Applying outcomes of lifelong learning to organisational achievement

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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I certify that the thesis entitled 'Applying outcomes of lifelong learning to organisational achievement'

submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

is the result of my own work and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.

I also certify that any material in the thesis which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by any university or institution is identified in the text.

Full Name: LEWIS BERNARD HUGHES
(Please Print)

Signed: ............................................................

Date: 10th November 2007
Acknowledgments

The research study informing this dissertation has caused me to reflect upon my own lifelong learning and drawing upon the outcomes from this journey. From the outset I have been shaped by my parents’ – Phil and Ivy - grounding of valuing learning, even though neither had gone beyond a primary formal education but had vigorously engaged with the university of life. And then, following my father’s death, Geoff Handbury coming into my life as a Legatee was fortuitous as he was, during my adolescent years, a guiding and supporting model which has continued to influence me throughout life.

With the benefit of hindsight, I now recognise that family and my teachers at Preston Technical College nurtured in me self-confidence, off the low base of being a profound stammerer, that I may not have otherwise achieved, and which articulated into continued growth through the air force cadets, the air force reserve, and tertiary student politics. During these formative years I learnt a great deal about myself and making the most of what you know and can do which was acquired through an “awakening” facilitation by others – had this not been the case, my life’s horizons would have been diminished. Having been awakened, my growth through professional life – teaching, training, management, entrepreneurship, and consulting – was supported by colleagues as friends and role models who influenced the “who I am”. This was particularly the case during my thirty year period of active engagement with the Australian Institute of Training and Development.

In respect of the finding of who I am, and the emergence of making the most of what is known and can be done as a life guiding beacon, I make particular acknowledgement of Roy Morris. As an intuitive capability orientated chief executive, and then as an especially close friend, Roy nurtured within me, as he has done for others, a confidence-in-self and thus an empowerment to rise to challenges and to grow and to contribute in unexpected ways.

Turning now to the specifics of this dissertation - I have gained much from the learning facilitated by teaching staff, faculty staff and fellow students of Deakin University Faculty of Education. This spans both the Masters program and the PhD candidacy; and I trust that my authoring of this dissertation goes some way to demonstrating my valuing of what these colleagues-in-learning have contributed to my learning. Principal amongst these colleagues is my supervisor John Henry who, through his guidance and patient friendship, has facilitated a learning pathway of great importance to me which has impacted beyond just my own life. I am greatly indebted to John and have high regard for the empowering manner in which he has contributed to my life’s learning journey. I must also make special mention of Peter Smith, my associate supervisor, who is a learning friend to all.
I was greatly assisted by the thoughtfulness with which each of the 86 respondents contributed to the study. In many instances, they went beyond generating data to sustaining my motivation to persist with the sometimes difficult inquiry. I trust that, in being a *grounding-for-action* device, this dissertation goes some way toward returning value to these respondents and their colleagues.

In the specific case of the Country Fire Authority (CFA), Graham Fountain (then Executive Manager, Human Resource Development & Planning, and now Deputy Chief Officer) opened the way to the research and arranged for Tony Duckmanton to facilitate access to the CFA environment. The support of Graham and Tony was pivotal to initiating the core CFA study and achieving the outcomes. Among the many CFA personnel who assisted, I must make special mention of David Kearney, George Osborne, Chelle Dickson, Andrew Ford, Len Butcher, Claire Gladman, Rachel Rogers and Kaylene Cossar without whom the depth of inquiry would not have occurred in the manner achieved.

It is apparent that the funding of the CFA component of this study by Emergency Management Australia (EMA), for whom particular acknowledgement is due, is well founded in terms of the prudence of inquiry into strengthening volunteer retention and the emergence of a more formal learning culture as the host environment for emergency sector volunteers. The opportunity to present the LCM Indicative Model at the EMA 2003 Australian Disaster Conference, Canberra 10th – 12th September 2003, added to confirmation of the efficacy of the model and its potential for extrapolation across the emergency sector and beyond.

I am also indebted to the authors whose work I have drawn upon as an informing base for the research study and in the deriving of meaning from the data outcomes. As acknowledged in my introduction, these authors are contributors to a rich body of literature from which I have drawn. And in some instances, particularly with respect to the capability literature, I am privileged to count some of these people as friends who have opened new learning pathways for me.

And in conclusion, but not the end, Libby – my wife and very best friend – is by far and away my most important and beloved learning partner. I am who I am primarily because of Libby; and it is due to her that I had the motivation to embark upon, and to sustain, my PhD candidacy. It is to Libby and my parents to whom I dedicate this dissertation.

Lewis Hughes
Melbourne, June 2007.
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Synopsis

The focus of this doctoral research study is making the most what a person knows and can do, as an outcome from their lifelong learning, so as to better contribute to organisational achievement. This has been motivated by a perceived gap in the extensive literature linking knowledge with organisational achievement. Whereas there is a rich body of literature addressing the meta-philosophies giving rise to the emergence of learning organisations there is, as yet, scant attention paid to the detail of planning and implementing action which would reveal individual/organisational opportunities of mutual advantage and motivate, and sustain, participation at the day-to-day level of the individual. It is in this space that this dissertation seeks to contribute by offering a mechanism for bringing the, hindsight informed, response “but that’s obvious” into the abiding explicit realm at the level of the individual.

In moving beyond the obvious which is prone to be overlooked, the emphasis on “better” in the introductory sentence, is very deliberately made and has a link to awakening latent individual, and hence organisational, capabilities that would otherwise languish. The evolved LCM Model – a purposeful integration valuing the outcomes from lifelong learning (the L) with nurturing a culture supporting this outcome (the C) and with responsiveness to potentially diverse motivations (the M) – is a reflective device for bringing otherwise tacit, and latent, logic into the explicit realm of action.

In the course of the development of the model, a number of supplementary models included in this dissertation have evolved from the research. They form a suite of devices which inform action and lead to making the most of what an individual knows and can do within the formal requirements of a job and within the informal influences of a frequently invisible community of practice.

The initial inquiry drew upon the views and experiences of water industry engineering personnel and training facilitators associated with the contract cleaning and waste management industries. However, the major research occurred as an Emergency Management Australia (EMA) project with the Country Fire Authority (CFA) as the host organisation. This EMA/CFA research project explored the influence of making the most of what a CFA volunteer knows and can do upon retention of that volunteer. In its aggregate, across the CFA volunteer body, retention is a critical community safety objective.
A qualitative research, ethnographic in character, approach was adopted. Data was collected through interviews, workshops and outcomes from attempts at action research projects. Following an initial thirteen month scoping study including respondents other than from the CFA, the research study moved into an exploration of the efficacy of an indicative model with four contextual foci – i.e. the manner of welcoming new members to the CFA, embracing training, strengthening brigade sustainability and leadership. Interestingly, the research environment which forced a truncated implementation of action research projects was, in itself, an informing experience indicative of inhibitors to making the most of what people know and can do. Competition for interest, time and commitment were factors governing the manner in which CFA respondents could be called upon to explore the efficacy of the model, and were a harbinger of the influences shaping the more general environment of drawing upon what CFA volunteers know and can do.

Subsequent to the development of the indicative model, a further 16 month period was utilised in the ethnographic exploration of the relevance of the model within the CFA as the host organisation. As a consequence, the model is a more fully developed tool (framework) to aid reflection, planning and action. Importantly, the later phase of the research study has, through application of the model to specific goals within the CFA, yielded operational insight into its effective use, and in which activity systems have an important place.

The model – now confidently styled as the **LCM Model** – has three elements that when enmeshed strengthen the likelihood of organisational achievement; and the degree of this meshing, as relevant to the target outcome, determines the strength of outcome. i.e. -

- **Valuing outcomes from learning:**
  When a person recognises and values (appropriately to achievement by the organisation) what they know and can do, and associated others recognise and value what this person knows and can do, then there is increased likelihood that outcomes from learning will be applied to organisational achievement.

- **Valuing a culture that is conducive to learning:**
  When a person, and associated others, are further developing and drawing upon what they know and can do within the context of a culture that is conducive to learning, then there is increased likelihood that outcomes from learning will be applied to organisational achievement.

- **Valuing motivation of the individual:**
  When a person’s motivation to apply what they know and can do is valued by them, and associated others, as appropriate to organisational achievement then there is increased likelihood that appropriately drawing upon outcomes from learning will occur.
Activity theory was employed as a device to scope and explore understanding of the issues as they emerged in the course of the research study. Viewing the data through the prism of activity theory led not only to the development of the LCM Model but also to an enhanced understanding of the role of leadership as a foundation for acting upon the model.

Both formal and informal leadership were found to be germane in asserting influence on empowering engagement with learning and drawing upon its outcomes. It is apparent that a “leaderful organisation”, as postulated by Raelin (2003), is an environment which supports drawing upon the LCM model; and it may be the case that the act of drawing upon the model will move a narrowly leadership focused organisation toward leaderful attributes.

As foreshadowed at the beginning of this synopsis, nurturing individual and organisational capability is the guiding mantra for this dissertation - “Capability embraces competence but is also forward-looking, concerned with the realisation of potential” (Stephenson 1998, p. 3). Although the inquiry focussed upon a need for CFA volunteer retention, it began with a broader investigation as part of the scoping foundation and the expanded usefulness of the LCM Model invites further investigation.

The dissertation concludes with the encapsulating sentiment that “You have really got to want to”. With this predisposition in mind, this dissertation contributes to knowledge through the development and discussion of the LCM model as a reflective device informing transformative learning (Mezirow and Associates 1990). A leaderful environment (Raelin 2003) aids transformative learning – accruing to the individual and the organisation - through engendering and maintaining making the most of knowledge and skill – motivating and sustaining “the will”.

The outcomes from this research study are a strong assertion that wanting to make the most of what is known and can be done is a hallmark of capability. Accordingly, this dissertation is a contribution to the “how” of strengthening the capability, and the commitment to applying that capability, of an individual and an organisation.
Chapter One: Making the most of what a person knows and can do – Overview of the problem and the opportunity

1.1 Introduction

This dissertation is grounded in my experience that people are more willing to contribute to organisational achievement than circumstances frequently allow. I can recall instances of people in an organisation placing obstacles in the path of others to inhibit them from making as full a contribution as would otherwise have been the case; instances of people just not knowing what others could contribute if invited; and even instances where a person just did not recognise that they had more to offer than they, themselves, realised. There is, of course, the other side of the argument that a person might knowingly hold back some part of the full contribution that they could make.

Motivated by a belief that individuals and the community have much to gain by making fuller use of personal capabilities, this dissertation draws upon inquiry into factors that inhibit and support the application of the outcomes of an individual’s lifelong learning in such a way as to enhance achievement by an organisation. And, as knowledge without application has only latent value, this research study has informed the development of a model – a framework - to aid making best use of what individuals know and can do.

1.2 Individual and organisation “knowing and action” partnership

Anecdotally, although the causes may be different, those who act on behalf of an organisation are increasingly required to achieve more with less. Competition from alternative suppliers of goods and services and competition for resources – notably human resources - are placing people within organisations under stress. Such feelings of pressure are not just the burden of senior executives. The feelings permeate throughout the organisational structure. Senior executives feel pressured by boards of management; middle ranking managers feel caught between the demands of those above them and the expectations of those below them; and staff feel a degree of exploitation and possibly an increasing sense of disempowerment and anxiety. Even if this is too dark a view, there is a
sound logic in making the most of what is known and can be done by the people who comprise the organisation (including external people such as suppliers, contractors, consultants, agents, etc.). In this sense, the problem and the opportunity is making the most of what people know and can do and is in accordance with the notion that, increasingly, the knowledge possessed by an organisation is the basis of its competitive advantage where competition impacts upon continuance. By extrapolation, knowledge possessed by an organisation is the basis of its sustainability where relevance of what is known supports continuance of the organisation; and Figure 1.1 illustrates the environment of intersection between personal knowledge and organisation achievement.

![Image of Figure 1.1: Intersection of individual & organisation mutual benefits from applying the outcomes from lifelong learning](image)

**Figure 1.1- Intersection of individual & organisation mutual benefits from applying the outcomes from lifelong learning**

Whilst it is common place to think of an organisation as an entity in its own right, especially as legal status is afforded to a properly constituted organisation as though it is a person, organisations are assemblies of people constructed in such a way as to achieve a purpose. ‘People found organizations when they find or learn about alternative better ways of doing things that are not easily done with existing social arrangements’ (Stinchcome 1965, p. 146) as cited by Child & Heavens (2001, p. 309). Under these circumstances, it is clearly appropriate to couple inquiry into knowing and action by an organisation with inquiry into knowing and action by people.

In their discussion of the socially embedded nature of organisations, Child & Heavens (2001, pp. 309-310) refer to Leonard-Barton (1995) and Johnson (1990) who similarly expressed the view that organisations act to privilege knowledge and actions that accord
with the founding motivations of the organisation, tend to reject knowledge that lies outside of this, and are thus resistant to change. It is this propensity to overlook, or even reject, the breadth and depth of knowledge possessed by individuals that fuels my interest in making the most of what people know and can do. I suggest that a partnership in knowing and action between the individual and the organisation has value which is easily overlooked, or only selectively drawn upon, and thus opportunity for both parties is lost.

A partnership in knowing involves the individual sharing with the organisation what they know and can do and the organisation displaying, through openness with respect to need and opportunity, that it values what the individual knows and can do. By this process, the individual is informed regarding the pertinence of what they bring and the organisation has enhanced knowledge of what is on offer. And thus this mutually valued body of knowledge becomes a foundation for action.

We accrue knowledge as we experience life. However some, more so than others, are aware of the range of what they know and can consequently do; and therefore they have the opportunity to take deliberate action for personal and, potentially, organisational benefit by leveraging upon this expansive knowledge.

It is not just contemporary management authors such as –

- Drucker (1996, pp 203-209) in commenting upon the place of formal education in the emerging knowledge society,
- Senge (1999a, p.49) highlighting the importance of informal networks and professional communities as ‘how people learn about new ideas, coach one another in trying them out, and share practical tips and lessons over time’, and
- Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995, p. 61) drawing a distinction between Westerners emphasising explicit knowledge compared to Japanese stressing tacit knowledge,

who have linked knowledge with action. Historically, people such as Aristotle have linked knowledge with action to achieve desirable outcomes (see Ethics, Book One) and the assertion that “Knowledge is power” has long been part of our thinking.
From an organisational perspective, obtaining leverage from knowledge held by members of the organisation can be seen as a problem. It may be seen as a composite problem of why and how to access this knowledge and then to draw upon it to advantage. One aspect of the problem is that members of the organisation may not be aware of the value, to the organisation, of what they know. Or members may be reluctant to share their knowledge for a variety of reasons including preserving status and territory. On the organisational side, there may be blindness to what is potentially available or, even, a reluctance to draw upon this so as to keep people in their place.

An alternative position to the foregoing is to view, as an opportunity, the probable existence of much valuable knowledge as a foundation upon which to build, even though there appear to be barriers to doing so – i.e. the cup is half full (an opportunity exists), not half empty (a problem exists), in terms of latent knowledge and the capability to act upon it.

1.3 Outcomes from lifelong learning - knowledge, skills and attitudes

First, a word of explanation: In this dissertation a distinction is made between learning and the outcomes from learning. Learning is seen as a process; and knowledge, skill and other attributes such as attitude are outcomes from this process. The emphasis upon lifelong learning is made in order to stress that outcomes from learning are acquired throughout life and via multiple, sometimes un-expected, pathways.

The knowledge, skills and attitudinal outcomes from the lifelong learning of people are both personal and organisational assets. It is a logical proposition that the realised (acted upon) worth of learning outcomes, relates to the degree to which these outcomes are recognised, valued and applied. Accordingly, low recognition and/or low valuing and/or low application of learning outcomes yields low return from learning outcomes. In a more positive light, high recognition and valuing and application maximise the realised worth of learning outcomes.

Drawing from the above proposition, it is reasonable to hypothesise that the recognition, valuing and application of an individual’s stock of lifelong learning outcomes for
organisational advantage requires a like-minded partnership between the individual and the organisation. Both parties have a role in acting upon the opportunity.

Very few people would dispute the notion that the quantum and quality of learning outcomes that an individual brings to an organisation, and to which they progressively add, is to the potential benefit of that organisation. However, reflection recalls instances where our, or another individual’s, learning experiences and outcomes were not valued or an individual deliberately drew upon their knowledge to the detriment of the organisation. Leadership capability of a volunteer shown in a community group, but not drawn upon by an employer, is an example of lost opportunity. *Bad mouthing* by frustrated past employees and *white-anting* (destroying from within) by frustrated current employees are examples of negative organisational outcomes.

For many organisations, timeliness is a special aspect of application of knowledge. It is now much harder for organisations in competitive environments to closely hold intellectual property through protection devices such as patenting and low mobility of staff. Organisations are faced with mobility (transfer) of knowledge assets as people move on to other employment or to self-employment and knowledge is more freely available within the rapidly evolving knowledge landscape and thereby giving rise to open innovation business models (Chesbrough 2003). Henry Chesbrough also refers to lost opportunities where an organisation does not recognise the value of its intellectual property or is unable, or is not motivated, to draw upon it.

Of course, there is always the possibility that an individual and an organisation can enter into a partnership of drawing upon the outcomes from learning to mutual benefit and in quite unexpected ways. It is this prospect that energises this research.
1.4 Making the most of learning outcomes accruing throughout life

‘The miller sees not all the water that goes by his mill’

(Robert Burton, 1577 – 1640, 3rd partition, memb. iv, subs.1)

Robert Burton in his work *The Anatomy of Melancholy* used this apophthegm in relationship to acknowledging and responding to matters of cuckolding (Jackson 1972). However, it is an apt way of making the point that much knowledge as an outcome from learning - like the water of the miller’s stream - goes unnoticed flowing by those who might otherwise profit from its application.

With the miller’s stream in mind, I take the view that lifelong learning is the continuous, reflective, process of applying progressively accumulated knowledge. It therefore follows that lifelong learning embraces episodical learning, such as may arise from specific training or education programs, but it is much broader than this. Lifelong learning is an accumulation of what is acquired from:

- formal/structured education and training such as is provided by education and training institutions;
- non-formal learning such as is typically provided in workplace and community settings;
- informal learning which is consciously drawn from life’s experiences; and
- incidental learning which is also drawn from life’s experiences but may not be recognised as such at the time of the experience.

(Refer Foley (ed.) 1995, p. xiv)

Lifelong learning is inclusive of many learning experiences and the knowledge outcomes are a continually accumulating asset, but the value of this may go substantially unrecognised. Probing of the relationship between the outcomes from lifelong learning of an individual and the achievement by an organisation invites the following questions:-

- What is the understanding of *lifelong learning* (and its outcomes) in the context of organisational application? What is it? - presumably, it has different meaning for different people. What should it be so as to aid adequate commonality of action?
What could it be - to move beyond the adequate to lead practice?

• What is the implication of regarding an organisation as being an assembly of people - rather than an impersonal structure?

• What is the relationship of lifelong learning to change as viewed from the individual's and the organisation's perspective?

In probing these questions, there was an expectation that the research study would raise other questions that may be significantly more than just nuances of questions indicated at the preliminary stage. It was also a possibility that valuing such questions – generically - may be more important than case-specific answers. Chapter Five, of this dissertation, is largely a discussion of these revealed questions.

In posing the foregoing questions, it is in mind that the current Australian vocational education and training system (VET) focus on competency-based training and organisational valuing of these questions could cause some corporate minds to embrace acceptance that learning is a holistic notion - not just vocationally specific skills orientated. Curiously, the embedding of capability goals within Training Package\textsuperscript{1} philosophy has gone mostly unnoticed; and I believe that there is strong argument that critics of Training Packages should address their critique to the manner of drawing upon and implementation more so than the inherent learning intent (Hughes 2006b).

The organisational tendency to have narrow valuing across the broad spectrum of learning outcomes occurs within a confused context. At the broadly embracing end of the spectrum there is an alerting to the power of conceptual skills in the observation that ‘Skills and competencies get the job done but they do not describe or define what the job should be’ (Handy 1998a, p. 161). But in Australia embracing economic rationalism (modelled upon the United Kingdom Thatcherist stance) that a superior stock of vocational skills is required for global competitive advantage (Pusey 1991) we may have lost our way. Fuelled by an enabling belief that the education and training marketplace should be opened up to competitive forces, and that the 1980s training reforms should be joined to employment

\textsuperscript{1} In the Australian VET context, Training Packages are the formal specification of competencies, packaging of competencies to comprise qualifications, and assessment principles and rules.
Overview of the problem and the opportunity

targets, the Labor Government facilitated this through a super ministry structure, under the control of economists with the educationists relegated to less influential positions (Pusey 1991, p.148). The subsequent Howard conservative government has largely maintained the thrust of these reforms and is newly evangelistic about the importance of hard skills acquired through traditional apprenticeships such as building, engineering and manufacturing.

Taking a lead from Handy's “what the job should be” challenge (Handy 1998a, p. 161), and extrapolating from Johnson's (1990) discussion of managing strategic change when faced with entrenched ‘sets of core beliefs and assumptions … variously referred to as myths’ (Johnson 1990, p. 185), there is cause to redress a tendency by Australian industry and other organisation managers to value only what they perceive to be hard skills. Hard skills are seen to be immediately applicable to the production of current products and services, whereas less tangible qualities of an employee which draw upon a wide range of life’s experiences and contribute in ways that strengthen sustainability of an organisation are not valued – and might even be discouraged.

In some instances, there can be a propensity to recruit on the basis of an apparent wide ranging repertoire, but then forces within the organisation conspire to keep a person in their place. Possibly, local level, organisation structural traditions and rules are related influences adding to the complexity of drawing upon knowledge and skill within varying environments.

Pertinent to reflecting upon organisational forces that may conspire to only value highly focussed outcomes from lifelong learning and even reject drawing upon more holistic outcomes, Johnson (1990, p. 185) cites Sathe (1985) in defining myths as the ‘set of important assumptions (often un-stated) that members of a community share in common and which govern communications, justifications and behaviours’ (Sathe 1985, p. 6). This foreshadows later discussion in this dissertation of rules that govern communities of practice (Wenger 1998; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002; Saint-Onge & Wallace 2003) that nurture and/or reject, and tools that support drawing upon what a person knows and can do.
In accordance with what I believe to be a generally narrow understanding, within our community, of what outcomes from learning should be, my observation is that within vocational education and training in Australia there is a current under-nurturing of the so-called “soft competencies” (Mayer Key Competencies (Mayer 1992)), and language, literacy and numeracy) required in the workplace and in community life. I report this observation even though I have participated in competency development discussions where industry representatives supported attention to soft competencies, but appeared to be doing so without real personal commitment or confidence that others in their industry shared these views. This apparent narrowness of focus adds to my perception that industry and commerce are typically taking a narrow view of what counts as valuable knowledge and skill. If industry training advisory groups – and not just those with a technocratic orientation - are not vigorously promoting the inclusion of soft competencies in vocational education and training programs, then there seems little reason to expect that there is an abiding valuing of broad outcomes from lifelong learning. However, the revised Training Package Development Handbook (DEST 2005) has strengthened direction for the inclusion of what are now called employability skills and the three “putting into effect” components of competency – task management, contingency management & job/role environment, skills - are now more responsive to the research finding by Cathy Down - ‘...the links between the Key Competencies and units of competence were implied rather than explicit and that they were not easily recognised by those implementing Training Packages’ (Down 2000, p. 2).

Given the organisational inertia, and if resources can be applied to awakening a valuing of holistic learning outcomes within individuals, it may be that the essence of making the most of what a person knows and can do lies with individuals truly valuing and embracing Gross’s interpretation of lifelong learning:

‘Lifelong learning means self-directed growth. It means understanding yourself and the world. It means acquiring new skills and powers – the only true wealth which you can never lose. It means investing in yourself.’ (Gross 1997, p.16)

However, I would add another element to Gross’s interpretation. Investing in yourself doesn’t necessarily require participation in formal learning programs. For many, the principal source of accruing learning outcome wealth is from recognising and consciously
drawing from and valuing outcomes from the university-of-life. In my experience, there are people for whom a lack of formal education – or what they perceive to be as only weak/incomplete formal education – generates personal doubt regarding the value of what they know and can do. For me, investing in yourself is a behaviour of holistic valuing of the knowledge and skill that you already have and consciously building upon this by whatever means are appropriate and to hand.

1.5 Organisational achievement

An individual contributing to achievement by an organisation is not necessarily synonymous with an individual contributing to attainment of the declared (at the time) goals of the organisation. Whilst it is to be expected that an individual will make their contribution to attainment of goals, as set from time to time, contributing to achievement could be seen as strengthening sustainability and/or other outcomes that may be valued but not necessarily envisaged in the initial articulations of vision and mission. It may be that achievement is usefully thought of as an outcome which reaches beyond defined goals.

Charles Handy’s (1995) exploration of the Sigmoid Curve as it applies to organisations necessarily re-inventing themselves, and its relationship to the organisational paradox that ‘It is one of the paradoxes of success that the things and the ways that got you where you are, are seldom the things to keep you there’ (Handy 1995, p.49) is germane to my making the distinction between contributing to achievement and contributing to attainment of goals. My argument is that, in addition to day to day advantage to be gained through fuller use of an organisation’s knowledge assets, appropriately drawing upon the breadth and depth of what people know and can do is of significant assistance in initiating organisation sustaining change. Such bringing about of change being in anticipation of the peak of the Sigmoid Curve and thus avoiding travelling beyond the peak into decline.

In the context of his discussion of the Sigmoid Curve, Charles Handy suggests that ‘The secret of balance in a time of paradox is to allow the past and the future to coexist in the present.’ (Handy 1995, p.61) – that is, building the future, whilst maintaining the present (paraphrasing Handy 1995, p.52). Handy then goes on to emphasise the imperative for organisations to reinvent themselves toward the peak of their curve; thus avoiding slipping
into the trough of inevitable decline. These sentiments resonate strongly with people making the most of what they know and can do as a contribution to organisation-sustaining change. The diverse and multiple outcomes from the lifelong learning of the people who comprise the organisation are potentially influential in the process of organisation re-invention. The degree to which this potential is realised is influenced by the willingness to offer and draw upon these knowledge assets. There is also the opportunity to recruit key people as agents of change, not as victims of change (Maira & Scott-Morgan 1997); and, as an extension of this focus upon key people, I suggest that more broadly throughout the organisation, overtly valuing and drawing upon what people know and can do expands their inclusion as agents of change.

The propensity of both parties - the individual and the organisation - to draw upon knowledge and to apply it to learning which supports goal achievement and continuous improvement for both in a changing world, is more than a matter of casual interest. We no longer live and work in a time of certainty and possibly we never have as it may be that it is only the pace, and impact, of change which is now different.

The potential personal and organisational change permutations are now so diverse, in number and character, that preparation for the future must now embrace an expectation that the future will not be as we expect it to be (Handy 1995: Handy 1998a). Under these circumstances the attribute of being a quick learner, individually and organisationally, is a major advantage (arguably a necessity) and must incorporate a willingness to quickly change to suit new challenges and opportunities. These questions then arise. Do organisations recognise this and value this in relation to both the organisation as an entity and the comprising individuals? And, if they do, how can this recognition and valuing be acted upon?

The attribute of being comfortable with drawing upon current competency/prior learning in dealing with the unfamiliar, is referred to by some as being "capable". In this respect, Stephenson remarks upon a propensity of many people to remain in familiar territory (Stephenson 1998, p.4). He contrasts this with the self-directed learner who has a belief in themself to perform confidently in new situations.
The application of knowledge to further learning, through reflection upon what is already known, is arguably the foundation of our growth as capable individuals, capable members of the community, and capable colleagues within corporate structures. However, this is not without its inhibitors and paradoxes which present within the learning milieu. These inhibitors and paradoxes must be acknowledged and appropriately managed if we are to continue to grow through our lifelong learning. By this means, we have the potential, given the opportunity and the resources to make positive contributions to our communities and employing organisations during our periods of association.

‘There must be more to life than to be a cog in someone else's great machine, hurtling God knows where.’ (Handy 1995, p.2)

Charles Handy speaks of paradox in people filling the empty raincoat which he uses as a metaphor for the anonymous gowning of workers by the corporate structure. People value their identity, not the status of empty raincoats, as they seek personal fulfilment in the context of corporate goals and community aspirations. I would add that this sits uncomfortably within the paradox that corporate heads proclaim a belief that people are now the major asset of the corporation but do little to act upon this espoused position.

Handy (1995) sees the empty raincoat paradox manifested in many forms in what he styles as mature environments – that is, the economies of developed countries.

- Intelligence as the new asset can't be managed as a conventional asset - you can share it but you can't give it away or bequeath it, it walks out of the door at the end of the shift, etc.
- Employers seek maximum work for least money and employees seek maximum money for least work.
- Productivity causing better work for fewer people and causing the emergence of new but hidden economies.
- We live longer but seem to have less time.
- The poor - being the market of the rich - cannot afford to buy.
- Organisations need to be global and local, small and big, autonomous workers working in teams; managers controlling and delegating.
The future environment of our children will not be the same as the better environment that we strive for today.

We seek to have personal "I" identity but are identified by others in terms of who we represent or to whom we belong.

In a just world, all should have an equal chance to aspire to inequality.

(Refer: Handy 1995, pp. 22-43)

Handy underscores the complex nature of the paradoxes which he identifies and welcomes, on the basis that they make life interesting, by remarking upon the comment of an employee’s partner – ‘Why don’t they employ twice as many people at half the salary and work them half as hard? That way they could all lead a normal life?’ (Handy 1995, p.9)

- Handy goes on to indicate that the mathematics of the new economy don't allow this. An especially poignant paradox cited by him is `We grow more food than we need but cannot feed the starving' (Handy 1995, p.2).

In embarking upon inquiry into people drawing upon the outcomes from their learning, it was my expectation that this would yield learning paradoxes. In my life’s journey I have encountered instances of learning causing negative outcomes where dissatisfaction within the powerless has been generated upon acquiring knowledge that they were indeed being oppressed and without the ready means to rise above the oppression. At a less threatening level, the awakening of a positive discomfort – forcing an opening of mind - upon realisation that the more I learn the less certainty I have about what I know, is high in the hierarchy of the outcomes from my lifelong learning; and has been particularly reinforced as an outcome of my recent academic studies.

It is germane to my valuing of an open mind that Handy acknowledges that he has moved forward from past right way and wrong way certainties. I, as for Handy and others who reflect upon our past positions, acknowledge that it is in the nature of learning that we move on and are not surprised that our perceptions change - the journey is the joy and hopefully arrival (in respect of my journey) is far in the future. In this respect, there is strong resonance with Gore Vidal saying ‘Change is the nature of life and its hope’ (Vidal 2005).
In this dissertation, the drawing upon outcomes from learning is closely connected to change in individuals and by organisations.

Handy expresses a view that we are more likely to have understanding of our life by looking backwards rather than forwards (Handy 1995, p.18). Associated with making the most of what we know and can do, and with this paradox of the need to live forward but derive understanding backwards, there are two Handy perspectives which are worthy of note.

- In the first instance, it is unlikely that a learning paradox which is revealed can be solved. Taking the lead from Handy (1995, p.18), an effective approach is to accept a learning paradox should it arise, so that appropriate management can be applied and gain achieved during the period of time in which the paradox manifests.

- The second perspective worthy of reflection, is the Handy (1995, p.19) view that the role of the prophet is to offer a way of thinking about things but it must not usurp the “doers” role in taking action – that is, avoid seizing/stealing power without accepting responsibility.

To a degree, the forward looking orientation of this dissertation is an offering of inquiry findings which have characteristics of prophecy. The goal has been to seek to make new knowledge available which adds to the interpretive capability of individuals and organisations in making sense of the present, expanding and drawing upon their stock of lifelong learning, and more confidently striding into the future.

1.6 Leverage from individual knowledge to organisational learning

Knowledge is increasingly identified as the new currency of organisational competitiveness (Abel & Oxbrow 2001; Drucker 1996; Hueman & Goodman 1999; Marquardt 1996; Mayo & Lank 1994; Pearn, Roderick & Mulrooney 1995; Senge, et al.1999; Swieringa & Wierdsma 1992; Watkins & Marsick 1993) where preservation of a market position is important for a commercial entity or access to resources is important for a non-commercial (not-for-profit) entity intent upon preserving its place in the pecking order to sustain viability.
and relevance. Accordingly, the acquisition of knowledge and its leverage for further individual and organisational learning are important components of this dissertation.

The proliferation of texts on the Learning Organisation and the Knowledge Organisation, anecdotal evidence such as is presented at conferences, and the national reforming of vocational education and training programs are examples of indicators that the valuing of corporate knowledge and individual learning is more than just a passing fad. The frequent mention in texts dealing with learning, of the Greeks, the Hebrew and Oriental philosophers and others of the ancient world, and the citing by Ronald Gross of the social historian, Caroline Bird’s, observation that ‘... people who make it big in money, power, prestige or achievement have always educated themselves in what they need to know’ (Gross 1977, p.30) suggest that at least some believe that this is not a new strategy, but is now a survival imperative. The position taken by Peter Schwartz in advocating creating and reflecting upon scenarios ‘As the implicit knowledge of each learner becomes explicit his or her mental model becomes a building block for the institutional model’ (Schwartz 2002, p.205) is especially pertinent to the argument that what people know and can do is a foundation upon which an organisation can expand its capability and strengthen its sustainability through learning.

1.7 Organisations as assemblies of people with their respective motivations and values

Organisations are assemblies of people. They are not some entity configured of other than people. Buildings, client loyalty and community goodwill, cash in the bank, equipment, patents and licences, markets for products and services, etc. are variously assemblies of tangible and intangible assets of an organisation - they are not the organisation in the way that people are the organisation.

People are the organisation, including the emergence of virtual organisations as caused by out-sourcing and facilitated by technology. And although the presence of people, with their own unique character, aspirations, etc., may be masked by labelling of position titles rather than assigning names of people, there is a significant difference between consideration of
the individual and consideration of the assembly of individuals into groups making up organisations.

Thinking of organisations as assemblies of people goes beyond the phenomenon of recognising that people behave differently in groups (group-think etc.) than they do as individuals. For example, some people hide within organisations, some assert quiet but powerful influence and others seize the opportunity to assert control which is sometimes exploitative of others.

We each bring our respective values and motivations to the organisation. The constructing of a universally embraced set of core values, from within the personal philosophy of each individual, is central to the formation of a shared holistic identity (Whiteley 1995, p.42). In this sense, the continuing success of an organisation is arguably dependent upon balance between the tensions of the self-interest of those who own/control the organisation and the larger group of those who make up the organisation and probably an extended population of stakeholders. At the outset of this research study, but without pre-empting the outcome, it was hypothesised that the circumstances of acquisition of knowledge and learning at the individual and organisational level are intimately bound to nurturing of shared core values and consequent organisational achievement.

In his seminal work Integrating the Individual and the Organization, Chris Argyris makes a statement early in the book `... the problem of integrating the individual and the organization is one in which both have to "give a little" to profit from each other. One of the major issues is how much should each give?’ (Argyris 1964, p.3). It is the contention of this dissertation that it is people, organisationally and individually, giving and taking with respect to their outcomes from lifelong learning that lies at the core of organisational achievement.

Twenty six years on from his 1964 insights, and whilst noting that contemporary commentators still regarded his earlier writing to hold true, Argyris (1990, p.ix) drew attention to a personal shift of view. Upon reflection, Argyris now came to the belief that socialisation causes people (even in different cultures) to respond to threat and
embarrassment by what he calls skilled incompetence brought about by rigid holding to limited roles and responsibilities often so as to avoid conflict with others and protecting of self. Argyris argued that this skilled incompetence reduces the capacity of organisations to be learning systems (Argyris 1990, p.x).

The 1990 Argyris reflection focuses upon his new realisation that the typical pyramid structure, which was the subject of his earlier review, exists as a consequence of `... the finite information processing capacities of the human mind' (Argyris 1990, p.x). As one explores upward in the pyramid - from worker, to supervisor, to manager, to executive - each knows what they need; but each does not know it all. Controlling power necessarily increases as one rises in the pyramid but you become increasingly remote from grass roots knowledge. This rational organisation can produce injustice and irrationality as successive layers respond to deviation from the plan and manage by exception (intervene only when things don't go according to plan) in an environment where, at all levels, there is a reluctance to change.

If the Argyris observation holds true, there are implications for the required knowing capabilities which are inherent in flattening organisational structures. People will need to know more and be confident in applying past learning to new situations. This raises the question as to what is causing this flattening of structure. Is it just cost-saving or are there other influences such as demand for empowerment at lower levels, the need to know more at higher levels so as to be more effective in using resources to best advantage, the availability and/or cost of technology, for example?

1.8 Theory X versus Theory Y

In a Taylorist organisation, the scientific management approach to people is to view them as tools of production in much the same way as machines are tools of production. It was this management predisposition that McGregor described as Theory X which was typified by a management belief that people dislike work, that they must be controlled and threatened and, in avoiding responsibility, they prefer to be directed (McGregor 1960, pp.33-34). Conversely, the Theory Y stance (McGregor 1960, pp.45-57) advances a belief in the capacity of people to be self-directed and motivated to contribute to organisational
goals and to achieve their own goals. In his 1957 speech, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, at the Sloan Management School, McGregor is reported as saying ‘People are not by nature passive or resistant to organizational needs. They have become so as a result of experience in organizations’ (McGregor as reported by Bennis 1972, p.141)

Having raised McGregor's Theories X and Y, it is appropriate to acknowledge Theory Z as postulated by William Ouchi (1981) of UCLA. Theory Z is concerned with achieving real participation by employees in influencing change - such participation is an empowering process. To appreciate Theory Z, it is useful to know that Ouchi postulated it as a comparative descriptor of the Japanese style egalitarian approach to employer/employee relationships compared with the typical (in his view) American (USA) Taylorist approach which he designates as Theory A.

