of SSIDWG with 12 of the 14 members agreeing to a confidential interview. The interviews took the form of a semi-structured questionnaire that contained both closed and open questions and was applied by research assistants who had not previously participated in SSIDWG activities. The confidentiality of the respondents was therefore maintained. The data collected from the closed questions were entered into SPSS while the responses to the open-ended questions were kept in their textual form. All the questions included in the survey related to universities as a whole, that is the entire tertiary sector. However, many of the respondents provided answers that referred to Flinders University alone, either because it is the sole university within the region or because the respondents appreciated that the research was being undertaken by that institution.

It is important to note that the survey was only directed to non-university members of SSIDWG and did not attempt to collect information on the attitudes of university decision makers to the region, or the institutions within it. This is an important limitation within the research design and one that necessarily results in a one-sided view of both the relationship and the university's role within the region.

The Nature of the Respondents

The gender division of the 12 respondents to our survey was 11 men and one woman. Four were employed in local government, five were state government officials, two were from the private sector and one was from the Trade Union movement. All respondents occupied senior – and influential – positions including two Chief Executive Officers, as well as General Managers, Directors and Policy Officers. Of the 12 respondents, eight indicated that their responsibilities included policy formation, six were involved in organisation leadership; nine indicated that they had responsibility for economic development functions and seven had some responsibility for networking.

Consistent with their senior positions, only three respondents had worked in their current field for five years or less, while five had worked in their industry for over 15 years. All but one respondent had attended university, and as a group the respondents had diverse academic backgrounds. While the largest number of respondents held the types of degrees one would anticipate within economic policy environment – with two holding a degree in Economics, two with Commerce degrees, and one a Law degree – others held MBAs, there were Bachelor of Arts degrees and one PhD in the management sciences. Importantly, many SSIDWG members had engaged in post graduate study and in many instances this study took place relatively recently. Their experience of universities, therefore, is likely to have been more contemporary than the authors anticipated in establishing the research design.

Many of the respondents had experience of universities that extended beyond their membership of SSIDWG. As noted previously, 11 SSIDWG members had studied at university, of these four had been a member of a university committee or Council, and three had worked at a university at some stage. Fully two thirds of SSIDWG members had been a partner in a research project with a university and seven reported other forms of intense interaction with a university. SSIDWG members, therefore, are senior decision makers who could be expected to have good knowledge of the operations of universities.

The survey asked SSIDWG members about their views of universities and whether they believed that universities had changed since they completed their degree. Eight of the 12 respondents agreed or agreed strongly that universities had changed since they completed their degree (Figure 2) which suggests a growing appreciation of the shifting realities and expectations confronting the higher education sector. Moreover, most respondents clearly based their perception of change within universities on recent experience, with nine of the 12 indicating that they had had contact with universities over recent years (Figure 3). However, eight of the respondents agreed, agreed strongly or agreed slightly that they found universities difficult organisations to understand and this suggests that university processes and dynamics remain opaque to informed external observers (Figure 4). Seven SSIDWG members agreed strongly or slightly that universities are out of touch with modern realities (Figure 5).

Figure 2 about here

Figure 3 about here

Figure 4 about here

Figure 5 about here

SSIDWG members were asked to compare the behaviour of universities with other public and private sector bodies (Figure 6 and Figure 7). Interestingly, while there was no clear consensus as to whether universities behave like public sector agencies, there was a clearly formed view that

they do not behave as if they were private companies. This result needs to be examined with reference to the substantial export revenues generated by universities through the sale of education services and research to international customers. This outcome may reflect a perception of universities that is not consistent with their present circumstances, or it could indicate a direction for further reform within the sector.

