This is the published version:

O'Toole, Kevin and MacNab, Katrina 2006, Step we gaily on we go, heel for heel and toe for toe : community building in Scotland and Australia, in Governments and communities in partnership : from theory to practice, University of Melbourne, Centre for Public Policy, Melbourne, Vic., pp. 1-26.

Available from Deakin Research Online:

http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30006038

Reproduced with the kind permission of the copyright owner.

Copyright : 2006, The Authors
Refereed Conference Paper

This paper is part of a collection of papers that were presented and discussed at the Centre for Public Policy Governments and Communities in Partnership conference (September, 2006). The paper has been independently reviewed by an expert. This review process conformed with the Department of Education, Science and Training (Australia) guidelines for refereed research publications.

For information about this conference – or to access other papers from this event, please visit the conference website:

http://www.public-policy.unimelb.edu.au/conference06/
Step we gaily on we go, heel for heel and toe for toe: Community building in Scotland and Australia

Kevin O’Toole & Katrina MacNab
Faculty of Arts, Deakin University, Victoria
&
Pulteneytown People’s Project, Wick, Scotland

Refereed paper presented to the Governments and Communities in Partnership conference, Centre for Public Policy, University of Melbourne, 25-27 September, 2006.
Introduction
The re-emergence of ‘community’ in the new public policy language derives in part from the partial failure of states and markets to deal with the complex issues of governance (Bowles and Gintis 2000). The inclusion of the ‘community’ into the public policy language is seen as both a reinvigoration of collective approaches to public policy as well as a way of providing a solution to market failures by using community voluntary action (Adams and Hess 2001). What we have seen is a growing range of collaborative activities both within the state through ‘joined-up’-government (Perri 6 2005; Shergold 2004) and between the state, the market and civil society such as community-led initiatives, contracts, inter-organisational cooperation, joint ventures, partnerships, policy networks, public-private partnerships, social networks, strategic alliances and voluntary sector compacts (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002).

The place of the community within the new collaborative activities is itself quite complex and there is much debate about the various forms that citizen participation can take (Ball and Maginn 2005; Bovaird 2005; Burton 2004; Cook 2002). Citizens have always played advisory roles on local boards, development committees and other community associations (Goss 2001). But the new language of public policy invests people with a wider governance role in partnerships and networks (Municipal Association of Victoria 2004; Wettenhall and Alexander 2000). While many of the community partnership practices have involved voluntary agents in service delivery, there has been some attempt to broaden the scope of democratic participation as well. Local area projects such as neighbourhood renewal and new area-based regeneration programs have placed a greater emphasis on ‘social inclusion’ (Klein 2004; Warr 2005). The strategies used to achieve social inclusion are many and varied and there is often contestation between top down and bottom up approaches.

The questions for this paper are whether local area projects are sustainable beyond the present policy and programmatic environment and whether governments actually change the way that they do business with the community. This paper seeks
to explore these issues using the experiences of two projects; one in Wick, Scotland and the other in Warrnambool, Australia.

**Community governance and joined-up government**

*Joined-up government*

As demands upon the political system have grown the traditional bureaucratic approaches to service delivery were perceived to be in need of reform. In reforms of the 70s, 80s and 90s, governments were enjoined to move away from ‘rowing’ to take a more central role in ‘steering’ the system (Osborne and Gaebler 1992). The neo-liberal agenda that promoted this approach argued that government agencies were maximizing their own self interest and needed to change their service delivery practices (Niskanen 1973; Tullock 1983). As a result many government services were either privatized or contracted out in a variety of public-private partnerships (Linder and Vaillancourt Rosenau 2000). In areas where profit could not be generated, partnerships were also developed with not-for-profit organizations. As partnerships were meant to deliver greater efficiencies for government, the use of not-for-profit and community agencies was ideal because they delivered services at a cheaper rate than the previous government service providers (Scott and Russell 2000).

However partnership development did little to break down much of the existing bureaucratic division of labour engendered by specialist departments (Page 2005). The disciplinary basis and specialties of different departments create a tendency for them to act as advocates for clients since they consider themselves the most expert in their particular fields (Downs 1967). Cross-cutting work across the boundaries of departmental silos then is seen to be an ‘unnatural’ activity for most organizations (Klein and Plowden 2005). Unless there are potential gains, cross-cutting activities have to compete with protecting the budgets for existing programs and services. Given a choice, most organizations will favour activities that enhance their legitimacy and garner more resources for a known client base (Handler 1996).