‘Egalitarianism is a central feature of Type Z organizations. Egalitarianism implies that each person can apply discretion and can work autonomously without close supervision, because they are to be trusted. Again trust underscores the belief that goals correspond, that neither person is out to harm the other. This feature, perhaps more than any other, accounts for the high levels of commitment, of loyalty, and of productivity in Japanese firms and in type Z organisations.’ (Ouchi 1981, p.81)

Ouchi (1981, p.81), acknowledges the view of Chris Argyris that workers are motivated by pursuing individual goals in an environment of some independence and in experiencing psychological growth. Ouchi notes that Chris Argyris was a former student of Douglas McGregor and that in developing Theory Y, McGregor drew upon the work of Argyris. The Argyris, McGregor and Ouchi views coalesce around a theme about the effect of management/supervisor trust in the worker to which Ouchi adds the effect of a reciprocal trust of the worker in the organisation.

Pertinent to my research study into people making the most of what they can do by drawing upon the outcomes from their lifelong learning, Ouchi (1981, p.37) refers to the possibility that a shift from the skill-centred career orientation of the American environment to embrace at least some part of the Japanese style company-centred career orientation may be beneficial to American organisations. However, Ouchi does acknowledge the tension between American organisations who are reluctant to invest in transferable skill
training and American employees who expect to move from employer to employer. If these opinions are reasonable, the question then arises: to what degree is this relevant in the environments of my Australian focussed research?

It is important to note that Ouchi is not blind to the dramatically varying tenure of employment and other differences manifested across the spectrum of Japanese organisations. In citing Japanese circumstances, it should not be assumed that they are universal within Japan. Likewise, the Western style of employer/employee relations is marked by its exceptions in time and place.

It is also noteworthy that Ouchi's inquiring into the comparisons between Japanese and American approaches to management yielded the finding that rarely are organisations purely of a type A or type Z nature (Ouchi 1981, p.70). Organisations manifest amalgams of type A (American style) and type Z (Japanese style) in the same way as managers and supervisors bring amalgams of McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y to their roles.

In my aligning Ouchi's Theory Z with McGregor's Theory Y, it is appropriate to note that Charles Joiner, Jr., a past president of the American Mead Corporation, is reputed to have described the "Z" approach as involving broad participation in achieving consensus and taking a long-term view. As for Theory Y, it is implicit in Theory Z that learning is valued and is reinforced through explicit application.

1.9 The changing Australian workplace

Exploring and reflecting upon the factors that aid and/or inhibit a person from drawing upon the outcomes from their lifelong learning in such a way as to strengthen achievement by an organisation in an Australian context must give due regard to the changing Australian workplace. This would be the case in extrapolating the outcomes from this inquiry to other organisational environments outside of Australia.

In addition to organisational structural change, and in common with much of the developed world, the Australian workplace has changed from one in which tenure of employment was an expectation to one in which transient full-time employment and casualisation is
becoming the norm. This presents enforced possibilities for workers achieving independence by becoming what Charles Handy (1995, p.175) describes as portfolio workers. Portfolio workers serially combine, or have coincident part-time jobs, to achieve full-time employment. This amalgamating of jobs may be deliberately done to suit their balancing of personal interests with their need to make a living. It is germane to this changing nature of work that in 2001 the Victorian Primary Industries Training Board applied substantial resources to exploring the concept of rural based workers participating in vocational training innovatively structured and delivered, to develop their competency in a number of jobs which become seasonally available in their respective regions. The outcome from such a shift in skills development would be to give confidence in local, continual (albeit serial) year long employment without the need to move away from family and friends and the resultant weakening of the community.

A 1999 review of the Australian workplace, by the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research [NCVER], *The Changing nature and patterns of work and implications for VET* (Waterhouse, Wilson and Ewer, 1999) reported significant changes in the nature of work in Australia as we move from manufacturing to service industries and towards casualisation. There is also increased feminisation of the workforce. In high performance organisations, it was noted that the workplace learning environment is characterised by people under pressure, committed to organisational goals and working in flexible environments.

Irrespective of whether an individual is an employee or a volunteer or contracted person of an organisation which is Taylorist in nature, or whether it is orientated more towards the McGregor Theory Y approaches to valuing and harnessing human resource energies, the outcomes from the lifelong learning of the individual are presumably available to the individual's and the organisation's benefit. The degree to which this potential is acted upon is influenced by factors that are discussed as outcomes from this research study – what is the nature of the relationship and what influences its positive and/or negative application?
1.10 Foreshadowed lines of inquiry

Arising from the research question – What aids and what inhibits the outcomes from lifelong learning being applied to organisational achievement? – and without pre-empting research outcomes, the following mappings were anticipated as likely to emerge as frames of interest. The hypothesising of these frames of interest is an outcome from my life experience. And, although some mapping may be arguably unlikely (see Figure 1.4), I have experienced environments where units within an organisation were intent upon imposing learning upon people; but they had little or no regard for what those people brought to the organisation that was not immediately and unambiguously pertinent to the task at hand. Similarly, I have known people who willingly participated in training, but had little or no recognition of the value of what they already knew and could do and had difficulty in valuing what was newly acquired. Happily, I have also had the personal benefit of working in environments that were characterised by both the organisation and the people valuing prior capabilities and newly acquired expansion of capability.

From the perspective of the individual

In polar terms and by taking an initial simplistic view, the individual may be either nurturing their lifelong learning or resisting lifelong learning. Either stance may occur due to conscious action or in a circumstance of being without conscious awareness; that is he/she is blind to the issue. There are four possible states, with varying intensity, as indicated in Figure 1.2

**Figure 1.2 – Potential learning postures by an individual**
Figure 1.2 offers a basic hypothetical model for considering the implications of an individual being located in one of the four quadrants of Figure 1.2. Notionally, being strongly conscious of one’s own learning and strongly embracing this learning is a desirable state. However, other combinations may apply. It is possible to foresee a scenario where an individual may have been so damaged or traumatised by past learning that they resist further learning and are blind to the value of their current and accrued learning.

Notwithstanding the inviting simplicity of Figure 1.2, the likely reality is that an individual’s relationship with their own learning is not as capable of being located in one of four fields as Figure 1.2 may suggest. For example, the circumstances and the application of the outcomes from different learnings may generate a scatter diagram rather than a single point representation of an individual's learning. There is also the matter of the particular location of the individual within the quadrant and what this implies in terms of supporting and motivating the individual.

From the perspective of the organisation
The organisation may be either actively nurturing a learning environment or discouraging a learning environment. In turn, these two environments may be a consequence of conscious action or of being blind to the issue. In polar terms, and again taking a simplistic view, there are four possible states as indicated in Figure1.3.

As for Figure 1.2, the real situation is likely to be much more complex than Figure 1.3 suggests. It is conceivable that an organisation might support learning that is clearly
targeted at attaining current goals, but is vigorously opposed to diverting energies towards learning activity that is forward looking. Similarly, a scenario might exist where in some circumstances an organisation has good knowledge of what staff know and can do because they are closely tied to the head office, but that organisation is largely ignorant of what staff know and can do in remotely located and/or recently acquired subsidiary units. And there are numerous possible other permutations. Accordingly, it was not anticipated that the research will reveal simple patterns of an organisation’s pre-disposition to learning which fit unambiguously into one of four quadrants. The purpose of Figures 1.2 and 1.3 is to indicate the general nature of possibilities and they are generative with respect to developing the research. Figures 1.2 and 1.3 invite consideration of what would be the view if one was to examine the consequence of each of the sixteen potential combinations arising from rotating individual and organisational lenses (Figures 1.2 and 1.3) and as illustrated in the following matrix – Figure 1.4.

**Figure 1.4 – Alignments of the individual and organisational potential learning postures**
An example of questions that might arise is - What would be the outcomes, for the individual and/or the organisation, of a circumstance where an individual is conscious of the value of their lifelong learning but the organisation is blind to this asset? Indeed, the range of possibilities is much larger than might at first appear. It is possible that a person may value some aspect of their learning (such as confident management of the unexpected developed through their work as a State Emergency Volunteer) but not recognise that this has value in their paid work; or be disinclined to allow their employer to derive advantage from this personal attribute.

In Figure 1.4 it is suggested as logical that a sound foundation exists upon which to make the most of what people know and can do where both parties – individual and organisational – are classified as willing. Whereas, where both parties are classified as unaware there is a hazard that resources being applied to facilitating learning will be largely wasted. In instances where one of the parties is classified as willing, but not the other, it is suggested that there is at least an opportunity to bring the other party to the willing status. The challenge circumstance is suggested as existing when there is some form of remedial intervention required other than just generating awareness.

The self-interest versus organisational interest polarity
The logical possibility of a spectrum from total individual self-interest to total organisational self-interest, adds a potential third dimension to the two dimensional scenario possibilities of Figures 1.2., 1.3 and 1.4. For example, what is the effect of an organisation deliberately taking an extreme self-interest (self-serving) position to the exclusion of consideration of the self-interests of the individuals comprising the organisation? Or, what would be the management strategy where an organisation with an overriding commitment to the community is dependent upon individuals motivated solely by self-interest?

Figure 1.5 illustrates the polarity possibilities of organisational and individual self-interest.
As for the earlier considerations of individual and organisational valuing of learning, this line of inquiry is confounded by the paradox that organisational positions are in fact a construct of individuals: i.e. Boards of Directors, CEOs and Executives. It seems paradoxical to separate an organisation from the reality that it is indeed a convening of people to achieve a purpose. Accordingly in managing this paradox, it is recognised that the outcomes from lifelong learning of individuals located within the ranks of an organisation are potentially interacting with the lifelong learning of executives who are specifically charged with organisational performance. This raises a question - is organisational achievement really just another way of saying executive achievement of organisational goals, sustainability and maintaining relevance?

Similarly to Figures 1.2 and 1.3, it is not suggested that extreme polarity divides are assumed to always exist between individual and organisational self-interest which is self-serving and excludes inclusion of the interests of others. It is possible, if not probable, that graduations and subtleties of each pole will exist and impact upon outcomes in such a way as to make the above simplistic self-interest dimension a far more complex area of inquiry than might at first appear. In this instance the term polarity has been deliberately introduced because the polarity management needs and techniques as discussed by Johnson, B. (1992) have resonance with Handy (1995) proposing appropriate managing of paradox.
Overview of the problem and the opportunity

‘Polarities are sets of opposites which can't function well independently. Because the two sides of a polarity are interdependent, you cannot choose one as a "solution" and neglect the other. The objective of Polarity Management is to get the best of both opposites while avoiding the limits of each.’ (Johnson (1992, p.xii)

Johnson, B. (1992) is an advocate of approaching differences with a polarity management intent rather than striving to solve what may be unsolvable problems. Maybe, it is the case that the objectives of individuals in drawing upon their lifelong learning outcomes and the organisational objectives of goal achievement, sustainability and maintaining relevance are inherently polar in nature, but are manageable to mutual benefit. In such cases, the balance of interests may be achieved by management of appropriate give-and-take, and this presupposes that each party is alert to, and responsive to, the needs of the other.

1.11 To recap - the aim of the research and thrust of this dissertation

The aim of the research, and the consequent thrust of this dissertation, has been to add to the body of knowledge which underpins the processes whereby people and organisations can draw upon the asset of lifelong learning as it best supports the pursuit of their respective objectives

There is a deliberate focus upon the impact of the lifelong learning of the individual, with respect to organisational achievement. This is based upon three foundation positions:

1. Organisations are assemblies of people; and hence the lifelong learning of individuals, in all its diversity, is the basic element of organisational learning.
2. "Change", such as characterises the environment in which organisations exist, evolve and decline, is brought about by people through what they learn and don't learn.
3. The '80s initiated training reforms in Australia are now taking on the mantle of learning reforms. We are moving from the organisational focus of the Training Reform Agenda to a people-centred valuing of learning.

Being cognisant of the vagaries of change, the above are very deliberately styled as foundation positions. There was an expectation that, in the course of the research study,
circumstances would arise where unplanned research questions would arise and enrichment/variation of research method would be warranted. There was also a perceived inevitability that the environment in which the research was being conducted, would be different to that which was initially predicted – and indeed this was a prophetic prediction.

I also had an expectation that the valuing of tacit knowledge and the processes of making it explicit (Maira and Scott-Morgan 1997, pp.221-225) would feature largely in the research findings. This is especially the case as my experience suggests that what is explicit knowledge to an individual, is frequently only tacit knowledge from an organisational perspective.

In broad overview, the research intent, as illustrated in Figure 1.5, was to explore the factors (GENERATORS) which potentially influence maximising the extent to which the lifelong learning of an individual is applied to achievement by organisations; and the factors (INHIBITORS) which potentially influence minimising the extent to which an individual’s lifelong learning is applied to achievement by an organisation.

Having, in Chapter 1, reviewed the generality of the issues, Chapter 2 is an overview of the background to the research undertaken within the Country Fire Authority (CFA) which emerged as the principal environment of inquiry. Consequently, this dissertation is grounded in generality but focuses upon the CFA particularities and, as such, is a stepping off point for future exploration of extrapolation to other environments of application.
Chapter Two: The particularities of the Country Fire Authority

2.1 Introduction

As stated in the concluding paragraph of the preceding chapter, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) became the principal organisation within which the research issues central to this doctoral study were explored. In this chapter the particularities of the CFA as an organisation are presented. The research focus discussed in Chapter 1 is further refined in this chapter to reflect these organisational particularities. This chapter is thus an advance organiser providing contextual details necessary for a fuller appreciation of the arguments developed in later chapters.

The origin of the Country Fire Authority (CFA) lies in the tradition of people in rural communities coming together in support of each other in times of fire threat. Consequent upon major outbreaks of fire in 1926, the formation of volunteer Bush Fire Brigades was a considerable improvement upon the previous informal arrangements of neighbour helping neighbour. Following the disastrous fires of 1939 and 1945, the capacity for community response to fire events was substantially strengthened by the 1945 formation of the CFA as a single entity. With 1,193 brigades and 58,662 volunteers supported by 431 career fire fighters and 813 career administration staff (CFA 2005), the CFA is now responsible for fire services across Victoria with the exception of inner metropolitan Melbourne and crown land.

The volunteer nature of the CFA is a major strength and, paradoxically, also a vulnerability. The ability to draw upon members of the local community is a strength. The vulnerability arises from the dependency upon adequate numbers of competent volunteers, when and where required.

2.2 Why join as a volunteer, why remain, and why leave

The CFA’s new member welcoming kit (CFA 2002) cites three principal joining motivations - i.e. to assist others; to learn new skills and to meet people; and to protect the community. However in the course of my research study it emerged that for some volunteers, notably
urban, the appearance of excitement is a factor in motivating joining and in other instances, notably rural, there is a strong element of proper self-interest and responsibility to the community.

Irrespective of the actual joining motivations, volunteers commonly mention that the reasons for joining are not necessarily the reasons for remaining. Finding oneself as a valued member of the brigade family appears to be a powerful motivator to remain for some who joined for other reasons. The sense of camaraderie within the brigade, coupled with commitment to the local community, appears to be the essence of the motivation to remain as a volunteer member of the brigade. In this regard, volunteers emphasise their relationship with the brigade more so than with the CFA as a corporate entity.

The CFA is intending to collect data on why volunteers leave as a follow-on from an earlier inquiry. However anecdotally, and as for other volunteer dependent organisations, the escalating demands in contemporary society are such that there is diminishing discretionary time and energy to devote to volunteering as a CFA member (CFA 2001). Changes in employment, economic circumstances, family responsibilities, and personal interests/enthusiasms impact upon the ability to volunteer. And, in the case of rural communities, diminishing populations associated with amalgamation of farms and other changing demographic factors are leading to fewer and ageing volunteers carrying increasing CFA commitment loads.

2.3 Brigade sustainability – importance, threats, and responses

The CFA, conservatively, estimates a saving to the Victorian community of $470 million a year from volunteer free labour and other contributions. Also, the CFA holds that contribution to social capital, at the local level, is an additional accruing value to the economic contribution (CFA 2001, pp. 11-12)

Whilst the dollar value of CFA volunteer contribution to the state’s economy may be variously calculated, and the nuances of contribution to social capital may be variously assessed, it is indisputable that CFA volunteers individually and collectively are a community asset of significantly high value. Under these circumstances, the recruitment
and retention of CFA volunteers has a level of importance that reaches beyond the obvious need for a local community to have a fire emergency response capacity. Therefore changes in the Victorian structural economy are of significant concern and require the resulting threat to brigade sustainability to be managed in new ways.

In its 2001 submission to the Economic Development Committee of the Parliament of Victoria (CFA 2001) the CFA made the following points:

- Over the preceding decade CFA volunteer numbers were deceasing at between 4.4% and 4.8% per annum and this presents a clear threat to the long-term sustainability of volunteerism in the CFA.
- Factors making it more difficult to join and remain as volunteers included –
  1. increased working hours;
  2. increased stress at work;
  3. reduced job security;
  4. increased family demands, especially where both parties are working;
  5. the need to leave the area for lifestyle, work, family, or retirement reasons, and the resulting disruption of their social networks and links to CFA;
  6. taking up of other interests – sport, clubs, Internet etc; and
  7. bureaucratic attitudes and requirements of CFA Headquarters, as perceived by volunteers.

In its submission, the CFA identified change in geographic and demographic structural components of the Victorian economy as impacting upon volunteer recruitment and retention. Employment factors are more pronounced in rural and regional areas, compared to urban areas, as are declining numbers of young people and increasing numbers of older people. Environmental problems such as salinity and land degradation, and land use changes, are also impacting on populations and hence available pools of volunteers. (CFA 2001, p. 14)

Attending to local community safety needs places issues of brigade sustainability at the local level. Emergency response, which includes road accidents, must be rapid and hence
the turn-out of fire fighters, especially for an urban brigade, necessarily draws upon members of the community who are only minutes away from the fire station. However, as the alternative of a substantial standing career force of fire fighters is not viable, it is action at the local level to recruit and retain volunteers which underpins CFA organisational capacity. But, given the possibility of increased frequency of major fire events, it would not surprise to see the emergence of an urban recruited volunteer fire fighter force specifically to turn out at times of major need.

2.4 A research project sponsored by EMA and hosted by the CFA

Emergency Management Australia (EMA) has evolved from what was previously known as civil defence. Whereas state and territory governments have primary responsibility for the protection of life and property in instances of natural, technological and human caused disasters, EMA as an agency of the Federal Government, responsible to the Attorney General, fulfils a supporting role that, upon request, elevates to a co-ordinating function in instances of major emergency.

As part of its role, EMA sponsors research across all sectors of emergency services – fire, search and rescue, ambulance, etc. Accordingly, and consequent upon the intersection of interests of my living in a bush fire prone area and the research interest regarding people making the most of what they know and can do, application was made to EMA for a research project related to retaining CFA volunteers.

In July 2002, EMA undertook to fund this research into making the most of what people know and can do within a volunteering environment. The research has been hosted by CFA and, although focused upon CFA needs and objectives, it has wider emergency service relevance.

2.5 The CFA research hypothesis

The notion that CFA volunteers bring much knowledge and skill to the CFA, and add considerably to their personal capability through their CFA learning experiences, has been the underpinning proposition of the research. Accordingly, the research study began with exploration of the validity of this proposition and initial probing of the hypothesis that
recruiting and retaining volunteers has some relationship to the manner in which the outcomes from the lifelong learning of volunteers is valued, drawn upon, and strengthened by the CFA experience. Logically, there are win/win outcomes as volunteers bring much to the CFA, volunteers gain much from the CFA that is of value in other aspects of their life, and the community is substantially strengthened in many ways. Consequently, the research study sought to identify the principal factors that aid or inhibit this win/win outcome and how to take best advantage from this insight.

2.6 Overview of the CFA research activity

In the period, July 2002 to August 2004, the research study drew upon CFA interviews (n.23), a series of CFA workshops and meetings (n.14), and mostly multiple contact with 69 CFA respondents. This included moving beyond an initial scoping phase to exploring the potential for action learning orientated projects, and the CFA experiences of the researcher during this extended period of time. The later stages of the research study focused upon exploring the efficacy of an indicative model and the influence of leadership upon its application. Comment arising from presentation of the indicative model at the 2003, Canberra, Australia Disaster Conference added to the confirmation of efficacy. Progressive construction of insight regarding the relationship between making the most of what volunteers know and can do and retention of volunteers was achieved by constant comparison from within the growing body of data. There are in excess of 300,000 words of CFA transcripts. There are also 96,000 words of allied transcripts from interviews and meetings similarly (and in a parallel sense) exploring making the most of what people know and can do, in industrial circumstances.
Chapter Three: Applying outcomes of lifelong learning to organisational achievement – A literature review

3.1 Introduction - A large body of literature from which to extrapolate

There is a large body of literature relating, separately, to organisational achievement and the processes of learning; and there is also a substantial body of literature addressing the notion of a learning organisation which is, to some degree, a bringing together of the two. In particular, through a process of giving attention to valuing and facilitating learning within an organisation, education orientated authors such as Watkins and Marsick (1993), Marsick and Watkins (1999), and Jarvis, Holford and Griffin (2003), do move toward reducing the gap between learning and organisation literature when writing about learning organisations. But these authors stop short of the detail of how an individual recognises that they can additionally, to conventional expectations, contribute to organisational achievement and why they would want to. In the instance of management orientated authors, advocating adoption of learning organisation postures, such as Senge (1992), Pearn, Roderick and Mulrooney (1995), and Yeung, Ulrich, Nason and Von Gliow (1999), the focus is upon organisational learning philosophies and systems to achieve growth and sustainability goals. But, even though there is attention to leadership and mentoring, these authors stop short of getting inside the mind and motivations of the individual being led or mentored.

With the perception of a literature gap in mind, at the outset of my research study there appeared to be little, if any, literature that directly addresses the how do you do it regarding making the most of what people know and can do with respect to the individual and in the context of organisational achievement. The existing organisational literature addresses broad concepts and, although declaring that people are an organisation’s greatest asset, attention to the people asset is directed at its importance and development more so than the processes of actually drawing upon it. And, although providing highly pertinent meta views, learning organisation literature gives only passing attention to the criticality of motivating and supporting individuals to actually draw upon the totality of their stock of knowledge and skill assets in a manner envisaged by the advocates of learning.
organisations. However, in the course of my research study and consequent upon an education grounded tendency within the capability literature to see things from the individual’s perspective, I found that capability literature (as discussed later in this Chapter) is closer to bridging the gap between the body of learning and organisational literature than is the case for learning organisation literature, but still invites a gap bridging addition.

The composite of learning, organisation, learning organisation and capability literature is a high value resource for those with the motivation to draw upon it under the influence of a commitment to support people in recognising, valuing, and hence drawing upon the depth and diversity of their knowledge and skills acquired throughout life. And because this combined body of literature is so expansive, the key to its use is not so much in identifying where to start but is more to be found in choosing to make a start. And, for me, this research study was shaped by choosing a beginning logic of scoping the “who” “what”, “why” and “how” of lifelong learning as addressed in the learning literature and aligning with Aristotle’s knowledge taxonomy of “Knowing” in each of these categories (Seddon and Cairns 2002, p.3).

3.2 The lifelong learning milieu

The introduction to Understanding Adult Education and Training (Foley (ed.) 1995) is a concise overview of the rich milieu of adult learning. This learning milieu is inclusive of “cradle to grave” lifelong learning and embraces, as Foley identified, family, workplace, leisure, political and community learning settings. It is noted that Foley (1995, p. xv) acknowledges the blurred boundaries between non-formal education, informal learning and incidental learning. The abiding and pervasive nature of learning is especially emphasised by Foley (1995, p.xiv). He cites David Kolb’s view that learning is a primary mode of human adaptation and is related to surviving and prospering.

While not all people identify themselves as lifelong learners, it is central to the argument of this dissertation that all people who are consciously aware of their environment are lifelong learners, but with varying levels of realisation of this engagement with learning and hence varying recognition of the value of the outcomes from this learning. In this respect, the abiding nature of learning is emphasised by Gross (1977) in his citing of Aristotle that “All
men by nature, desire to grow" and then going on to offer a self-check list, included here as Table 3.1, which is thought provoking in relation to the degree to which one may be a conscious learner. This check list also serves to focus upon the returns which may accrue to a learner and, although published in 1977, has application today in 2007.

Table 3.1 – Characteristics of lifelong learners as suggested by Gross (1977)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you recognise in yourself any of the following characteristics of lifelong learners?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• You are open to new experiences, ideas, information and insights. You like to make things happen instead of waiting for life to act on you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There are always things that you would love to know more about, appreciate better, or learn to do. In fact, you never have the feeling that you know everything, have every skill, you'll ever need to know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You feel better about yourself when you are learning something new.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You’ve learnt enormously from certain important experiences which don’t usually rate as “subjects”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You often learn a great deal in ways other than taking courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The kind of life that you want to lead in five years from now requires that you begin to learn new things now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You believe that investing in your own growth is the best investment in your future – occupational or personal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You have been attracted by, or perhaps are already enrolled in, one of the new kinds of educational programs for adults offered by colleges and universities around the country.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Gross 1977, pp. 15 – 16)

Table 3.1 highlights the desirability of “the who” of learning having the status of being a purposeful learner. In addition to being a descriptor of a conscious learner, being purposeful is also acknowledging the importance of having cause to learn – i.e. “the why” of learning. Kolb (1993, p. 146), drawing from Lewin, Dewy and Piaget, sees the purposeful learner as adding to knowledge and skill by confronting difficulties through the resolution of problems; and thus adding to future capacity whilst addressing current issues. There are many facets to the causes and outcomes of being a purposeful learner, as exampled by –

- Milam (2005), citing Schein (1995, p.2), posits that data disconfirming hopes and expectations leads to frustration and dissatisfaction, and is at the root of all forms of learning and change. This is expressed, by Milam, in the context of there being little higher education institutional tolerance for expressions of dissatisfaction from minority (group) faculty members; and hence, due to dissatisfaction not being felt
by the faculty majority, no motivation to change by the faculty majority and there is suppression of organisational learning.

- David Beckett adds another dimension by his statement that ‘Experiences in workplaces, like those in life in general, are purposeful. The very quest for productivity in this era of turbo-charged capitalism pushes workers towards missions, goals, outcomes, audits and so on.’ (Beckett 2000, p. 42).

For me, having a sense of purpose and having motivation to learn, have close linkages in meaning. And, accordingly, Vroom's Expectancy Theory (Vroom 1995 – first published in 1964) has a relationship to the notion of a purposeful learner. It seems reasonable to expect a purposeful learner to commit themselves to working hard at their learning to achieve an identifable reward that is sufficiently attractive to warrant the effort. Drawing from Vroom, there is an expectancy that learning effort, in pursuing a purpose, will lead to an outcome of value to the learner. By comparison, a non-purposeful learner will not have the motivation to learn and hence the commitment to apply the effort. Whilst these are self-evident conclusions, the simplicity of the logic may well have a force that is easily overlooked and the opportunities for drawing upon life as an experiential learning process may be only marginally drawn upon by both individual employees and their organisational managers/leaders.

By taking a broad view of what is meant by experiential learning, and linking this to “the how” of learning, the introduction to Culture and Processes of Adult Learning (Thorpe, Edwards & Hanson (eds.), 1993, p.7) cautions, citing Tennant (1993), that teaching and learning occurs in a complex environment and borrowing of theoretical approaches should be done as heuristic devices which inform possibilities rather than unquestioned application to a particular circumstance. With this in mind, my empathy with the notion of experiential learning as reflecting the generality of learning throughout life is informed by Kolb (1993) as reinforcement of my broad experience and observations.

Thorpe, Edwards and Hanson (1993, p. 7), in applauding Kolb’s contribution to experiential learning as seminal, caution that Kolb has not sought to position experiential learning as an alternative to behavioural and cognitive learning theories, but to draw upon them.
According to Kolb ‘Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience’ (Kolb 1993, p.155). This resonates strongly with my experiences of learning and its outcomes, and I embrace the position that the ever expanding characteristic of learning is a consequence of a cyclic phenomenon. However, not all people recognise this opportunity as a constant in their life and possibly much which could have been learnt, through recognition and valuing, evaporates into the fog of life.

My view is that an event may cause knowledge to be gained, which is then applied to the resolution of a problem or to acting upon an opportunity. Through critical reflection upon the outcome of this application, further knowledge may be generated. And so the cycle continues with the body of knowledge ever increasing and the occurrence of learning infinitely expanding. In embracing this cyclic theme, I draw upon the experiential learning models of Lewin, Dewey and Piaget as reviewed in Kolb (1993, pp.138 - 155) as supporting evidence that not only is a knowledge base progressively constructed in a cyclic manner, but it is constructed in accord with the environmental context of our learning. In this regard, Thorpe, et al. (1993, p. 2) alert to the influence of different learning cultures upon the processes of learning; and I posit that this environmental context adds further to the breadth of scope and depth of complexity of making the most of what a person knows and can do. For example, a person who has been brought up in a family and close community culture which places little value on education might be unaware of how much learning outcome they have acquired through life and may feel that they have little to offer by way of valued knowledge and skill; and these people are taken by surprise when they become aware that recognition of prior learning, no matter how this learning is acquired, is now a foundation feature of the achieving of vocational, education and training (VET) qualifications in Australia.

Whilst the “what”, “why” and “how” of lifelong learning as a starting point for constructing a literature framework to inform inquiry was at first intuitive, the outcomes from the research study have strengthened my view that these are among the core issues. And “who learns”, whilst initially tacitly in mind, became explicit in importance along with highlighting “stakeholders” as significant contributors as well as beneficiaries. This view of the milieu of lifelong learning is illustrated as Figure 3.1.
The Figure 3.1 interconnections are of a mediating nature and have some resonance with the mediating linkages within an activity system as derived from Vygotsky (Minick 1997, p. 124). “Who learns” can be equated to “subject” in an activity system. “Why learn” can be viewed as a combination of the “object” and “outcome” of an activity system. “How we learn” can be positioned within the “tools and artefacts” element of an activity system and mediated by the “division of labour” and “rules” elements. The “stakeholders” component can be viewed as residing within the “community” element of an activity system as expanded from Vygotsky and Leont’ev by Engestrom (1987a) to what has become the common representation of a human activity system. The learners are also stakeholders in the learning. In instances of cooperation between learners, and with the influence of knowledgeable others, there is relevance to the zone of proximal development concepts as originating with Vygotsky (Rieber & Robinson (eds.) 2004, pp. 351-353; Vygotsky 1978).

In locating myself within the lifelong learning milieu, my research interest in lifelong learning is motivated by its on-going application in my work situations. In this, I am clearly a follower of visionaries such as Dave (1976, p. 343) who believed that, through lifelong education, humankind is faced with the necessity of mastering social and technical realities; and also of Gelpi (1979, p. 44) who was concerned about the rigidity of the prevailing education system and advocated recognising and responding to the links between education, the dynamics of production, history and the social milieu. In more recent times, Marquardt (1996, p. 32) in support of his own position about individual learning refers to Senge (1990), Argyris and Schon (1978), and Redding (1994), and by implication, embraces lifelong learning as a contribution to organisational learning. And
Applying outcomes of lifelong learning to organisational achievement – A literature review

broad scoping of the literature makes it apparent that lifelong learning is a topic with ancient roots. For example, Goldman (1975) provides insight into the biblical origins of the lifelong learning of the Jewish people and its continuing purpose - ‘The ultimate test of the value of Jewish learning is whether it leads to better Jewish living in one’s daily life’ (Goldman 1975, p. 47).

Expanding from the Goldman view, there are many dimensions to the valuing of learning in its many forms. In considering the notion of whether there are one or two educations and in bringing attention to the value of self-directed learning, Candy (1991, p. 14) cites Edward Gibbon – ‘Every man who rises above the common level has received two educations: the first from his teachers; the second, more personal and important, from himself.’ (Gibbon 1907, p. 65). Candy (1991, p. 15), in defining self-directed learning, provides a lead to the basis upon which an individual may embrace and value learning. The valued motivations, foreshadowed by Candy, include the strengthening of knowledge, skills and attitudes required to accommodate change. Candy suggests that self-directed learning has self-fulfilment as the ultimate goal.

As an extension to self-directed learning, participation as a member of a community of practice is a mode of co-operative learning which is underpinned by the capacity of self-direction. Participation in a community of practice, albeit not knowingly as a member of a such “labelled” collegiate group, shapes a person’s identity (Wenger 1998, p. 152) and gives rise to what Wenger styles as a social ecology (Wenger 1998, pp. 188 – 213) in which personal identity is shaped by investment in self, a sense of belonging, and the consolidation of meaning of this through ability to negotiate meaning. Wenger (1998, pp. 214 – 221) goes on to argue that the interaction between experience and competence, which generates learning and is characteristic of a learning community, involves internal social reconfiguration of the community and its relationship to associated communities.

Communities are potentially a very rich learning environment in which the degree to which overt identification of existence and valuing is pivotal to the accruing of individual and organisational advantage. This is addressed by Saint-Ong and Wallace (2003) in creating, nurturing and growing communities of practice in a manner which gives rise to
organisational strategic advantage. An architecture to achieve such advantage is illustrated by Saint-Ong and Wallace (2003, p. 79) as constructed from productive inquiry and conversations which are embraced by an environment characterised by a linking of facilitating tools; the generative capabilities of learning and collaboration involving knowledge creation, exchange and access; and supportive community of practice conventions. Such an organisational environment, seeking strategic advantage through drawing upon communities of practice, is very rich in encouraging and drawing upon an expanding resource of outcomes from lifelong learning.

As a concluding comment, to this overview of lifelong learning, I place special emphasis upon the inclusion, within the milieu, of the Mayer Competencies (Mayer 1992) – i.e. communicating ideas and information, collecting analysing and organising information, planning and organising activities, working with others and in teams, using mathematical ideas and techniques, solving problems, and using technology. The Mayer specification of these competencies, as underpinning effective workplace practice, also extends to much of life in general and is indicative that making the most of what a person knows and can do is frequently concerned with better drawing upon tacitly held life knowledge and skills more so than high order explicitly acknowledged technical and professional knowledge and skills. This is an important distinction as it may be the case that, in the process of strengthening capability, it is better drawing upon the prone to be overlooked Mayer defined knowledge and skills and other “getting on with life” tacitly possessed knowledge and skill attributes which are at the core of capability. Although referring to UK defined key skills, Hunt and Frier (1998, pp. 42-48) make a strong connection between generic competencies and capability.

3.3 The change relationship and values associated with learning

Consequent upon its relationship to change, the lifelong learning milieu is highly value laden. The change associated tensions are abiding features of the world as it evolves into a post-industrial form. Theobald (1999) describes this near future as the Fourth Story - a time in which the priorities of our society become quality of living, social cohesion, ecological integrity, effective decision making and a value-based culture. This is a commendable optimistic projection which, for its realisation, will draw upon the progressive
building of learning by individuals. The outcomes from this learning will find application in co-operative social and working team environments.

Even with a less optimistic expectation than Theobald I find encouragement from -

- The commitment to change evident in the inspirational, and prolific, writings of Charles Handy crusading for more enlightened management and respect for individuals.
- Ouchi stressing the linkage between productivity, trust and subtlety (Ouchi 1981, p. 8) which underscores the central value of trust as individuals contribute to achievement by an organisation.
- Watkins and Marsick (1993, pp. 73 – 95), in mapping a pathway to collaborative learning, raising the probability that people need to develop new ways of inquiry rather than modelling the acquired dysfunctional learning and inquiry habits of parents, teachers and other role models (Watkins & Marsick 1993, p. 76).
- Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) in showing a pathway toward organisationally advantaging communities of practice, making the point that ‘communities of practice create value by stewarding highly prized knowledge resources’. (p. 166)
- Biggs (1999, pp. 14 – 19) advocating change in approaches to university teaching. He contrasts surface learning and deep learning by students through the respective prisms of students and teachers. He raises issues for reflection that sit comfortably with the notion of people making the most of what they know and can do in a manner that is in accordance with moving forward in a stronger learning partnership (Biggs 1999, p. 110) that suits the particularities of circumstance. Significantly, Biggs (1999, p. 62) makes a connection between McGregor’s Theory X and Theory Y and the way in which teachers regard their students and thereby structure their teaching. This adds weight to the question in my mind about the ways in which a manager in an organisation is a facilitator of learning and how the outcomes of that learning can be applied to the benefit of the organisation.
In looking back, Drucker (1996, pp. 185 – 238) reflects upon the 20th century as a time of greater peaceful social transformation than at any other time in human history. He expresses the view that the 20th century has seen the rise and decline of the blue collar worker – the rise being associated with industrialisation and the decline being associated with the advent of the knowledge worker (a term, claimed by Drucker to be coined by him in his 1959 book The Landmarks of Tomorrow). In essence, the knowledge worker brings specialised knowledge to a job function and, in this sense, is markedly different to an industrial worker (as understood by Karl Marx) in that they own the tools of their trade – their knowledge. This represents a change from work being experience based to being learning based. It brings with it a requirement for industrial workers seeking transition to knowledge workers to change basic attitudes, values and beliefs (Drucker 1996, p. 197). It is also evident that employers will need to make similar changes as they adjust to a new regime of their major asset – the knowledge possessed by their employees – walking out the door at the end of the working period.