Figure 6 about here

Figure 7 about here

The picture that emerges from the analysis of data is complex. Amongst the SSIDWG members there is a diversity of opinion and experience with respect to universities. There is a general appreciation of change within the university sector and some, though not all, respondents feel that universities remain difficult institutions to understand. For some, this reflects organisations out of touch with the demands of a modern economy. There is a clearly formed view that universities do not behave as if they were for-profit companies, but a significant minority of SSIDWG members felt that they did not behave as if they were public sector agencies either. The capacity of universities to operate in ways that are not consistent with either public sector or private sector organisations may be an impediment to the development of effective partnerships between universities and other regionally-based actors.

Functional Relationships with Universities

All respondents indicated that universities were a key organisation for their work (Figure 8). Private companies and local government departments were the only other two types of institution to be judged important by all respondents, with community groups and trade unions relevant to the work of only half the respondents. Interestingly, when asked to rank the eight most important entities for their work, universities featured in most responses, but were not the most important entities. Across the respondents state government organisations were the most significant bodies, followed by local governments, private businesses, business associations and the education sector – including universities. The Australian Government was important for some – but not all – respondents. Working relationships with labour organisations were only important for the Trade Union official who participated in the survey and some of the state government officials. For the majority of respondents the most important relationships were with state government departments, local governments and the private sector. These priorities need to be considered when we later examine communication within SSIDWG.

Figure 8 about here

All 12 respondents to the survey indicated that their organisation had previously had dealings with universities. The nature of those relationships varied significantly, reflecting both the broad roles performed by universities within society and the range of bodies represented within the survey. For some respondents universities had been a source of technical advice for their industry sector or a provider of training. Others had been research partners or had accommodated students on industry placement. Some local government respondents reported that universities had participated in their community education initiatives or had been involved in specific projects – such as the establishment of a business incubator.

Ten of the 12 respondents indicated that universities had been important for their work as individuals. The responses varied considerably across the participants in the survey with some indicating that universities had contributed to the specific programs of their employer – for example, The City of Marion's Community Learning Charter – through to more broad ranging relationships that emphasised the capacity of universities to offer critical thought and input in the development of strategic plans. Two SSIDWG members believed universities had not been

important for their work, with one arguing that universities have not been relevant to small or medium sized businesses (the sector within which the respondent works) and that they have been too traditional in their focus. The second respondent believed they were too slow in responding to the needs of industry and therefore lacked relevance. Ten respondents believed that universities will become more important to their work in the future and in large measure this reflected an appreciation of the importance of education and technology transfer for building prosperous regional economies. As one respondent said 'universities help underpin today's commercial world' (state government official). However, this positive assessment of the potential role of universities was qualified by a belief that universities need to become more responsive in order to meet the needs of their region

they have the opportunity to be more important in the future but whether they do is another matter. The ingredients for a successful region involve many things. Integral to this is a strong regional university or technical learning centre which seeks out how it can add value to the region. Universities should actively consult and seek out where they can add value to the region. Value is having graduates that match the needs of the region and stay in the region, starting businesses etc. Universities may have a business plan that may not mirror the needs and wants of the region which means they sit outside the region in a sense (state government official).

A private sector member of SSIDWG responded to the question whether universities will become more important to his work in the future by saying

it depends on whether universities become more focussed on meeting the needs of customers and trying to meet the challenge and change accordingly. If they don't the answer is NO.

The education role of universities was emphasised by one of the local government respondents. He felt that

although Flinders marketing of its services is weak, it is still viewed as a major asset for the region, and as a resource which will enable a larger number of residents to increase their skills and knowledge. This increase in learning is seen as a foundation on which to build a more sustainable community – a community which understands and supports economic and environmentally sustainable initiatives.

Fully three quarters of respondents to the survey believed that there had already been change over time in their dealings with universities. Some responses reflected a broader sea-change in the relationship, while others focussed upon changes brought about by engagement via SSIDWG. One of the local government respondents took the longer term view, noting that

this change is a reflection of changes in council. 1999 saw the Local Government Act changed which broadened expectations and role of councils. They are expected to take a longer term view of residents' desires and their own (council's) viability – and universities will therefore play a broader role in achieving this.