Cross cutting activities take time to nurture and develop if they are to be successful and with such short political timelines this is often out of the question (Klein and
There are also technical issues such as the legislative framework, legal requirements and/or tools of the trade such as computing systems. Cross-cutting is especially hard in the processes of data handling (Page 2005). Notwithstanding the apparent obstacles some governments have taken on the rhetoric of ‘joined-up government’ in an attempt to get beyond departmental silos, especially at the service level (Mulgan 2003). While efficiency of service delivery appears to be the underlying motive for joined-up government there is also a perceived need on the part of some governments to re-engage the public in the political process. The central argument is that services can be co-produced in multi agency working relationships designed to cut across organizational boundaries and give non-government agencies a direct involvement, especially in service delivery (Leach and Percy-Smith 2001). The theory is that multi-agency partnerships will be efficient through making better use of resources, integrating by ‘joining-up’ dispersed service providers, and accountable through increased knowledge of local resource allocation and service provision (Lowndes and Sullivan 2004). Furthermore through getting government agencies to work with other local interests, partnerships can build trust in local communities and act as a type of democratic renewal process (Lowndes and Sullivan 2004).

It is argued that joined-up approaches can best activate participatory mechanisms at local level in what may be called community governance (Banner 2002). Since community governance is an arena of local participation that includes all activities involved in the provision of local services or the representation of local interests to outside bodies (O’Toole and Burdess 2004), it attempts to resolve the tension between a managerialist focus and more participatory forms of democracy (Geddes 2005). However, the characterization of community governance is contested by many commentators especially with regard to the role of local government and the extent of participation by other stakeholders (Sullivan 2001).
Community Governance

For many commentators governance is now part of the everyday discourse of public life (Geddes 2005), even though there is often little definition of what the term means. Governance can be seen in structural terms as the ‘institutional arrangements for debating, considering, deciding, prioritising, resourcing, implementing and evaluating public policy’ (Head 2005, 44). In the wider agenda of the modernization of government the term governance has been extended to mean the dynamic process in which social and political actors play a significant role in deciding how to satisfy many of their needs (Pierre and Peters 2000). In this sense governance becomes a method whereby state and non-state actors and institutions interact with one another to manage the affairs of the nation (Weller 2000). It is both the involvement of institutions and actors from within and beyond government that in Stoker’s often quoted statement now ‘refers to the development of governing styles in which boundaries between and within public and private sectors have become blurred’ (Pierre and Stoker 2000, 32).

Within this broader framework commentators have also noted different types of governance. Rhodes (1997) and Hirst (2000) both separate vertical and horizontal approaches to governance in their analyses. They identify vertical types that are mainly driven by managerialist and neo-liberal economic principles such as new public management, the minimal state, good governance and corporate governance (Hirst 2000; Rhodes 1997). The horizontal approaches to governance are what Rhodes considers to be governing without government such as socio-cybernetic systems and the self-organising networks (Rhodes 1996), while Hirst focuses on the new practices of co-ordinating activities that occur through networks, partnerships and deliberative forums (Hirst 2000).

This last form of governance as networks is more focused on cooperative processes of governing, policymaking, and decision-making and ‘policies are formulated and implemented in multi-actor, networked environments, in which actors pursue different goals’ (van Bueren and ten Heuvelhof 2005, 47). While networks are often
two-dimensional, with a mixture of vertical and horizontal relationships, they link a
variety of actors who share common policy interests and who through exchanging
resources about shared interests acknowledge that cooperation is the best way to
achieve common goals (Borzel 1998). Partnerships as a special form of horizontal
governance are analytically different from networks as they can be associated with a
various forms of social coordination and cooperation that involve hierarchical and
market arrangements (Lowndes and Skelcher 1998). Furthermore networks are
generally stable but partnerships pass through a life cycle where the power
relationships between the partners change (Lowndes and Skelcher 1998).