Referring to these new jobs of the 21st Century, Drucker expresses the view that –

‘The new jobs require a good deal of formal education and the ability to acquire and to apply theoretical and analytical knowledge. They require a different approach to work and a different mind-set. Above all they require a habit of continuous learning.’ (Drucker 1996, p. 197)

Drucker (1996, p. 226) goes on to state that ‘Knowledge has become the key resource – for a nation’s military strength as well as for a nation’s economic strength. And it is knowledge that can only be acquired in a formal process, that is through schooling’. I am not as convinced as Drucker appears to be that the only knowledge of value in the new world is that which is acquired through formal education. However, maybe Drucker and I have more in common than at first appears. We both hold the view that an individual may acquire new knowledge through new learning structures and new technologies as learning becomes a tool of the individual (Drucker 1996, p. 206). The traditional notions of formal education are breaking down, and it may not be unreasonable to suggest that the provision of a tool to facilitate drawing upon informal learning and incidental learning would be a welcome device in support of a new notion of formal education.
Although there is a possible deviation between my view and Drucker's view, my research study into people making the most of what they know and can do has resonance with Drucker's observation that knowledge workers necessarily must co-operate in teams. Thus knowledge workers require an organisation to provide the vehicle by which specialised knowledge can be converted to performance (Drucker 1996, pp. 210 – 212). In this respect, the view that ‘the essence of management is to make knowledge productive’ (Drucker 1996, p. 219) is particularly relevant to this dissertation if one accepts that management may be regarded as being, at least to a degree, synonymous with organisation.

The changes to routine in work and the associated needs for flexibility and risk taking, as are foreshadowed by the advent of knowledge workers and the transition from the certainties of long-term employment of the past to the short-term expectations of the future, are potentially significant influences on the way in which we prepare and learn for work. These changes are discussed by Sennett (1999) and their context is encapsulated as follows.

‘Today the phrase “flexible capitalism” describes a system which is more than a permutation on an old theme. The emphasis is on flexibility. Rigid forms of bureaucracy are under attack, as are the evils of blind routine. Workers are asked to behave nimbly, to be open to change on short notice, to take risks continually, to become ever less dependent on regulations and formal procedures.’ (Sennett 1999, p. 9)

There is a learning message inherent in this view - the employee and the employer are in a change partnership where each must learn. In these circumstances, the urging by Senge et al., (1999, p. 5) that organisational leaders who seek change should ‘unleash employees’ natural talents and enthusiasm’ suggests that both employees and employers/leaders have their respective required new learnings – employers/leaders learning how to unleash talents and employees learning how to recognise and respond to the opportunity. Senge is concerned with systems thinking and action, and I hold that learning by everyone underpins systems change.

Senge holds the view that the system functions to maintain its internal balances and, where resistance to change is being encountered, it is the system which is resisting – not
the people (Senge et al. 1999, p. 558). This is a very interesting proposition as the system is a creation of people, who may be holding to their creation or have long ago departed the scene. In either case, in my view, where resistance to change is being encountered, there is still a need for some people to relieve the constraining influences of the system so that others can recognise and value that the change is a transforming to something better and hence be motivated to learn (and draw upon) what is required to support such change.

Motivation to apply learning to initiating and supporting change is one thing. The means by which people act upon this is another, especially when they are faced with systemic resistance such as foreshadowed by Senge et al. (1999). Learning acquired through action research may be at least a partial solution.

Whiteley (1995), describes action research applied to introducing organisational change ‘...as a small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world of work’ and observes that ‘... the best way to know how something works is when you try to change it’ (Whiteley 1995, p.111). Inherent within this beckoning beacon of action research (Kemmis 1998, p. 10; Carr & Kemmis 1986), and associated action learning (Wilson 1998, p. 61; Dick 1997) is reflection upon what we know and don’t know and upon past occurrences and contemporary outcomes. Accordingly, critical reflection is part of the process to be applied by those who aspire to contribute to change, achieved by drawing upon the outcomes of their learning to date and through this adding to their stock of learning outcomes. In this way the valuing by an individual of the ever expanding cycle of drawing upon learning outcomes, critical reflection upon both the learning and the outcomes as an extension of the learning, and then leading on to the next level of application, is pivotal to the process of achieving best advantage from the accruing outcomes of lifelong learning.

3.4 Accruing of transformative and emancipatory benefits

In addition to the value base of the learner, there is the influence of organisational values as they pertain to learning and as are evolved from the predispositions of influential others within the organisation. In this respect, a Theory X organisation (McGregor (1960, pp. 33-34), where authoritarian management applies, is grounded in the predisposition to believe that people by nature require and seek this form of direction and control. Such an
organisation is likely to only narrowly draw upon the full spectrum of what an individual knows and can do because such drawing is shaped by management’s narrow view of what is required and available. In contrast a Theory Y organisation, characterised by a belief that people do seek to contribute and can be trusted to respond to the opportunity for self-direction and exercise initiative in contributing to organisational achievement (McGregor 1960, pp. 47-48), manifests an empowering, and acting upon the opportunity, drawing upon and adding to a learning outcomes culture which benefits both the individual and the organisation.

‘The central principle of organization which derives from Theory X is that of direction and control through the exercise of authority ... . The central principle which derives from Theory Y is that of integration: the creation of conditions such that the members of the organization can achieve their own goals best by directing their efforts toward the success of the enterprise.’ (McGregor 1960, p. 49)

Given the importance of the individual valuing their self-direction capacity in terms of drawing upon what they know and can do, and the organisation’s comfort in investing trust in this regard, it is reasonable to postulate that there is a relationship here with the manner in which the individual has been supported in their learning. There is a logic in positing that a person whose learning environment has encouraged discovery and respected what the learner has brought to the experience, will have both motivation and confidence in creatively drawing upon what they know and can do. Conversely a person whose learning experience was one of dependency upon others and whose learning environment did not invite creative inquiry, may not recognise that they have the capacity to contribute more than is at first apparent to them and to controlling others. This invites comparison with the notion of andragogy (Knowles & Associates 1984) as outlined in Figures 3.2 and 3.3.

Arguably, learning can be linked to goal achievement for both an individual and an organisation. Figure 3.2, illustrating an enabling environment, shows the juxtaposition of the values underpinning McGregor’s Theory Y and the Knowles & Associates’ (1984) Andragogical model. Possibly, there is an empowering intersection for both an individual member of the organisation expanding the outcomes of their learning and drawing upon them and a manager (as an individual) nurturing the circumstances where this can happen. A partnership of learning and the application of outcomes may be forged through compatibility of management and learning values.
In developing Theory Y, McGregor (1960, pp. 36 – 43) drew significantly upon motivational insights derived from Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow 1954). McGregor contrasted what he styled as the Principle of Integration derived from Theory Y with the direction and control approach through exercising authority at the core of Theory X.

McGregor’s Principle of Integration resonates with a partnership proposition of learning and application. In contrast, Figure 3.3 is a representation of the possibility of a negative predisposition of learners where values toward learning and its outcomes that have been moulded through the pedagogical model find their place in the structure of an organisation and there impact on adult learners. Similarly, Figure 3.3 is a representation of the possibility of managers bringing their pedagogical perceptions of learning into their management role and thus not recognising and valuing the opportunities for partnership in learning and application.
Referring back to Chapter 1, the polar situations illustrated by Figures 1.2 and 1.3 raise the issue of the potential relationship between valuing learning and its outcomes and contributing to beneficial change. Consideration of values which impact upon the propensity of a learner to learn, and the degree to which others may nurture or inhibit this learning, invites exploration of the relationship with the forces and motivations associated with generating or resisting change. In turn, this leads on to consideration of whether the individual and/or the organisation is predisposed to achieving transforming change and, through this, emancipation in the sense of becoming free of perceived limitations upon contribution and achievement.

In the preface to *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood: A Guide to Transformative and Emancipatory Learning* (Mezirow and Associates 1990), Mezirow draws attention to Botkin's (1979, pp. 10-11) citing of the Club of Rome's position that addressing the problems of the modern world requires innovative learning. What is sought and regarded as indispensable is ‘... the type of learning that can bring change, renewal, restructuring and problem reformation ... a type of learning that emphasizes value-creating more than value-conserving.’ (Botkin 1979, pp. 10-11). This citing was done in the context of Mezirow's belief that critical self-reflection can generate profound change.
The pervasiveness and significance of change in modern society have become axiomatic. Freed from the inevitable dependency imposed by the socialization process, adult learners can make dramatic gains in self-direction. Understandably, one may find transformative learning threatening, exhilarating and empowering.” (Mezirow and Associates 1990, p. xiii)

The notion of “Heutagogy” postulated by Hase and Kenyon (2000), is an interesting advance on better preparing a learner to confidently embrace and initiate change with strong transformative and emancipatory outcomes. In essence, Hase and Kenyon advance their heutagogy concept as an extension of self-directed learning as the reactive-to-need component of andragogy. Self-directed learning within heutagogy is about being proactive to a perceived opportunity for further learning to the reactive-to-need component of andragogy.

‘... it may well be that a person does not identify a learning need at all but identifies the potential to learn from a novel experience as a matter of course and recognises that opportunity to reflect on what has happened and see how it challenges, discomforts or supports existing values and assumptions.’ (Hase & Kenyon, 2000, p. 5)

And germane to my realisation that the capability literature is a strong bridging between learning and organisation literature, is the identification by Hase and Kenyon (2000, p.5) that the heutagogy approach includes aspects of capability.

3.5 The literature of “capability” as a strong bridging between learning and organisation literature

Now with six years of reflection, informed by four years of inquiry during this time, I have come to the view that the gap between the learning literature and the organisational achievement literature is significantly bridged by the capability literature as a step beyond the learning organisation literature. There is an inherent quality within capability literature which manifests as a propensity to see things from the inside – i.e. as the individual or organisation sees it - rather than from an external view of what the individual or organisation should be.

The reporting by Osborne, Davis and Garnet (1998, pp. 85-93) of students at Middlesex University taking responsibility for key aspects of their learning, Evatt and Boyle (1998, pp. 142-149) reviewing the practice and outcomes associated with students supporting each
other in their learning, and Butcher (1998, pp. 154-156) outlining the required attributes of a learner in undertaking self-managed learning, are examples of capability literature focusing upon the individual’s role and motivations, as they see it, with respect to strengthening capability through learning. Similarly, the Taylor (1998, pp. 95-101) overview of the University of Glamorgan work-based learning partnerships in which the university, the employer and the employees (as students) construct and engage with learning that suits both organisational and individual needs is an example of stakeholders co-operatively reaching for enhanced capability.

The capability literature, frequently case study based, addresses the objectives and outcomes from drawing upon what is known and can be done as individuals and organisations move their activity from the relative comfort of the known to the challenges of unfamiliar problems and contexts. Under these circumstances of venturing into the unknown, there is a higher level demand on motivating and supporting people to confidently draw upon the learning outcomes from their life experiences than applies in the instance where they are operating in familiar territory. In this regard, Stephenson (1999) comments that as an organisation ‘learning from and about its current activities’ (p. 6), meets the learning organisation criteria. It follows that the notion of capability ‘embraces but goes beyond that of the learning organisation’ (p. 6). Accordingly, the capability literature has a focus upon both the individual and the organisation. It is this expanded coal face coverage, which includes the individual, that causes capability authors to align closely to the making the most of what you know and can do theme of this dissertation.

The bulk of capability literature has emerged consequent upon a perception that British industry was falling behind in global competitive terms and following the 1980 Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce (RSA) publication of the education related Capability Manifesto (http://www.lle.mdx.ac.uk/hec/manifesto.htm ). This manifesto was a response to concerns that the focus of learning was narrowing to training outcomes and to the detriment of valuing more holistic education outcomes (Stephenson 1999, p. 1). Stephenson credits Burgess (1979) with initiating education interest in individual capability which sparked action leading to development of the manifesto. Now, from this origin, the stock of
capability literature is typified by the writing of John Stephenson in the United Kingdom and Len Cairns in Australia. For example, capability is described as –

‘Capability is an all round human quality observable in what Sir Toby Weaver describes as ‘purposive and sensible’ action (Weaver, 1994). Capability is an integration of knowledge, skills, personal qualities and understanding used appropriately and effectively – not just in familiar and highly focused specialist contexts but in response to new and changing circumstances. Capability can be observed when we see people with justified confidence in their ability to:
  • take effective and appropriate action;
  • explain what they are about;
  • live and work effectively with others; and
  • continue to learn from their experiences as individuals and in association with others, in a diverse and changing society

Capability is not just about skills and knowledge. Taking effective and appropriate action within unfamiliar and changing circumstances involves ethics, judgements, the self-confidence to take risks and a commitment to learn from the experience.’ (Stephenson 1998, pp. 2-3, cited in Stephenson & Cairns 1999, p.3)

Stephenson and Cairns (1999) discuss what has become the classic capability representation (Figure 3.4), but interestingly this is seen by Stephenson as “a way of looking at the world of action” and by Cairns as a “learning plane” (Stephenson & Cairns 1999, p.5). It is germane to my focus of “drawing upon what people know and can do” that Stephenson chooses to view capability through the prism of action – what people and organisations do and could do – and Cairns chooses a learning prism which he expands upon in what he calls the capability learning spiral.
In viewing Figure 3.4 as a learning plane Cairns (1997a, p.7), drawing upon earlier work of Stephenson, posits that nurturing capability requires attention to “values, attitudes and beliefs”. In addition, “self efficacy” and “specialist knowledge and skills” are required. And the meshing of these three key elements of capability constitutes the learning commitment core. Successful learning generates a spiralling upwards in terms of acquisition of capability and failure in the learning experience causes spiralling down.

In terms of our individual mobility, between the familiar and the new, Stephenson (1998, p. 4) makes the point that we mostly operate in position Y but, in the face of change, it is a desirable attribute that the actors in this, “world of action” (Stephenson cited in Stephenson & Cairns 1999, p. 5) milieu are confident in making the transition from position Y to position Z when called upon to do so. In this sense, in a contemporary environment characterised by the normality of change, there is a demand upon us as individuals, and collectively as organisations, to be effectively responsive across the Stephenson’s world of action. And, in resonance with this, Cairns’ (1997a, p.6) view that the capability representation (Figure 3.4) can be usefully thought of as a learning plane links learning to confident and effective action in responding to the challenges of change.
Applying outcomes of lifelong learning to organisational achievement – A literature review

The composite of Stephenson's and Cairns' perceptions of Figure 3.4 is that, to derive self and organisational benefit, there is a requirement for a coupling between the worlds of action of the individual and reliance upon learning and its outcomes by organisations. In turn, I posit that there is a direct coupling with overtly supporting making the most of what a person knows and can do, so as to accommodate to change and/or initiate change, and attainment of the attribute of capability for both the individual and the organisation.

In addition to the capability literature, as typified by Stephenson and Cairns, the writing of Charles Handy sets the organisational and individual context in which striving for capability is a desirable but often frustrated goal. This is especially the case when Handy is writing in a reflective mode – as exampled by:

- Handy (1994), in *The Age of Paradox*, offers insights regarding turning turbulence into creation as paradoxes arise from the inevitability of confusion. Whereas some may give up, believing that there is no point in believing that they can assert control and can influence change, Handy (1994, p. 247) encourages that a person should build upon the three senses of continuity, connection and direction. This building process is connected to the theme of this dissertation by the manner in which such an outcome rests upon an encapsulating sense of capability accruing from valuing and acting upon what you know and can do and the enabling influence of others similarly valuing what you know and can do.

- Handy (1998b), in *The Hungry Spirit*, expanding upon his view of a proper selfishness philosophy wherein a person reaches to self-interested heights beyond their expectations through pursuing a purpose bigger than themselves, advocates an approach to education which ‘fosters responsibility for oneself and others’ (Handy 1998b, p. 205). Handy reflects upon the realisation that his traditional education had fitted him for dealing with closed problems more so than open problems – i.e. responding to “What is happening?” more so than “What is to be done about it?”. After leaving university, and upon entering employment in industry, Handy came to the realisation that his ability to address open problems was forged through learning in the workplace and learning through life experience; and that how we learn is as important
as what we learn. As a consequence of this, and although doubting that it can be achieved, Handy advocates an education system which focuses more upon learning process than content and gives equal weight to values and people as it does to knowledge and things (Handy 1998b, p.208). These sentiments resonate with the notion that recognising and valuing the full extent of what is known and can be done are key components of progressively accruing capability throughout life.

- *The Elephant and the Flea* (Handy 2001) is a twenty year retrospective musing and a twenty years on projection of what the world of learning, living and work might look like. Handy sees this as coming about under the influence of irritant individuals or groups (the fleas) causing large organisations (the elephants) to change in ways which are necessary for the survival of the organisations. Having decided to become an independent, self-employed flea by moving away from the security of being an elephant inhabitant (Handy 2001, p. 12), and to practice what he preached regarding his prediction of the emerging role of portfolio worker, Handy has lived and advocated much which is related to capability.

Drawing upon his life experience in corporate, learning and not-for-profit organisation structures, Handy couples the emergence of portfolio workers with advocating the need for a capability orientated education system. As Handy sees it, portfolio workers require confidence to survive in this new world of work and therefore need to draw from a broad based learning system which judges people on their potential, as opposed to just judging them on their demonstrated proficiency at a point in time (Handy 2001, p.37).

Interestingly, in the closing pages of *The Elephant and the Flea* Handy describes capability in very personal, having potential, terms (Handy 2001, p. 7). This may, at first sight, appear to be divergent from the more commonly accepted view. But, as capability is not a finite arrival point as is the case for competency, it is my interpretation that Handy is focusing upon the inherent personal capacity of an individual to undertake a learning journey as defining capability. Accordingly, I perceive Handy’s personalised view as consistent with the general view that capability is
manifested by confidence and capacity in dealing with the unexpected underpinned by a willingness to continually learn.

Following on from indicating his meaning of capability as relating to the potential for further personal growth/development, Handy concludes with –

‘My belief in the long search for my latent ‘capability’ sustains me. I recognise, however, that it is a religion for a flea, that it is not going to unite a people, nor lead to great crusades or mighty reforms. I would like ‘capability’ to be the core of a humane society, but it needs to be accompanied by another culture, one that focuses on a concern for others. To balance the morality of self-interest, however enlightened that self-interest may be, there needs to be another morality of concern for our fellows, the commandment to love your neighbour as yourself that Christianity has preached down the ages. (Handy 2001, p. 214)

The manner in which Handy concludes The Elephant and the Flea rings strongly in resonance with the motivations which drive my enthusiasm for inquiring into making the most of what a person knows and can do – i.e. confidently drawing upon the outcomes of lifelong learning in a manner which is appropriate to the need and/or opportunity to make a difference.

It is now my view that the capability literature has direct relevance to actions and influences relating to making the most of what people know and can do and, in addition to the foregoing, this is reinforced by the linking of social theory to capability as strongly evidenced by the prominence of this relationship in the Cairns (1997b) literature review and the two assumptions, cited in Cairns and Stephenson (2001), which framed this review.

- Organisations, amongst other things, are primarily, social entities.

- Learning is a socially constructed concept which refers to the process of building meaning by individuals and organisations over time and by experience in interaction with others within the learning community.

(Cairns & Stephenson 2001, p. 2)
Consistent with the above, it is an outcome of my inquiry that confidence/trust in oneself and in others, in a capability sense, is an important component of the foundation which underpins advantageously drawing upon the broad outcomes from lifelong learning. This group cohesiveness through trust is forged in communities of practice as addressed, for example, in the writings of Wenger (1998), Wenger, McDermott & Snyder (2002), and Saint-Onge & Wallace (2003). In turn, under the influence of benevolent leadership, communities of practice form and function within the wider constructing of social capital as different to the meaning of human capital.

In general terms, the human capital position is that people are industrial and community assets whose worth is determined by their productive capacity. Therefore their physical fitness, health status, level of skill and compliance to the will of the system are factors which determine their worth. Unlike the concept of human capital, the valuing of social capital is based upon the perceived worth of social networks and relationships of people. Schuller (2000) discusses the newness, and consequent lack of agreed clarity, of the emerging notion of social capital. He offers the following (Table 3.2) comparison as a framework for discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Human Capital</th>
<th>Social Capital</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual agent</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>Duration of schooling</td>
<td>Attitudes/values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>Membership/participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trust levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Direct: income, productivity</td>
<td>Social cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indirect: health, civic activity</td>
<td>Economic achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More social capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>linear</td>
<td>Interactive/circular</td>
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And it has also emerged in the course of this research study that the nature and quality of leadership is pivotal to making the most of what a person knows and can do within the context of contributing to organisational achievement and within the supporting environment of a community of practice. In this regard, informal leadership is as influential as formally recognised leadership. The notion of a leaderful organisation (Raelin 2003) is
very pertinent to this inquiry and is connected to nurturing both individual and organisational capability.

3.6 The capability journey

In making my contribution to the literature informing the actions leading to making the most of what people know and can do, this PhD dissertation is an outcome of research building upon initial, life informed, insight about the means by which the attribute of personal capability can be actually drawn upon in a knowledge and action milieu. The connectedness of this inquiry to the body of informing literature is illustrated in Figure 3.5.

As illustrated in Figure 3.5, the progression from vision informing literature to acting is a continuing journey. The body of literature, at all stations along the journey, is extensive in nature and continually expanding, and the journey does not have a finite destination. Accordingly, this dissertation is an offering toward the richness of the joy of the journey for all who travel the realisation and strengthening of capability path.
4.1 Introduction – choosing an ethnographic approach

This research study was underpinned by the premise that the strength of organisational achievement is positively related to the vigour with which relevant outcomes from lifelong learning are drawn upon. Although this premise did not have the status of a hypothesis (to be proved or disproved) exploration of “what aids” and “what inhibits” drawing upon the outcomes from lifelong learning did add weight to this, life informed, premise. Further, there are workplace culture connotations associated with this belief that led to the choice of ethnography as the appropriate methodology for this inquiry. There is an anthropological logic to the proposition that drawing upon knowledge and skill possessed by individual actors in a group, in a manner which is culturally acceptable to the group, yields positive group outcomes.

The core objective of the research study was to produce an interpretation of cultural influences as defined by Creswell (1998, p. 58) to constitute an ethnography. From this core, it was anticipated that potentially useful ways and means of acting on this interpretation would be developed as practical products of the inquiry. The ethnographic approach was adopted cognisant of the Crotty position (1998, p. 74), drawing from George Herbert Mead (1934), that social forces determine our personhood and shape our behaviour and that an inquirer into this must do so from the point of view of the actors – i.e. ethnography requires seeing things from the perspective of the subject actors. However, the outcome from the research was to be an interpretation of the subjective views of many actors, requiring care to avoid accepting individual face-value views (Crotty 1998, p. 75, citing Mitchell 1977); and so a constant comparison of individual views with the views of others, as a triangulating mechanism to achieve a plausible generalised interpretation, was planned from the outset. Exhibiting the quality of plausibility - styled by Popper (1972, p. 47) as “verisimilitude” and combining the notions of truth and logical content - as seen from the perspective of the targeted individual and organisational audiences, had particular importance. The research had a strong motivation to support change; and this requires that
the outcomes are believable and encourage adoption by those in positions to be agents of change.

As another dimension to the intentions of informing social/organisational change, my empathetic motivation in pursuing inquiry within the interpretive paradigm by applying ethnographic methodology, comes from valuing the feminist transformative outcomes from research (Creswell 1998, p. 83). But notwithstanding a philosophical commitment to the interpretive research paradigm, I do slide between paradigms which Payne and Payne (2004, p.174) identify as a common occurrence in the process of doing research. Whilst being primarily qualitative orientated, I do sometimes revert to my quantitative scientific comfort zone; and this may explain my use of constant comparison and seeking of multiple declaration of the efficacy of research outcomes.

Consequent upon the foregoing, the inquiry had a strong exploration of cultural influences at its logical core with the intent to yield insights in a form which is supportive of reflection and action leading to strengthened self-image and personal confidence in making the most of what a person knows and can do. With this in mind, I find myself located toward the humanistic-naturalistic end of the positivist-naturalistic versus humanistic-culturalistic spectrum. This spectrum is identified by Truzzi (1974, p. 2) as describing frequently opposing camps with respect to achieving, through research inquiry, positivist law like generalisations versus humanistic subjective understanding (verstehen) (Abel 1974, pp. 40-55).

With respect to social inquiry, I am in what Truzzi (1974, p.3) describes as the soft-line humanist camp. I believe in the worth of naturalistic derived insight when such is not held to be describing scientific truth, but is informing enhanced understanding of what is essentially a subjective sociocultural field subject to many variables. My qualitative inquiry sought empathetic understanding sufficient to inform development of a tool to aid reflection and action appropriate to the varying circumstances in which the inquiry outcomes find application. It should be noted that, in the context of this inquiry, the foreshadowing of an evolved tool does not imply certainty in the way that a positivist might expect, but is an
artefact focusing-upon-the-issues to aid reflection and action from which outcomes can accrue which are appropriate to the circumstances.

4.2 The research issue and its relationship to the politics of social research

Sarantakos (1998, p. 27) draws upon Becker (1989) and Vlahos (1984) to emphasise the importance of a clear rationale for why a particular research project is undertaken and how the research is to be conducted with due regard to who gains power and with what consequences. And, in a cautionary manner, Sarantakos alerts to the propensity for interest groups to conduct research and interpret research outcomes in ways that are supportive of their objectives and might even be exploitative of others. Conscious of this caution, the research design and implementation were shaped to give voice across the individual/organisational spectrum of stakeholders in a manner where self-interest could be expressed but, also, with regard for others. The amalgam of insights derived from privately expressed individual views and dynamics of group sharing of views did provide balance with respect to who potentially benefits and in what way. For example, in a group sharing of views it was not uncommon for an individual to modify their one-on-one interview expressed view to accommodate the expanded views of their colleagues; and this gave weight to my belief that engaging research subjects as co-researchers (even to a small degree such as sharing reflective views regarding past and current experiences and future opportunities) produces opening of mind and expanding of horizons outcomes for them.

In this research study, whilst there was clearly an emancipatory motive, it was not formed in the face of felt need for liberation from oppression. Rather, the emancipation is to do with freeing individuals from personally grounded constraints upon recognising, valuing, using the full worth of what is known; and, similarly, assisting organisations to recognise, value, and draw upon the knowledge and capabilities of individuals. I have many times encountered circumstances where a person did not fully recognise the value of knowledge and skill that they brought to the job – myself included. Accordingly, both the individual interviews and the group sharings were only semi-structured so as to prompt contributions which were not confined to the researcher’s assumptions.
4.3 The core research question

In embracing the logic that making the most of what people know and can do has a relationship to organisational achievement, I am cognisant of the views of Glaser and Strauss (1999, pp. 2-6) that prior, logical, assumptions are not a reliable base from which to develop theory, but in this instance the research study was not seeking to develop a theory with a pre-determined outcome confirming the foundation logic. Rather, the research was directed at identifying factors which may aid or may inhibit an organisation from usefully drawing upon what individuals know and can do as outcomes from their lifelong learning (refer Figure 1.1). In this sense, the sought theory (if such is an appropriate use the term, given that reflective guidance is the intent) was to do with identification of factors influencing the foundation anthropological logic. In the event that factors could not be identified, then the foundation logic would be brought into question and useful knowledge would accrue from this.

Consequent upon the above, the core research question was –

What aids and what inhibits the outcomes from lifelong learning being applied to organisational achievement?

In framing the core research question, two issues were very much in mind. Firstly, there is a high probability that the entirety of relevant factors is so large that fully resolving research is not achievable. And, in pursuit of a practically useful outcome, the intent of the inquiry was to inform the development of a tool (or tools) with application in organisational settings; the tool to be used in a manner which supports reflection leading to action; the action addressing the hub (but not all) of what is appropriate in varying circumstances.

4.4 Designing a method which is cognisant of the target audience for the research outcomes

As indicated in the foregoing, the epistemology informing the research is that inquiry is targeted at –

- increasing insight regarding factors that aid and inhibit an organisation from drawing upon the outcomes from lifelong learning possessed by individuals,
• probing the possibility that much of what an individual knows and can do is not recognised and/or valued by the individual and/or the organisation.

At the time of designing the research study a cautiously optimistic view was taken regarding take-up of the outcomes from the inquiry. This was encouraged by a perception that in the face of long established positivist approaches to social research, where the social world was construed as having fixed reality and constructed upon measurable phenomenon, qualitative approaches to social research are strengthening in status and visibility (Merriam & Associates 2002, p. 3). However, my experience with organisational people, the target of this research, is that they are still mainly positivistically orientated and are much more comfortable with quantitatively derived and presented data as the foundation upon which to plan and take action with respect to striving for personal and organisational achievement. With this target audience predisposition in mind, but with a personal belief in the richness of qualitatively derived insight and the trend toward a more general embracing of its outcomes, the research tactic was to employ methods which would yield plausible insights possessing the attribute of verisimilitude. It was also important that the manner of presenting of the insights would evoke empathetic understanding (possessing “verstehen”) when viewed by the target audience. As referred to previously I believe that I do slide between paradigms and the quest for developing a model/tool by viewing the constant comparative data through the prism of activity theory, may be evidence of this. Certainly, under the influence of a belief that the target audience is positivistically inclined, I have leaned toward presenting qualitatively derived data in positivist terms as indicated by Crotty (1998, p.41) as is sometimes done by researchers.

4.5 A research design facilitating “ownership” through its connection to “change”

Taking action to more advantageously draw upon what people know and can do is “change” generating. And even if the overt intention was not to cause change, such action leads to change in the person and change in the environment into which this additional knowledge, skill and other attributes are being applied. Where there is overt intention to generate change, for these research outcomes to be embraced they must be couched in believable and useful terms and this is aided by a research approach which fosters
ownership allied with exhibiting verisimilitude and verstehen in the articulation of the outcomes.

With respect to the importance of “ownership”, from the outset it was deemed important that the research respondents felt that they were active participants, beyond just expressing their view, and hence recognised and valued for their “contributor” stake holding in the outcomes. Accordingly, the research design and implementation sought to engage respondents in sharing of views through scoping, and later, workshops reviewing the outcomes from constant comparison. As change is best nurtured from the inside, through ownership of insights and commitment rather than externally imposed by outside critique, respondents recognising their hand in the stories which arose from the interviews and workshops was a significant objective.

As indicated earlier, there is a strong emancipatory motive underpinning this research and this has some alignment with the potential for organisational systems to resist change (Senge 1999b, p. 558). A strong motivation for this inquiry is to enable individuals to draw from their life experiences, to free them from their own tacit and explicit restraints upon drawing upon what they know and can do, in the face of systems rigidity.

Consistent with the Sarantakos (1998, p. 16) view that research motive and aim are frequently joined, the emancipation motive of this research was coupled with the aim of supporting organisational change. The nature of the change was to nurture people making the most of what they know and can do; and, through this, to better contribute to organisational achievement.

In the context of this research study, organisational change does not necessarily imply significant difference in direction and/or character. The change may be of a nature that supports a greater emphasis upon an established practice and, accordingly, the approach to the design and implementation of this research was anticipating evolution – not revolution. The intention to recruit research subjects as co-researchers reflected underlying beliefs that the sought change is best quietly generated and owned internally. The pathway to change is best constructed by those destined to tread the path. The initially intended
tactic was therefore to draw upon outcomes from scoping interviews and scoping workshops to inform a series of action research projects within the CFA; and by this means to present the story of real outcomes in a way that moved the general audience beyond just focussing upon interpretations of inquiry outcomes. However, as outlined later, this tactic had to be modified, whilst retaining the strategic essence, so as to accommodate unexpected difficulties in convening action research projects.

4.6 The scoping questions

In order to encourage research respondents to share their views and to move beyond relatively passive contribution, the scoping questions designed to get a feel for generalities were –

- What is your understanding of the nature of lifelong learning, of individuals, as may benefit this organisation – what is it and how does it stand to potentially benefit the organisation?
- What do you feel are the main outcomes of your lifelong learning, and that of others, that are potentially relevant to adding to achievement by the organisation?
- What are the factors that you feel encourage you, and others, to apply the outcomes of lifelong learning to the benefit of the organisation – in the short-term and in the long term?
- What are the factors that you feel inhibit you, and others, from applying the outcomes of lifelong learning to the benefit of the organisation – in the short-term and in the long-term?
- Who do you see as the main stakeholders in your, and others, being able to fully draw upon the outcomes of lifelong learning in such a way as to add to achievement by the organisation?

In addition to these scoping questions, the research design was framed to accommodate the possibilities that individuals will variously pursue and embrace learning and be variously aware of their engagement with learning (See Figure 1.2). Also, organisations may be committed to nurturing a learning environment and be alert to the value of learning outcomes of individuals in different ways (See Figure 1.3). It is important to clarify that
these insights arise from experience and could have been explored by questionnaires possibly yielding useful quantified indicators. However, the intent was to probe understanding and develop a tool based upon insights; accordingly, these insights were a place to begin to get a feel for an environment more so than a prime focus for research. The intention was that the scoping study outcomes would inform action research projects from which a sense of ownership would accrue within the target audience; and thus significantly support take-up of the outcomes.

4.7 Actual research methods being responsive to the context of the research

The research began, not with the CFA, but with representatives of the water, contract cleaning and waste management industries. With these industry representatives, the intent was always to draw upon these research environments as part of a scoping study to explore, across different environments, the generality of the underlying influences upon making the most of what people know and can do so as to aid organisational achievement. These were secondary environments in the research to the principal CFA environment and at this early stage the research went mostly as planned.

In the CFA, the research began confidently but encountered unforeseen implementation difficulties. These difficulties included an industrial issue, not related to the research, which for some months inhibited my contact with CFA research respondents. However, consequent upon addressing the CFA difficulties, strengthened insight to the topic of inquiry was gained – particularly with regard to the importance of making the most of what people know and can do being embedded within the environment rather than being “yet another job”. In essence, the most impacting problem was that action research could not be implemented due to other calls upon personal time of potential action research set members. Competing priorities such as achieving balance between employment, family and CFA volunteering, and associated commitments and motivations, were among factors preventing action research projects from being conducted and were general inhibitors related to the topic of inquiry. Significantly, the difficulties extended to CFA organisational matters, such as career staff who appeared keen to support the research appearing to be inhibited in this regard due to their workloads, other priorities, and chain of command
constraints. These organisational inhibitors were subsequently revealed as having systemic relevance to the topic of inquiry. For example, there are industrial tensions arising from the career personnel and volunteer personnel composition of the CFA. And organisational priority pressures upon both career and volunteer personnel limit the level and nature of contribution which they can make to peripheral activities such as assisting in research inquiry.

Whilst the original intention of interviews and workshops comprising a scoping study were implemented, the next action research step, intended to extend insight and to build credibility of research outcomes, was necessarily modified. Except in one instance, where an actual project focusing upon welcoming of new members was conducted over approximately 10 weeks, the “extending of inquiry and fostering a sense of ownership” major component of the research took on the form of another round of CFA workshops and interviews. These additional interviews, workshops, and reviewing of project progress meetings (in the one case) focused upon exploring efficacy of an indicative model which was the encapsulating outcome from an expanded scoping study when it became apparent that an alternative to action research was required.

The development of Stories was the major element of the probing of indicative model efficacy. Initially, this element of the research focused upon three particular fields of interest declared by CFA scoping workshop respondents as potential action research projects having particular relevance in their CFA regions. The three initial fields of particular interest gave rise to “The Welcoming New Members Story”, “The Selling Training Story” and “The Strengthening Brigade Sustainability Story”. These were subsequently added to by “The Leadership Story” which was informed by interviews, two specifically convened “leadership” workshops/focus groups, and the common “significance of leadership” theme emerging from the development of the other stories. In developing the stories, the total breadth of data was drawn upon in addition to the specific contributions made by those with a declared special interest in the respective topics.

Consequent upon the “needs must” adjustment to the research implementation, Figure 4.1 is a representation of the research phases and data gathering activity.
4.8 Drawing upon the data through the prism of Activity Theory

Activity Theory arises out of the work of Vygotsky, Leont'ev and Luria during the 1920s and 1930s in their founding of the cultural-historical school of Russian psychology and, notwithstanding its somewhat invisibility to the Western scientific community, is being theoretically expanded and progressively finding practical application by researchers in diverse fields (Engestrom & Miettinen 1999, pp. 1-2). From my perspective, the Leont'ev (1981, pp. 210-213) illustration of the ‘primeval collective hunt’, cited by Engestrom (1987b, p.1) as indicative of the second generation of Activity Theory, is a sound grounding for extending the use of the theory for analysing and describing “who does what and why” in respect of making the most of what CFA volunteers know and can do as a contribution to retaining the volunteer.