A second respondent from the state government provided a similar response, noting how changing policy frameworks for the development of new technology placed greater emphasis on universities. The changing framework of governance and government policy has therefore had a significant structural impact on how government decision makers view universities. At a more immediate level, participation on SSIDWG itself was seen as an avenue or catalyst for change. For example, one of the state government respondents considered participation in SSIDWG had a positive impact on his dealings with the Flinders University.

dealings have become more personal with Flinders – through SSIDWG and the development of joint initiatives and through gaining a better understanding of the goals, objectives and culture of the University. This makes it easier to match up or marry some of those goals with those of the region.

Others, however, felt that the university's involvement with SSIDWG and its associated activities had not been sustained. As one local government officer commented

withdrawal on Flinders part. Gone into projects and haven't kept debate going. Flinders not a major driver. There was a flurry at the beginning.

And this view was echoed by a State Government official who felt that

contact fluctuates. Other matters – short term priorities – are distractions.

In summary, respondents to the survey felt that universities are important for their work and for the development of their region. Most respondents felt that universities will become more important within their profession into the future and that there was already some evidence for change. In part, broader social and governmental changes have facilitated this shift in attitude. However, the relationship with universities – and Flinders in particular – was seen to include some problematic elements. It was felt that universities need to become more customer-focussed (ie industry focussed) in order to better meet the needs of their region, and that a sustained debate – and action – around the role of universities in the region is necessary.

The Role of Universities within Society and their Regions

The survey asked SSIDWG members to describe the role of universities and their responses indicated the multifaceted nature of these institutions. As would be expected, many of the responses reflected the particular perspectives of State and local government officials with responsibilities in economic development. For example, one state government manager believed that universities are

a facility which enables people to achieve their immediate and lifelong learning experiences. They can also present business with opportunities that can provide enormous potential to a developing region/developing community – and to a degree shape the social fabric of the region.

One of the other state government respondents focussed on the changing role of universities

traditionally 1) student turnstiles; 2) research to keep up and get more students. Now they are more involved, they supply a changing mix of students appropriate for the business community. They are a resource for the business community, not just students but now there is more partnering.

Most respondents recognised that universities have an important role in raising skill levels amongst the community and that their role in research is also important. Technology diffusion was an important theme in many responses with some arguing that 'universities have immense technical resources' and that the commercialisation of Intellectual Property was an important potential contribution universities could pass on to their regions. While recognising the potential of universities, a number of SSIDWG members focussed on the specific problems of transferring that knowledge into the broader community. For example, one local government officer saw universities

as remote, although valid. Available only for a certain group of people. Universities put too much emphasis on research and not enough on teaching. Measured by research grants, therefore input oriented, yet not enough known about this research and its relevance to the community.

SSIDWG members were asked to evaluate the potential contribution of universities to their region. As would be expected from the discussion above, the majority of respondents felt that universities made a substantial contribution to the economies of their regions through the provision of education (Figure 9). Surprisingly, however, one respondent disagreed strongly with this response, a view that would appear to fly in the face of contemporary labour market and education paradigms.

Figure 9 about here

The majority of respondents to the survey also agreed that universities are important to their region in their role as an employer, though with one dissenter (Figure 10). Interestingly, more agreed with this view than agreed strongly and it may be that this group of policy makers did not award priority to the employment impacts of universities, both in terms of direct employment and multiplier effects.

Figure 10 about here

There was reasonably strong agreement that universities can be important for their region through the commercialisation of the Intellectual Property that they produce (Figure 11).

Figure 11 about here

The commercialisation of emerging technologies was an important theme when respondents were asked whether universities were important for their region, and if so, in what ways. As expressed by one State government officer the important issue was the transition from research to commercialisation. Expertise, technology base, management and engineering need to be accessible to industry.