Self-organising networks and partnerships in the community develop a mode of
governance that forms an arena for local participation. What can develop is a
relationship between citizens and their governments over policy evolution and
service delivery. Through collective action citizens can ensure enhanced
governability which in turn strengthens democracy. For Kooiman (2000: 160) the
‘governability of a system expresses not only how the system governs itself as a
whole but also how it wants to govern itself as a whole’. What develops is a form of
‘social-political governance’ that is defined as the ‘arrangements in which public as
well as private actors aim at solving societal problems or creating societal
opportunities, and aim at the care for the societal institutions within which these
governing activities take place’ (Kooiman 2000, 139). This mode of governing at
community level includes all activities involved in the provision of local services in
the community or the representation of local interests to outside bodies (Woods, et
al. 2001). It is what can be termed community governance.

New public management approaches to governance create the ‘citizen as consumer’,
(Ravenscroft, et al. 2002) who have the right as individuals to express their concerns
but they have little or no access to the decision-making about the policies that
generate the services, other than through periodical elections. (Brodie 2000). Joined-
up government for ‘citizens as consumers’ is a top-down response to complaints,
suggestions, comments or other customer requests. Unlike the ‘citizen as consumer’
Community building in Scotland and Australia

approach where consumers are ‘consulted’ about state services and how they work for them individually, community governance is organized activity where citizens are encouraged to be involved in the decision-making process itself (Docherty, et al. 2001; O’Malley 2004). It entails a type of empowerment where citizens are involved in transforming their lives in a process that is constructed through action (Keiffer 1984). There is a greater sense of democratic participation in community governance than that accorded to the ‘citizen as consumer’.

Community governance is more akin to co-governance where citizens are able to be part of joined-up government. Of course the mere development of community governance institutions does not necessitate joined-up outcomes. ‘It can be very fragile and dependent on the dedication of a handful of individuals’ (Robinson, et al. 2005, 16). There is also a tendency towards elite sectoral interest where the leadership of different partners is often unelected and self appointed (Geddes 2005). Nevertheless, where resources are depleted and where people have been unable to rely on existing public arrangements, they turn to informal networks to seek some form of redress (Chaskin 2001). One way of achieving that is through participating in new forms of governance.

For Sullivan (2001) community governance has three distinctive normative approaches. The first approach sees local government as the central part of the governance structure and process (Sullivan 2001). For proponents of this position it is the reinvigoration of local government as the legitimate representatives of the community playing a strategic role amongst other groups and agencies that is the central theme of community governance (See Clarke and Stewart 1998). Sullivan (2001) argues that the heart of this approach is accountability and it is through the traditional pillars of representative democracy and organizational bureaucracy that accountability is maintained.

The second approach eschews the privileged role of local government in favour of a network system in which different actors at community level come together for specific purposes (Sullivan 2001). Proponents of this view hold that local government
needs to involve other partners to build local capacity but shouldn’t be able to dictate the terms on which such arrangements are based (See Stoker 1996). It is the emphasis on networks where cooperative action takes places on the basis of mutual dependency, and where partnerships are built around contractual arrangements, that form the main focus of this approach to community governance.

The third approach is built upon the notion of citizen governance where neighbourhoods and communities construct their own forms of governing for their localized areas (Sullivan 2001). This approach is based upon communitarian notions of self-governing where citizens work towards achieving their goals and objectives for their own local areas (See Atkinson 1994; Box 1998). The proponents of this position argue that elected local government can be damaging to community governance, especially in terms of citizen participation in local affairs (Sullivan 2001). Accordingly, community governance occurs when citizens enhance their own power by developing local associations or committees that act as advocates for the local area whether that is the neighbourhood in urban centres or the small town in rural settings.

**Community Governance and Area-based Projects**

According to Smith and Beazley (2000) regeneration partnerships are established to produce outcomes for the mutual benefit of the participants that would have been incapable of being achieved independently. There is a sense in which area-based partnerships produce the conditions for enabling local communities to identify and address their own needs (Smith and Beazley 2000), since community groups are more intent on responding to local demands than broader policy concerns (Pearce and Ellwood 2002). Such partnerships are not limited to material re-development but also include community capacity-building and a central principle in most of these projects is community governance that is meant to enhance citizen participation (Robinson, et al. 2005).