The activity network relevant to CFA volunteer retention derived from Activity Theory is represented in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.1 – Inquiry Program

Note: There were a total of 69 CFA research respondents with some continuing participation across phases 3 and 4.
Figure 4.2 illustrates the environmental order influencing development of a tool and/or other devices to support making the most of what a volunteer knows and can do in such a way as to strengthen retention of the volunteer. The CFA environment is characterised by rules, communities of varying nature, and division of labour requirements and possibilities. And, as illustrated in the Figure 4.2 network, all of the components of the network have a mediating influence – each upon the other. Viewing the inquiry derived data through the prism of activity theory is not only a mechanism for bringing order to the analysis of data, but is also a device that facilitates presenting the story in a manner which the audience relates to as taking account of the mediating elements of their environment – i.e. plausibility and empathy are evidenced.

4.9 A concluding thought

In conclusion of this chapter, I acknowledge the paradox of pursuing outcomes which will satisfy a quantitative orientated audience by the use of interpretive inquiry. The paradoxical nature of this intent is increased by the objective of offering a tool, which is not steeped in scientific truth, to aid reflection by either a quantitatively or a qualitatively orientated audience. In Charles Handy’s terms (Handy 1995, p.18), this is a paradox to be managed.
and possibly has its solution in assisting the quantitatively and the qualitatively orientated stakeholders to find common ground by each moving a bit toward the other – which, in itself, would be a major contribution to the beneficial pooling of learning.
Chapter Five: Three Pillars – Need, Opportunity and Encouragement

5.1 Initial scoping interviews and scoping workshops

A semi-structured interview approach, using the scoping questions listed in Chapter Four (p. 66) as prompts, opened the way for discovery of the unexpected rather than being constrained by rigid adherence to an imposed sequence of questioning with the potential for only shallow exploration of the issues.

Interview respondents to the scoping questions were drawn from –

- engineering management and public policy making and implementation personnel within the Victorian water industry (no. 6);
- personnel engaged within the contract cleaning and/or the waste management industries (no. 11 – nine trainers and two organisation managers); and
- career staff members of the Country Fire Authority (CFA) (no. 13 - four of whom were engaged in managing training delivery).

Opinion was drawn from across a spectrum of people ranging from those for whom consideration of learning issues is not a day-to-day, front of mind, activity to people whose professional engagement with facilitating training would give cause to expect a familiarity with the topic. However, consequent upon ease of access to such respondents and their predisposition to engage with the topic of inquiry, there was a bias toward respondents with learning awareness.

As an outcome from my professional involvement with the water industry, I believed that there was potential to better draw upon residual knowledge within the industry and its stakeholders. Accordingly, this topic was aired by presentation of a paper “Action Learning – Benefits for the water industry” (Hughes 2001) at an Australian Water Association conference, Moama, October 2001; and although my belief was strengthened, there wasn’t industry enthusiasm and the timing was not right for a research project – although in 2007, consequent upon a looming water availability crisis, the issue/need is now much more current.
The inclusion of triangulating views of trainers engaged with the contract cleaning and waste management sectors arose from a research project, relating to the potential for workplace training support partnerships, which I undertook on behalf of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). Such partnerships appeared, to me, to have a foundation of drawing upon making the most of what each person in the partnership knows and can do; and ANTA gave permission to draw upon this inquiry for my PhD thesis purposes. However, in a similar vein to the water industry, timing was a key factor and progression to a more intensive inquiry was not welcomed at the time. It was apparent that a need was there, but the want did not exist. As for the water industry, the importance of gatekeepers acknowledging a need to more fully draw upon what people know and can do was a pertinent insight.

Even though continuing PhD related research did not occur in either of the water industry or the workplace training support instances, the initial scoping interviews in the water industry and workplace training support environments yielded insights of value that had triangulation congruence with the CFA derived insights. In addition to the scoping interviews, a contract cleaning workshop, two contract cleaning action learning orientated meetings, and three CFA workshops were confirming of these insights and added to understanding of the influencing forces.

The CFA as a host environment for research arose as a consequence of drawing upon my alertness to community vulnerability to wild fire events and other emergency situations. This led to making a research project proposal, in association with the Research Institute for Professional and Vocational Education & Training (RIPVET) which is a joint venture of Deakin University and the Gordon Institute of TAFE, to Emergency Management Australia (EMA). The combination of my motivation and opportunity underpinning this approach to EMA has emerged as a factor to be more widely extrapolated to making the most of what people know and can do. In this instance, the motivation arose from living in a highly bushfire prone area. And the opportunity was grounded in my previous National Presidency of the Australian Institute of Training and Development which, in addition to being a significant element of my lifelong learning brought me into contact with colleagues who are active in emergency management.
Consequent upon the CFA agreeing to host my research study, EMA awarded support for a project and my study became focused upon enhancing retention of CFA volunteers through making the most of what they know and can do. The CFA study began with scoping interviews and progressed through a series of focus group orientated workshops incorporating some elements of action learning as a strategy to probe deeper than just workshop participation would allow and also as a way of quickly returning value to the researched environment.

The foregoing contacts with three research environments represent three phases of scoping interviews as illustrated in Figure 5.1.

The first phase was the general exploration, probed by the scoping questions, of the issues with water industry personnel and, although the interviewees generally grounded their remarks within their water industry experience, the views expressed were of an all-of-life embracing nature – albeit of narrow focus in some instances (see Figure 5.2). The second phase, overlapping phase three to a small degree, sought responses from interviewees in the context of contract cleaning and waste management workplace training support partnerships. The third phase was focussed upon drawing upon the outcomes of the lifelong learning of CFA volunteers as a factor in influencing their retention as volunteers.
By this process, the phases went from the general to a broad (but defined) context, and then to a specifically defined organisational objective.

- Water industry respondents provided personal views regarding generalities applying in their respective professional environments.
- Workplace training support respondents focused upon their experience as training facilitators and their perceptions of the organisational and learning issues from a trainee’s perspective. The manner in which employer motivations, and practices, impacted upon the trainer and the trainee was a core element of the discussion.
- CFA respondents were focused upon the issue of retaining volunteers and the notion that drawing upon the outcomes from a volunteer’s lifelong learning might have a relationship to their propensity to remain as a volunteer.

Interestingly, notwithstanding the research ethics plain language statement foreshadowing the potential relevance of drawing upon the outcomes of lifelong learning, there was a sense that the topic was new to most interviewees. Their responses reflected not having previously given conscious consideration to this topic.

The plain language statement providing the basis for informed consent contained –

For the purpose of my research a broad view is taken of what constitutes lifelong learning. Lifelong learning (as I see it) is the combination of formal education and training whereby we achieve formal qualifications, less formal but structured learning which may not result in adding to our formal qualifications, consciously learning from life’s experiences, and knowledge and abilities that we acquire throughout life without really recognising it.

The aim of my research project is to add to the body of knowledge that supports individuals in drawing upon the outcomes from their lifelong learning in such a manner as to benefit themselves and the organisation with which they work. Whilst we all draw to some degree from our lifelong learning, it may be the case that important aspects of our lifelong learning are overlooked or otherwise under-valued by ourselves and others. This research project seeks to develop strategies and mechanisms whereby we all derive greater return from the outcomes of our lifelong learning than would otherwise be the case. As the intent is for mutual benefit to accrue to individuals and organisations, the outcomes from this research are intended to be useful to us as individuals and to the achievement of organisations.

(Extract from scoping interview plain language statement)
The apparent newness of drawing upon the breadth of outcomes from lifelong learning to contribute to organisational achievement as a conscious topic was an early finding of the research. This suggested that, although it is probable that people do have a sub-conscious valuing of what they know and can do, the range and value of this personal resource is not explicitly recognised by the individual or the organisation. In an organisational sense, if an individual in a key position within an organisation does not explicitly recognise the value to the organisation of the full extent of what they personally know and can do, they are unlikely to recognise this in others. The following extracts from scoping interviews are indicative of an early finding that prompting may be required to recognise, and value, the breadth of outcomes from lifelong learning.

‘Well, Lewis, it [lifelong learning] is a concept that you have raised with me only recently. So it is not a phrase that comes to my mind ...’ (Barry, water industry interviewee, 140502, lines 3-4)

Well prior to having received this [Plain language statement] it has never been a phrase that was in my thinking. So I have had to think what does that mean. (Robert, workplace training support interviewee, 020802, lines 160-161)

‘It [lifelong learning] is not a question that I have given a lot of thought to up until I read the briefing document.’ Ken, CFA interviewee, 021002, lines 18-19)

‘I actually looked at it [briefing document], and then I thought lifelong learning. And then I thought – What has my lifelong learning been?’ (Adam, CFA interviewee, 031002, lines 168-169)

Interestingly, women (n = 6) interviewed at the scoping stage had a confident understanding (to them) of lifelong learning. And in the subsequent CFA scoping workshops, women (n = 5) appeared more naturally inclined, than the men (n = 13), to recognising, valuing and nurturing learning.

‘To me the first thing that I would say about lifelong learning is that it is almost a given for me. I have been surrounded by my own family who are lifelong learners. I don’t imagine that you finish learning at any point ... So I am the sort of person who would constantly be looking for another challenge, a new theme, a new experience. That’s what I would consider lifelong learning. You are constantly expanding your own skill set or your own understanding of any topic or skill.’ (Carmel, CFA interviewee, 11102, lines 7-12)

‘Well my understanding of lifelong learning would be learning not just applied to a workplace environment, but a personal environment. Virtually it would cover every aspect of your life, from your personal involvement, to your involvement in your particular job. I think the two of them go hand in hand in some instances. And it is continually attempting to improve your competence
in the workplace, your knowledge in the workplace. To continually strive for increased knowledge. Improvement in systems. The way you operate. Generally to work continually toward gaining further knowledge - in whatever area it may be.” (Gail, workplace training support interviewee, 0500902, lines 16-23)

It was noted as interesting that these two women interviewees – as for the other seven women across the amalgam of scoping interviews and scoping workshops - so naturally and un-prompted during the interview, embraced the concept of lifelong learning. The possibility was emerging that nurturing a person in making the most of what they know and can do is a feminine type attribute. In foreshadowing such a possibility, this is not to say that it is necessarily gender specific.

The outcomes from the thirty scoping interviews were progressively compared. This constant comparative approach occurred firstly within each cohort – water industry, workplace training support and CFA - and then between cohorts. In phases two and three, there was a strengthening of accrued insights from workshops and the workplace training support action learning orientated meetings. The Phase 2 meetings were sharing of views regarding attempts at initiating action learning orientated projects, in their respective environments, by four respondents over a three month period.

5.2 Outcomes from Phase 1 of the initial scoping interviews – water industry respondents

Water industry respondents – The meaning and value of lifelong learning:
For the water industry personnel, expressing general views regarding what is understood by lifelong learning, there was a spectrum as outlined below.

One end of the spectrum - Focusing upon expanding technical expertise, through experience, but also acknowledging, to some lesser degree, that there are outcomes from lifelong learning which are of value other than enhanced technical competency.

to

The other end of the spectrum – Looking to holistically draw upon what a person knows and can do and regarding lifelong learning as embracing more than formal education as part of accumulating knowledge and skill. There are personal
attributes such as ability to communicate, adapting to change, emotional intelligence, and ability to transfer competencies to new contexts that are developed and nurtured through learning other than by formal means.

‘I think that my understanding of lifelong learning is that it is a series of building blocks that are put together over years and a lot of it is straightforward technical matters – technical or management matters. Others are sort of peripheral things which don’t seem important; but probably, in a period of time, the peripheral matters enable you to make a decision on a particular subject or topic.’ (Trevor, 20502, lines 6-10)

‘Even though my own people don’t say it, it’s happening everywhere, its happening at every level. When they start working and through experience they gain more and more knowledge. And mainly on systems – so they welcome that’ (John, 300402, lines 6-8)

‘… I like personally to learn through metaphors from experience elsewhere. I see parallels in activities undertaken in different fields. I learn from the experience of others in developing their solutions and being able to pick that up and transpose it into the area in which I am working.’ (Don, 160502, lines 34-42)

‘…in working for this type organisation [Government authority] you have to be able to draw on more than what you have just learnt from a theoretical perspective … you necessarily have to draw upon all of your life’s experiences whether they are in your professional life or otherwise…’ (Peter, 010502, lines 10-14)

‘My own personal value is that one of the great joys of living is learning. And I think that from a personal satisfaction point of view, and from an organisation’s point of view, that learning is one that we continue to do for both personal gain and the organisation’s gain. … Another satisfaction, I find in the role, is learning in [through] meeting people…’ (Barry, 140502, lines 5-23)

For reasons of preserving anonymity, it is not appropriate to indicate the full nature of water industry involvement of the above respondents and the names cited are pseudonyms as is the case for all research subjects cited in this dissertation. However, it is germane to note that Barry and Peter are involved in policy development and implementation. Don sits astride influencing people and technical matters and John and Trevor are highly technically orientated. Could it be that the more one is connected with the behaviour of people, with respect to generating and acceptance of new ideas, the more broadly holistic lifelong learning is valued? And could it be that the more one is focused upon technical engineering and processes, the more likely it is that lifelong technical learning is valued and other outcomes are seen as peripheral as illustrated in Figure 5.2.
Whilst the thesis word limit does not allow a full evidencing of comments, a portion of the dialogue with Don (Dialogue 5.1) provides some insight into an environment which may be in transition from engineering (technocrat) dominance to consultation involving valuing the input of a broad range of stakeholders. And it may be the case that even the technocrats draw more upon a fuller range of what they know and can do than might at first appear to be the case. Don sits astride what I suggest as the possible polar positions of Figure 5.2.

Dialogue 5.1 – Water industry scoping interview

Lewis 0012 (Researcher)
The first thing that I would really like to explore is your personal view of what is meant by lifelong learning. Just what do you think that actually means?

Don 028 (Respondent)
It’s very interesting. Yesterday I was out talking to one of the water authorities, because I am working on this drinking water quality regulatory framework which is a new way of looking at drinking water quality in the State. And it’s a catchment-to-tap approach looking at the overall system – how the overall system operates.

And this particular water authority is doing a lot of work in the catchment and they have set up what are called regional catchment strategies. And the idea is there shall be a strategic plan for a catchment area to move the catchment forward. And the point that was made by this water authority was the regional catchment strategy isn’t for the catchment management authority, it’s for the catchment.

Now I know that’s a play on words, it might be a subtlety. But the light turned on for me because it had a totally different kind of concept of ownership to it. So for me, lifelong learning is very much about participating and having the opportunity to get the light bulb switched on every so often. Which then helps to further expand one’s own knowledge and one’s own ability in terms of how well one can communicate. Because, clearly, within the water industry it is a very paternalistic place. It has always been about telling people what to do – that’s where it kind of comes from.

Figure 5.2 – Spectrum of expanding drawing upon the breadth of outcomes from lifelong learning – a possibility

Expanding and contracting drawing upon outcomes from lifelong learning under the influence of technocratic orientations or seeking broader outcomes. In both cases, building upon a central core of technical knowledge and skill. There always being some additional context drawing upon life skills – e.g. functioning as a member of a team.

2 Micro-cassette tape location
And what I am seeing now is a shift – it might be gradual – but it is gaining momentum in terms of having much greater partnership happening between the technocrats and the community that the service is being provided for. To reach a win/win solution - a partnership solution between the two.

So what does lifelong learning mean for me. It means something about the process of evolution – an evolution in solution development. There is truly more than one way to skin a cat. And through a learning process, one learns that, and therefore one can become more skillful – not just in a personal sense but also in an institutional sense. An institution can become more skillful through having people who have this learning ability to derive much more robust and thorough solutions than they would otherwise.

---------- and later ----------

Lewis 168
I suspect that your discussion about what lifelong learning means to you has substantially addressed the issue of how an organisation stands to benefit. But it would be helpful if you were to think now specifically on that point. How does an organisation stand to benefit by drawing upon the outcomes of an individual’s lifelong learning?

Don 190
I see that that’s related to organisation development. Organisations do change over time - they change their physical location; they change their name; they change their approach.

An organisation, if it is going to stand the test of time, needs to change.

What causes that change to take place [rhetorical]? It’s the environment that it is in, certainly; but that environment is created by the stakeholders; but clearly also by the individuals within the organisation. And therefore it is what the individuals can bring to an organisation that helps an organisation to develop, and learn, and change. And that to my mind is a sum of the incremental knowledge of the people that it is involved with – the stakeholders. It is as much about the organisation as the individuals in the organisation.

(Don,160502, lines 1-57)

Water industry respondents joined comment regarding the relevance of outcomes from lifelong learning with their reflections upon what is meant by lifelong learning. These comments reflect a personal position on the holistic to technically focussed spectrum.

‘How does it stand to potentially benefit the organisation [rhetorical]. As I said, it is because we work in a dynamic environment. We work sometimes in an environment where the outcomes are not clearly defined because they are so fluid; and, also sometimes because the organisation is so big, they can be poorly defined.

I think that an organisation like this really requires you to live by your wits, rather than just what you have learnt to achieve outcomes. And that requires the use of – I don’t know --- I mean it would be interesting to go down the process of thinking about mechanisms that we could use to tap into people’s lifelong learning and then to acknowledge, and to explore how the organisation can contribute to people’s lifelong learning, and what the organisation sees as its role in that area.’  (Peter, 010502, lines 56-64)

‘Like after I came here I found out we are having problems with a particular chemical. Like manganese, there is a problem. And there were some treatment methods here and there; and normally if you go to universities they spend probably less than half a lecture on this that I am talking about – because there are so many issues to talk about in water treatment. But that is the major problem here. I know the fundamentals. But then what you do is you look through journals, and then really what is happening, and what everybody is
It is interesting that even John, who I place at the technocrat end of the spectrum, is looking beyond his formal education to knowledge and skill that is otherwise acquired and he is sharing his expanding knowledge through publication.

In summary, the water industry interviewees displayed a consensus stance that learning beyond what is learnt at university is necessary to meet professional obligations, but there was a spread of articulated belief regarding the value of reaching beyond technical learning.

**Water industry respondents** –  **What aids and what inhibits drawing upon outcomes from lifelong learning:**

Figure 5.3 is an amalgamated summary of individual views regarding aids and inhibitors to drawing upon the outcomes of lifelong learning. As these responses are indicative of a range of views, even greater variation is to be expected from wider inquiry and this, implied need to respond to the possibly unexpected, is suggestive that making the most of what people know and can do is more of an art than it is a science. Accordingly, Figure 5.3 – *The three pillars* - is an early attempt, in the course of the inquiry, at grouping diverse responses into manageable common categories.
Three Pillars – Need, Opportunity and Encouragement

Examples of what aids drawing upon outcomes from lifelong learning:
- The need to draw from others as you can’t know everything.
- Drawing from others to remain current – you don’t know what you don’t know.
- The organisation seeking to avoid having to import knowledge and skill.
- Reaction against a stifling bureaucratic environment.
- Personal motivation to draw upon what you know and can do.
- An organisational sense of breaking new ground and moving forward.
- Encouragement of new thinking beyond past practices – “change”.
- Valuing reduction of management load – confidence in others.
- Motivated to contribute to change.

Examples of what inhibits drawing upon the outcomes from lifelong learning:
- Competitive jealousy
- Not wanting to offend by putting forward your own views.
- Time and effort required.
- Risk of failure.
- Pre-disposition to keep your ideas to yourself.

Examples of what aids drawing upon outcomes from lifelong learning:
- An environment that encourages sharing ideas in a critical manner.
- Encouragement to contribute from your corporate memory.
- Encouragement to contribute from both length of memory and depth of memory.
- Encouragement to tap into emotional intelligence.
- Management that is sensitive to people.
- Staff empowerment to draw upon outcomes from their lifelong learning.
- Organisation accepting ideas.
- Encouraging people to contribute by talking to them.
- Being thanked – e.g. letter of appreciation.
- Having a senior person support you – encouragement.

Examples of what inhibits drawing upon outcomes from lifelong learning:
- Outputs owned by senior people driving others to achieve their (senior people) goals.

Examples of what aids drawing upon outcomes from lifelong learning:
- Being educated in a manner that encourages sharing of ideas in a critical manner.
- Being able to build into one’s job what you like doing.
- Being invited into an organisation because you possess fresh ideas derived from your learning.
- Workshops that encourage people to reveal the breadth of what they know and can do.
- A HR approach that recognises the value of lifelong learning. A systematic approach to drawing upon lifelong learning.
- Triple bottom line organisations.
- Adopting a consultant role.
- Belief that the idea is going to work.
- Finding application for your knowledge.
- Knowing what is relevant.

Examples of what inhibits drawing upon outcomes from lifelong learning:
- Power structures that suppress offering your opinion or other contribution.
- Possibly on the basis that you are too new or too junior. Protecting old ideas.
- Nature of the workplace – e.g. a production line.
- Single bottom line organisations.
- Rejection of ideas leading to undermining of courage.
- Not knowing how to put forward peripheral ideas.

Figure 5.3 – Need, encouragement and opportunity as three pillars of making the most of the outcomes from lifelong learning

Whilst the possibility of three pillars (Figure 5.3), supporting the application of the appropriate fullness of what a person knows and can do, first arose from the scoping interviews with water industry personnel the possibility was reinforced by phase 2 and 3
inquiry. At the time of initial insight, whilst “need” appeared unambiguous, there was a grey area in differentiating between “encouragement” and “opportunity”.

In the following extract of transcript (Dialogue Item 5.2) Michael begins with expressing a view that people feeling comfortable about sharing their ideas with others and drawing from the ideas of others is very important if an organisation is going to draw upon an appropriately full range of what these people know and can do; and interestingly, Michael styles this as mutuality of learning. To my mind, this fits within the encouragement category as it describes a situation in which people value what they know and can do and also value what others know and can do and with the added attribute of willingness to share. This willingness to share, with colleagues, resonates with the community of practice notions (Wenger, Mc Dermott & Snyder 2002). This is a very interesting depth of insight by Michael which may be a consequence of having to daily influence co-operative outcomes from a diverse group of people with, sometimes, competing agendas.

Michael then goes on to identify the imperative of change as a key driving force. He expresses a view that the, now, rapid nature of change requires people to pool knowledge because one person can’t know everything in the quest to remain current. For me, at this point, Michael is focusing upon contributing to change and keeping up as the need.

In touching upon opportunity, Michael observes that competitive jealousy is a potential barrier to people revealing to others what they know; and the negative influence of power relationships also impacts. It is reasonable to infer from this that there is opportunity to remove both hindrances upon recognition that they exist and having the will to act. It is also germane that Michael observes that some people may be reticent about putting their ideas forward as this may offend. It may be the case that opportunity frequently resides in recognising factors which inhibit more fully drawing upon what people know and can do and working toward mimimising, if not removing, these barriers.
Three Pillars – Need, Opportunity and Encouragement

Dialogue 5.2 – Water industry scoping interview

Michael 267 (Respondent)
I think I mentioned briefly, before, this element of mutuality. It is not a one way educative process. It is an interactive process where one learns from the other so that in a group situation, especially, the free flow of ideas then I guess builds new ideas. And I guess people’s understandings and horizons are expanded. So it is a cross pollination of a group of people both ways. To me, the incentive of being involved in a network of people who are interested in developing ideas is your ideas aren’t the only ideas that are being discussed or espoused – it is all of them around the table, so to speak. And then you absorb those components of that which you feel are relevant to your circumstances. So that you are building on that interaction. I think that that mutuality of leaning is a key factor encouraging it to occur. I guess it depends upon people’s personalities, to some extent, how open they are to that sort of approach. And I think that one of the challenges in making it work is trying to get people who are very open about that their ideas are free to be used by others. And, vice versa, you expect that you can take on board their ideas and go away and apply them to your own situation. So I think that it is that mutuality that is a key factor.

I think as I mentioned right at the start, things are changing in the world and organisations are changing rapidly and a set of procedures, or a base set of knowledge, will become outmoded very quickly. So the driving force has to be that you have to keep up-dating your knowledge base very rapidly – an individual on their own can’t do that, there is too much to know. And you don’t know what you don’t know anyway so you have got to be out there trying to work out is there something else out there that is going to help you as an individual, but also as an organisation, move forward and cope with the changing environment in which they operate. So it is that need to stay current, is a factor that should be driving people in that direction.

Lewis 333 (Researcher)
OK, next item is – What are the factors that would actually inhibit that process? Why won’t people join the game?

Michael 338
I think that traditionally some - What would you call it? - competitive jealousy sort of situations. People thinking that I can’t let my competitor know what’s going on and therefore there is not a free flow of, or exchange of, current information. That could be an inhibiting factor. And I think into the future, where collaborations are more and more critical to development, that’s got to be broken down. So I think there is still a hangover of that, especially in the commercial world where you don’t want to let your competitors know what you are up to, in case you lose some of your competitive advantage or something. So that is probably an inhibitor.

I think that, as people, we are not brought up in an environment that encourages us to freely discuss in an open, and in a critical, way our ideas and things. We are not, in certain areas anyway. Perhaps at the university level, or at the tertiary education level, those approaches of critical analysis and discussion are probably quite common, but in the business world where you have people that are not necessarily trained in that form of dialogue they aren’t comfortable in expressing their views about things if it is not their normal role. And in the projects that we talked about in our organisation, we found that you have got people there with a lot of experience, but it is not their normal practice to express what they feel is a short coming of a colleague in terms of an operational issue. They see that as being --- ah --- they don’t want to offend. So they don’t want to offer up the insight that something can be done better. So it is those personality issues, people aren’t necessarily comfortable with critically analysing an organisation’s activities in case they offend their fellow employees – they don’t know how to manage that relationship very well. So I see that as another factor that may inhibit this process – in our experience that was a big factor. Even to the point where when we went out and tried to do some basic surveys and people said “Look I am not comfortable” because in a small organisation there is no way that that information remains totally anonymous and confidential. As soon as it is put on paper, people know what you are saying, and so that was the example to me that they are not comfortable yet with being able to offer critical analysis of things without feeling that somehow that is going to offend somebody.

Drawing upon Dialogue 5.2, in resolution of the uncertainty of where the divide lies between encouragement and opportunity, it is suggested that encouragement is that quality where people are supported in recognising and valuing the breadth of what they know and can do; and opportunity exists when it becomes evident that people are welcomed in contributing appropriately from the breadth of what they know and can do.
In consideration of the foregoing, it is postulated that the three pillars – Need, Encouragement and Opportunity – are three pathways to making the most of what a person knows and can do. And as the scoping inquiry progressed to Phases 2 and 3, there was further consideration of this. It may be that the pillars are, to a degree, independent (but related) pathways, as illustrated in Figure 5.4, rather than links in a chain where if one breaks the whole breaks.

Water industry respondents – Stakeholders with respect to and organisation drawing upon the outcomes of a person’s lifelong learning:

All six respondents identified a spread of stakeholders beyond the individual and the organisation. Interestingly, even the apparently technocratic centred John and Trevor had, toward the end of the interviews, began to remark upon valued consequences from drawing more broadly upon what people know and can do.

Commenting upon developing country aid projects that were wrongly technically conceived and without regard for community ownership – ‘And then they did some atrocities which were right for a developed country but not a developing country. But they never sought the real stakeholders opinion of things and what they wanted, and fortunately that’s limited now to a large extent.’

(Trevor, 20502, lines 155-157)

This comment by Trevor foreshadowed a finding that bringing the possibility of more fully drawing upon what people know and can do to a front-of-mind status is a factor in valuing the outcomes from an individual’s lifelong learning. Organisations are vulnerable to
overlooking the worth of what stakeholders can contribute from the outcomes of their lifelong learning. – “We know best” can be a fatal flaw.

In overview terms, internal drawing upon the breadth of outcomes from lifelong learning stakeholders were identified as including -

- the individual personally deriving benefit from the broad range of what they know and can do;
- the group of which the individual is a member;
- the subordinates of the individual;
- the persons in authority above the individual;
- others in the organisation who are not members of the individual's immediate group, but for whom benefits can accrue;
- the organisation (as an entity) of which the individual is a member; and
- the owner(s) (broadly defined) of the organisation.

Depending upon how the relationship is best described, external stakeholders were identified as including -

- the clients, comprising product customers or consumers of services, of the organisation; and
- the Government(s). Note: In this instance, this refers to government's role in the provision of water services.

At this early point in the research, I began reflecting upon the manner in which internal and external stakeholders could be referred to as the community of stakeholders and represented by expanding concentric circles with the subject individual at the core; then peers, colleagues, subordinates and superiors; then the organisation as a third annulus, meeting the needs of clients/customers (which may include government(s) who make up the fourth annulus; and then the overall community as the all enclosing stakeholder. There is a sense that a small drawing upon knowledge events, at the core, could lead to a major organisational outcome – from small beginnings big things grow.

The potential for interconnectedness between the interests of diverse stakeholders, who may not initially have consideration for the interests of each other, is illustrated by Don’s comments explaining how triple bottom line accounting works in his organisation –

‘Again in my tours, yesterday – looking at catchment management issues – the particular water supply catchment has got a lot of potato farmers in it. And
potato farmers manage their spuds, they grow their spuds and they dig them out. And in the winter, I think the land lies fallow, and it rains. And with that rain, there is a lot of runoff. The farmer loses soil. The run-off goes into river systems. The river system degrades the water quality, which is not a good solution. And that is a solution that has been going on for centuries ever since spuds were first grown.

Over recent years, though, there has been a discussion about there has got to be a better way – we need a broader solution. We are losing top soil and we are degrading the water quality. We need a broader solution. We need a solution which is of more value to both sides, because both sides are losing.

And there was a crop which was identified, which could be planted during the winter months, to cover the soil so that when the rainfall occurred there wasn’t the same amount of run-off. Now that to my mind has got economic benefits, because there is an additional income from the second crop. It has got social benefits because I think everybody feels a lot better about what is going on – there is a much better sense of community and consultation going on, and clearly it has got environmental benefits in terms of not losing the top soil and so not degrading the water quality. Now I think to achieve that, one needs an environment that encourages people to think from their experience of what might be possible, and this is where lifelong learning would come in.

I think, certainly, that you need experience to know that there are other solutions which are possible and to explore those. And therefore you need an environment that encourages that type of action to take place, rather than any kind of constrained environment.’ (Don, 160502, lines 99-121)

Whilst the foregoing is a positive instance of people drawing co-operatively upon knowledge, Peter gave an example of the abandoning of an initiative that had the potential to bring front line personnel into close association with broader policy making and planning.

Referring to a local government experience –
‘...we just wanted to use the information gained by inspectors more effectively – you know the informal ad hoc information that they got from the people when they were doing their complaint investigations on what they did. And we found that very difficult to develop a system to work into informing other policy decisions of the organisation.’ (Peter, 010502, lines 19-23)

Peter’s example prompts reflection upon what might have been the contribution to enhanced perception of self-worth by inspectors if the idea had been persevered with. There was a possibility that the inspectors would recognise their value as direct contributors to policy making as members of a community of practice (community of stakeholders) in which valuing of knowledge would lead on to further co-operations and mutual support.
With respect to what’s in it for the individual making the most of what they know and can do, it is intriguing that none of the six water industry respondents mentioned tangible rewards such as more money as reward for effort or increased job security. The returns were seen in less tangible forms as summarised below.

- The return to people who are motivated and empowered to make the most of what they know and can do was seen by the water industry respondents as including pleasure in their ideas being taken-up, being valued by others (including strengthened empathy), getting something in return by sharing with others, and enhanced trust in you by others.

- People in the immediate community of stakeholders, such as superior and subordinate colleagues and those with whom there is an organisational relationship that does include a reporting relationship, were seen to stand to gain by valuing interaction with a person with different experiences. Better informed interaction was suggested as yielding stronger empathy because of an enhanced understanding of a person’s background, an increased pool of knowledge from which to share and increased levels of trust within the team both in respect of performance and information/advice which informs policies and action of the organisation.

- For those not within the immediate organisational community, but in the expanded community – i.e. customers, clients, government and the community at large – the benefits of individuals making the most of what they know and can do were projected to include achieving, better policies leading to more mutual agreement in negations, better solutions being proposed and implemented, functioning and cooperating in an environment of enhanced goodwill.

Returning to the first point (above), the mention of “trust” was noted as interesting and was a harbinger of more to emerge on this theme. In a community of practice sense, trust that a person’s contribution ‘will make a difference and will be recognised’ (Saint-Onge & Wallace 2003, p. 107) was reinforced in the course of this inquiry, and is clearly reflected in the first point (above). However, the personal trust between individuals is at the heart of the matter. It may not be drawing too long a bow to propose that trust in colleagues through valuing
the broad range of what they know and can do is a significant factor in organisational achievement. This possibility is strengthened by water industry respondents remarking that—

- peers helping each other is a win/win situation and involves giving and receiving through drawing upon the respective broad outcomes of lifelong learning;
- ownership of a project is important and is aided by people feeling that they have contributed from their stock of what they know and can do; and
- the transfer of knowledge, through sharing, is much more effective in mentoring circumstances than it is through volumes of written words, and the process requires trust, and subtlety.

**Water industry respondents – Phase 1 summary of outcomes**

The interviews with water industry respondents yielded the *need, opportunity and encouragement* theme (Figures 5.3 and 5.4) as an issue worthy of further consideration. This theme appeared to encapsulate circumstances that underpin the degree to which outcomes from lifelong learning are valued and drawn upon. There was also the *technocrat versus engaging with people* insight (Figure 5.2) that invites reflection upon the manner in which varying aspects of an organisation’s activities require difference in approach to making the most of the totality of what people know and can do.

It was with these water industry outcomes in mind that the inquiry moved on to the Phase 2, workplace training support, component of the scoping inquiry.

**5.3 Outcomes from Phase 2 of the initial scoping interviews – workplace training support respondents**

**Workplace training support respondents – Positioning themselves in the research:**

The eight contract cleaning interviewees and three waste management interviewees participated in the research by invitation consequent upon advice from the Industry Training Advisory Body (ITAB) – Property Services Training Australia (PSTA) – that they were people who had previously exhibited a willingness to contribute to industry training
initiatives. These people were very open and frank in their sharing of views and exhibited a high level of commitment to their industry and facilitation of high quality learning.

In respect of four interviewees, the research participation extended to a three month period in which these trainers attempted, without success, to establish action research orientated projects within their respective contract cleaning environments. However the sharing of experiences in a manner akin to action research set members, regarding the difficulty of securing employer patronage, was very informative and further strengthened the importance of need, encouragement and opportunity. In the contract cleaning industry, operator time is so finely scheduled that on-the-job training actually means that, in some instances, the trainer walks alongside the trainee as they are actually working – an investment in taking time out to make the most of what a person knows and can do is a need but not a want.

The interviews had a particular orientation toward making best use of a workplace training supporter kit. This kit is a tool in the form of a guide and collation of other materials to assist an experienced buddy (workplace training supporter) to support a new colleague in their strengthening of job competencies. The kit was developed, for use in the contract cleaning industry by PSTA with Commonwealth funding provided under the auspices of ANTA. The strategy had potential for application in other industries. As I had contributed to the development of the kit, I was very curious as to why there had been only a small degree of take-up of the tool given that industry representatives had strongly supported (in my presence) its development. It was subsequently revealed, through my ANTA commissioned inquiry, that the research informing development of the tool had probed industry-wide need and not degree of want. This motivation ambiguity arose from a small number of insightful people in the contract cleaning industry expressing a high level of need to train employees. But upon further consideration, it emerged that it was more common for employers to view training as not critical for what is perceived to be low-skilled work by disposable employees. This dichotomy resonated with an emerging theme of this dissertation that “you have really got to want to” when looking to make the most of what is known and could be applied. In essence, this emerged as a story of need and opportunity to draw upon workplace training supporters, but reluctance to do so as it meant
taking them away, albeit only intermittently, from their substantive job and the meeting of contract targets.

Workplace training support respondents – The meaning and value of lifelong learning

Whilst the workplace training supporter kit was developed with a relatively narrow training objective in mind, there is an opportunity to gain much expanded learning advantage. A learning partnership – trainer, trainee and workplace training supporter (buddy) - that builds upon the breadth and depth of incoming knowledge and skill of each partner has the potential to contribute to organisational achievement through drawing upon collective experience. This resonates with the Maira and Scott-Morgan (1997, pp 218-225) strategies for bringing what is tacitly known back into the explicit realm. With this thought in mind, Dialogue 5.3 is a reference point for comparisons of views regarding the relevance of the broad ambit of lifelong learning to narrowly focused training. The fluency and breadth of expression is the reason for selection of this extract of interview with Terry as the reference point for the comparison of views.

In drawing from Dialogue 5.3, and what follows in respect of workplace training support, it should be borne in mind that the responses are mostly (only two exceptions) from Registered Training Organisation (RTO) trainers and reflect their perceptions of broad issues associated with the potential for workplace learning partnerships in which a trainee is supported by a workplace colleague sharing the outcomes from their experience. This phase of the inquiry began with the understanding that there was employer enthusiasm for workplace learning partnerships involving the RTO trainer, the trainee and a workplace training supporter as a buddy. However, it was revealed that employers were typically not yet embracing this approach and, contrary to expectation, there was a perception of reluctance to apply more than minimum employer effort into delivery of training – especially where it may involve an experienced worker de-directing their effort away from their job to assisting the competency development of another.
Dialogue 5.3 – Contract cleaning workplace training support interview
Lewis 010 (Researcher)
... So Terry, the first question is what is your understanding of the nature of lifelong learning?

Terry 033 (Respondent)
Lifelong learning is basically as the name implies. It is an ongoing, it is a continuum, it is a process whereby people have the opportunity to pick up new information and to learn.