One local government respondent saw the universities as an important potential partner within the region. He felt that universities could contribute to growth

by creating/enhancing meaningful partnerships around agreed objectives.

and

- 1) commercialisation of research could be improved. Suspect a lot of potential commercial opportunities being missed/not effectively evaluated.
- 2) building stronger links into the local community in terms of partnering with other education providers so as to inculcate a sense of education being more socially acceptable.

A State government officer felt that

the single most significant contribution to economic growth in SA is better leverage of our research assets through enhanced linkages with the government and private sector.

Universities, therefore, were seen as critical sources of economic opportunities for their region, and potential partners in further development. Respondents to the survey, however, accepted that establishing these partnerships may be difficult because the measures of university achievement and economic sustainability – undergraduate enrolments, overseas student recruitment, and research performance – are not necessarily focussed on regional concerns or needs. One of the State government respondents enunciated this concern clearly

universities are critical as they can offer a sense of leadership, especially when this is lacking in a region. However, universities can be frustrating due to the fact that their core objectives are not supportive of the region.

future engagement with universities, and Flinders in particular, would be improved if they were less insular, less low risk and less introverted. Strong leadership is required and a willingness to take up opportunities presented to them. At present I feel there is no commitment to regional development nor any passion for engaging with communities at all levels.

the culture of universities is one of teaching curriculum materials that do not encourage engagement with regions or meeting regional needs, business or otherwise.

However, the same respondent had some sense of the difficulties that confront universities in initiating regional engagement, and this is reflected in his comment that

universities need to work in with community strategic plans – if councils had one.

Overall, the SSIDWG members – as professionals concerned with economic development – highlighted the economic potential of universities. They believed that universities play an important role in raising education levels and in generating a culture change that contributes to a greater acceptability of education. They also consider universities are potentially very important sources of new technologies and partners. Universities, however, are seen to be distant from their region in that their priorities do not match the goals of the region.

Communication Networks

How frequently we communicate, and the ways in which we communicate, are clearly important for the strengths of our relationships in partnership building for economic development. Respondents to the survey were asked to list the SSIDWG members they have professional dealings with outside SSIDWG and score that relationship on a scale of one to five.

Ten respondents provided data for this question and the results are shown in Table 1 below. Critically, academics did not rate highly in the network of communication flows and working relationships. Two local government and one State government official dominated the *ex officio* interactions within the group, whereas the university participants appear to lie outside the on-going business of the group. This may be an inevitable – and indeed desirable outcome – from the perspective of the academics given the strong focus on quantifiable outcomes. However, it inevitably raises questions about the capacity of university staff to participate in the debates and processes associated with regional development. Informal group interactions reinforce group cohesiveness and shared goals. The absence of university staff from these less structured dealings effectively casts them as an outsider within the ‘business’ of regional development.

Table 1. about here

Conclusion

Universities are increasingly seen by regions as an 'asset' to be developed or exploited in planning for their development. Jessop (1990; 1997) has identified four key tendencies in contemporary approaches to place based regional development – a shift to governance rather than centralized government responses; the vertical reworking of powers; an internationalized approach; and the subordination of social or environmental concerns to economic policy. Each of these tendencies is evident in the response to the closure of the MMAL plant at Lonsdale: the region's response to this economic shock was co-ordinated by a governance committee rather than a central government agency; responsibility for the allocation of Structural Adjustment Fund monies was redistributed upwards to the High Level Advisory Group, while the task of managing local level responses was allocated downwards to SSIDWG and local governments; international perspectives on regional development were clearly evident in the focus of SSIDWG members on the capacity of universities to generate commercial Intellectual Property – as per Silicon Valley or Cambridge; and, policy concern was directed to attracting new jobs and investment, with little attention paid to the impact of redundancy on workers and their families.