There are hidden costs in area-based projects, especially associated with human resources (Taylor 2000). The staying power of volunteers is tested through a process
of initial enthusiasm, then ‘increasing demands on time and energy, anxieties and stresses of new roles, inevitable conflicts and frustrations and only marginal change, all leading to burnout’ (Handler 1996, 227). An important issue here is that while community groups may have legitimacy in the community, participation by locals will be minimal if there are little or no perceived outcomes (Tett 2005). Nevertheless, where citizens treat participation as a right and not as an invitation from some authority, the utilization of their own resources is perceived more as an empowering process than that of the consumer consultation (or more likely insultation) (Gaventa 2004).

Area-based projects vary in their aims and circumstances depending on the strategic working of the partnerships involved. MacPherson (2006) argues that there are three distinct conceptualisations of strategic working:

1. Strategy as plan of action.

2. Strategy as changing organisational practices.


The first emphasizes the importance of establishing action plans for implementing change. It is often a prescriptive approach associated with pre-ordained programs or projects. The general approach adopted here is ‘to set out in advance of receiving funding the problems they were concerned to address, their overarching vision and a set of objectives to be achieved during their funding life’ (Macpherson 2006, p. 187).

The second approach focuses on which organisations get involved, the way they get involved, and whether institutional conditions either facilitate or limit how objectives are achieved at local level (Macpherson 2006). It is more about how organisations work together and importantly the change to the organisational practices brought about by the partnership structures. Its aim is to give organisations the ability to freely work in partnerships by releasing the resources required ‘to achieve long term sustainable change within deprived neighbourhoods’ (Macpherson 2006, 188).
The third approach encompasses the ways that inter-organisational cooperation is used to build alliances between key organisations. Its focus is more about coordinating agencies in joined-up ways that lead to ‘both vertical and horizontal integration pooling of budgets and organisational governance’ (Macpherson 2006, 189). This approach is more far reaching than the first two in that it aims to build links from the local partnerships to the broader policy networks at local government and regional level. There is a much greater emphasis here upon joining-up the different levels of decision-making.

Depending upon the strategy adopted there will be different outcomes for community building in area-based projects. Furthermore the types of community governance adopted will vary across neighbourhoods and communities. This paper now turns to a short description of two different experiments found in Scotland (Wick) and Victoria (Warrnambool).

**Pulteneytown People’s Project (PPP) and Warrnambool Action Vision for Everyone (WAVE)**

The two projects under consideration in this paper are the Pulteneytown People’s Project (PPP) and Warrnambool Action Vision for Everyone (WAVE).

*Pulteneytown*

Pulteneytown is the half of the town of Wick that lies south of the river Wick a small town of 8500 people in Northeast Scotland. It was originally built by the British Fisheries Society (and designed by Scottish engineer Thomas Telford). For many decades Pulteneytown/Wick was the largest herring port in Europe. It was also the market town for Caithness. However following the collapse of the fishing industry and decline in the crofting industry Pulteneytown suffered from multiple deprivations. A survey conducted by the local Citizens Advice Board (CAB) indicated that there were many people who had significant debt and that there were a high proportion of young tenants in public housing. According to the CAB survey a significant indicator of deprivation in the area was the high take up of free dinners (33%) in the local school compared to the 9-13% elsewhere.
Following the survey, the (CAB) held a meeting where five agencies were invited to make presentations about their activities. At that meeting, the Caithness Voluntary Group (CVG) asked the Pultneytown residents if they wished to form a local community group. Their response was overwhelming affirmative. The outcome was the establishment of the Pultneytown People’s Project (PPP) in May 2002. With the support of the CVG and the Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise (CASE) that had received some funding from the European-funded Community Economic Development (CED) programme, the PPP started receiving funding in February 2003. The project was also supported in kind by the Highland Council who supplied a flat from their public housing stock to be used as an office/base for the project. The PPP was unlike other local development programs such as the Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIP) that form a major part of the Scottish Executive’s approach to community capacity building (Macpherson 2006).

The PPP has a management committee that oversees the project consisting of up to fifteen people. All of the committee is elected except for the two school principals; one from the local primary school and one from the Wick High School. There is also representation on the committee from the local Police but they are observers at meetings and do not have voting rights. Elections take place each year for the committee, with a restriction that no one member can serve on the board for more than five years.