It is interesting, but having experienced the delivery of training as a trainer – not just in this particular industry that we are discussing here, but in other areas as well such as the professional development that you were referring to before - it is always interesting that I seem to come across a great spread of age groups that are represented – which is not a bad thing because it tells me that there are people in all walks of life who are still looking to either get access to new information, additional knowledge, new sets of skills and so forth.

I think the oldest person I have trained in the cleaning industry was about 72. And it was quite interesting because he was having little “Ah! Ah!” experiences as we were going through some of the material because there were things there that he hadn't quite understood previously or he wasn't quite sure why he was being asked to do them in a certain way, or what have you. And that was quite rewarding, because he actually – I dare say – would have had a lot more practical hands on experience in the industry than what I would have. And so the fact that he was able to learn new things along the way was very encouraging.

Where I look at the lifelong learning is that those individuals who come through a program -- whatever that program is whether it is a traineeship or what have you – really benefit most where they are actually wanting to participate. And I know how traineeships work, and I appreciate how some employers like to use traineeships to enhance their bottom line and whatever else, but the concept when the trainee actually gets involved and is willing to learn I think they gain a lot more out of that.

In terms of how the organisation benefits out of that effectively-
By bringing in a whole new set of skills that they would not have had access to otherwise. Or had been given the opportunity to formalise in some way. Because, just like the gentleman that was 72 had a lot of experience, nobody had actually sat down with him and said, OK, let's just tick all the boxes and RPL what you have done or what you haven't done, or look at your breadth of experience and just formalise it and actually honour you through the awarding of a formal qualification - a formal qualification and a piece of paper.

Lewis 133
Was that a surprise to him that that could be done?

Terry 135
It was. It was, because he just felt that he was really in retirement mode and this was just some pocket money in terms of the position itself being part-time, and what have you. And, all of a sudden at the end of what I would imagine would have been quite a full and fruitful life, somebody actually recognised some of his effort and was willing to actually give him a certificate. So he sort of felt that somebody had actually taken a genuine interest in him. I guess, which in this case was the employer. And the interesting thing was that the client, where they were working at - the location that they were working at - the client actually was quite pleased with the fact that their contractor was investing time and effort to up-skill some of those people.

(Interview Terry, 300702, lines 1-51)

In Dialogue 5.3 Terry (pseudonym), an RTO principal and hands-on trainer with substantial industry and commercial experience beyond delivering training, remarks upon –

- his view that lifelong learning is a continuous process throughout life where people have the opportunity to ‘… pick-up new information and to learn’;
- his observation that people across the age groups are active in adding to their knowledge and skill;
• people with long experience can still acquire new knowledge and skill in a manner that may be a revelation to them;
• the encouragement to a trainer when a learner is willing and keen;
• the importance of a learner wanting to engage with the learning notwithstanding that the employer may have motivations other than the learner becoming more competent – i.e. the employer motivated by training subsidies that could be added to the bottom line;
• an employer having access to a broader range of skills through investing in training; and, importantly, through the combination of RPL and gap training formally creating recognition (valuing) of the existence of these skills; and
• the power/motivation to the individual arising from the system formally recognising current competencies that might not be explicitly recognised (before that moment) by the individual.

Dialogue 5.3 – although the thoughts of one respondent - is offered as indicative of the broad sweep of issues attached to making the most of what a person knows and can do in the context of the formal learning component of lifelong learning (See Tables 5.1 and 5.2).

Of course, the underpinning issue is the holding and espousing of a belief in the value of drawing upon outcomes from lifelong learning. Terry raises an intriguing situation in this regard touching upon varying motivations to initiate a learning process, varying welcoming of this by the learner and sometimes the parties valuing the outcomes in unexpected ways. Terry refers to a circumstance where an employer (the organisation) embarks upon involving employees in a training program with motivations other than skills development – in this instance, possibly taking advantage of government subsidies to increase business income. However, a subsequent discovery (by the employer) is made that the increase in skill level within the organisation does indeed have benefit to the organisation.

During this phase of the research there were a number of anecdotal reports of employers shifting their motivations to install traineeship programs from seeking short-term bottom line advantage to long-term organisational advantage through having better skilled employees. Similarly, there were anecdotal reports of employees who discovered that the training/learning being imposed upon them had personal outcomes for them of increased
self-esteem as well as increased knowledge and skill which, in some instances, leads on to seeking further qualification.

And it is quite interesting that, often as a trainer, I get asked “OK I am nearly at the end of my Certificate III, what can I do next?”... I have got one fellow, at the moment, who wants to go on and actually study facility management at the RMIT as a consequence of going through only Certificate II at this stage. So he is already looking forward to what the new opportunities are and his comment to me was “You have actually opened up my eyes that I can do a lot more”. (Terry, T300702, Lines 97-118)

Returning to the issues that follow from valuing learning and its outcomes, responses from each of the other workplace training support respondents (including two from the waste management sector who are not actual trainers, but closely associated with the delivery of training) were collated against four key concepts inferred from Terry’s responses.

- There is benefit to be derived from the continuing lifelong nature of the opportunity for learning.
- Importance of the individual recognising and hence valuing the outcomes from their lifelong learning.
- Importance of others recognising, and hence valuing, the outcomes from the individual’s lifelong learning.
- Return to others from taking action to enhance the outcomes from an individual’s lifelong learning and/or just drawing upon what is available.

From analysis of the transcripts, there is a general respondent view that there is gain for an individual trainee, their workplace colleagues, and the employer from awakening appreciation and then drawing upon the outcomes from the broad spectrum of collective lifelong learning. This gain accrues even though, at first consideration, it may be thought that the activity of focussed formal training is complete within itself.

Figure 5.5 is an extrapolation from the common views of the workplace training respondents. In this figure, the individual is shown as moving from recognising and valuing what they know and can do through an interface to achieving outcomes from this recognising and valuing. The portion of the diagram shown as “interface” is a logically
arrived at notion of the need for some mechanism which facilitates this movement from recognition and valuing to actual consequential outcome. Similarly there is a process of recognition and valuing by others of what the individual knows and can do progressing through an interface to outcome benefiting the others (the organisation). Opportunity – as previously introduced (p. 82) – is shown here as central to the realisation of the outcomes where an organisation values this as compared to a circumstance where the individual is making a contribution in spite of organisational indifference or even active rejection.

The development of Figure 5.5 has been influenced by the views of the workplace training respondents that there is a difference between lifelong education and lifelong learning, but they are connected and the totality of what a person knows and can do is an accrual from both education and learning. Whilst it was not always the case that the detail of the nature of this difference was universally agreed upon, and even sometimes the meanings were transposed, the point of significance was that respondents had a sense that acquisition of knowledge and skill occurred both formally and informally throughout life – but is not always overtly recognised and valued.

The view (below) expressed by Brian encompasses interesting aspects of potential outcomes from a training organisation thinking in terms of both education and learning objectives on behalf of its organisation and trainee clients.

‘I would like to think that, in an ideal world, that obviously initially we are concerned with lifelong education because we [an RTO] are part of these types of agency. But I would like to think that, to some aspect, we are concerned with lifelong learning by changing the culture [of the workplace].
Again, simple things, like in the cleaning industry in one of the modules “occupational health and safety” we show people how to do it properly. Again, simple common sense stuff such as bend the legs, don’t lift with your back. We like to say to people that’s how you lift your kids as well. So in that aspect, that is hopefully lifelong learning.

I would like to think that in some small way, when we go to a company and help to promote, that in three or four years they become a much more holistic company when it comes to training and education and all that stuff. That allows a trainee, who is exposed to a positive work environment, when they leave and go to a negative environment to be able to recognise the difference. In this negative work environment, they might be able to say “I only live once, and I must make sure that I enjoy it”. Therefore they go somewhere else where all the features that they had at the previous one are working.’ (Brian, 300702, lines 206-219)

Taking the lead from Brian, in Figure 5.5, the enabling opportunity may have much to do with the culture manifesting in the learning environment and this may not necessarily yet be, in all respects, the abiding culture of the organisation. There is an element of “the chicken and the egg” quandary here. Does change in the learning culture precede change in organisational culture or vice versa? In this dissertation the question is somewhat rhetorical as in the course of the research there has been a progressively building case to support the argument that there is a mutuality between an organisation taking the initiative to strengthen a culture that values learning and its outcomes and the emergence of champions (not necessarily designated as leaders within the organisation) of a learning culture who have the capacity to lead an organisation in that direction.

Interestingly, in the first interview (Phase 1 – see Dialogue 5.2) Michael expressed a view that mutuality of sharing and drawing upon ideas is a key factor in organisational achievement. And in subsequent interviews culture was frequently alluded to in some form. In Figure 5.5, this culture related attribute is suggested as residing within the opportunity enabler.

Workplace training support respondents - What aids and what inhibits drawing upon outcomes from lifelong learning

The scoping interviews with the workplace training support respondents yielded views in close accord with the “NEED”, “OPPORTUNITY” and “ENCOURAGEMENT” categories (three pillars) of Figure 5.4. And, significantly, the workplace training support respondents moved beyond addressing the three pillars to add comment regarding taking action. It may
be that the trainee performance outcome obligations upon trainers are such that they are “action” orientated. These resonating range of views were mapped and are summarised below as Table 5.1. In making this expanding comparison, it is emphasised that the workplace training support respondents were reflecting upon participation in formal training by people who, themselves, typically have a perception that their job is low skilled and of low status. Under these circumstances, an awakening of the value of the broad spectrum of what the individual knows and can do may have unusually high value for the individual, the employer, and the client organisation.

Table 5.1 - An overview of the expanded insight by comparing water industry respondent views with the views of training support respondents.

Note: Additions are shown in bold and confirmations are bolded and italicised. Also, indicative ACTIONS are added because the workplace training support respondents went beyond just reflecting upon the “what” to addressing the “how” of nurturing holistic appreciation of what is known and can be done.

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<th>For the NEED to draw upon what people know and can do</th>
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<td>• The need to draw from others as you can’t know everything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Drawing from others to remain current – you don’t know what you don’t know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The organisation seeking to avoid having to import knowledge and skill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reaction against a stifling bureaucratic environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Personal motivation to draw upon what you know and can do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• An organisational sense of breaking new ground and moving forward. Encouragement of new thinking beyond past practices – “change”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Valuing reduction of management load – confidence in others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Motivated to contribute to change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• An organisation seeking advantage in the marketplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• An organisation seeking increased operational effectiveness (even if initially motivated by profitability increasing access to training subsidy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• An organisation recognising its dependence upon putting trust in employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• An organisation seeking to decrease supervision costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The trainee willingly accepting the value to themselves and the organisation in undertaking training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The trainee recognising the value to them in undertaking training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The trainee, trainer and organisation manager(s) wanting to be in a learning partnership in some way – all part of the team and all learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The organisation seeking to establish a tradition of generations on learners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of what inhibits drawing upon the outcomes from lifelong learning:

• Competitive jealousy
• Not wanting to offend by putting forward your own views.
• Time and effort required.
• Risk of failure.
• Pre-disposition to keep your ideas to yourself.
• Short-term view by employers regarding training – regarding employees as disposable.
Three Pillars – Need, Opportunity and Encouragement

- Tendering on low cost more so than quality.
- Employees not being self-motivated to contribute more than they have to.
- Employer running on low staff levels that don’t allow for time-off-the-job to train.
- Employees (in some instances) not having motivation to add to their competency certification.
- Organisation management not recognising the full range of what staff actually do.

Actions that may assist a person to more fully draw upon what they know and can do:
- Strengthen the valuing of learning and education in the organisational culture.
- Encourage valuing both tangible and intangible outcomes from holistic training.
- Sell, to the organisation, the idea that there are real benefits from supporting learning (not necessarily with immediately obvious practical outcome) and training.
- Nurture the situation where an employee seeks to build upon their first success (sometimes surprising to them) in training outcomes to go on to engage in further learning.
- Encourage trainees to value formal certification of what they know and can do.
- Encourage trainees to raise their expectations of what are proper workplace standards across a broad range of issues.
- Encourage trainees to increase their own self-image as an outcome from participation in learning.
- Nurture a sense of openness in sharing and applying knowledge – all are learners and all benefit.

For facilitating **OPPORTUNITY** for people to draw upon what they know and can do

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of what aids drawing upon outcomes from lifelong learning:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Being educated in a manner that encourages sharing of ideas in a critical manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being able to build into one’s job what you like doing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being invited into an organisation because you possess fresh ideas derived from your learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Workshops that encourage people to reveal the breadth of what they know and can do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A HR approach that recognises the value of lifelong learning. A systematic approach to drawing upon lifelong learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Triple bottom line organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adopting a consultant role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Belief that the idea is going to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Finding application for your knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Knowing what is relevant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An organisational predisposition to value outcomes from theoretical and practical learning through both formal and informal pathways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An organisational environment in which the employer has a genuine commitment to training and to the trainees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An organisation facilitating achievement of formal certification by employees for their competencies as brought to the job and acquired whilst in the job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The existence of harmonious relations between employer and employee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The existence of an effective partnership between all engaged in facilitating and supporting workplace learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An organisation seeking to reduce the load on supervisors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An organisation creating a situation where people can be heard and their ideas listened to.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Examples of what inhibits drawing upon outcomes from lifelong learning:
- Power structures that suppress offering your opinion or other contribution. Possibly on the basis that you are too new or too junior. Protecting old ideas.
- Nature of the workplace – e.g. a production line.
- Single bottom line organisations.
- Rejection of ideas leading to undermining of courage.
- Not knowing how to put forward peripheral ideas.
- An employer being primarily motivated by training subsidies more so than increased competency outcomes.
- Trainees having training imposed upon them – especially where it is in unpaid time.
- An employer having a narrow – traditional classroom – view of how learning is facilitated.

### Actions that may assist a person to more fully draw upon what they know and can do:
- Assist an organisation to recognise, and hence value, the worth of combining highly focussed training with broader education strategies.
- Assist a trainee to recognise, and hence value, the learning outcomes from their life experience along with the outcomes from their formal training.
- Include the employer in the management of training even though a high level of reliance may be placed upon an external training organisation.
- Assist an employee to recognise the value of formal credentialing arising from training outcomes added to what they already know and can do.
- Encourage an employer to take a long term view regarding the worth of training and having employees value the full scope of what they know and can do.
- Nurture a workplace learning environment in which trainers, trainees, management, supervisors and mentors see themselves as members of a learning partnership.
- Nurture a sense of self-confidence in all staff.
- Encourage people to learn, personally change as is beneficial to them and confidently participate in organisational change.
- Assist organisations to empower people to recognise the need for change and to do things differently when appropriate.

### Examples of what aids drawing upon outcomes from lifelong learning:
- An environment that encourages sharing ideas in a critical manner.
- Encouragement to contribute from your corporate memory.
- Encouragement to contribute from both length of memory and depth of memory.
- Encouragement to tap into emotional intelligence.
- Management that is sensitive to people.
- Staff empowerment to draw upon outcomes from their lifelong learning.
- Organisation accepting ideas.
- Encouraging people to contribute by talking to them.
- **Being thanked** – e.g. letter of appreciation.
- **Having a senior person support you** – encouragement.
- The organisation recognising the value of the person as an individual.
- People valuing themselves.
- Mentors having the required skills and attitudes.
- The trainee having self-confidence.
- The trainer having self-confidence.

### Examples of what inhibits drawing upon outcomes from lifelong learning:
- Outputs owned by senior people driving others to achieve their (senior people) goals.
- A person being fearful of learning.
- The organisation regarding its people as being disposable.
Three Pillars – Need, Opportunity and Encouragement

- A person placing a low value upon themselves because of the job that they do.
- A person having low self-esteem.
- Others placing low value upon a person because of inadequate performance outcomes over which the person has no control.
- Poor communication skills which inhibit a person rising above the low status to which others assign them.
- Poor job support by organisation management – “If they don’t care about me, why should I care about them?”
- Inappropriate attitude by others who should provide encouraging support.
- Superiors not seeking advice from subordinates.
- Operating under restrictive time constraints.
- Logistical barriers to close communication between people.
- Personal insecurities that work against consulting and sharing with others.

Actions that may assist a person to more fully draw upon what they know and can do:
- Remove/reduce a trainee’s anxiety regarding participating in training.
- Recognise the value of the individual – employers sometimes have a shallow view about an employee’s value.
- Enhance the public perception of the job where it is a task perceived to be of low status.
- Assist an individual to recognise that there are career options arising from what might be presently perceived as a low status job.
- Acknowledgment by an employer of what a job involves and the employee’s performance in this regard.
- Draw upon appropriately experienced mentors.
- Assist acknowledgement of a job well done by having appropriate quality specifications specified and agreed to by the parties.
- Enhance self-confidence by giving positive feedback on performance.
- Acknowledge an individual’s worth by recruiting them as a workplace mentor.
- Strengthen (change) the workplace culture by recruiting appropriate mentors – avoid drawing upon in-appropriate mentors.
- Applaud managers who invite and encourage subordinates to participate in sharing and valuing knowledge.

It was not surprising that the workplace training support respondents mostly added (rather than duplicated) to the aids and inhibitors list of the water industry respondents. At the time of analysing water industry respondent transcripts, there was a growing feeling that a definitive listing was not going to readily emerge as vagaries of different circumstances were going to generate numerous aids and inhibitors of unique character, but there was a sense that manageable (in number) categories existed. It was for this reason that the inquiry informed notion of the common categories – Need and Opportunity and Encouragement– has been advanced in this dissertation. And, associated with this many faceted circumstance, I have suggested the proposition that making the most of what a person knows and can do is more of an art than it is a science. There may be many permutations to how best drawing upon outcomes from lifelong learning principles
may be beneficially drawn upon and applied. And thus there isn’t a best approach that fits all circumstances but, in this dissertation, it is argued that there is a clarity regarding the principles.

With the “art not a science” proposition in mind, the workplace training support responses were reviewed for action inferences that might lead to the development of a tool(s) akin to the combination of the artist’s paints, brush and pallet – i.e. a painter is largely unconstrained in the manner of artistic representations from mastery of their tools. The inclusion of the “ACTION” component is prompted because workplace training support respondents invariably coupled “what aids and what inhibits” comments with “what to do about it” remarks.

From the reflection associated with creating the actions listing, an embryonic notion began to form that thus far the inquiry had focussed upon the “What” of drawing upon the outcomes from lifelong learning and that the “How” was beckoning for investigation. Accordingly, the workplace training support scoping interviewee comments were particularly reviewed for insight regarding positions on “How” and there was an associated retrospective looking back at the water industry respondents.

Table 5.2 is an overview of the “How” comparisons as emerged in Phases 1 and 2 of this inquiry – taking the workplace training support responses as the benchmark.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions to assist an organisation to advantageously draw upon the outcomes from the lifelong learning of the people comprising the organisation</th>
<th>Water industry respondent’s view that have some affinity with the workplace training support position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consensus view of workplace training support respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>Value the individual:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recognise the value of the individual.</td>
<td>‘I think that it takes courage, from the organisation’s point of view, or the team leader’s point of view, to invite new ideas… And it takes courage, from the individual’s point of view to, maybe to speak up in what might be a semi-threatening environment where new ideas get knocked down easily’ (Barry, 140502, lines 98-101)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encourage increasing of self-esteem through learning success or otherwise having pride in what is known and can be done.</td>
<td>The organisation has a role to play in breaking down an individual’s under-valuing of themselves – where it may exist. (Paraphrasing - Peter, 010502, lines 144-146)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Action to cause a person to want to contribute – ‘Mainly the motivation. Like the acceptance of the idea that you have come</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

101
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledge success in task performance – give feedback.</td>
<td>up with by the organisation’ (John, 300402, lines 95-96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applaud continuous improvement in personal performance.</td>
<td>‘I think that staff empowerment is very important. An individual has got to feel that they are contributing to achieving an outcome. So there is a lot about organisation culture in this’ (Don, 160502, lines 61-63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the individual to contribute to and grow through participation in change.</td>
<td>‘… you need to adapt your understanding and perception of things along with the change – or ahead of that change if you can.’ (Michael, 90402, lines 19-22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value the job:</td>
<td>Expressing disquiet regarding reliance upon a single source of information and learning3 - ‘… it [continual learning] needs to be of a kind of pure nature so as to empower the individual to think more about what is going on and to move forward with that.’ (Don, 160502, lines 152-153)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the perception of valued job status - particularly where it might be perceived as of low status.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applaud continuous improvement in task performance by all involved.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value the broad range of learning outcomes:</td>
<td>‘… you will need to adapt your skills and understanding throughout the term of your working life. So how that relates to your working life is that nothing remains static.’ (Michael, 90402, lines 16-19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value both learning throughout life and formal education/training as may periodically occur.</td>
<td>‘A person comes here, then he gets familiarised into the system. And then ties that to the fundamentals and how it is solved everywhere else … We are having less of a quality problem now’ (John, 300402, lines 69-72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value both tangible and intangible outcomes from training.</td>
<td>‘I wouldn’t hold out any hope to even look at short-term outcomes in tapping people’s lifelong learning as an organisation, I would only ever think of it on a five or ten year horizon …’ (Peter, 010502, lines 121-123)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value learning outcomes that may not be immediately useful.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support the individual learner:</td>
<td>‘And it is that interchange of skills and knowledge between people that applies to the organisational learning most of all.’ (Michael, 90402, lines 25-27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce anxieties – where such exist – associated with engaging with learning.</td>
<td>‘… it is not that we come here and invent things. It is probably more like a bridge … it is you go and talk to the operators and then really find out how they are telling here is the problem’ (John, 300402, lines 131-133)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage an individual to build upon training success to proceed to further learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Show that engagement with learning enhances career options.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nurture the concept of learning partnerships:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage sharing and applying of knowledge – all are learners.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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3 Don used the example of a television news promo “I know everything I need to know, because Brian told me so” to make his point that uncritical acceptance of information/learning from a single source is a matter of grave concern to him.
Three Pillars – Need, Opportunity and Encouragement

- Broaden responsibility and ownership regarding facilitating learning.

‘... if people are able to express their views more comfortably in group situations then I think that has a big flow on effect.’
(Michael, 90402, lines 164-165)

‘... make sure that the culture of the team work, or of the organisation, is one whereby those people with the different learnings in the past are able to share them and voice them.’
(Barry, 140502, lines 74-76)

Workplace training support respondents – Stakeholder interests

Whilst the employer and the clients of the contract cleaning or waste management organisation where typically identified as stakeholders, and sometimes others, the broad outcomes for a trainee were clearly prominent in the minds of the workplace training support respondents.

‘The stakeholders are the person himself being trained because that engenders confidence and a bit of, some of the basic psychological needs like, “I’m valued, I’m needed” so there’s harmony in the workplace. The supervisor benefits of course, the management benefits, the whole company benefits and that person’s family would benefit and I just see that as all embracing – it’s win/win everywhere, all over. Just the whole picture.’
(Howard, 101002, lines 158-163)

‘... people who are cleaning need to feel empowered in their job so that their job is not just about tasks. It’s about human relationships and that kind of thing as well, which is very important – self-esteem.’
(Jodie, workshop 290802, tape 154)

As an extension to the above, in identifying stakeholders, and remarking upon the nature of their interest, the workplace training support respondents frequently touched upon the importance of looking beyond technical task competence to the value of broader capabilities. This is very interesting as it would not have been surprising to find that a trainer would place emphasis upon who benefits from the outcomes of the technical training that they facilitated and upon which they are judged. Brian’s comments were typical of a valuing across a broad range of a trainee’s capabilities and personal attributes that are revealed and strengthened in association with the formal training.

Identifying stakeholders in strengthening cleaning competency – ‘I think definitely the person [trainee], their family, And I say that again, not just from a training/trainer aspect but from when I go back to our previous working with unemployed people and their low self-esteem and developing that. And then the feedback that you got when they got the jobs, and six months later just chatting away you think “Hang on, is that the same person?” And you know that that must impact upon their family and impact on their friends. Obviously, it impacts on them [the trainee].
(Brian, 300702, lines 407-415)
In Dialogue 5.4 (following) Gail – a trainer who has been both a cleaner and a successful cleaning contractor – gives a succinct insight into the manner in which a cleaner contributes to the interests of diverse stakeholders, draws upon much more than technical skill, and has good reason for pride in the job and pride in self.

Dialogue 5.4 – Contract cleaning workplace training support interview

Lewis 521 (Researcher)

Final question. Who are the stakeholders in having a successful outcome from a learning partnership? Who stands to benefit?

Gail 525 (Respondent)

Obviously the employer benefits, by improved knowledge and efficiency, and improved skill base of their employee.

The mentor benefits because they are seeing, hopefully, positive outcome by the work that they have been doing with the employee. The mentor would benefit from job satisfaction, I would imagine.

The trainer benefits, because virtually a similar reason to why the mentor would benefit; and obviously that is their role to achieve outcomes for the particular institute [RTO] that they are working for.

And lastly the employee benefits, because they are getting recognised for a skill that perhaps they haven’t been recognised for before or they are improving their skill base that they already have – so it makes them more confident in their role in the workplace through that increased knowledge and that recognition.

Lewis 548

You mentioned earlier about how a cleaner could be subject to abuse – criticism - by the people in the environment where they are cleaning. Is that related to this notion of who are the stakeholders?

Gail 557

It is. A cleaner who has been in the industry for a long time might have very sound skills in regard to the work that they perform manually. But they might not have sound skills, or knowledge, in the area of what a specification [the particular site job] is – for example. So if they walked into this room, they would walk in before they had any training and they would go alright I know through my experience that I need to clean that, that, and that. But that might not be what the specification is. There might be other areas that they need to look at, there might be other things that they need to take into account.

So what I have noticed, in regards to the training that we have delivered, is not only an improvement in their [trainee]manual skill base, but the big area for improvement has been their knowledge in how the company operates [their work site], communication, team work, occupational health and safety. So perhaps units that aren’t directly related to the actual manual cleaning side of it, that’s where I find the big improvements are made. Because they have a greater understanding of what the company [client] expects from them, what the employer [contract cleaning organisation] expects from them. They have a greater understanding of what they need to contribute into the workplace. They perhaps get, after training, other duties given to them that they might not have had before, which adds to the lifelong learning experience.

They [trainee] might be made OH&S representative in the workplace because of the training they have had. So, in actual fact, they are broadening their role in the workplace from perhaps just generally working on the tools - cleaning every day - to working on the tools say 70% of the time and being able to work with the client to perhaps overcome issues.

Being able to negotiate when they do get a critical comment made to them instead of turning around and going ‘Oh well that’s just what I am told to do’ they will have a more effective way of being able to answer that particular critical comment. And perhaps the negativity factor can be overcome because they can actually explain to the person who is making that comment what their role is and they can negotiate at a more effective level.

Lewis 609

I would just like to put one other thought to you regarding stakeholders. And that is - is it possible that even their family are stakeholders?
Yes. We had a good comment a couple of weeks ago … One of the trainees who had just finished Certificate III, and she had been cleaning for twenty five years, and we asked her what benefit her family got from the traineeship program. And her children were very proud of her because their mother had been able to go back to school and receive a nationally accredited certificate. Where she had basically left school at fourteen years of age many, many, years earlier and they were extremely proud of her.

So it gave the children something to go to school with and talk about to their friends. And it gave the husband something to be proud about, to brag about, down at the hotel when he went down to have a couple of beers with his mates on a Friday night. Which gave her a tremendous amount of satisfaction when she went home, because she had the family all patting her on the back and saying good on you mum. She had been able to achieve.

(Gail, 050902, lines 171-238)

Workplace training support respondents – Phase 2 summary of outcomes – building upon Phase 1 derived insights

The nature of the environment being probed in Phase 2 is markedly different to the generality of the water industry environment of Phase 1. Whereas the water industry respondents were mostly reflecting upon circumstances involving a high level of professionally qualified people, the workplace training respondents were focused upon the circumstances of supporting the competency development of trainees at what many in the community would feel (arguably, wrongly) is at the low-end of the job status and skill spectrum. It is therefore of interest that the range of Phase 2 views had strong alignment with the outcomes from Phase1.

In general terms, the workplace training support respondents’ views, as listed below, align with views expressed by the water industry respondents.

- Being a lifelong learner is beneficial to the individual.
- It is helpful when the individual recognises and hence values the outcomes from their lifelong learning.
- It is helpful when others recognise and value the outcomes from an individual’s lifelong learning.
- There is a return to others from taking action to enhance the outcomes from an individual’s lifelong learning and/or just drawing upon what is available.
5.4 Summary of the combined insights derived from Phase 1 and Phase 2

Phase 1 of the scoping study set up a foundation for Phase 2 of data analysis along the lines that -

- the existence of need to make the most of what a person knows and can do,
- the nurturing of opportunity to appropriately draw upon outcomes from lifelong learning, and
- providing encouragement to the individual to draw upon the broad outcomes from their lifelong learning,

are appropriate issues of interest – dubbed the three pillars. Accordingly, notwithstanding the differences of environment, it is a significant Phase 2 outcome that the views of the workplace training support respondents are confirming of the Phase 1 insight. The case for the three pillars is strengthened by Phase 2 and is evidenced by mapping workplace training support respondents views of aids, inhibitors and actions against NEED, OPPORTUNITY and ENCOURAGEMENT.

In addition to adding to description of the three pillars, Phase 2 extended the field of insight to include actions that are appropriate to supporting outcomes as valued by stakeholders. In this respect, it appears appropriate to embrace the possibility that the “how” of making the most of what people know and can do can be usefully viewed through the prism of stakeholder interests. Interestingly, the contract cleaning overview of stakeholders accords with the indicative listing from Phase 1 (p. 88), but places even stronger emphasis on external stakeholders as exampled by Terry’s remarks below -

‘The stakeholders are - the way we view them – is the organisation who is represented by its managers or owners or what have you; the second tier management below that who then make this happen on the specific site or location.

Because of the nature of the industry, the cleaners don’t actually work within the employer’s premises - or it would be very rare – they are all deployed throughout suburbia, or the countryside, working for various clients. And they are managed by periodic supervision – face to face, telephone contact remote control whatever you wish to call it.

So yes you have got the management; you have got the middle management; and you have got the trainee.
There can sometimes be an issue with the client. And some employers have a philosophy that “We don’t want you to train on our client’s premises, because we have made a representation at the tender stage that we are an efficient organisation with a highly skilled labour force, and therefore we don’t want to give any hint that we are not. And I look at that and I say “Well hang on, what you are really doing is saying to your client we are investing because we want a long-term relationship with you. We are investing into this contract by bringing in additional skills over and above what should be the minimum requirement”’.

(Terry, 300702, lines 200-218)

Clearly, there are multiple layers of stakeholder interest in nurturing circumstances where a person will draw upon more than just a narrow range of what they know and can do, but the parties may not be aware of the extent to which their interests might be better served.

On the matter of whose interests are being served, and what actions might assist, in further comparing Phase 2 outcomes with Phase 1, there is similarity between the contract cleaning employer only drawing narrowly upon the range of knowledge and skill of an employee cleaner and the technocrat as depicted in the expanding spectrum of Figure 5.2. And, although the initial motivations may be different, there is a possibility that both the technocrat and the narrowly focused employer may both come to recognise, and value, the opportunity to draw more holistically upon what an individual knows and can do.

With regard to the above summary, Figure 5.6 is a diagrammatic overview (in crude form) of the combination of Phase 1 and Phase 2 derived insights.
Three Pillars – Need, Opportunity and Encouragement

Existence of –

**NEED**
and/or

**OPPORTUNITY**
and/or

**ENCOURAGEMENT**
to variable degrees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core ability of the individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>technical knowledge and skill</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appropriate amalgam of core and more expansive field of ability

Figure 5.6 – Drawing upon the outcomes from lifelong learning (Phases 1 & 2 insight)

- the individual recognising and valuing the extent of what they know and can do;
- others recognising and valuing what the individual knows and can do; and
- demand and support from stakeholders (internal and external) relevant to motivating the individual to appropriately draw upon the range of what the individual knows and can do.

Note: The varying expanded range of drawing upon what is known and can be done does not reduce to zero because it is unlikely that a situation will arise where some components of generic life skills are not required for effective performance.
Chapter Six: Outcomes from CFA scoping inquiry

6.1 Phase 3 - Progress of inquiry into the Country Fire Authority (CFA)

The inability to find a project within the water industry and the difficulty with adequately penetrating beyond the trainer role within the contract cleaning and waste management industries were, in themselves, research outcomes. At some organisational levels there was a weakness in felt-need to engage in the proposed inquiry, and the prospect of achieving empowering championing appeared unlikely.

In contrast to the prospecting nature of Phases 1 and 2, the engagement with Emergency Management Australia (EMA) and the Country Fire Authority (CFA) came about because of organisational acknowledgement that the retirement and resignation of volunteers is a significant strategic risk (CFA 2001). Delivery of CFA fire fighting, and community safety services, is dependent upon a force of approximately 50,000 volunteers and retention of volunteers – especially given the cost of training – is important.

Both the EMA and the CFA had a stance of “really wanting to” with regard to strengthening volunteer retention. And the possibility that strengthening drawing upon the outcomes of volunteers’ learning could aid this achievement struck a welcoming chord. A felt-need existed, a door of opportunity was opened, and CFA career staff and volunteers were encouraged to contribute to the project by drawing upon a knowledge base beyond their core fire fighting or other CFA specialities. In turn, the CFA career staff and volunteers who chose to contribute to the research were acutely conscious of the need, and had personal motivation that was in accord with the organisational need and support for a research project. There was also a CFA organisational belief that drawing upon the full range of knowledge and skill which volunteers bring to, and acquire from the CFA, is beneficial to all.

Consequent upon the foregoing, the third phase of the scoping inquiry had a firm organisational foundation as indicated by Mr Graham Fountain’s 26th April 2002 letter of support (addressed to EMA) for the project:
‘Transference of competency from one context to another has significant advantages to CFA members, the community and CFA. ... The outcomes of this project, it is expected, will benefit CFA and the range of diverse volunteer based organisations.’ (Graham Fountain, Executive Manager, Human Resources Policy and Planning, Country Fire Authority)

Given that CFA staff and volunteers were to be invited to participate by drawing upon the breadth and depth of their experience relating to volunteering, and in accord with the importance of acknowledged need, this was a very significant statement by a senior CFA executive.

As a consequence of the retention of CFA volunteer members becoming the focus of the research, the core research question of “What aids and what inhibits the outcomes from lifelong learning being applied to organisational achievement?”, for the purpose of the CFA inquiry, evolved to “What aids and what inhibits the outcomes from a CFA volunteer’s lifelong learning being drawn upon in such a manner as to motivate the member to remain as a volunteer?” Although this is a wordy expression of the focus of inquiry, it does contain a statement of outcome that is highly valued by the organisation. Under these circumstances of felt-need, there was an expectation of support by empowering champions for the research study and probing the issues of opportunity and encouragement impacting upon making the most of what a CFA volunteer knows and can do.

6.2 Nuances of need

Although it is running ahead of the sequence in which insight was strengthened, the CFA case highlights the potential for need to have multiple facets in terms of the who and the what.

- From an organisational perspective, the CFA has needs that are framed by its target outputs of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery with respect to fire threat to community safety (CFA 2003, p.2). This has led to the concept of broader membership beyond volunteers as just fire fighters.

‘The broader role of membership opened up doors for people that may not have necessarily wanted to do the practical fire fighting, but they bring a wealth of experience from a particular field that might be the fund raising, it
could be recruiting issues. The broader role has really opened up that door to those types of people.’ (Jane, Workshop 200203, lines 60-63)

However, notwithstanding Jane’s valuing of the broader membership role, in the course of the research study it was frequently the case that respondents were not thinking beyond the fire fighting role. Indeed, there is an appearance that a volunteer who is not a fire fighter is corporately, and by volunteers, perceived as having second class status.

- From a volunteer’s perspective, the personal need being addressed ranges from the proper self-interest of neighbours helping each other in the case of a rural brigade volunteer, where there is an ever-present threat of wildfire, to combinations of community service, excitement, and camaraderie which typically apply in urban type brigades. Also, in the course of this study, these varying volunteer motivations were reflected upon in the context of what I style as the CFA paradox. A CFA brigade typically sees its primary role as fighting fires, but the CFA works hard at reducing the need to fight fires. What then is the motivation, personal need being met, to remain for the excitement seeking volunteer?

Having recruited a volunteer, and then the volunteer coming to the realisation that fire frequency is low and/or an extensive period of training is required before turning-out, resolution of the CFA paradox may lie in Carmel’s comment –

‘You will hear a lot of people say that people join the fire brigade because they thought it would be exciting to go to a fire; but then they stayed because they found a family.’ (Carmel, 11102, lines 96-98)

Referring back to Figures 5.2 (p. 79) and 5.5 (p. 95), and taking the case of a volunteer who is motivated to serve as both a fire fighter and performing broader duties, the cone enclosing the central technical (fire fighting) core is best represented as comprising segments more so than concentric anulus of broader contribution – see Figure 6.1
Irrespective of whether the extended, beyond technical core competency, drawing upon what a person knows and can do is perceived as concentric layers of difference or as radial segments, this dissertation asserts that under circumstances of need, opportunity and encouragement, there is much to be gained by taking deliberate action to more fully draw upon the aggregate of the knowledge and skill base of the individual.