In many ways SSIDWG has been a most unusual 'governance' body. As a committee comprised of public servants – local, state and national government – rather than business owners and entrepreneurs, it has been limited in the steps it has been able to take to achieve its goals. It has not been able to lobby governments or take overt political action, its influence on the senior levels of the bureaucracy has been limited and public events – such as the proposed Southern Summit – were either postponed or cancelled for fear of attracting criticism. These are significant omissions as the lobbying of governments is one of the most important activities of independent regional development agencies in Australia (Beer, Houghton and Maude 2003). The disappointment expressed by a number of SSIDWG members with the university's role in regional development may therefore reflect displaced frustration with the inherent shortcomings of the Working Group. This in turn sheds light on the shift in balance between government and 'governance' in regional development. Government responses are no longer favoured because they are inherently constrained by what is politically and economically acceptable to the government of the day, while bodies that are independent of government are free to employ a full range of strategies and activities to achieve their ends.

To a large degree the discussion of SSIDWG and its relationship with its local university highlights the complexity of region/university relationships. Research and policy attention is often focussed on well known 'success' stories but such a partial view often obscures the practical barriers that result in a less than perfect fit between tertiary education institutions and the regions in which they are located. Poor working relationships between regional development bodies and universities are probably more common in Australia and some other developed nations than effective working relationships. This reflects the on-going industry sector focus of most economic development programs on the one hand and the needs of universities to concentrate on their core functions – teaching and research – on the other. We can conclude, therefore, that universities are often peripheral to locally based regional development efforts because while they contribute skilled labour and knowledge to the community, their impact is spread throughout the economy – at the regional, national, and increasingly the international scale. In Australia the problem is compounded by the absence of a dedicated funding stream attached to regional engagement. By contrast, the UK Government provides separate and substantial funding for regional partnerships – including the delivery of business assistance – while the Land Grant universities of the United States were established with a charter to serve the needs of their local community. These processes have not been evident in Australia.

Our review of the literature has shown the potential – and real – impact of universities on regional and national economies, as well as the mutually beneficial factors needed to establish a long term

relationship. It has also drawn attention to the significant hurdles to be overcome by universities working with a range of partners in the region. Regional partners have high expectations of universities. They believe that universities can generate technologies that can be commercialized; that they can serve as a regional leader; that they can contribute to culture change within the region as a whole; that they can respond to the needs of individual businesses and groups of businesses; and, that they can contribute to the broader education of the population. In addition, there is an expectation that universities will behave like public sector bodies – rather than the complex hybrid entities that have emerged in Australia and many other developed economies over the last 15 years. The research has demonstrated that external observers find universities to be opaque, with structures and management arrangements that are difficult to comprehend.

In large measure universities are still based on – and use the titles of – ecclesiastical structures. For example, a university is headed by a Vice Chancellor (a supervisory rank within a number of Churches) and a Professor holds a Chair, as does a parish priest. Moreover, decisions are often made on the basis of achieving a consensus around an argument, rather than through executive fiat. The reforming of universities towards more corporate structures and the implementation of work practices based on contemporary corporate models would assist local governments and businesses in understanding the work of these institutions. However, such a restructure may come at a cost to the ‘core business’ (to use business language) of the university: teaching and research. For example, the university in South Australia with the most corporate structure and with the most assertive regional engagement strategy performs poorly in national assessments of teaching quality and research and this tends to be the pattern across Australia as a whole. While it is clearly possible for more traditional universities to borrow administrative structures and practices from the corporate world, the transition could be costly and disruptive. The five lessons for effective community engagement from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (2002) provide a more certain way forward for universities seeking to enhance their links with regions and communities. The Foundation’s key strategies included ensuring community ownership of all initiatives, a focus on a limited number of targets, rigorous selection processes for initiatives – including an assessment of community readiness, harvesting the low hanging fruit, and having patience with the way communities work. The research presented here has reinforced the significance of these lessons.

Epilogue

Following the drafting of this paper Flinders University, the South Australian Government, the City of Marion and the City of Onkaparinga agreed on the establishment of an Innovation Centre to be located next to Flinders University, with accommodation provided by the university and an operational budget from the state government. However, this apparent success in picking the ‘low hanging fruit’ was qualified by state government insistence on a corporate structure for the Innovation Centre that centralized control within the state bureaucracy.