The PPP meets every third Wednesday and the attendance at meetings is usually reasonably high. At least 60% of all committee members attend the meetings. The turnover of members on the committee has been managed well so that the committee does not lose all its organisational knowledge at one time. Managers of the different programs report every six weeks on operational issues, and on alternate meetings the committee discusses more strategic issues such as funding, costs, community centre update etc.

The PPP does not have to report to any other organizations, except to meet funders’ auditing and accounting requirements. The PPP is engaged in ‘partnership
meetings’ where the council, the college, police and other agencies come together and discuss the progress of the PPP and where there are opportunities for more collaborative activities. Because of the limit on staff resources in the PPP these meetings have not been as regular as the PPP would like. However, the PPP does also sit on a number of working groups – Vandalism Action Group, CCTV working group, Wick 21 (looking at Wick in the 21st Century), Wick Project (various groups/council/harbour board working in area) as well as being one of the lead members of the Community Regeneration Group which was set up recently to look at the best was of spending money (£60k) to regenerate Pulteneytown.

Warrnambool

The City of Warrnambool is located strategically on the Great Ocean Road coastal corridor from Melbourne to Adelaide, has a population of over 30,000, and acts as the main service centre for a wide outlying area. The main focus for the WAVE project was East Warrnambool, an area that had significant social issues including a high proportion of families trapped in a poverty cycle, no available childcare, a lack of training/educational opportunities for parents, long term unemployment, no incentive to work for people on welfare payments, low school attendance rate amongst a number of local youth and a number of families where both parents regularly misused alcohol/drugs. The rate of single parents (mostly mothers) with under fifteen year-old dependents living in the area was more than double the rest of Warrnambool. It was a major area in Warrnambool for illegal drugs and the community purportedly suffered from the perception that it was a ‘no-go’ area for members of the wider community (Warrnambool City Council 2003).

In October 2001 a community project planning workshop was organised by Warrnambool City Council for the Office of Community Building in Victoria to outline the goals of a community building project and to seek the commitment of services and community groups to identify and select neighbourhood areas for the project. The project was named WAVE – Warrnambool Action Vision for Everyone.
It was not until October 2003 that the WAVE Manager organized a meeting at the local church hall for a group of citizens in East Warrnambool, where only ten residents attended. From the beginning there was a ‘fear’ factor associated with being a member of the fledgling East Warrnambool Residents Group (EWRG). Many of the residents were afraid that their attendance at the meetings would be seen by some elements in the local neighbourhood as colluding with ‘authorities’. There was also significant cynicism about whether a residents group would be able to achieve much since previous strategies had failed to achieve results on such issues as a skate park for the area. Furthermore there was anger toward the Office of Housing for dumping so many families in crisis into one small and poorly resourced community. This was coupled with an ignorance of the role of various relevant service providers and a feeling that service providers treated the area like a ‘leper colony’. By the end of the project, however, the EWRG had become an incorporated group and had achieved some significant outcomes for the area. However, while the EWRG received community development and administrative support from the WAVE operatives during the project, once the funding ran out there was no ongoing money for the local committee to continue many of its activities.

The governance of WAVE varied across the three different phases of the project. In Stage 1 of the project, a reference committee was established comprising 17 nominated members with all of the members from government and non-government agencies under the auspice agency of the Warrnambool City Council. While the decision-making about the future direction of the project was in the hands of the reference committee this was often subject to the overview of the Office of Community Building in the Victorian Government.

With the announcement of stage two of the project, an Interim Steering Committee was established consisting of thirteen voting members from six local service agencies, six community members and a youth representative. The six community members were chosen on the basis of two from each of the areas of East Warrnambool, West Warrnambool and Merrivale-South Warrnambool. The
number of community members was increased to eight in July 2004 when it was decided that Merrivale and South Warrnambool could be identified as separate neighbourhood groups. There were three non-voting members including the WAVE Project Manager, a representative from WCC as auspice agency and the Department of Sustainability and Environment as the lead department. The Management Committee was given the major decision-making role in the project, with the Council acting as an administrative support in its auspice capacity. The Resident Services Department provided the non-voting representative on the Management Committee, line management for the project manager, and coordinated support for the project throughout Council.