### 6.3 Building upon Phase 1 and 2 outcomes

The CFA avowed need to increase the propensity of a volunteer to remain as a volunteer created the circumstances for inquiring further into the emerging significance of coupling consideration of “action” with the “three pillars”. There was an expectation that the volunteering aspect would yield a further level of insight into the relationships between need, opportunity, encouragement and action as presented in Table 5.1 (p. 97). Even in a non-volunteering environment the propensity of a person to draw upon the expanded range of what they know and can do, beyond conventional/shallow expectation, has an element of voluntary contribution toward enhancing organisational achievement. For example, Phase 2 of the research revealed that in the case of a cleaner working within a major shopping complex the cleaner frequently voluntarily acts as an unofficial information officer and performs other acts based on broad knowledge and skills which are of assistance to shoppers and store holders.

The beginning round of interviews with CFA career staff were of an initial exploratory and scoping nature on the topic of making the most of what volunteers know and can do. The
thrust of these open-ended interviews was structured by the scoping questions introduced in Chapter Four, but customised for the CFA inquiry.

### Table 6.1 – CFA Interview scoping questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>With retention of volunteers in mind –</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What is your understanding of the nature of lifelong learning, of volunteers, as may benefit the CFA – What is it and how does it stand to potentially benefit the organisation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What do you feel are the main outcomes of your lifelong learning, and that of others (especially volunteers), that are potentially relevant to adding to achievement by the CFA?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What are the factors that you feel encourage you, and others (especially volunteers), to apply the outcomes of lifelong learning to the benefit of the CFA – in the short-term and in the long term?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What are the factors that you feel inhibit you, and others (especially volunteers), from applying the outcomes of lifelong learning to the benefit of the CFA – in the short-term and in the long-term?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who do you see as the main stakeholders in your, and others (especially volunteers), being able to fully draw upon the outcomes of lifelong learning in such away as to add to achievement by the CFA?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These initial interviews served the purpose of establishing a sense of the status regarding recognising and valuing outcomes from lifelong learning as it existed within the CFA. Given that these early comments were made by career staff, their views largely reflected the organisational perspective, but did have strong overtones of a personal view. The subsequent workshops – involving volunteers and career staff – provided the means of comparing career staff (organisational) views with the views of front-line personnel (volunteers).

Outcomes from the scoping interviews informed design and delivery of three scoping workshops, each conducted over an approximate three hour period, during February to April 2003. These scoping workshops were forums for regional and brigade level members of the CFA to share responses to questions as listed in Table 6.2.

### Table 6.2 – CFA scoping workshop issues for discussion

| • Why does a volunteer join and remain as a CFA member? |
| • Does it help in keeping a member to know what a volunteer brings by way of knowledge and skill to the CFA? |
| • How valuable, in other aspects of their life is the knowledge and skill that a volunteer gets from being a CFA member? |
| • Do volunteers really know and value what they know and can do? |
| • What is there about a brigade that keeps a volunteer’s interest? |

The questions listed in Table 6.2 were indicative questions provided to workshop participants in briefing notes prior to each workshop. Workshop participants were free to
address these issues as appropriate to their volunteering environment and to expand or contract the level of sharing of views according to their interest in the generality of the workshop topic.

Whilst the scoping workshops had some commonality and continuity with the individual scoping interviews, they were significantly different in that they drew upon people actually sharing views in an interactive way. In this way, the scoping workshops provided a collegiate base for shaping further inquiry as a group if they, and/or others, so chose.

In addition to the nine initial scoping interviews, there were also four other CFA career staff scoping interviews conducted during the period of the workshops. Except for one instance, these later interviewees were not nominated by the CFA, but emerged as interested parties. Of the total thirteen career staff interviewees, seven had been volunteers and three were continuing as volunteers in addition to their staff roles.

6.4 Outcomes from Phase 3 scoping interviews

The following is an amalgam of the outcomes from all thirteen CFA scoping interviewees.

CFA scoping interview respondents - The meaning and value of lifelong learning:

As for the Phase 1 and Phase 2 respondents, there was a sense that consciously valuing outcomes from lifelong learning was not a front-of-mind issue. However, once prompted, CFA career staff respondents readily expressed views upon the issue as exampled by Ken.

'It is not a question that I have given a lot of thought to up until I read the briefing document. The picture that it conjures in my mind is the progressive development of a person's understanding about all things. And there is not a day goes by when you don't learn something. Or have something reaffirmed in your understanding of how the world works, or how people work, or how they interact together.

Perhaps in the context of our organisation, and I guess it is applicable to most, is that lifelong learning is the gathering of understanding from all aspects of the involvement that you have in your work, or formal education, or experience with others, or even in the pastimes that you might choose. And there is an opportunity for a person to apply what they learn in one context to another - and it should be.' (Ken, 021002, lines 18-27)
The CFA interviewee behaviour of initially expressing unfamiliarity with the lifelong learning topic and then talking about it in an insightful manner followed the pattern of water industry and workplace training support interviewees. It is as though engagement with the topic is even deeper in the subconscious than could be described as tacitly held, but yet only a small prompting is required to bring functional engagement into the explicit realm.

The potential for lifelong learning to shape a person, and as a dynamic occurrence, was outlined by David.

‘What you pick up colours your views on the other things that you then pick up. So you start getting biases and seeing the world in certain ways which then has an impact on what you pick up in the future. And so, over time, you acquire all of this information which has an impact on who you are and also how you see the world and how you interact with the world.

And along the way you also lose information. So if you learnt the clarinet as a kid, and you stopped playing for a while, then that skill disappears and drops off. So there is maybe some sort of bell curve shape where you acquire information over time - probably more than you are losing.

And then later on in life maybe you lose more information than you actually gain. Maybe because you become more fixed in your views. Maybe because just mentally your capacity to retain information decreases – I don't know it needs to be thought through. For me it is just the process of remembering things that you pick up along the way, and then trying to get some understanding or linkages between those in your mind.’

(David, 250902, lines 17-30)

Ken’s and David’s thoughts are representative of expressed sentiments arising from inviting CFA members to reflect upon the implications of lifelong learning; and it is apparent that a deliberate act, leading to an awakening of awareness, is a step toward making the most of what is known and can be done.

There was a generally expressed view that, beyond what was seen to be immediately relevant to their fire fighting role, the broad range of lifelong learning outcomes possessed by volunteers, was traditionally only weakly drawn upon, if at all. Reflection then led interviewees through to suggesting reasons why drawing upon a broad range of knowledge and skill was important in the performance of a volunteer’s CFA role and in other aspects of their life. Figure 6.2 (p. 119) illustrates the nature of interviewee positions and is derived in the context of interviewee perceptions that there is much more in play regarding
retaining a volunteer’s interest and commitment than recognising and valuing what they know and can do as commented upon by Ken in Dialogue 6.1.

**Dialogue 6.1 – CFA scoping interview, Ken, 021002, lines 90-129** (Note: Ken is a pseudonym for the interviewee)

Ken (Respondent) 327
A lot of the people who join our fire brigades do develop very strong leadership skills over the years because of their involvement. Now they may well have had the aptitude for that skill well and truly beforehand but the fire brigades often give them a forum in which they can develop and refine those skills. And I am aware of many of our volunteers who are absolutely brilliant leaders and who are very highly regarded people within their community. And often it is because of the leadership skills and the opportunity that the fire brigade has given them to develop and demonstrate their leadership skills.

Lewis (Researcher) 345
It may be that as well as leadership skills there is the notion of increasing self-esteem. Have you seen that happen?

Ken 350
Very much so. There are a number of people who have joined our brigades and there has been uncertainty as to them being part of the brigade. Because they have come with a reputation or with a history that raises concerns. And yet it has been the opportunity for them to step past that history that they brought with them. Develop skills, operate in an environment that they would not have otherwise been given an opportunity to demonstrate their capability to be part of a team or even to play a leadership role in the team. And there are two or three cases that I have worked with over the years that come to mind.

I recall one young person who joined the brigade that I worked with – very quiet, very shy, very retiring, but over a period of three or four years developed skills, developed confidence, to the point where that person took on a leadership role in the brigade. And if you had asked us three or four years before, whether that would have ever been possible, we would have shaken our heads in dismay and said that that could never happen. But the brigade gave that person the opportunity to learn, to develop their skills, and to operate in a secure environment where they were supported and able to develop those skills.

Lewis 385
What’s your view then about the possibility that if you were to take special notice of what people bring by way of outcomes of lifelong learning and what they get and take to other parts of their life – What impact can that have upon retention of volunteers? Is there a lever there?

Ken 395
Yes there is. I think we have to be careful that we don’t overplay the significance of that because there are many things that influence a person’s decision to join a brigade and to remain in a brigade. The recognition that they get. The positive feedback from being part of a brigade is only one aspect of it. The social relationships that they develop within the brigade and the way that they are treated by their peers is fundamental to it. And all of those things are tangled up together.

But first and foremost amongst people’s reason for staying is, I believe, that they are clear in their own mind that they are valued. And that is not just to do with their skills. It is often to do with a whole host of personal traits, personality and character and the like.

Examination of Ken’s thoughts reveals that, although he was cautious regarding not over-emphasising the contribution made to retention by drawing broadly upon a volunteer’s outcomes from lifelong learning, his comments relate to valuing what a volunteer knows and can do as exampled below.

- The CFA is a leadership and team building learning environment.
Outcomes from CFA scoping inquiry

• Even in the case of a person where there was initial doubt (in Ken’s commentary) there must have been something about the candidate that won entry to probationary status (such as applies to all new volunteers). If this was further probed, it would not be surprising to find that this was to do with perception of potential for contribution to the brigade – i.e. there was some foundation of useful knowledge and skill to be built upon. Even if the reason for admission to probationary status was to do with personal relationships within the brigade, acceptance by the brigade as a full member would require that the recruit does demonstrate competence (knowledge, skill and attitude) to a level where the required “trust”, is warranted.

• Ken makes the point that “being valued” is the foundation upon which remaining as a member is grounded. It is not too large an extrapolation, from this sentiment, to suggest that social relationships and the manner in which a volunteer is treated by their peers are influenced by what this colleague can contribute as a consequence of what they know and can do. In essence, as a consistent outcome from subsequent inquiry, there is mutuality between a volunteer being valued and the volunteer valuing being valued – this is the foundation of “trust” as frequently mentioned.

As illustrated in Figure 6.2, Ken’s comments are taken as an alerting to the importance to guard against thinking, and acting, narrowly with respect to probing the potential relationship between drawing upon the outcomes of a volunteer’s lifelong learning and retaining the volunteer as a CFA member. There is much more in play than just making the most of what a person knows and can do. There is interconnectedness. The interview citings in Figure 6.2 are all coupled with respondent comments supporting Ken’s view of “things being tangled up together” and are further evidenced in the following.

‘I think that the retention thing happens at a local level... they don’t join CFA as a statewide organisation. They join the Upwey Brigade, or they join the U Potty Pot tin shed, because of the people that are there. And so the capacity to share with others is very much a local thing – I think. And the capacity to learn, is very much a local thing. (David, 250902, lines 380-386)

‘... volunteers have got this, I think a unique, quality - an ethos that exists - that you don’t find in many other places. They’re not being paid. They’ll get out of
bed any time of the night to run off to fight fires, put themselves at risk.’
(Patrick, 201102, lines 60-63)

‘Some groups are run on an almost ... fiefdom hereditary basis and so on.’
(Charles 111202, line 154)

‘The brigade, being like a family, means that there is great solidarity and people then share in a community experience. They grow as a result of it, and they benefit by it’. (Paul, 141002, lines 170-172)

‘I think that what a lot of volunteers get from their involvement with the CFA is social. There is the getting together with your mates and they do all of that sort of stuff. You get to play with a big red truck, which is always a bit of fun for a lot of our volunteers...’ (Elizabeth, 180203, lines 73-76)

‘They are probably consciously saying ‘Yes, I want to do something for the community’. But I reckon for a lot of them there is something more personal in it. There is something that they want out of belonging to the organisation. And in a lot of people, it is probably a mix of both.’ (Sam,260902, lines 286-289)

With these above examples of additional factors in mind, Figure 6.2 is a representation of moving from recognition of an available resource, to valuing what is on offer, and then to action in respect of drawing upon what volunteers know and can do. This harks back to the earlier data supporting the view that recognition, valuing and action is not a one sided process – both the individual and the organisation have a role to play.
### Recognition of the range of what a volunteer knows and can do

‘I would think that there is probably quite a broad capacity of things that these people are able to do that we don’t tap. That there are a whole range of skills that they use that aren’t clearly thought through as needed in the job. Some of them have got fund raising skills, some of them are good at resolving conflict, and all of these sorts of things. All of those things that would help the brigade actually function aren’t necessarily seen as core skills that people need to have to fight fires – pouring wet stuff on hot staff, as they call it.’ (David, 250902, lines 69-73)

‘… we don’t help people externalise [recognise what they bring to the CFA] their experience – coming back to lifelong learning I think. I’m not sure how to do that or how we would go about it, but there’s very little that the individual probably perceives as being immediately useful [to the CFA] from their life.’ (Patrick, 201102, lines 199-203)

So I don’t think we necessarily do as well as we can out of leveraging a lot of knowledge that’s out there amongst the volunteers. I distinctly feel that the CFA headquarters, and a lot of the corporate staff, undervalue the volunteers.’ (Charles, 111202, lines 221-223)

### Valuing the broad range of what a volunteer knows and can do

Lifelong learning is a necessary requirement for people to continue to be able to provide usefulness to CFA. It also applies in their work lives where they will have to cope with technological change and changes in practices. (Paul, 141002, lines 47-49)

‘… for a lot of our volunteers, they come in with none of that technical background [pump operation, etc], but they will come in with other skills and areas of expertise that are relevant to the effective functioning of the brigade in the normal operational sense: … the majority of the business of a brigade is not related to firefighting it is actually related to keeping the brigade together … it is the rest of the stuff that occupies probably 90 to 95 percent of a volunteers time in their involvement with the brigade. And so things like ordinary everyday things that people learn through life, to a greater or lesser degree, effective communications skills and being able to organise the secretarial type paperwork and pay the bills on time, keep records of who has done what, maintenance of equipment – that sort of thing.’ (Elizabeth, 180202, lines 53-64)

### Usefulness of tools to aid recognition and valuing of what volunteers know and can do

‘… you would have to create a process which recognises peoples’ lifelong learnings and captures that – because we don’t necessarily capture that in any formal way. … But then the trick then is to be able to tap into those skills and make sure that they are used in a tangible and meaningful way so that the individual can say “Yes they have got me doing this because they know that I have got all these skills”. … and the people get recognised for the fact that we have tapped into them and we have used them effectively.’ (Sam, 260902, lines 431-433)

‘I think the first thing that we have to do is recognise it. That’s the feeling, recognise it, volunteers’ skills, and have programs in place that allows people to utilise those skills in CFA. I am a huge advocate for it because I actually brought it into my catchment. And we actually went out and recruited people who have an ethnic background, who can speak other languages; and we recognised those people.’ (Adam, 031002, lines 322-344)

Figure 6.2 – Recognition, valuing and action with respect to what CFA volunteers know and can do
CFA scoping interview respondents - Retaining volunteers as CFA members

In this Phase 3 instance – compared to Phases 1 and 2 – the research study had a specific potential organisational outcome as a focus. Accordingly, following scoping of what is understood to be meant by lifelong learning and its outcomes, the study turned to interviewees’ views regarding the likelihood that drawing upon a broad range of what a volunteer knows and can do may add to their propensity to remain as a volunteer.

The scoping interviewees, upon individual reflection, did assert a relationship between drawing upon outcomes from lifelong learning and retention of volunteers. However, this is one factor within a broader milieu as cautioned by Ken and further exampled in the following views offered by Carmel.

- A belief that there is much to be gained by the CFA drawing upon what its members know and can do.

  ‘I would think that the happiest brigade is the brigade that is using everyone to their best ability - in a utopian world, that’s what I would think. I would think that CFA would have a stronger brigade culture, and a stronger organisational performance, if everybody’s skills were being used to their best ability. And therefore you would then say that the community are benefiting from a brigade who are aware of the skills and using the skills of their people. The nice way of putting that is that everybody can benefit from it. However, the CFA under-utilises this resource.’ (Carmel, 11102, lines 183-189)

- Possibly, at the time of recruitment, there is not as much inquiry made about what a new member brings, and would benefit the brigade, as should be the case.

  ‘...I do think that we could probably extrapolate a little bit more from people and be a bit more aware of the benefits of those skills of people’ (Carmel, 11102, lines 127-129)

- Consideration should be given to the possibility that a CFA volunteer may prefer to not draw upon their professional (day job) expertise as they are seeking variety in their life and maybe relief from what they do elsewhere.

  ‘... but I would imagine that some people would actually join the brigade to get away from the other things that they do’ (Carmel, 11102, lines 146-147)
People have now got less time to give to the CFA and this should be taken into account – especially with the requirement to now participate in formal training and assessment. The level of personal commitment is now greater than it was in the past.

‘And volunteerism in general, as you would know, is declining because people have just less and less time in their life. And here is CFA saying “And by the way, you also need to go through some not rigorous training, but serious training; and maintain those skills as well through regular training”’.

(Carmel, 11102, lines 167-170)

The analysis of the CFA career staff scoping interviews yielded retention related themes listed below as Thematic Set 1. A fuller explanation of this and the following two thematic sets is given in Henry and Hughes (2003).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Set 1: Potentially contributing to retention</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Valuing of outcomes from learning: Volunteers, CFA colleagues and others valuing the range of what volunteers know and can do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Applauding commitment: Building upon the high level of commitment exhibited by volunteers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Valuing identity: Achieving and maintaining pride in CFA identity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Comfortable with learning and its application: Stress and threat-free drawing upon past learning and acquisition and application of new learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Respecting the past as a base upon which to build new futures: Initiating and embracing change by drawing upon the insights and capabilities of experienced volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recognising and strengthening available competencies/capabilities: Enhancing and drawing upon the range of what a volunteer knows and can do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strengthening partnership: CFA and volunteers working toward stronger partnership.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Nurturing the passion: Building, in a sensitive manner, upon the passion that volunteers exhibit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Supporting continuance of a positive brigade culture: Enhancing the “learning” quality of a brigade culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Applauding added capability value: Promoting that volunteers have much more to offer as a consequence of their CFA commitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Applying lifelong learning outcomes to initiating and embracing change: Volunteers being included as agents of change rather than seeing themselves as victims of change (Maira &amp; Scott-Morgan (1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mentor orientated drawing upon volunteer’s life experiences: Retaining corporate knowledge and facilitating personal growth through learning partnerships.</td>
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CFA scoping interview respondents - What aids and what inhibits drawing upon outcomes from lifelong learning:

Consequent upon the “retention of volunteers” focus, the interviewees addressed the aids and inhibitors matter from the perspective of what may serve to influence a volunteer to remain as a volunteer.
Whilst the need to have a turn-out capability to fight fire is clear to all, and this requires adequate numbers of volunteers with the required knowledge and skill, the interviewees made comments that indicated a degree of organisational blindness to valuing what else is known and could be done by volunteers. Dialogue 6.2 is a running selection from the interview with Brenda that illustrates this generally shared pattern of concern and lost opportunity.

Dialogue 6.2 – Extracts from CFA scoping interview: Brenda (pseudonym), 020403

- **Under-valuing** - ‘… we don’t listen to volunteers about how we are going to solve the water [access to adequate volume of water close by the fire ground] issues. We don’t call upon their previous experience … We [CFA corporately] come in and tell them how they are going to organise their fire plans’ (lines 55-59).

- **Under-valuing** - ‘I think that another problem within the organisation is once they become a volunteer [fire fighter], they lose all other hats in the eyes of the organisation. We have some wonderful resources here… We’re selling ourselves short in a major way here. I just think that we’re too busy lumping people into the volunteer [fire fighter] category that we just cannot recognise what else they could contribute to the CFA.’ (lines 72-80)

- **Under-valuing** - ‘… we don’t grab people and say, can you assist us with this? It’s almost like to do that would show a sign of weakness [corporate CFA] … If would say we do need your help, we do need you to sit down and explain to us, you know, what can you contribute to the CFA? (lines 84-87)

- **Taking but not giving** - ‘… two young boys both applied to go to the youth leadership course. And these boys both need building in their self esteem - and the youth leadership course is a wonderful course - but for some reason we have this ridiculous policy that because they’re from the same brigade they both can’t go …’ (lines 97-101)

- **Taking but not giving** - ‘… for example, praise where it’s due, the CFA have a wonderful first aid course … People are invited to do their first aid, yearly refreshers, no-one has a problem with that, it’s only three hours a year that they have to do in refresher and that’s something that everyone can benefit from, OK. So it sounds wonderful, OK. There is a limit. For a rural brigade it’s a maximum of three to four people that are allowed [why not all who wish] to have the training. In an urban brigade, it’s between six and eight … depending on the operations managers.’ (lines 189-198)

- **Taking but not giving** - ‘And then I come to an organisation which has some training processes but only if there’s an immediate benefit for the CFA – not seen to give a lot back the other way.’ (lines 200-203)

- **Weak attention to cost versus return from a volunteer’s perspective** – Responding to the researcher asking if it would be useful to look at the return on investment from participating in training from a volunteer’s perspective – i.e. what dose a volunteer get (such as self-esteem, fun, sense of contribution to the community) given that they may expose personal limitations such as literacy and numeracy limitations and may have to overcome fear of failure – ‘Well it would be very interesting [CFA thinks only in terms of the return to the organisation] … I’m actually a volunteer myself so I can speak from every possible angle.’ (lines 221-237)

- **Acting upon opportunity beckons** - ‘So, I’d like to think that we perhaps could implement something like that [means of encouraging to draw more upon what is known and can be done] and this gives the volunteers the self-worth that they can contribute and make it a better organisation.’ (lines 390-392)

Although Brenda’s comments reflect her particular functional closeness to volunteers, her stance that more could be done to build upon what volunteers know and can do was echoed in the responses of other interviewees. As for Brenda, it was also the case that other research respondents (subsequent to the scoping interviews) indicated that this
weakness was not just in respect of drawing upon capabilities beyond fire fighting, but included devaluing of knowledge directly related to fire fighting. Analysis of all scoping interview responses yielded thematic groupings as shown in Thematic Set 2 (What aids) and Thematic Set 3 (What inhibits).

In analysing the data, and constructing Thematic Sets 1 and 2, attention was given to respondents’ insights regarding “action” that might impact positively or negatively upon a volunteer’s propensity to remain as a volunteer.

### Thematic Set 2: Aiding application of outcomes from lifelong learning

- **Maintaining a learning structure:** Supporting learning and the application of the outcomes of learning.
- **Reflecting community demographics:** Volunteers being drawn from a cross-section of the community.
- **Rewarding the application of learning outcomes:** Moving beyond the current status of volunteering being its own reward.
- **Overtly reinforcing value of application:** Volunteers proactively engaged in identifying and building upon the value of learning.
- **Encouragement to share and learn:** Demonstrating the value of outcomes from drawing upon the breadth of available knowledge and skill.
- **Nurturing a learning culture:** The CFA organisation, local brigades and individuals confident to contribute and grow through learning.
- **Providing pathways for growth:** Volunteers seeing that they can grow within the CFA and externally to the CFA.
- **CFA leaders recognising and supporting volunteers’ expectations:** Partnering in achieving best, mutual, advantage.

Thematic Set 2 suggests a process for advantageously drawing upon the breadth and depth of what a volunteer knows that is an amalgam of actions that assert - to the individual and the organisation - the value of learning and its outcomes; actions that facilitate opportunities for a person to contribute to the organisation and their community (as they see it) through appropriately drawing upon what they know and can do; and actions that reinforce the person’s motivation to grow through expanding their learning and drawing upon its outcomes. Figure 6.3 is a template that associates these actions with the three pillars of need, opportunity and encouragement (see Figures 5.3, p. 82 & 5.4, p. 85).
Thematic Set 3 reinforces the “action” interpretations arising from Thematic Set 2 through an indicative alerting to what can act against making the most of what a person knows and can do. For example, rejecting suggestions for improvement that are made by a new member on the basis that they have only just arrived may have a “turning off” effect that persists for a long time and leads to a frustration culminating in leaving the brigade. And rationing opportunities for further learning signals that learning is not valued (except on the organisation’s terms). Of course, there may be logistical and resource rationales for this, but there may be innovative ways and means around such factors.

Figure 6.3 – Actions supporting achievement

Thematic Set 3: Inhibiting application of outcomes from lifelong learning

- **Holding to old ways**: Maintaining the status quo and resisting change.
- **Defending rigid structures**: Organisational and operation structures that don’t welcome drawing upon outcomes from learning.
- **Inhibitions of individuals**: Personally imposed inhibitions and undervaluing of opportunities.
- **Lack of balance in priorities**: Enthusiasm potentially becoming counter-productive.
- **Proper balance in priorities**: The individual placing rational limits upon contribution.
- **Unawareness**: Blind to breadth and depth of available knowledge and skill.
- **Industrial inhibitors**: Weakness in promoting integrated career staff and volunteer activity.
- **Cost and other logistical limitations**: CFA corporate and volunteer rational limits.
- **Interpersonal tensions**: Dysfunction within the environment.
- **Under-valuing learning**: Not having considered the issue or conscious rejection.
- **Lack of reward and disappointment**: Personal goals not realised.
- **General decline in volunteerism**: An apparent community trend.
- **CFA not valued by local community**: Weakened pride in being a CFA volunteer.
- **Over concentration upon systems**: Perception of greater complexity.
- **Unsupportive approaches to training**: Failure to apply flexible approaches to training.
- **Providing only narrow attention to training**: Overlooking wider opportunities beyond technical fire fighting.
- **Local weakening opportunities for learning**: Diminishing critical learning mass and gaps between knowledge acquisition and application.
In terms of guarding against inhibitors, and taking remedial action where appropriate, the data indicates that it is responsiveness at the local CFA brigade level which has the most influence. Although organisational overall systems and policy approaches have governing authority it is the manner in which a volunteer is valued, supported and motivated within the brigade that impacts upon their willingness to draw upon what they know and can do – they join the local brigade more so than they join the CFA.

CFA scoping interview respondents - Stakeholder interests

The interviewees variously identified the range of stakeholders as including: the volunteers as individuals and in teams; the CFA as an organisation; the community at large and as served by the brigade(s) in defined localities; brigade management; the State Government; family of the member; employer of the member; other emergency organisations; the volunteer associations\(^4\) and the United Fire Fighters Union.

The following are two indicative views, of the many, which couple making the most of what volunteers know and can do with diverse stakeholder interests.

‘Well I think there’s a possibility of a win/win around here. I’d be saying that if CFA could identify what skills they are looking for and then go out into their communities and search for those people in specific roles, they would be better off. So I think that CFA is a stakeholder, or a fire agency is a stakeholder to identify what they are looking for.’ (Paul, 141002, lines 277-280)

‘At the end of the day, it is our customer. We are in the business of selling fire suppression to people whose houses are on fire – that’s our job, that’s what we sell to them. At the end of the day if you don’t recognise the different abilities or whatever it is that people bring into a brigade and make the most of it or make them feel wanted then, the volunteer structure as it is, you are not going to be able to get bums on seats to get trucks out of the door. So regardless of what people bring to it, you have got to be able to say “OK, we can use you that way, we can use you that way, or we can train you this way and use you that way” So if you don’t value a person for their ability, their personality, or just for who they are, then they are not going to feel wanted. Regardless of how good I am at being a fire fighter, if you don’t make me feel wanted as a person, I am not going to stay. And if at the end of the day, you do that to enough people, your truck is not going to get out of the door. So it is not just bringing the lifelong learning, its bringing the mix of people together as well.’ (Penny, 050503, lines 244-256)

\(^4\) CFA volunteers have been traditionally represented by separate rural and urban associations. These separate associations have now agreed to be represented by Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) as a united voice.
6.5 CFA workshops

Having derived thematic sets from the scoping interviews, three focus group orientated workshops were conducted to test the thematic sets and to add to insight. The workshops, in terms of location and participants, were convened to be representative of urban, urban/rural interface and rural brigade circumstances. Participants came to the workshops with the understanding that they should have an interest in proceeding to a project, of their choosing, which will provide an opportunity to explore the value of taking action to better draw upon the outcomes of a volunteer's lifelong learning.

The workshops were

- 20th February 2003   Geelong workshop (Barwon/Corangamite Area)
- 19th March 2003    Ballarat workshop (Midlands/Wimmera Area)
- 14th April 2003   Charlton workshop (North West Area)

In each case, following the earlier provision of briefing notes, the workshop format began with a presentation regarding the diversity of lifelong learning and its outcomes. This was consequential upon the scoping interviews finding that bringing these matters to a front-of mind status was helpful to generating a sharing of views. The presentation was structured so as to bring participants quickly into a sharing dialogue leading to the possibility of a project to further explore making the most of what a volunteer knows and can do – i.e. test the thematic sets.

6.6 The experience of delay as a contribution to insight

The 2002-03 fire season was said to be the cause of a three month delay from December to late February before commencement of the series of three workshops. Although it was said by CFA career staff, who were gatekeepers to my progress onto the workshops, that volunteers would not be available during this time, there was a sense that staff workloads and other corporate – quasi-military command and control - structural matters impeded this progression. With reference to Figure 5.5 (p.95), it seemed probable that undeclared forces were in play that inhibited opportunity and were thus keeping the interface closed. This was particularly felt because it was logical that, from among the many thousands of volunteers,
there would be the required small number CFA members available and keen to participate in a workshop.

The delay in moving on to workshops followed an internal CFA industrial issue that had earlier caused a three month holding off of the commencement of the interviews. This, along with the fire season delay, illustrates how both predictable and unscheduled events may assert influence upon the propensity of people to broadly draw upon the range of their knowledge and skill capacity. And it follows that people making the most of what they know and can do has boundaries that are not always within their control - as CFA exampled below.

- The integration of career staff with volunteer members presents on the one hand as a powerful mutually advantaging partnership, but it also has tensions.

> ‘There are a whole lot of factors that sit there, industrially, that would stop volunteers from doing things to their capacity.’ (David, 250902, lines 298-99)

> ‘... the more the industrial body supports the volunteer system, or promotes it, the more risks there are for its own members.’ (Ian, 121002, lines 301-302)

> ‘... and a lot of corporate staff undervalue the volunteers ...’ (Charles, 111202, lines 223-24)

However, notwithstanding the above, the following (Dialogue 6.3) is indicative of the manner in which events can bring about a change in valuing of what CFA volunteers know and can do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialogue 6.3 – Extract from 20th February 2003 Geelong workshop</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Note - a reminder: Throughout this dissertation, pseudonyms are used for research respondents)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lewis 384 (Researcher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… it was pointed out to me that a member is a member and the attitude being that a volunteer and a career CFA person have equal status in the eyes of the CFA as being a competent member.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob 428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actually, that’s really been evident in the North East of Victoria in the last few months because they have had volunteers as crew leaders and career staff as crew on the back of the truck.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamela 432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers as strike team leaders and career staff as crew on the back ---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob 434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, and scribes and everything. It has been a real eye opener because this has been the biggest effort we have put in for this amount of time and because of resources being stretched and everybody is really working together. And that’s, in my experience, the first time that that has really happened and been accepted like that.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Because it was normally volunteers over here and career staff doing all of the management side of it – but they worked in together and worked in extremely well.

Jane 443
Also in the incident management team as well.

Bob 444
Yes.

Jane 444
It has been a bit of a no-go zone in the past.

Bob 445
In the past – yeh.

Lewis 446
What an interesting change.

John (Principal supervisor of the researcher’s candidature) 447
What has brought that change in?

Collin 448
Necessity, the scale of the fires – more than a million hectares.

Pamela 449
I think also, apart from that, I think it is the training that we have been doing as volunteers.

- Clearly, calling upon volunteers to contribute and participate must accommodate the other commitments that they have in life.

‘... it is a fine line between tapping into their passion and using up their goodwill.’ (David, 250902, line367-68)

‘The increasing level of demand on people’s time. Specifically from the CFA position, I think it is very much a factor for a lot of our volunteers. There just seems to be more and more and more time and energy commitment for the range of brigade activities, not just training, but a whole heap of other stuff that brigades are being required to do - do in more detail and do more of. ... The demands of people’s time and there are people who have to take a decision - “What am I going to stop doing in order to have some time to myself at home” And some times its the CFA that gets dropped off the list.’

(Elizabeth, 180203, lines 281-290)

- It seems apparent that, in the case of emergency service volunteers, in addition to the routine time lags between intention and action that occur in a volunteer environment, there is also the occurrence of events that put great call upon a volunteer’s time. In this way, the 2002-03 summer fires appeared to create a circumstance where both key volunteers and career staff had their attention and energies focused away from what could be seen as peripheral and less urgent matters such as contributing to this research project. But, yet, there was a sense that there were other volunteers – less preoccupied with organisational matters -
who could have enthusiastically contributed to the research had they been known to be interested and trusted by those who could have assisted with an invitation.

6.7 Geelong workshop (Barwon/Corangamite Area) – 20th February 2003

Participants at this workshop were three brigade officer volunteers and three career staff members. As the researcher, I facilitated the workshop. Also, Associate Professor John Henry (my principal supervisor) was in attendance and participated in the sharing of views.

Although, initially, there wasn't unanimity that valuing outcomes from lifelong learning was a significant factor in retaining a volunteer, a consensus progressively developed that a broad range of knowledge and skill was indeed being drawn upon, and added to, to maintain a volunteer’s interest. As an example, initially, Bob (see below) was thinking only in terms of drawing upon fire fighting competencies; and, as fire frequency in his brigade location is very low, it appeared unreasonable to hold that retention relied upon turning out to fire events.

‘We had seventeen vols. turn up to a training session on Tuesday night. Now that is indicative of their willingness to still train and still want to learn. But apart from sending crews away on strike teams, our guys get very little demand on their skills. But they are still willing to turn up and do the training. So we don’t have to keep our guys busy. We don’t have to use --- draw upon them, on their knowledge, to keep them interested.’ (Bob, volunteer brigade officer, 200203, M2A3485)

And later when asked by Jane how members are retained in the brigade, Bob explained that the brigade was active in the competitions - ‘And that’s a real social thing because we all go away to the State championships. And we have a real fun time’ (Bob, volunteer brigade officer, 200203, L2B241). In this instance, it is reasonable to infer that drawing upon knowledge and skills aligned to brigade competitions is a retention factor. It is also germane that the brigade in question is “rural” and, although it draws upon the proper self-interests of the local families for its sustainability, there is still the matter of nurturing other motivations to join and remain – especially in respect of younger people who have other

5 Workshop citings are located by audio tape position.
things to do and who, it is said by Mike, join and remain in the brigade because of the competitions.

Notwithstanding initial doubt, Bob subsequently joined with others in agreeing that, appropriate to the circumstances, drawing upon what a volunteer knows and can do is a factor in retaining the volunteer – albeit in a not-immediately obvious manner. In the broader Geelong instance, confirmation of the thematic sets (1, 2 and 3) was associated with a view that the manner in which a volunteer is welcomed, and then embraced, by a brigade is a significant contribution to the new member being retained as a volunteer.

In addition to confirming resonance with the thematic sets, analysis of the workshop transcript yielded three key welcoming elements as listed, and expanded upon by sample indicative comments, below –

- **Recognition** of the new member – Who they are and what they bring.

  Initiative to assist with members better knowing one another – ‘And we looked at some simplistic processes like when new members where coming into brigades. Perhaps [even] existing members have not been to the brigade for a while, no one sort of knowing who’s who in the zoo. So just simple things like a photograph of the new member, a brief profile of the person, what their interests are, some conversation starters. And we found that that worked really, really, well. That person was instantly starting to feel like “Oh, people are interested in me as an individual. They can be bothered talking to me.”’
  
  (Jane, career member, 200203, 2B310)

  An example of how recognition of some of what a new member brings is not necessarily a straightforward matter and thinking narrowly regarding what it is that a new member brings - ‘For some of the things that, you know, that you could say that you could bring into the CFA as a new volunteer, a lot of those skills that you have can’t be used in the CFA until you have been accredited. We have got an instance where we have got a fellow out in the bush that is a professional saw miller – right – woodcutter, you name it. He is not entitled, or allowed to pick up a chain saw off a tanker to use to remove a fallen log because he hasn’t been accredited. So he said “Stick it where the sun doesn’t shine.” And we lost him. But we got him back after a while. But that is one of many instances we come across where I personally know that they can do it correctly, but as the officer in charge if you let them do it and they do get injured – through one thing or another – your head is on the chopping block. So you can’t let them. So that is the problem that I find out we have.’
  
  (Jack, volunteer brigade officer, 200203, 705)

  There is a role for everyone as a consequence of CFA welcoming members who join to make a contribution other than fire fighting – ‘The broader role of membership opened up doors for people that may not have necessarily wanted to do the practical fire fighting, but they bring a wealth of experience
from a particular field that might be the fund raising, it could be recruiting issues. The broader role has really opened up that door to those type of people.’ (Jane, career member, 200203, B359)

• Inclusiveness with respect to being embraced by the brigade – finding a place and fitting in.