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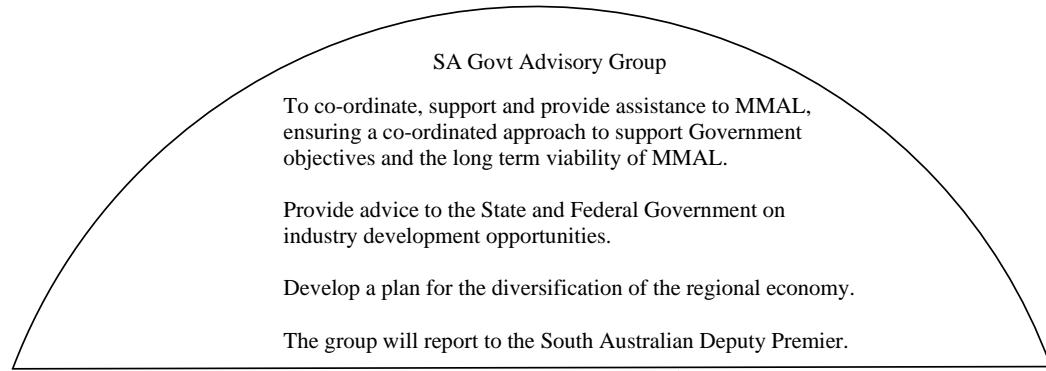
Table 1. Rating of Key Relationships

Person	Cumulative Score
Local Government 1	14
State Government 1	27
Academic 1	10
Private Sector 1	8
Local Government 2	38
Local Government 3	27
Private Sector 2	4
State Government 2	7
State Government 3	9
State Government 4	6
Local Government 4	6
Academic 2	6
Trade Union	3

- Figure 1. Location Map – The Tonsley Park and Lonsdale Mitsubishi Plants, Flinders University, Adelaide**
- Figure 2. Universities Have Changed Since I Completed My Degree**
- Figure 3. Over Recent Years I have Had Little to Do With Universities**
- Figure 4. I Find Universities Difficult to Understand**
- Figure 5. Universities Often Appear to be Out of Touch with Modern Realities**
- Figure 6. Universities Behave Like Any other Public Sector Organisation**
- Figure 7. Universities Behave Like Any Other Private Sector Organisation**
- Figure 8. Number of Respondents Reporting Each Type of Organisation is Central to their Work**
- Figure 9. Universities are Valuable to their Region for their Contribution to Education**
- Figure 10. Universities are Valuable to their Region in their Role as an Employer**
- Figure 11. Universities are Valuable to their Region for their Capacity to Generate New Technologies that can be Commercialised.**

SA Government High Level Advisory Group

Umbrella Group



Site Closure

Lonsdale Facility Assets

Terms of Reference

1. Work closely with Mitsubishi in identifying potential investors or new industry opportunities for the Lonsdale engine plant.
2. Marketing of assets to external parties.
3. Support Mitsubishi in disposal of existing assets and facilitating new business/industries onto site.

People

Outplacement Opportunities

Terms of Reference

1. Assist in ensuring that necessary support and assistance is provided to workers through State and Commonwealth programs.
2. Meet the needs of displaced workers.
3. Identify range of specialised needs within displaced workforce.
4. Identify opportunities to place specialised skills.

Southern Suburbs Industry Development

Terms of Reference

1. Identify industry development opportunities in the Southern suburbs and provide advice to Commonwealth and State Government on the most effective targeting of any industry assistance.
2. Identify and establish new business/industries in the Southern region.
3. Provide advice to Governments on how best to secure new investment opportunities, including best allocation of available assistance packages.
4. Develop a plan for the diversification of the regional economy.

Site Continuity

Tonsley Park Utilisation

Terms of Reference

1. Pursue opportunities in relation to Tonsley.
2. Maximise capacity utilisation of facility.
3. Ensure long term viability of facility.