The governance of the project by the Management Committee had some significant problems. Two major issues were attendance at meetings and change of personnel. Of the sixteen meetings held after the establishment of the Management Committee five were inquorate. From July 2004 when the number of community members was increased to eight, attendance by community members averaged five while during the same period agency attendance averaged two. This was further exacerbated by changes to community membership on the committee. By December 2004, there were only three of the original six community members left who had served for more than six months on the committee.

**Discussion**

The PPP and WAVE projects are both examples of a ‘project based’ approach to issues of social exclusion where partnerships are designed to fill service gaps in service provision to fill a specific need (Macpherson 2006). As area based initiatives, they target communities in need of priority action, they support cross-cutting approaches to service delivery, they promote local partnerships, and they encourage flexibility in the spending of public funds (Lloyd, et al. 2001). Beyond that though, the two projects have a mix of different approaches to community governance and strategic working.
Community Governance

In governance terms there are quite distinct differences. In the case of the PPP, leadership of the program was left almost entirely in the hands of the local Management Committee except for reporting and compliance with funding arrangements. The Highland Council was not represented officially on the Management Committee, and reporting to the Highland Council was only in terms of the use of the five public houses. The local committee employed its own staff to carry out the operational goals of the project. Furthermore the PPP had full autonomy in deciding the choice of partnerships it entered into. It was not determined by any overarching agency such as local government. In this sense the PPP is a self-governing neighbourhood group that works towards achieving outcomes for their own local area as citizen governance (Box 1998).

In the case of the PPP the neighbourhood group has developed its own institutional identity with the trappings of organizational life (Stoker 2005). It has a good support base and has established ‘its own narrative of what needs to be done and what things can be achieved’ (Stoker 2005, p. 168). However its reliance upon short term funding means that its long term aims are always at risk, and further, writing reports to various funding and grant awarding agencies is very resource consuming for its limited support staff (Macpherson 2006). Nevertheless the PPP now has a developed capacity for writing funding submissions that will assist its longer term sustainability.

WAVE was more akin to a local government centred approach. The Management Committee was essentially part of the Warrnambool City Council who acted as the auspice agency for the project. The community groups, especially the East Warrnambool Residents Group (EWRG), had representation on the Management Committee but did not really control their own affairs. As the EWRG was established after the first phase of the project, the East Warrnambool residents had little input into the strategic directions adopted for the second and third phases. It was the local council who employed the staff and who held the purse strings for the
Community building in Scotland and Australia

project. The form of community governance in this instance was through the traditional pillars of representative democracy and its organizational bureaucracy (Smith and Sullivan 2003).

Within WAVE the EWRG was able to establish an identity for itself as a resource for the local residents. It has a local support base but since it does not have its own autonomous funding sources, its decision making is limited. While EWRG did not have to spend time applying for funding sources for its own maintenance it did not develop the capacity for submission writing, an essential skill for sustaining the resource base of neighbourhood organizations (Robinson, et al. 2005).

Strategic Working

The types of strategic working used by the two projects were quite different. The partnership working in the PPP falls within the strategy as changing organisational practices framework (Macpherson 2006). The ability of the PPP to initiate its own partnerships without reference to an outside auspice agency gave it an advantage in responding to local needs. It has acted as a catalyst in drawing other agencies into ‘joined-up’ responses to particular needs. For example the Homelinks program brought together a number of agencies to achieve a more holistic approach to assisting youth to develop independent living. The partnerships strategy is aimed at re-deploying resources from a number of different programs for youth in the area.

The original and subsequent PPP applications for funding sources respond to the guidelines of the various agencies and to that extent there is some adherence to the strategy as plan of action approach. The very structure of community funding incorporates such a strategy in that the agencies fund community groups within some pre-determined guidelines. Accordingly, community applicants (in this case the PPP) have to abide by those guidelines and fit their activities into a broader plan of action if they wish to be part of the strategic partnership. However, the PPP has been able to utilize its funding to create its own resource base to develop further partnerships. It is this ability to be able to direct its own strategic framework that makes the PPP a special example.
The PPP's adoption of the changing organisational practices framework does not fit the Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIP) that are a major element in Scottish approaches to community capacity building. The SIP idea equates more with the strategy as plan of action approach that includes, a vision statement and priorities for action, a list of partners, including community members, an outline of the proposed programme of work to be undertaken, and reflections on how activities would link with other regeneration activity also taking place (Macpherson 2006). The PPP has its own mission statement and constitution but it is driven more by bottom up approaches to partnership working rather than the dictates of a SIP framework.