Extract from 20th February 2003 Geelong workshop transcript (Pseudonyms used)

Bob 2A152
…We had one guy he is a bit of a media --- he has got a media background. His buzz is to do a little press release for the local paper, and if we don’t find him enough to do, you can see that he gets bored and we don’t see him for a couple of meetings and unless you keep feeding him stuff to keep him active he will gradually drift off somewhere else ---

Jack 2A166
Would that be a worry?

Bob 2A167
Of yeh, what he does is really good.

In the context of what others may or may not know - responding to “Do we fully value all that we know and can do?” – ‘Probably not. You tend to take a lot for granted over time. Things that you just know. And I think a lot of us are awakened to that when somebody new comes into the environment that you have known for a long time. And then you realise that things that you just take for granted – that you know or do – and particularly like a recruit volunteer would be a classic example. When they come into a new environment, somebody has been there ten, or fifteen, twenty years or more and they just know, these people, that [embedded, tacitly held, knowledge]. And then they have to actually impart that knowledge – it makes you stop and think about what you do know.’ (Jane, career member, 200203, 694)

Interests, in common with others, other than fighting fires hold people as members - ‘And as I said before we have got lots of families involved in the fire brigade and it is the one thing that they can all do together. You know, we have got a couple of mums in there and they bring their young kids along and they are all joined up as members now and advancing from junior up to senior. And, I mean, it is just something that they have all got a common interest in. We don’t have to have an end result of going out and fighting fires to maintain that interest.’ (Bob, volunteer brigade officer, 200203, 2A3700)

Commenting upon an older member’s feeling of threat from younger members – ‘He sort of says the young people are trying to take over this brigade. But what he is saying is that the young people are coming up through the brigade. You know, with their enthusiasm and their keenness. And he doesn’t see why he can’t drive the truck - code 1 - at thirty kilometers an hour.’ (Bob, volunteer brigade officer, 200203, 2A579)

Commenting upon a volunteer’s initiative, being valued, to construct improvement to an equipment trailer – ‘And the comments I had from one ex-captain – two weeks ago – was that we should have done it years ago. So things are
Outcomes from CFA scoping inquiry

starting to happen around the place.’ (Pamela, volunteer brigade officer, 200203, 2A642)

- Leadership that is applied, throughout the structure of the brigade, to nurture a culture that does indeed support members contributing to their own personal advantage and to the advantage of the brigade and, hence, the community.

Commenting upon CFA drawing its leaders from the community - ‘I don’t know. There seems to be a lot of people out there with just really good --- just life skills that they have picked up and kicked around. And there are a lot of good leaders out there. I don’t know, they may not have necessarily been in a leadership role [prior to joining the CFA]’ - (Andy, career member, 200203, 675)

Later in the workshop, Andy made the following comment –

‘I don’t want to keep harking back to XXX [brigade name suppressed] again --- They have just recruited three people and they have had a major change in leadership. The captains have changed and the incoming captain he is busy with his work and he couldn’t care less. And because he isn’t driving the brigade, the other officers aren’t --- And the whole thing is sort of slipping down a big slippery slide over the cliff. And, ah. I am just wondering how these new members are going to go – they are all quite keen---’ (Andy, career member, 200203, L2B431)

Andy’s observations are a pointer toward the dependency that the CFA has upon finding brigade leaders from among the members of the community who choose to join and remain as volunteers. This is a matter that is taken up in Chapter 9, but for the moment the following extracts from the Geelong workshop transcript are indicative of the diversity of function and sensitivity and commitment that an effective brigade officer brings to the leadership role.

Displaying sensitivity and creating opportunity as a leader - ‘I have a couple of new members who can’t read – have trouble reading and writing – and they are, like, adult, younger members. And I have a junior member – one junior member – so I often send her out to do the checklist on the truck with the guys and she reads through the check list and then they go and tick it off. They say yes its here, its here. So they check it and she does the reading and ticks it off. So she feels important because she is contributing even though she is the only junior. And then they are feeling important, and learning, because they are checking off the stuff but not actually having to do something that they can’t do.’ (Pamela, volunteer brigade officer, 200203, 2A737)

Empowering, with support – ‘I won’t ask someone to do something that they don’t think they can do. So she asked me “Do you think I could do it?” So that is back to you “Jill, do you think you can do the job?”’ (Pamela, volunteer brigade officer, 200203, 2B579)
Pamela has been specifically cited as she is a relatively new brigade leader (and a woman) functioning in an overall CFA environment characterised by change – particularly with respect to requiring fire fighters to have assessed, proven, minimum competencies; and she is apparently the catalyst for change within her brigade. Although there was not one iconic moment during the workshop that can be selected out, there was a pervading sense that change, drawing upon what volunteers know and can do, and leadership are intimately entwined as illustrated in Figure 6.4.

Informed by later insights derived from the Ballarat and Charlton workshops, it is a proposition of this dissertation that the Geelong participants did exhibit a consensus in close alignment with the outcomes from the other two scoping workshops. The alignment of views is that a brigade culture which supports a volunteer in valuing what they know and can do when coupled with being included motivation to remain as a brigade member is at the core of volunteer retention. In essence, this inclusion of all rests upon the quality of leadership within the brigade.

Grounded in the belief that the quality of welcoming a new member carries through to motivation to continue as a member, the Geelong workshop concluded with participants indicating a willingness to progress to an action research orientated project that would explore the relationships between the manner of welcoming (and inducting) a new brigade member, appropriately making the most of what the new member knows and can do, and
strengthening the propensity of the new member to remain as a volunteer. However, as discussed in Chapter 8, this did not happen as anticipated.

6.8 Ballarat workshop (Midlands/Wimmera Area) – 19th March 2003

Participants in this workshop were three CFA career members (two of whom are also active volunteers) and three volunteers with long experience as active fire fighters and making a broader contribution to the CFA. By CFA invitation, the three career members were involved with delivering fire fighting training and the three volunteers had a strong current engagement with delivering and promoting training.

As for other CFA instances, for these workshop participants, the broader meaning (beyond formal skills training) of adding to and drawing upon outcomes from lifelong learning was an unfamiliar topic, but quickly embraced. There was a rapid movement to a consensus view that there was much more being drawn upon than was formally addressed through the minimum skills fire fighting competencies. There was also a group feeling that, within the CFA, there is under-valuing of these additional skills, notwithstanding that these additional skills are frequently pivotal to taking on specialist and leadership roles within a brigade. And, in a more general sense, there are skills related to being an effective team member, on and off the fire ground, and contributing to community safety that are not consciously recognised and hence properly valued.

Referring to broad skills, that are useful to the brigade, Charles described them as life skills and Martin agreed with ‘Yes, it is your life skills and CFA do not value it’ (Martin, 190303, 596)

The view that the CFA, generally, undervalues the breadth of what volunteers know and can do was coupled with a perception that volunteers are also prone to this undervaluing with respect to themselves and others. Dialogue 6.4 is an example of workshop participants sharing of views and experiences in this undervaluing regard. Throughout the workshop, participants were consistent in urging action that would support constructing a foundation upon which a volunteer will value learning experiences and the outcomes from
such experiences – i.e. a foundation from which to sell participation in formal training to a hesitant audience.

Dialogue 6.4 – Extract from 19th March 2003 Ballarat workshop

Mary LB036
When I - because I’m a volunteer trainer as well as my other job - and working with some of the farmers doing their minimum skills and other skills, they have --- a lot of them have had a fear of failure. They don’t all have a high self-esteem. They work on their own – there’s no-one there to build it up for them. So approached in the correct manner, you could use that system of valuing what they’re doing on the farm and getting them to realise that they are really worthwhile – that they have valuable skills in their knowledge of --- it’s like my son who has grown up out in the country, so he could, he’d just say ‘ Oh mum, it’s going to rain in half an hour’ or whatever. City people wouldn’t have a clue about that? And it is those sort of skills that the farmers have that we don’t even recognise. We don’t even ---

Martin LB042
Yes exactly. Yes.

Mary LB042
--- value that stuff that is in-built into you. And if they can get that valued and realise how valuable they are – what they are worth – then we can start to look at teaching them things. But you have got to make them feel valued ---

Lewis (researcher) LB043
Indeed.

Mary LB043
--- but you have got to make them feel valued, first, for what they are worth.

Norm LB044
We had a very successful brigade recruitment program a few years ago that wasn’t run by brigade members – it was put together, structured, by a BASO [Brigade Administration Support Officer]. She actually went out and investigated every single person’s background. So we knew about the people when they came down actually on the night. And we played, stretch, tickled - whatever you want to do -- to all of their features, and their skills, and everything. And we got eleven people. And we kept six of them. Now of those, not one of them –and myself included – not one of our brigade members had identified them as a real potential member. Because the old way of doing things – it didn’t work.

Martin LB051
Yeh, yeh.

Charles LB051
What does an actual potential member look like? [rhetorical]

Norm LB052
You don’t know – that’s right. You can’t tell.

In this instance, the participants came to the workshop with an expectation that they were going to share views regarding strengthening volunteer engagement with training and leading on to a project focused upon more effectively promoting the value of training to volunteers who are reluctant trainees. In the course of the broad scope of my CFA research study, and especially asserted in this Ballarat workshop, this reluctance has been variously attributed (by research respondents) to long-serving volunteers, especially in rural areas, not accepting the need for them to now undertake formal training and assessment of competency, even though this is now a requirement consequent upon the
death of five volunteers trapped in the December 1998 Linton fire. Respondents in this workshop and on other occasions expressed a view that, for some volunteers, anxieties associated with participating in formal training is a factor in resisting training. The following transcript extract is indicative of the view that, in general, the resistance to engaging with formal training exists more so in rural brigades than is the case for urban brigades.

Extract from 19th March 2003 Ballarat workshop transcript

(Pseudonyms used)

Vince B224
The closer you get to urban areas, the more the culture is, "I work in an industry where training is accepted - in fact it's compulsory. If I don't do training in how to use this machine I can't use it. And therefore if I join a brigade I expect to train." [agreeing]. The further you get out, the further you get out, you get the people on the farm and they've always done it themselves all the time; and if anybody was going to come round and train them in how to drive a tractor then it would be a surprise to them. They learned it as a kid and they've done it all their life – and they treat the CFA the same way.

Tim B243
And they die driving a tractor.

Vince 244
But they don't see that. It's just the natural consequence of living in the country. It's not an industrial accident. So you've got the two different cultures, you've got the culture where there is an industrial centre, like Ballarat, where they expect to be trained. So you'll see the urban brigades will train every week – some of them. And you go out to, as you move further out to people who are self-employed on farms or whatever, that they don't see the necessity of training like the other people. So you've got two different levels ---

Although the Ballarat workshop participants came with a specific focus upon better selling – to volunteers - the requirement to train in a more formal manner than had hitherto been the case, they quickly moved to sharing views aligning with the Figure 6.2 recognition, valuing and drawing upon tools relating to outcomes from lifelong learning. In this respect, Dialogue 6.4 is but one example of the breadth of valuing lifelong learning by the Ballarat workshop participants. This was unexpected as I had anticipated that the participants would have a narrow training focus, akin to the technocratic water industry respondents, and largely centered upon fire fighting skills as represented by the technocratic end of the Figure 5.2 (p. 79) spectrum. Contrary to the earlier uncertainty, at the conclusion of the workshop, there was strong agreement by all that retaining CFA volunteers through making the most of what they know and can do and promoting the value of training, are intimately connected. Indeed, the very last opinion expressed at the workshop was – ‘You can't do one [valuing learning and promoting training] without the other’ (Tim (paraphrased), 190303, L3A275) and this was agreed to by others at the workshop.
In asserting a connection between valuing learning (holistically) and retention, the Ballarat workshop participants agreed that there are significant influencing factors to be addressed if the *valuing of training* goal is to be achieved. In summary, these influencing factors are broadly grouped as –

- **Welcoming and knowing**: Systemic valuing of what a new member brings by way of capability and supporting all members in making the most of what they know and can do in accordance with their motivation to remain as a member.

- **Partnership**: Volunteers and career members valuing each other through regard for what they know and can do.

- **Critically important but different**: Organisational acknowledging and responding to the, possibly different, nature of personal commitment that may apply in respect of rural and urban volunteers.

- **Motivation drivers and hurdles**: Leadership responsiveness to why a volunteer chooses to remain as a volunteer and factors that may work against this.

- **Changing roles**: Volunteers supporting the broader community safety function of the CFA and contributing to and embracing organisational change to meet changing circumstances.

- **Promotion/Public Relations**: Corporately strengthening volunteer commitment through promoting - internally and externally – the community safety value of well trained CFA volunteers.

- **Capability required beyond just being competent**: Recognition, by all, that emergency response requires capability of individuals to draw upon what they know and can do when confronted with unfamiliar problems and unfamiliar contexts (Stephenson 1998, p. 5).

- **Valuing outcomes from lifelong learning**: A CFA volunteer brings much of value to the role and adds to their knowledge, skill, and confidence capacities through CFA experience – but this may be not fully recognised by the individual and by others.

The broad scope of these influencing factors, identified in the Ballarat workshop, was found to align closely with outcomes from the Geelong workshop and are consistent with the
thematic sets derived from the scoping interviews. It was subsequently found that this congruence extended to include the outcomes from the Charlton, 14th April 2003, workshop; and, even though there were different nuances of special interest, three common principles emerged.

- Valuing outcomes from lifelong learning
- A brigade culture which values and nurtures learning
- Having regard for the motivation for the member to remain as a volunteer

Although it is moving a little ahead in reporting upon the research outcomes, Table 6.3 is a presentation of Ballarat outcomes in a format aligning with the above principles and as confirmed by Geelong and Charlton outcomes.

Table 6.3 – Indicative, Ballarat, comments alerting to influencing issues - nuances of special interest

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Principles – revealed at Geelong, Ballarat and Charlton</th>
<th>Overview of consensus as expressed at Ballarat workshop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Valuing outcomes from lifelong learning</strong></td>
<td>Some, possibly many, volunteers under-value the outcomes from their lifelong learning and some are consequently hesitant about participating in formal training – i.e. some volunteers may have anxieties regarding what they perceive to be a threatening, imposed, training situation and/or may not appropriately recognise the value of what they already know and can do.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Commenting upon sometimes requiring other people to help you recognise the value of what you know and can do – “I don’t think we realise all of the knowledge and skills that we have. It is only when something goes really, really, wrong that when people come to you -- Like I had a crisis in my life. And all of a sudden people came to me and said how valuable I was; what a good human being I was; what value I was to them. And I thought – “I didn’t even know that this person liked me” I had no idea of the things that they thought I did well. I didn’t even realise it” (Mary, 190303, LTB120)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Brigade culture which values and nurtures learning</strong></td>
<td>Some, possibly many, volunteers are not convinced of the need for them to undertake formal training. Thus there is a need to strengthen (make more compelling) the “selling training” message and to couple this with a broad valuing of the outcomes from lifelong learning – i.e. participation in, and outcomes from, formal CFA training add to the <strong>what is known and can be done</strong> broad assets of a member.</td>
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<td>However, in the face of the volunteer safety and broader community safety benefits flowing from strengthening engagement with training – and more broadly valuing leaning outcomes - there are some brigade cultures which are pre-</td>
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disposed to reject this stance. There is also the occurrence of other forms of valuing of learning dysfunction – e.g. protection of one’s own position by putting others down and resisting change.

Commenting upon protection of personal status, although possibly the exception, is a negative valuing of what people know and can do factor – ‘That's right. And you've got the backbiting of those people with egos because their ego isn't—their self esteem isn’t really big, they've got to get rid of all the people that are worthwhile in the brigade so there's no-one left to take over. So they destroy, silently, all the good members – they all leave and they don't care because they're [the persons with inhibiting (of others) egos] not there for the community. They're there for their own tag on their shoulder. And that's a huge problem that could be taken away if they took out the way we vote in the rural system.’ (Mary, 190303, 684)

### Having regard for motivations to remain as a volunteer

In the CFA, it can be frequently the case that motivational matters are not strongly in mind by those in leadership positions. This is exacerbated, within brigades, by the practice of electing people to leadership and management positions that doesn't take sufficient account of competency.

It would be helpful with respect to strengthening retention and better selling training to place more emphasis upon motivation than is presently the case. There is seen to be a motivational relationship between self-esteem, valuing learning and its outcomes and remaining as a volunteer member of the CFA.

Supporting volunteers in welcoming and contributing to change is related to motivation and preserving their commitment to the CFA. In the course of the Ballarat workshop, participants (by their own initiative) drew upon the Maslow Hierarchy of Needs to emphasise this point.

Commenting upon the usefulness of drawing upon Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs – ‘And if you take it into the CFA context – We are involved at the moment in a period of change. And change attacks safety, potentially belonging, and it can attack self-esteem. So three of the components can all be attacked during a period of change. And the way that we have introduced training is just that. It hasn’t been recognised as that by CFA – it hasn’t been dealt with as a change management activity. It is just been - “You have got to do this training it is really good everyone else does it – don’t sook”’ --- (Charles, 190303, 2/B597)

A simple, but profound process of better acknowledging the value of what a volunteer brings to the CFA – by way of knowledge and skill – and what the volunteer progressively acquires through the CFA is recommended. And this is largely in the hands of those in leadership positions – in brigades and elsewhere in the CFA structure.

Not all leaders of brigades are sensitive to motivation influences around them – ‘There is also another side to it. Brigades don’t feel that the actions of today affect tomorrow, and then reflect upon what is going on. If they were observant they might realise that’s some people are not happy with what is going on. And they don’t realise that if they don’t do something about it then they are going to lose that person. And they do nothing about it and they lose that person. They have lost the person and they still do nothing to try and get that person to return.’ (Mary, 190303, 410)

Arising from the discussion – sampled in Table 6.3 – the Ballarat workshop participants agreed that an exchange of value marketing model (Figure 6.5) is a useful way of framing
Outcomes from CFA scoping inquiry

an approach to better selling training to CFA volunteers. However, this approach is predicated upon nurturing an environment in which the outcomes from learning are held to have value – which may not, without intervention, be the case.

In a marketing exchange sense, the workshop explored the relationship between CFA offering (selling) training as a means of acquiring and maintaining a competent volunteer force and the volunteers investing their time and possibly exposing themselves to some risk – exposure of weakness and fear of failure – in return for the enhanced self-esteem and/or other personal benefits such as belonging, excitement and satisfaction in serving the community. In this vein, the workshop concluded with participants expressing willingness to proceed to an action learning orientated project. However, the creation of a project did not happen and is reviewed in Chapter 8 as further insight into factors aiding and inhibiting drawing upon the outcomes from life long learning.

6.9 Charlton workshop (North West Area) – 14th April 2003

Participants in this workshop were five CFA volunteers from three brigades and one CFA career staff member who is also a volunteer. Also, one CFA volunteer (unable to attend) from a fourth brigade made a contribution by email prior to the workshop.

Those attending the workshop came with an expectation that brigade sustainability would be the focus of discussion and that this would be explored in the context of making the most of what volunteers and potential volunteers know and can do. It was understood that
reducing rural populations (ABS 2002, p. 3) coupled with increasing other demands upon a volunteer’s (and potential volunteers’) time, were threatening brigade viability in rural locations and that this was a matter of concern to existing CFA North West Area brigade members (CFA 2001). In general terms, the concern was (and is) that replacement of retiring volunteer members is increasingly difficult.

Whilst reducing rural population was an acknowledged significant factor, the workshop participants began their sharing of views prompted by the paraphrased view of the CFA staff member that “Demographics don’t tell the whole story” (Brenda – pseudonym). This led to a sharing of views in which more holistic drawing upon the available community (albeit in decline) was seen as a way forward. In particular, women and young people were acknowledged as under-represented in the volunteer ranks – in large part, due to being traditionally excluded.

Drawing attention to overlooked recruitment opportunity - ‘From doing some compiling of census data, the demographics of the Buloke Shire actually show that 51% of the population is female. And when we actually compare that to how many female volunteers there are it is a very, very, small percentage – probably less than 1%. So that was the first thing. The second thing was also that we seem to believe that all the young children go away and don’t return, when in fact a small percentage do in fact stay in town. But also you find that from the ages of eighteen to twenty two when they are still attending university they still do come home in our most vulnerable fire season over the summer; and they all either work at home or they work on the farms or they are just hanging around with Mom and Dad. And we seem to think that we won’t waste our time or energy in training these students up, when in fact we should be trying to enhance their skills. Because even if they don’t stay within our area, if we can make them CFA members, they may go off to Ballarat, Bendigo, or somewhere else and stay as a CFA member somewhere else. And every time they are home during that school holiday period we should be utilising their skills.’ (Brenda, staff member and volunteer, workshop 140403, tape:184)

Remarking upon a changing recruitment attitude as older members retire - ‘I have noticed that in the last probably ten years we have recruited a few young ones. It was all older guys - they didn’t want the younger guys in there. ... and [now] we are getting a few younger ones in there which is good. There is one kid that is sixteen he has only just joined up a few weeks ago, he has come up from the juniors.’ (Len, volunteer member, workshop 140403, tape: 730)

The discussion, from which the above are cited, was prompted by consideration of Figure 6.6 illustrating a hierarchy moving from the necessity of having an adequate community pool from which to draw volunteers, through to having sufficient appropriately competent
volunteers to meet the local community safety needs – particularly with respect to turning out to fight fires.

Figure 6.6 evolved from scoping inquiry – interviews and workshops – preceding the Charlton workshop. The confirmation, by Charlton participants, that this is a proper and useful representation of the process of recruiting from the community and then drawing from what volunteers know and can do was a significant outcome from the Charlton workshop. In this instance, the sharing of views was framed by pressing concern – the “Need” component of The Three Pillars (Figure 5.4, p. 85). And the citing of Brenda’s and Ken’s views is indicative of traditional exclusion from “Opportunity” to contribute to community safety and consequent holding back of “Encouragement”.

The Charlton discussion, associated with Figure 6.6, also aligned with the insights derived from the CFA scoping interviews regarding the importance of recognising and valuing what volunteers know and can do. Dialogue 6.5 is iconic of the conversations that have been progressively supporting the proposition that valuing volunteers on the basis of knowledge and skill brought into the CFA, and then these being built upon in the course of their volunteering, is a significant factor in retaining volunteers and hence underpins the CFA fulfilling its community safety role.

Dialogue 6.5 – Extract from 14th April 2003 Charlton workshop  
(Pseudonyms used)

Lewis 425 (Researcher)  
So if you draw upon what they [volunteers] know, is it likely to encourage them to remain as a volunteer and likely to make the brigade more sustainable?

Henry 438 (Volunteer brigade officer)
In this brief extract (Dialogue 6.5), Helen is central to drawing attention to the importance of an individual, and others, valuing what they know and can do as this stock of capacities builds over time. Helen is also foreshadowing, particularly at 463 (tape location), the
importance of a culture that nurtures this valuing of outcomes from learning and regard for motivations that are in accord with an environment which is of a learning nature.

Although Helen’s remarks on the valuing of learning found general agreement, at the early part of the workshop there was a sense that participants were not all connecting valuing the person with valuing what they know and can do in as direct a manner as stated by Helen. However this intertwining did find a strengthening voice as the workshop progressed.

At the mid-point of the three hour workshop, when participants were then drawing upon stronger insight regarding the views of others, the question was again asked “Do you believe that the manner of drawing upon what a CFA volunteer knows and can do has an influence upon whether they remain as a CFA volunteer?”. Consensus quickly developed that this was an important foundation for creating and maintaining a sense of being valued through performing roles and undertaking tasks that draw upon knowledge and skill – typified by the remarks below.

‘Part of being a volunteer is actually feeling that you have worth in being a volunteer … if they don’t want to be on the fire ground “OK” there are so many other tasks in the brigade that someone can do and be part of that and a very important part … if you don’t keep people enthusiastic and make them worthwhile they won’t stay in the organisation.’ (Helen, volunteer, 140403, p.21)

‘So long as they are doing something and feeling wanted.’ (Len, volunteer, 140403, p. 21)

‘If they don’t get a pat on the back, they don’t feel happy. You know so long as they are feeling part of the community or part of the brigade.’ (Gordon, volunteer brigade officer, 140403, p. 21)

These above responses are especially interesting in that there was no doubt that the responders were agreeing with the premise of the question, but were answering in terms of acknowledging outcomes from performance. It may be the case that the connection between possessed knowledge and skill and performance is so assumed that there is a danger of overlooking and hence under-valuing the specific valuing of these means of performance.
Following agreement that the valuing of people is related to what they know and can do and, by implication, their capacity to acquire new skills and knowledge, the focus returned to the issue of under-utilising the capacities of women which then gave rise to comments as exampled in Dialogue 6.6.

Dialogue 6.6 – Extract from 14th April 2003 Charlton workshop

(Pseudonyms used)

Helen (Volunteer) T2376
I think that all brigades, no matter where they are, need to shift their focus. We are only looking at half the population. And whether it be their daughter, their wife, or girlfriend, they may be interested in being part of the brigade. And it might be something as simple as taking on an administrative role.

Henry (Volunteer) T2384
Yes the thing is we are talking about volunteers now. They don't have to be on the fire ground.

Helen T2 385
No. But if they would like to be ---

Henry T2386
Oh certainly. I am not saying that we don't give them that option. We are talking both sexes – male and female. But obviously, somewhere along the line, and it might not be too far away, we are going to have to start doing something about it so that we can keep on going. If thirty years ago, they had thought about it a lot more, we could have opened up to females we would not be facing this situation now. But, because it was a male thing …

Helen T2402
The main point of going to a fire is to be able to put it out. So as long as someone can drive a truck, and they have the skills does it matter whether they are male or female? If the issue with females is “OK well I've got children at home”, I know [in my situation] if I was called out, then my nearest neighbour would have taken my children when they were little. We had this backup, and something that we had planned for and thought of. And we also planned if my husband was called out, I wouldn't be called out at the same time, there’d be a roster system. These are perhaps things that could be put in place to encourage women to participate to a greater level when looking at the child minding, hours of duty, things like that – the basic logistical things. It might just be something as simple as broadening your recruitment campaign and having a talk to women about it.

Whilst Brenda had support for recruitment of women and Helen’s advocacy of recruiting young people was clearly welcomed by those at the workshop, there was a high probability expressed and implied that conservative attitudes within brigades would not be easily changed. Coupled with the ignorance of the extent to which the notion of strengthening brigade sustainability by making the most of what is known and can be done would be more widely embraced beyond the workshop, is an apathy and/or cultural resistance said to exist in some brigades – as exampled in Dialogue 6.7.

Dialogue 6.7 – Extract from 14th April 2003 Charlton workshop

(Pseudonyms used)

Brenda, (CFA career staff member, also a volunteer), T3499
But I do think that it is all well and good to sit here and say how are we going to get them and how are we going to keep them. How are we going to change the culture. It is OK for us to sit here and say this is what we are going to do. How are we going to get all of the brigades to agree with it, because of what they have to do to be sustainable.
Fred (Volunteer) T3513
Because every brigade is different. That is the hard thing.

Brenda T3513
Very different! [agreeing by others]

Gordon (Volunteer) T3514
Very different, diverse, yes.

Helen T3515
A lot of them have a lot of baggage too ... I did not mean that in a derogatory way. But there is a lot of history there.

Henry T3519
Oh yes, for sure.

Brenda T3519
So if we go out recruiting young people or we go out recruiting females specifically or just recruits in general. How are we going to get the brigades to accept them, and want them, and make them feel wanted.

Henry T3523
That is probably the big issue.

Brenda T3524
I think it is.

Henry T3525
To make sure that every brigade is in agreement with it. There are brigades, that will say no – they will not take females on board. And if they make that statement publicly, then they are liable.

Brenda T3529
Indeed.

Len (Volunteer) T3530
Like a year ago, one guy said that there will never be a woman in this brigade.

Brenda T3533
That is mad because we are missing out on a recruit, regardless of what sex they are. [agreeing – including Helen indication exacerbation]

Henry T3534
But irrespective of that, anyway, the other thing is, as I said, you know, is that some brigades will say no they don’t see the problem. If you ask them to forecast their age [brigade profile] in ten years time, and what might their recruit level will be like, they will say well it is no problem at the moment. They won’t worry about it. They won’t need to change. So that will be a problem, we will find, somewhere down the track.

Dialogue 6.7 is both flagging of opportunity and is cautionary. In all three workshops – Geelong, Ballarat and Charlton – those who participated clearly saw value in contributing to change that would lead to strengthening recruitment and retention of volunteers. However, although there is acknowledged to be opportunity latent within recognising and valuing the totality of outcomes from lifelong learning, the difficulty in convening the workshops and the remarks made at the workshops are cautionary – not all, yet, share the enthusiasm for this perceived opportunity. There is a probability that the making the most of what volunteers know and can do premise of this dissertation is not (yet) strongly attractive as a general stance.
Without some awakening, the enthusiasm displayed by workshop participants may not manifest itself in others. There is also the possibility that a degree of volunteering exhaustion is a factor in the difficulty encountered in convening the workshops (as indicated by some volunteer members) that there is already more expected of a volunteer, in a leadership position, than what can be comfortably accommodated. Under these circumstances, the CFA scoping interview finding of the desirability of creating a tool to support recognition and valuing of the range of what a volunteer knows and can do is very pertinent. On the one hand such a tool must awaken awareness and interest by those in a position to act and then, on the other hand, contribute to reducing the brigade management load upon these people – i.e. being welcomed as supporting achieving more with less individual effort.

As mentioned earlier in this dissertation, there is a sense that the difficulties in convening workshops were largely consequent upon a tendency by some, in leadership positions, to not delegate participation (by invitation) to others. If so, there is a range of possible reasons for this including a belief that others would not, or could not, respond to such an invitation or might offer unwelcome opinions. There is also the possibility of an influence of a quasi-military command and control factor which is necessarily a fire-ground requirement. Dialogue 6.8 is indicative of the tension between the need to delegate and maintaining control in changing contexts on and off the fire-ground.

Dialogue 6.8 Extract from 14th April 2003 Charlton workshop
(Pseudonyms used)

Fred (Volunteer) B454
The other thing is - probably too – a lot of things that the captain takes on he is probably trying to take on too much instead of delegating things too. And that is something that you have got to look at. Especially in an urban fire brigade, you have just got to delegate each guy to do a couple of jobs, instead of you trying to do it all yourself - it is just too complex.

Brenda, (CFA career staff member, also a volunteer), B462
It is a good way of learning gradually.

Fred B463
Yes.

Len (Volunteer) B463
I think ... 

Fred B464
Someone being groomed ...
Brenda B464
The mentor approach --

Fred B465
Yes that’s right. It comes back to the mentor …

Gordon (Volunteer) B471
But in every rural brigade that [not delegating] happens. You become a lieutenant and the lieutenants do nothing. Just like you were saying, if the previous captain hasn’t delegated the lieutenants do nothing and all of a sudden you are captain. And that was my situation. And all of a sudden you turn up at a big fire ground - “Help!”

Henry B476
You know I have had problems with the outcomes of the next ten years, or five years, perhaps it will change because we are all being told now, you know, that if you are the captain or the onsite incident commander delegate your authority. You know, it doesn’t matter if it is right here in Charlton or out at Yeungroom or out Laen East. You are in charge of this fire. ... You have to oversee the whole thing.

Informed by inquiry to date, at the time of convening the Charlton workshop it was evident that a tool which would support sharing of knowledge, and thus delegation, would be very helpful. However, even with such a tool, there would still be a need to encourage its use within an environment where there are instances of people holding on to information and protecting personal roles which are not necessarily leadership orientated. In this later respect, there are instances cited of volunteers who have with well-meaning held administration and other role positions within a brigade for many years and, by so doing, have excluded others from both knowledge and motivating activity.

Whilst much of the workshop(s) sharing of views, with respect to motivation, was directed at motivating members of the community to join as CFA volunteers, build upon their incoming competency and then remain as volunteers, there was recurring comment regarding the load upon brigade leaders and factors which potentially weaken the motivation to take on and continue in a leadership role. This was a topic especially arising at the Charlton workshop – possibly because sustainability is felt to be under particular threat and cause for anxiety – and is exampled by ‘… the biggest problem for the Group [collection of brigades] is that nobody wants to step up to the next level because of the training and the red tape that people see is associated with the job’ (Len, C140403, 582 - paraphrased). There was also expression of doubt regarding confidence that the CFA will corporately stand behind a leader if something goes wrong and an associated sense that in some quarters there is lack of support. However, these somewhat negative comments were balanced by acknowledgement of the support being given within this CFA Area to leadership development and team building – including young people.
In a more general overall volunteer member sense, with regard to motivation, Helen was clearly expressing a shared view in saying –

‘Especially in recent times since the Coroner’s inquest into Linton there has been an enormous amount of information coming into brigades. And it is almost getting into the unfamiliar problems because there are a lot of new issues that have come up that we have to train for that we may not use. It is getting out of the comfort zone of a lot of brigade members because they are suddenly being inundated with a lot of paper work and a lot of things [required more formal training and assessment] that they are not comfortable with… it impacts so much on brigades and real sustainability, because a lot of people feel threatened and uncomfortable and don’t want to do any of this. So therefore they are being told, almost, that they can’t be part of the brigade anymore.’ (Helen, C140403, B206)

Helen’s remark about some volunteer members of the brigade feeling that they are now being excluded (by unwelcome competency strengthening and other impositions upon them) points to one example of the emerging need for brigade leaders to support and encourage volunteers to find motivation for joining and remaining within a volunteering culture that is now much more formally learning orientated. In this respect, the workshop participants acknowledged the importance of training in building trust between volunteers and in the strengthening of self-esteem as exampled by Henry –

Responding to the proposition that it is important that a volunteer is confident in themselves and the team is confident in that person – ‘I think it goes hand in hand, Lewis. Probably the biggest thing is a new recruit, or a new fire fighter, if they have been taught the right way, and they have done it the right way, and they are sort of waiting for their first turn-out. Then if their first turn-out is a big one, then the reckon that it is great. Mind you they are going to be very concerned so that you make sure that they have got an experienced fire fighter with them. And if at the end of the day, you know, they are on the front of the branch then they are good. The thing is you build up their esteem, and if it is built up the right way, then they have got that confidence. So the next time they are not going to sit back and wait because I am scared I will do it wrong. But if they have been taught right, and they have been coached through the process, there is no problem. If they are taught wrong they may get to their first fire and think “This is not for me”.’ (Henry, C140403, B404)

The motivation overview, arising from the Charlton workshop, is that beyond the foundation issues of what is understood to variously motivate an individual (rural possibly, in some respects, different to urban) to join and remain as a volunteer, there is a brigade sustainability requirement for brigade leaders to make the most of what they know and can do and, similarly, to support others in achieving this outcome as is appropriate to their individual motivation circumstances.
In the North West Area instance – as addressed by the Charlton workshop - strengthening brigade sustainability invites a strategy of recruiting from non-traditional sources into both fire-fighting and broader membership roles (with the potential to later move into fire-fighting roles). Consistent with the other scoping inquiries, it was acknowledged that a new member brings with them much knowledge and skill that is useful to the brigade and they will build upon this in a manner that is personally advantageous and also to the brigade. In essence, this strengthening of brigade sustainability requires a brigade culture which is responsive to a volunteer’s motivations to join and remain as a volunteer, is warmly welcoming of all and nurtures valuing of learning and its outcomes.

In summary, the Charlton workshop added to research insight by yielding data that aligned with the preceding scoping inquiries and placed these findings within the overarching context of CFA brigade sustainability, and the usefulness of modelling making the most of what a volunteer knows and can do as a three values tool – initially to be identified as the **Indicative LCM Model**.
Chapter seven: The LCM Indicative Model

7.1 Introduction to the LCM Indicative Model

In the course of the scoping inquiry it became apparent that to be useful a model, serving as a making the most of learning outcomes tool (or framework) in the context of the CFA, has to succinctly encapsulate many nuances of influencing factors. In addition to revealing the diverse themes within themes nature of the topic, the scoping inquiry also evidenced a broad diversity of people and environments that require a tool to be, by nature, a framework for reflection and action more so than offering a definitive utilitarian or technical solution. Also having application as an embedded practice, more so than being perceived as yet another task to be accommodated within an already burdensome leadership load, is a desirable attribute. Under the influence of the above, as a consequence of constant comparison of data, and with the specific CFA retention of volunteers focus, the research outcomes were progressively refined to three features exhibited by a making the most of learning outcomes environment -

- L Quality: Practices that value the learning outcomes of volunteers, as in what a volunteer knows and can do.
- C Quality: Practices that nurture a brigade culture conducive to learning.
- M Quality: Practices that enhance individual motivations to be and remain as a volunteer.

Each of the features purposefully speaks of qualities so as to draw attention to the nurturing characteristics of an organisational environment in which people are encouraged and empowered to make the most of what they know and can do. Similarly, the reference point of practices is referred to so as to focus upon the requirement that there be consciously designed and implemented action to create and maintain a making the most of learning outcomes environment that will support organisational achievement.

The requirement to take conscious action to shape and preserve an organisational environment characterised by the three L C & M qualities was underscored by the recurring theme that much of what is available is not recognised and not valued by an individual, in
respect of themselves, and others in respect of the individual. In addition to lost opportunities regarding not drawing upon latent knowledge and skill, the scoping inquiry revealed instances of CFA brigade practices which were suppressive in nature by actively discouraging some volunteers from expansively drawing upon and adding to their body of knowledge and skill. And, in some instances, coupled with these lost opportunities was a tendency to assume continuance of motivation – rather than to proactively nurture motivation.