The institutional structure of the PPP, while dependent upon grants for its initial establishment, is now developing a mix of fees and grants to sustain the organisation into the future. In so doing they can begin to build their assets and enter into partnerships with other government and non-government agencies in a more equal way. Certainly the PPP is not in the same position as their statutory partners at local and central levels, but they are attempting to build a more sustainable asset base.

The WAVE project was a mixture of strategies. In the first place the WAVE project illustrates the strategy as plan of action. The WAVE project in phase one was given funding to develop a set of aims and objectives related to a series of problems derived from a community consultation process. Before funding was made available for phase two the interim steering committee had to set out their overarching vision and a set of objectives to be achieved during life of the project. Funding was not allocated until the WAVE aims and objectives fitted those of the Office of Community Building. While it was supposedly locally driven, it was the centre that had to approve the phase two aims and objectives. In other words it was to be coordinated local action that would be under the steering guidance of the centre (Stoker 2005).

WAVE also adopted a strategy of changing organisational practices through the development of four task groups. By allocating funding to task groups the Management Committee wanted to create partnerships with different agencies to
develop new ways of responding to social needs. For instance a business 
linkages/employment pathways (BLEP) task group facilitated three partnerships 
aimed at getting agencies in the public and community service organizations 
working together towards alternative ways of handling particular social issues. The 
three partnerships (the Skateboard Project, the Young Mother’s Well-being Project 
and the Alternative Learning Project) established a degree of joined-up activity on 
the part of agencies such as Brophy Family and Youth Services, South West TAFE 
(Technical and Further Education), Community Connections, the Department of 
Housing and other state and not-for-profit organizations but they were more 
partnerships between existing agencies rather than with the EWRG.

While there is a strong undercurrent of cooperation in WAVE’s strategy of changing 
organisational practices that apparently enabled satisfactory outcomes for citizens, 
what is missing is the actual transfer of power that is the key to empowerment for 
citizens and communities (Handler 1996). Since public agencies have legitimacy for 
their roles in existing power relations they are unlikely to relinquish any resources 
that maintain their position (Ballock and Taylor 2001). The partnerships between the 
various agencies in the different task groups did not include the EWRG even though 
the EWRG had membership on the WAVE Management Committee.

WAVE also attempted a third strategy of multi-level organisational collaboration 
through the development of a Reshaping Serviced Delivery (RSD) task force. The 
RSD’s major aim was to focus on program and policy issues that would enable more 
joined-up government. The RSD initiated three significant projects including public 
housing allocation policy, after hours crisis support and a data sharing amongst 
agencies in Warrnambool. What they found in the data sharing project reinforced 
the findings of other studies that indicated that coordinating service delivery for 
individual clients is not only technically difficult it can also be subject to other 
legislative requirements such as privacy (Page 2005). Furthermore, most 
departments collect data for records of service activities that are mainly used for 
reporting, accounting and auditing purposes (Page 2005).
The WAVE project, while succeeding in the production of a wide range of outcomes for different groups, ran into some difficulties by attempting to adopt a mix of strategies. First, the EWRG did not really develop the same type of independence as that enjoyed by the PPP. The EWRG did make suggestions about its aims for East Warrnambool but they were always filtered through the WAVE Management Committee. There was no separate budget (except for a small $5,500 grant) that could be controlled by the EWRG and the appointment of support staff was in the hands of the local government. The result of this was that EWRG was only part of the advisory framework rather than the directorate. The EWRG was being steered by the central and local agencies.

Secondly the aim of reshaping service delivery in WAVE was mainly in the hands of the government and community service agencies. There was some input from the community representatives but the suggestions for changes to the policy areas under discussion have not really come to anything. The partnerships that were developed were more about a meeting of agency representatives to discuss specific policy issues rather than any particular change to organizational practices.

**Conclusion**

The experiences of the PPP and EWRG (as part of the WAVE project in Warrnambool) have highlighted different aspects of community governance and partnership working. On the one hand the PPP has gone some way towards demonstrating how a local organization can build a community governance institution that develops partnerships from below. The WAVE project on the other hand while developing a local community organization in East Warrnambool did not really provide a sustainable institutional structure for the EWRG. Further the management of the WAVE project that was organised under the auspices of the local government did not build a sustainable model of community governance. What we learn from the different experiences is that there are some basic processes that need to be present for sustainable community governance.
First the citizen governance approach in local community groups is only likely to succeed if there are established means of ensuring some form of financial independence. This does not mean establishing another tier of government but rather ensuring that neighbourhood and local area committees have access to partnership working in policy areas that directly affect their local living standards. Unlike EWRG the PPP has established processes for ensuring a sustainable independence that allows them to seek out and develop partnerships that are meaningful for their local area.

Secondly the sustainability of neighbourhood and local area committees will only work if the groups are functioning properly. To that end more work needs to be put into broader community networks, giving more community members access to skill training and development. Both the PPP and the EWG have legitimacy in their neighbourhoods but more participation will only come if the people gain confidence in their ability to achieve local outcomes.

Thirdly if local government is to reinvigorate itself as the centre of community governance then there needs to be infrastructure to support neighbourhood and local area committee beyond bureaucratic facilitation. While a community development professional or facilitator may be a central support for local committees they also need local infrastructure such as local meeting places and their own budgets to achieve local development and advocacy.

Fourthly, in a local government-centred community governance there is a need to give communities some access to the decision makers other than through the bureaucratic participatory mechanisms. That is local committees need some forum where members of their groups can communicate directly with the decision-makers beyond the filtered conversations of a community facilitator. Some of this could be achieved through council committees but there is still scope for the Councillors to meet neighbourhood organizations at other forums (eg in local network forums).

Further to these localised concerns is the question of whether the citizenry can act to help coordinate government at local level by acting as the conduit through which
government and other service agencies direct their service. Community groups are able to highlight the local issues that need resolution, they can lobby and put pressure on agencies to service the highlighted needs and they can work across service agencies to direct resources into specific issues. If government and other service agencies are able to truly listen to the community and then are able to be ‘flexible’ in re-organising their resources they can respond accordingly. This entails an adaptable system where agencies can work together in partnerships to develop more flexible approaches to services and resources. A major issue for governments is that they want everyone else to be flexible but are very rigid in the way they apply their own rules.

Since new public management approaches emphasize hierarchical forms of accountability, regulation, inspection and performance management it is no wonder that horizontal forms of coordination are hard to establish. What this points to is a broader issue of the disciplinary focus of both government and non-government agencies. Programs designed to service the needs of individuals are not necessarily organized for broader community concerns. Furthermore competition between agencies to fulfil their programmatic requirements means that partnerships will not necessarily be based upon community outcomes but upon those that serve the interests of fulfilling performance indicators or at least the sustainability of the agency itself.

In this sense partnership working needs to see central and local governments free up budgetry allocations and local operatives to respond to the needs of people at local level. In this way broader strategies of organizational change can both respond to the dictates of central policy makers while at the same time adapting to local conditions. In essence what the system needs is to reward those agencies that lead the way in cross-cutting activities with extra funding to sustain the process.
The agencies involved were: CAB, Communities Scotland, Highland Council, Ormlie Residents Association (From Thurso 20 miles away) and Caithness Voluntary Group.

During the course of the WAVE project a number of other neighbourhoods were introduced into the program from three other areas of Warrnambool; two revitalized groups in Merrivale and South Warrnambool, and a newly established community group in West Warrnambool.

Katrina is a councillor on the Highland Council but she attends the management committee as the Economic Regeneration Manager of the PPP.
References


Gaventa, J. 2004. 'Participatory development or participatory democracy? Linking participatory approaches to policy and governance.' *Participatory Learning and Action* 50(150-159)


Keiffer, C. 1984. 'Citizen Empowerment: A Developmental Perspective.' *Prevention in Human Services* 3(9-36)


O'Malley, L. 2004. 'Working in partnership for regeneration - the effect of organisational norms on community groups.' *Environment and Planning A* 36(841-857

Community building in Scotland and Australia


van Bueren, E. and E. ten Heuvelhof 2005. 'Improving governance arrangements in support of sustainable cities.' *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design* 32(47-66