The interconnectedness of the L C & M qualities is illustrated by Colin joining culture and motivation with valuing of learning outcomes

‘...the thing that keeps volunteers is their ability to be satisfied by their performance of that skill which is the result of training and the kind of self-sustaining, self-fulfilling, feedback that comes from that... It is brigade management and leadership that allows people to feel that they have grown and developed ... the feeling of everybody there, [that it] is a trusting work environment.’ (Colin 200203, lines 188 – 198)

And another example of the LCM interconnectedness, albeit somewhat negative, is Mary (190303, lines 582 - 593) at the Ballarat workshop relating the instance of a young member with a speech impediment who was supported into a self-esteem building role in delivering the brigade in schools program only to be then removed from this activity, by a new brigade captain, on the grounds of not looking right (presumably the speech impediment). In this instance, the volunteer had been drawing upon fire awareness and response knowledge and presumably more, in a context of some personal challenge, but then had this taken away by a change in brigade culture under the influence of a new leader and with undermining effect.

In the course of the Charlton scoping workshop, participants cited examples of personal growth in confidence and changes in attitude arising from placing people in a supportive learning culture, respecting and feeding motivation, and newly awakening a valuing of what people know and can do. The Charlton participants cited, as an example, the way in which volunteer fire fighters and career fire fighters have now strengthened mutual regard (cultural change) as an outcome from fighting the 2003 North East fires and thus demonstrating their respective worth.
By a process of comparison of CFA views, and referring back to the resonance with the three pillars relationships of “Need”, “Opportunity” and “Encouragement” as an early outcome from the scoping inquiry, it appeared appropriate to postulate that the three L, C & M qualities, although having stand alone quality, are much more powerful when working in unison. Also, although retention of CFA volunteers had become the focus of inquiry there is a sense that the model, as introduced below, has broad application where the L, C & M qualities are defined in a manner appropriate to a particular focus of organisational achievement – thus inviting further exploration beyond this dissertation. From this logic, the indicative model – shown as Figure 7.1 – was developed.

In summary, the overall outcome from the scoping research, as illustrated in Figure 7.1, is that

- taking action to strengthen the valuing of the outcomes from lifelong learning,
- taking action to strengthen a culture that is conducive to learning, and
- taking action to strengthen the motivation to contribute by drawing upon the outcomes from lifelong learning,

are indicated as a means by which the CFA can enhance its achievement via making the most of what people know and can do. Importantly, these actions work in unison and therefore enhancing the meshing of the three is the means by which best advantage can be achieved. In this latter regard, Figure 7.1 introduces the notion of a Sweet Spot as a means of focusing attention on the advantage to be gained by meshing of the three actions (practices). And it should be noted that this sweet spot is defined by the particularities of the target focus of organisational achievement. Indeed, in the case of the CFA research,
each of the three scoping workshops had a particular focus – welcoming, selling training, and brigade sustainability – for which the LCM Indicative Model emerged as being just as appropriate as was the case for the more global CFA volunteer retention organisational achievement target – each focus being connected to volunteer satisfaction and thus retention.

7.2 Why “Indicative”?  
In the foregoing, the model is very deliberately referred to as indicative. There are three reasons for this. Firstly, at this stage of the inquiry, the model had been developed from scoping inquiry and was still subject to validating scrutiny. Secondly, there was already a sense that the utility of the model was as a reflective tool and this discretion-in-use attribute should be reflected in its title. And thirdly, although the genesis of the model was more broadly based than just being derived from the CFA, its broader organisational application was yet to be more fully explored. Under these circumstances “Indicative” is felt to be an appropriate way to present the model as a useful device for discretionary drawing upon in diverse environments and for diverse foci of organisational achievement – and its efficacy to be tested and refined over time.

7.3 To recap - collation of outcomes from scoping inquiry  
The scoping inquiry was a fourteen month – April 2002 to May 2003 – journey of data gathering, constant comparison, and reflection. Accordingly, this collation of scoping inquiry outcomes is a map of this journey leading to the emergence of the LCM Indicative Model.

The water industry scoping interviews yielded the notion of a spectrum of expanded drawing upon the breadth of outcomes from lifelong learning (Figure 5.2, p. 79). In essence, it is postulated that people draw from a central core of knowledge and skill as required to fulfil narrowly defined technical roles and then draw more expansively upon broader knowledge and skill to achieve broader outcomes. Achievement of broader outcomes may, at least in part, be a matter of choice by the individual as they are motivated to contribute beyond organisational expectation by drawing upon knowledge and skill that may be not known to the organisation and/or valued by the organisation. The
water industry scoping interviews also yielded insight leading to the notion of the “Three Pillars” (Figure 5.4, p. 85) identified as Need, Opportunity and Encouragement.

In moving on to the workplace training support environment (Phase Two) even though in this instance the inquiry was focussed upon first line operators of a lower job status than was typically in the mind of the water industry respondents, the findings supported the need, opportunity and encouragement outcomes from the earlier water industry scoping inquiry. And, in the course of this inquiry phase, the relationship between valuing what is known and can be done by individuals and the “Three Pillars” began to emerge as illustrated in Figure 5.4 (p. 85) and tabulated in Table 5.1 (p. 97). This then led on to indications of advantage accruing from refining consideration of this relationship by attention to motivations and culture as foreshadowed in Table 5.2 (p. 101) which is specifically “need for action” orientated. In particular, as an outcome of the three month sharing of experiences by contract cleaning trainers, the requirement and difficulty of moving from recognition of the value of what is known and can be done to achieving a beneficial outcome was added insight leading to development of the LCM Indicative Model.

The CFA scoping inquiry was a significant step forward from the generalities of Phases 1 and 2. In this instance, the inquiry had an organisation determined achievement focus – strengthening the retention of volunteers – and was thus much more directed in terms of making the most of what people know and can do. The fact of organisational support also afforded the opportunity to probe the research question from the perspective of both parties – the member of the organisation and the organisation.

The scoping interviews with CFA career staff personnel, many of whom had been or were still also volunteers, supported the Phase 1 and Phase 2 findings and also yielded the requirement of first recognising the range of what a volunteer knows and can do, then valuing this and, consequently, having a tool that facilitates the recognising and valuing (Figure 6.2, p.119). These interviews also generated three thematic sets – i.e. what potentially contributes to retention, what aids applications from lifelong learning and what inhibits the application of outcomes from lifelong learning.
Comparison of the content of the thematic sets with the need, opportunity and encouragement outcomes from Phase 1 reinforced the Phase 2 finding of the need for an action facilitating tool. Figure 6.3 (p. 124) is an overview of a required action sequence -

- actions that assert the value of learning in meeting the community safety need; leading on to
- actions that support a volunteer in drawing upon the outcomes from the totality of their learning to date and to extend their learning; and then
- actions which acknowledge the esteem in which a volunteer is held as a consequence of them drawing upon the outcomes from their lifelong learning.

Moving on from the CFA scoping interviews, the scoping workshops provided the opportunity to deepen insight through the consensus and differences of shared views from volunteer member participants in a focus group format with career staff members (themselves, mostly, also volunteers). Although each workshop had a common overarching rationale – increasing retention through making the most of what volunteers know and can do – the inquiry was enriched by the difference in special interest of each workshop. This difference afforded the opportunity to probe the universality of a general tool being applied to achieve a range of making the most of what people know and can do outcomes – albeit within a common environment.

Participants at the Geelong scoping workshop found consensus in the view that the manner of welcoming and inducting a new volunteer member is an important factor; and has three foundations –

- **Recognition** of the new member – who they are and what they bring.
- **Inclusiveness** with respect to being embraced by the brigade – finding a place and fitting in.
- **Leadership** that is applied throughout the structure of the brigade to nurture a culture that does indeed support members contributing to their own personal advantage and to the advantage of the brigade and, hence, the community.
In expressing views that were consistent with scoping inquiry outcomes (to date), contributing to and embracing change was also seen as an important factor by the Geelong workshop participants. A co-influencing relationship between leadership, changes in things around the brigade and change in the nature of applying what is known and can be done was found to be embedded within the views expressed (Figure 6.4, p. 133).

The Ballarat scoping workshop was convened with “Better selling training” as a focus. This topic was suggested, corporately, as a subject of special interest to members who were likely to attend a workshop. In agreeing with the general thrust of inquiry outcomes (to date) the Ballarat participants expressed views that could be expressed as common principles –

- Valuing outcomes from lifelong learning.
- The influence of brigade culture upon people making the most of what they know and can do.
- Having regard for the motivations to remain as a volunteer and its relationship to drawing upon the outcomes from lifelong learning.

It was at this point that the notion of the LCM Indicative Model began to take explicit form.

In exploring the specific focus of strengthening brigade sustainability, the Charlton scoping workshop embraced the idea of a hierarchical drawing upon people beginning with a foundation of an adequate pool from which to recruit, and then moving on to a targeted, breaking free of traditional restrictive notions of who can be a volunteer, recruiting from those who are willing and available, valuing competency (on a broad basis) and finally having competent volunteers who are there when needed (Figure 6.6, p. 142). In this CFA instance, whilst it may be true that there is a diminishing rural community pool from which to draw, because of tradition only a part of the community (the blokes) had been the recruitment base and thus the making the most of what people know and can do progress through the hierarchy had been confined within a narrow boundary and then limited in vision with respect to the manner of drawing upon the volunteers. In addition to the broader CFA possibilities, revealed by reflection upon the hierarchy, it may be the case that this
The LCM Indicative Model

hierarchy (appropriately extrapolated) has broad application in terms of drawing upon a latent pool of knowledge and skill in circumstances other than the CFA.

The importance of motivation through a sense of self-worth and a status of mutual trust emerged as a significant consensus view of Charlton workshop participants. This was grounded in valuing what volunteers know and can do and resonated strongly with the three values of learning, culture and motivation that were informing development of the LCM Indicative Model. And, the role and quality of brigade leadership was seen to be the foundation upon which these values are nurtured and was associated with the core importance of action at the brigade level.

In summary, Figure 7.2 is a flow chart representation of the informing of design of the LCM Indicative Model.
The LCM Indicative Model

Thematic Set 1: Potentially contributing to retention
- Valuing of outcomes from learning
- Applauding commitment (to serve as a CFA member)
- Valuing identity (as a CFA member)
- Comfortable with learning and its application
- Respecting the past as a base upon which to build new futures:
  - Recognising and strengthening available competencies/capabilities
  - Strengthening partnership (between volunteers and career personnel)
- Nurturing the passion (for being a CFA member)
- Supporting continuance of a positive brigade culture
- Applauding added capability value (as a consequence of CFA membership)
- Applying lifelong learning outcomes to initiating and embracing change
- Mentor orientated drawing upon volunteer’s life experiences

Thematic Set 2: Aiding application of outcomes from lifelong learning
- Maintaining a learning structure (from learning to application of outcomes)
- Reflecting community demographics
- Rewarding the application of learning outcomes
- Overtly reinforcing value of application (of learning outcomes)
- Encouragement to share and learn (together)
- Nurturing a learning culture
- Providing pathways for growth (enhancing personnel capability)
- CFA leaders recognising and supporting volunteers’ expectations (motivations)

Thematic Set 3: Inhibiting application of outcomes from lifelong learning
- Holding to old ways
- Defending rigid structures
- Inhibitions of individuals (including under-valuing of opportunities)
- Lack of balance in priorities (personal choices)
- Proper balance in priorities
- Unawareness of knowledge and skill
- Industrial inhibitors (Rules)
- Cost and other logistical limitations
- Interpersonal tensions (Dysfunction)
- Under-valuing learning
- Lack of reward and disappointment: (Personal)
- General decline in volunteerism:
  - CFA not valued by local community (In some instances)
  - Over concentration upon systems (Perception of)
  - Unsupportive approaches to training (Too little flexibility)
  - Providing only narrow attention to training (fire fighting only)
  - Local weakening opportunities for learning (Diminishing critical mass)

Geelong workshop (20th Feb. 03) – Welcoming a new member
- Recognition of the new member – who they are and what they bring.
- Inclusiveness with respect to being embraced by the brigade – finding a place and fitting in.
- Leadership nurturing a valuing of learning supportive culture. (Also leading with respect to “change”)

Ballarat workshop (19th March 03) – “Selling” training
- Welcoming and Knowing (a volunteer member)
- Partnership (Volunteer member and career member)
- Critically important but different (rural compared to urban)
- Motivation drivers and hurdles (Influence of and dependency upon leadership)
- Changing roles (Attention to community safety expanding beyond just response to fire events)
- Promotion/Public Relations (Being proactive both externally and internally)

Charlton workshop (14th April 03) Strengthening brigade sustainability
- The importance of access to an adequate pool of people who can then be moved up, as volunteers, though a hierarchy of “willing and available”, “competent” and “there when needed”.
- A “sense of worth” as the foundation upon which to motivate volunteers to draw upon what they know and can do.
- Valuing outcomes from learning, valuing a culture which is conducive to this, and valuing volunteer motivations.

LCM Indicative Model
L - Practices that value the learning outcomes of volunteers.
C - Practices that nurture a brigade culture conducive to learning.
M - Practices that enhance individual motivations to be and remain as a volunteer.

Figure 7.2 – Emergence of the LCM Indicative Model
7.4 The LCM Indicative Model in the context of environmental influences – an activity theory approach

In the course of development of the LCM Indicative Model, as an aid to retention, it was apparent that making the most of what a CFA volunteer knows and can do requires consideration of the diverse ways in which the CFA organisational environment influences (mediates) activity by the volunteer. Accordingly, an Activity Theory approach was applied to exploring the interconnectedness (mediating) between the elements as shown previously in Figure 4.2 (p. 70) and the interrogating of data questions listed below framed the development of the LCM Indicative Model as a tool, or framework, with a designed legitimacy in the CFA environment

- What are the rules imposed (reluctantly accepted) and willingly embraced that impact upon retention?
- What is the nature of a tool, or framework, that could be developed which will positively mediate the effect of the rules?
- What is the potential influence – positive and negative – of the brigade team upon the volunteer remaining as a volunteer?
- What is the nature of a tool, or framework, that could be developed which will positively mediate the influence of the brigade?

The Making the most of learning 2003 report to Emergency Management Australia (Henry & Hughes 2003, pp. 25-32) gives an account of the manner in which Activity Theory was used as a prism to draw upon data; and cites examples of views expressed by respondents to the scoping inquiry. Expanded descriptors of the elements of the activity network were an outcome of this process, as listed below.

**The tool:**

The informing research of this project has grounded empirically the premise that there is indeed a reinforcing relationship between making the most of what a volunteer knows and can do and retention of that volunteer. Whilst it could be said that holding to such a premise may lead to a self-fulfilling outcome, the research has continually challenged this underpinning notion by canvassing the opinions of interviewees and
workshop participants and by seeking anecdotal evidence. In a confirming manner, the experiential evidence from the interviewees and workshop participants gave cause to regard this grounding proposition as sound. Accordingly, the quest for development of a tool is judged to be a valid pursuit.

The subjects:
CFA volunteers are not of a homogeneous group within the Australian population. For example, although the CFA, as a total organisation, is predominately a male environment, there is increasing participation by women; the joining and remaining motivations of rural and urban volunteers are suggested by the evidence gathered to date as being different; and it is suggested that young people with different incoming personal qualities are replacing older members. It is an interesting and a germane issue to reflect upon whether the CFA volunteer of the future will be the same as the CFA volunteer of today.

The object:
This particular object of strengthening retention through making the most of what a volunteer knows and can do is undoubtedly one of a number of retention strategies. It is possible that these different strategies are to a degree co-dependent, and therefore the making the most of learning tool will have application within a broader context that needs to be understood and respected.

The division of labour:
To perform its community serving function, the CFA has a division of labour that, in terms of number, draws primarily upon volunteers – not all of whom are necessarily fire fighters. Career CFA staff, both in the roles of fire fighters and corporate personnel resources, operate in partnership with volunteers. And, depending upon circumstances, there is division of labour with volunteers and career staff from other emergency services and career personal from government agencies such as the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE). Also, within a brigade, there is division of labour based upon individual choice, competency, defined responsibilities and availability.
The community:

This is probably a much more complex matter than first appears. There is a possibility of a hierarchy existing. At its foundation there is the particular brigade that may be unique in character. The next level could possibly be the amalgam of brigades that have close supporting relationships. Finally, the hierarchy then progresses up to the CFA corporately. From an operational perspective there are also the relationships with other emergency services and government agencies such as the DSE. The community milieu is further expanded/enriched by consideration of the broader community fabric in terms of the social, economic and environmental infrastructure that is protected and serviced by the CFA. Family and employers (and, in some cases, employees) of CFA volunteers are members of the closer external community to the CFA.

Consequent upon this embedding within the community – quite fairly regarded as iconic with respect to social capital - it is with high validity that the CFA introduces itself to prospective career members as “A vital partnership for the Victorian community” (CFA 2006); and this is a sentiment embraced clearly by CFA volunteer members as indicated by interviewees in their identification of stakeholders.

Notwithstanding the broad nature of the community in which a CFA volunteer lives and serves, the research indicates that it is the local brigade that is the significant community with respect to retention.

The rules:

In recent years a volunteer’s potential fire fighting contribution has become governed by assessed competency. In addition to the mandated minimum skills requirement for fire fighters, specialist functions require confirmed competency and intended brigade operational classifications define the nature of competencies required beyond minimum skills. There are also informal rules that apply within brigades and relate to what is expected of a volunteer member.

The exploration of the efficacy of the model – elevation beyond the “indicative” status - in the next chapter interrogates the appropriateness of the above descriptors derived from
Activity Theory as useful reflecting and auditing concepts when reviewing the specifics of the environment in which the model is to be applied.
Chapter Eight: Efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model – The three stories

8.1 The need for persistence and compromise as an informing element in exploring the efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model

This chapter is an account of the process undertaken to explore the efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model – Phase 4 of the research. Initially, the intent was to draw upon the scoping inquiry to inform one or more action research orientated projects. However, notwithstanding an expression of willingness by participants in the three scoping workshops to proceed to projects focussed upon their respective group interests – welcoming, selling training and brigade sustainability – taking this next step was much harder than anticipated and had to be done in a modified form. An approach of triangulating respondent personal views and experiences, rather than outcomes from actual application, was adopted.

The root of the problem was that a CFA protocol had evolved where my contact with the volunteers was via the career staff members who had arranged their participation. These staff members variously had their own corporate reporting responsibilities, targets to be achieved, and an apparent practice of liaising with volunteers through the respective brigade leaderships. Initially, this collided with an industrial work-to-rule situation with respect to career staff and caused uncertainty regarding how to best proceed in an environment with tension between the career and volunteer elements of the organisation. Also, in an abiding manner, this was a complex reporting and respecting of territory research environment in which some career staff appeared to be frequently walking on egg shells as they took care to not intrude upon individual sensibilities within the complex, necessarily quasi-military, command and control but mostly volunteer environment.

In addition to the CFA reporting and communicating protocols to be respected, there was the vagary of multiple calls upon a volunteer’s availability – including their job, climatic and seasonal influences in rural environments, and their duties and obligations as a volunteer. Moving on to actual projects was not just a simple matter of volunteers choosing to do so.
Commenting upon the difficulty in getting an action research orientated project underway -

‘Um, up here the majority of volunteers in this area are from rural brigades [as distinct from town based urban brigades]. And I think that we may have already discussed that rural brigades primarily have members because of that community feeling that you have to be a member because of it is their own property [at risk] or other such as trucks [e.g. using their own earth moving plant to construct fire breaks and contributing to community purchased brigade equipment]. So that's why they are members and they are not necessarily CFA loyal – that's the thing that is expected of them. It's not something that they necessarily want to do – but it is expected.

And so their time commitment to the CFA is not necessarily high on their agenda. That said though, the CFA has placed some very, very, high expectations on the CFA volunteer’s time in the last six to eight months.

Following the North East fires [January – March 2003], we realise of course that out of the inquiry certain things have come in place and we [CFA corporately] are pushing to get those implemented or some of them - obviously not all of them - some of those things implemented before this fire season. So that is actually taking up a lot of the volunteers’ time in attending educational sessions, going back and trying to implement those things on their truck and within their brigade. So that has been a huge time commitment. Also the fact that the June 2005 time frame from the Linton Inquiry for completion of training sessions is fast approaching; and there is now a massive panic mode [CFA corporately].

............... So basically the training demands and the operational demands have put the community safety side of things [matters other than fire fighting] on the back burner. It seems to be always the way.’ (Brenda, career staff member, 191203, lines 22-56)

The above comments by Brenda were made in the context of severe drought conditions in the district and the personal stress and additional work load for many volunteers, which were inhibiting getting on with a project. However, even though some of the active fire fighting volunteers who had previously expressed a willingness to proceed to a project had cause to put this aside, it did emerge that some would have participated and/or could have assisted with recruiting others. It remains something of a mystery as to why a project group was not convened notwithstanding an unquestioned support for this by Brenda. Similarly, the special interests of welcoming members and promoting training were (and remain) sufficiently wide spread that it should have been possible to convene relatively small membership action research orientated project groups - availability of a small number of volunteers as co-researchers did not appear to be the real problem.

There was a sense that authority figures within the organisational structure were inhibiting getting on with the next phase of research. This was probably with good cause, from their
perspectives, as there were pressing objectives to be met and distraction from these obligations was not welcome. In this regard, Brenda’s closing remark about community safety matters having low priority has significance as notwithstanding the CFA need for members in the “broader membership” category – i.e. other than active fire fighters – to fulfil its range of community safety functions, there appears to be a cultural pre-disposition to only fully valuing fire fighters.

With the benefit of hindsight, I could have been more assertive in suggesting that non-active fire fighters, including those recently retired from availability for call-out, could have contributed to the efficacy exploration of the LCM Indicative Model. It was in this vein that the conversation/interview with Brenda went on to include the following –

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dialogue 8.1 – Extract from 19th December 2003 interview with Brenda (CFA career member)</th>
<th>(Pseudonym)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lewis 529 (Researcher)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>…. why couldn’t we in your region be drawing upon volunteers who are not fire fighters, and therefore they have a job to do. Why do we need fire fighters [as co-researchers] ---</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brenda 531</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>--- to be part of this project?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lewis 532</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes, to be part of this project.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brenda 532</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Simply because we don’t have volunteers who aren’t fire fighters. Which is an area that I’m trying to work on at the moment. We don’t have any broader role volunteers – they are all fire fighters. Thus the reason why I have gone out and recruited [attempted] some different people to come and work on this project because I just thought that we needed to expand our group and that actually meant expanding the brigades and the volunteers that we are trying to work with.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lewis 546</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there a cultural problem within brigades with this broader membership notion?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brenda 549</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>It’s unknown to them. It’s something that they’re not even really aware of. You’re either a fire fighter or you’re not. This is basically how they see it. And they are not even really aware that you can be a broader role member.</td>
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<td>A very good example, with the Linton inquiry, they were told that they had to have - I believe it was 100%, it may have been less, and I will be able to confirm the figures - X amount of all volunteers had to be trained in wildfire by June 2005, OK, full stop. So what happened was, on your [brigade] list, you had these members who [had] left. And 60, 70, 80 years old who have always been a member, you don’t want to cut them off your list because they’re family members. Yeh, very valuable people, but they were written down as firefighters. So that meant they had to do this training even though they didn’t want to actually go onto the fire ground any more. So it is only now that probably we are getting out there and we’re saying to them ‘Look on your [brigade] listing, you don’t have to cut them off your listing. They don’t have to be a fire fighter, they can be a broader role member, which can be something as simple as they come and clean out the shed, they might take your truck for a drive. Or they can offer you their experience. …. Whereas, initially, they would have said that ‘Ohi, we can’t delete Joe Blogs because he’s a family member and we’ve got to leave him on the list’. Whereas now they go ‘It’s OK to delete him as a fire fighter because we can retain him and his experience [in a broader member role way].’</td>
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I have a feeling that the idea of broader membership hasn't been well communicated to the CFA [across its brigade structure and membership], because I keep getting a feeling that people are working to different rules. I was pulled up at head office because I was making a distinction between what I was calling professional firefighters and volunteers. I was pulled up by the remark that “No! they are all professionals”. So I can understand that, they all need to be equally competent as ---

--- I can understand that. But then I was talking about these people that do other things and who call themselves auxiliary members. And I'd been given to understand that such a thing doesn't exist. So when I went into the head office environment again and started to say “Explain this to me” I got this emphatic statement “A member is a member”. And so I understand that there isn't any distinction – they're all members. But it seems as though that's not the case out in the field because there's some people who are qualified firefighting members and there's other people who aren't. So there is a difference there.

The auxiliary members, who used to be primarily called the ladies auxiliary because they are fund raisers for the brigade, have now been told they have to drop the ladies off the front of it - and they have to be auxiliary members. But their years of service to the CFA is not recognised by the CFA. So you may have Mary who has fund raised for 50 years - and you have a lot of those Marys out there - who is not recognised as being a member by the CFA, and will not be given a badge or anything – we have badges and service awards. So Mary will not be eligible for any of those and will not receive any of those because she is not a member of the CFA. So that's not fair. Mary has been involved in the CFA for X amount of years. We'll sign her up as a broader role member which is what the CFA is terming that. She then starts from day one - they don't recognise even half the service she's provided them - so she starts from day one, the day after they sign her up even though she's now [already] given 50 year's service previous to that. .... And they are not recognised by the CFA. It's such an injustice.

It seemed strange that the CFA, with in excess of 50,000 volunteers, had difficulty in facilitating access to a small number of appropriate research subjects to embark upon the next phase of inquiry. There appeared to be a pre-disposition to involving volunteers from a relatively small pool where there were already established personal links. Maybe it is regarded as hazardous to solicit opinion from within a wide catchment where views are not known and a personal relationship does not already exist.

Throughout the inquiry, there was a sense that, in some parts of the organisation (including within volunteer leadership), un-controlled consultation is to be avoided. And this was coupled with a perception by some career and volunteer members that contributions from the rank and file are not welcome – as exampled below.

Commenting upon suggestions not being welcomed -

"At the risk of stereotyping, some people in headquarters suffer school teacher mentality – ‘I am right, you are wrong, I am the teacher’" (Phase 4 respondent)

Commenting upon, in some instances, requiring a new volunteer to be seen but not heard – ‘A lot of people who are in senior positions are older and because of
that they might put subtle messages across to junior people [new, and relatively new, members] - who have skills – of “Don’t show them here”; Don’t stand up”; Don’t be counted”; “Don’t challenge”; “Don’t put your views across”; “Don’t do X”; “When you have been around here for twenty five years longer than I have, then you can start doing those sort of things.”’ (Phase 3 respondent)

Tongue in cheek, but with serious intent, commenting upon protecting position when necessarily having to delegate –

‘But there is an awful lot of trust in that as well. You couldn’t trust anyone else to do what you are doing. I will say no more. They might do it better than you and therefore you are seen as a weakling.’ (Phase 4 respondent)

Commenting on a brigade leader taking on too much in circumstances of an excluding (not welcoming suggestions and assistance) culture –

‘... but also, I know the type of person who was there as captain. No one else could do anything because no one else would do it right,’ (Phase 4 respondent)

Commenting upon matters which inhibit succession planning -

‘That’s right. And you’ve got the backbiting of those people with egos because their ego isn’t—their self esteem isn’t really big, they’ve got to get rid of all the people that are worthwhile in the brigade so there’s no-one left to take over. So they destroy, silently, all the good members – they all leave. And they don’t care because they’re not there for the community; they’re there for their own tag on their shoulder [agreeing]. And that’s a huge problem that could be taken away if they took out the way we vote in the rural system.’ (Phase 3 respondent)

Echoing the above, there were recurring comments along the lines that the CFA does not welcome opinions and suggestions, of a critical and/or change orientation nature, from within the volunteer membership. Although such comments may be more perception based than reality, they do support the proposition that making the most of what a volunteer knows and can do requires mutual respect and trust between the CFA corporately and the volunteers, and volunteer to volunteer.

Arising from the foregoing background, the delay between scoping workshop agreement to undertake a project and actually commencing the review of the efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model is of itself informing research insight as indicated in Table 8.1. There is a case study quality in the persistence and compromise which were required to arrive at a series of situations where CFA volunteers drew upon their knowledge and experience to explore the efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model. The possibility exists that this hiatus was indicative of broader organisation environment factors which serve to inhibit volunteers contributing from the breadth of their knowledge and experience.
Table 8.1 – Hiatus between agreement to commence a project and commencement of modified exploration of the LCM Indicative Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement to commence a project</th>
<th>Commencement of LCM model review</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barwon/Corangamite Area</strong></td>
<td>29th March 2003 to 13th October 2003</td>
<td>Subsequent to the scoping workshop, there appeared to be a “cooling off” in CFA corporate interest in proceeding with an actual project – alternative suggestions were made such as conducting a survey. And then the temporary reassignment of the Area Training Manager, who was pivotal to maintaining contact with the workshop participants or arranging alternative access, was a major factor in the loss of momentum. Upon return to normal substantive duties, the Area Training Manager (with strong CFA corporate support) was instrumental in getting a project underway – albeit in modified form to the original intention and with a different group of volunteers. However, it is a matter of some concern, that contact was lost with the original group of volunteers – they may not even be aware of the value of their initial contribution. During this hiatus period, as I continued to press for project commencement and offered means (including providing materials) by which momentum might be maintained, there was a sense that an un-declared reason existed to avoid resuming contact with the volunteers who contributed to the scoping workshop.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Midlands/Wimmera Area</strong></td>
<td>18th March 2003 to 8th September 2003</td>
<td>Competing demands upon career staff time appeared to be a major factor in loss of momentum. As for the other two prospective project environments, there was a sense that organisational priorities were overwhelming a nice-to-do but not need-to-do peripheral research project. However informal contact with volunteers and some career staff suggested that, at an individual level, the LCM model research was valued as it was addressing a felt need for stronger respect of volunteers at both the CFA corporate and brigade level.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>North West Area</strong></td>
<td>14th April 2003 to 26th February 2004</td>
<td>As for the other areas, the research in the North West Area began with a high level of expressed commitment by the Area Training Manager. However, delegation of this interest to another career member for whom – although highly committed – it appeared to place an additional load which could not be readily embraced. This was more than just a matter of quantum of work load. The complexity of multiple reporting obligations and associated respect for organisational territorial boundaries along with consideration of corporate versus volunteer sensitivities appeared to be factors that inhibited moving on to the next phase of the research. Also, in this area, there was a high level of rural stress – restructuring and drought related – which added to the difficulty of arranging a next step in the research.</td>
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</table>

Note: Even though this research environment presented as extremely difficult to move on to the next phase, it has subsequently strongly embraced the LCM Model and the outcomes from exploration of its efficacy. Indeed, the CFA North West Area is moving toward LCM exemplar status – if not already there – and beckons as a further research environment.

If the difficulty of moving on from the scoping study had only applied in the one instance of a CFA Area, then it would have been accepted as a vagary of life, but it occurred in all three instances. In all three post-scoping workshop instances, a document summarising workshop outcomes and outlining the next step was provided to the CFA career staff member who had arranged workshop participation. It was an expectation that the feedback document would be on-forwarded to workshop participants and thus support a quick moving on to the action research orientated projects. However, as reviewed in Table 8.1,
there was a loss in momentum at this time and an appearance that, diverse in nature, CFA operational issues were overwhelming moving on to this next phase in the research – there was the appearance of a systemic cause and the possibility that it was related to the work load of individual career staff members more so than availability of a sufficient small number of willing volunteers. Accordingly, a modified approach of group meetings, interviews and one project (reviewing the welcoming of new members) was implemented as shown in Figure 8.1.

Note: In Figure 8.1 and in the discussion relating to the two Geelong urban brigades, for anonymity purposes, the brigades are identified as “Brigade 1” and “Brigade 2”
Figure 8.1 – Probing efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model
Although, at the time, there was frustration with the failure to initiate action research orientated projects, the alternative of achieving feedback upon the LCM Indicative Model from fifty nine respondents (43 volunteers, 7 career staff also volunteers, 9 career staff) variously in single interview and group sharing formats over an extended period was fortuitous. This afforded confirming the scoping insight regarding the linkage between what a volunteer may contribute and the predisposition of organisational structural elements to aid and/or inhibit. There was also triangulation benefit in that forty eight of these Phase 4 respondents had not participated in the development of the LCM Indicative Model – they came to the model with a fresh view.

The insight derived from this experience of the need for persistence, patience and compromise is that two preconditions apply for a volunteer to draw upon what they know and can do –

- the volunteer must be aware that the need/opportunity exists; and
- the volunteer should feel that they are welcome to contribute.

And, derived from the broad inquiry, there are four additional preconditions –

- the volunteer must recognise (value) the opportunity to make a personal contribution;
- the volunteer must be confident that they can contribute;
- the volunteer must be motivated to contribute; and
- the volunteer must be able to identify a pathway to contribute.

Figure 8.2 illustrates these six precondition relationships to the LCM Indicative Model and goes some way toward demonstrating the logical efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model. The Sweet Spot is the coalescence of all three qualities (L, C and M) in a manner which is responsive to the above preconditions.
8.2 The authoring of three stories

Having overcome the getting started difficulty, Phase 4 of the research by way of confirming the efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model led to the authoring of three stories –

- The ‘Welcoming a New Member’ story
- The “Selling Training” story
- The “Strengthening Brigade Sustainability” story

Each of these stories is a telling of the research and its outcomes as aligned to the particular focus issue and is set in the context of the broader making the most of what volunteers know and can do issue. Each story contains tools addressing matters which emerged in the course of the inquiry and culminates in an offering of a master – LCM grounded - tool posing indicative key questions and/or strategies to frame action.

The stories are substantial research overview and derived documents and, in size, are beyond the word limit allowance for this dissertation. However the following citing of a senior CFA manager, in introducing me as the researcher to a 9th June 2005 meeting of North West Area functional managers, is offered in testimony to the worth of the confirmed
insights and the derived tools and to a confirming of the efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model.

‘I am very pleased to be able to welcome Lewis here today. Lewis has done a really terrific study, in my opinion, upon brigade viability and he used Brenda’s catchment and the volunteers in that catchment as the source for the information that he obtained about the circumstances – environmental circumstances – affecting the brigades. And as a basis for the identification of issues which brigades face – and which individual volunteers face – which affect their sustainability and viability. And as a consequence of all of the interviews that he has conducted and the thought he has put into this he has produced some really excellent tools.

I didn’t get to the tools in the study until --- it was the last part that I read. Because I went to each of the attachments that Lewis has in his study and read about all of the details of the interviews that he conducted and the conversations that he had. But, these are the first tools that I have seen that are practically applicable to brigades. That we could actually give them to brigades as they are - right now - and ask brigades to use those - and they are very easy to use – to move the brigade and the members to a point where they are actually addressing those fundamental issues which affect sustainability and viability. That is, the environment in the brigade and the engagement and involvement of individual members in the brigade and the encouragement of other members of the community to join the brigade.

Now --- this is a bit of an executive summary that I am trying to give you here. But those tools are very simple, very practical, common sense and they simply take the brigade – or provide the opportunity for the brigade to take itself through a really simple little process which causes it to address the particular issues which affect viability and sustainability. And so I was really delighted with them. I think that we could just give them to the BASOs [brigade administration support officers] straight away – I am quite serious about that – and the ops. [operations] officers and ask them to take them to the brigades and identify what issues they want to address using the appropriate tool. So I think that that is a fantastic breakthrough.

Nobody else has gone from the original research, through the thinking process, to identify the particular issues which affect brigades and then produce tools which will allow the brigades to address those issues. Nobody has done that. So I think that we are very fortunate to have had Lewis’s contribution and I am really pleased to welcome him here today to talk about his study and to receive some feedback from us. So, there you are Lewis, there’s an introduction for you.’ (John, senior CFA manager, K090605, lines 1-34)

It is intriguing that such a strong advocacy for the legitimacy of the research outcomes and the worth of the LCM Indicative Model arose from the research environment which was most difficult to take into the exploration of efficacy phase of inquiry. And this confirming of efficacy introduction was followed by Brenda informing the meeting that the LCM Indicative Model related tools were already in use. Given the difficulty in moving to Phase 4 of the
research, within this CFA Area, this was a very reassuring surprise. The persistence over a twenty three month period – as mapped in Figure 8.1 – had been justified.

Whilst Figure 8.1 (Phase 4) is an overview of the period in which the efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model was confirmed, the writing of the three stories drew upon the totality of the research. Likewise, whilst the interviews with Eric, Oliver and John and the two Westernport Area focus group meetings, drawing upon the experience and insights of sixteen CFA volunteer brigade captains, were specifically directed at leadership issues (as reviewed in Chapter 9), the findings relevant to the impact of leadership upon the LCM values were derived from the totality of the inquiry into making the most of what CFA volunteers know and can do.

8.3 Outcomes from the Brigade 1 and Brigade 2 exploration of “Welcoming a new member”

During the period October 2003 to May 2004 the usefulness of drawing upon the LCM Indicative Model to welcoming a new member to a brigade was explored. This was done through a series of meetings with Brigade 1 volunteers and an on-going project by a group of Brigade 2 volunteers – both brigades are urban brigades.

Commenting upon the potential difference in nature of urban versus rural commitment required of a volunteer -

‘It is interesting because we have had volunteers come from rural brigades where they have had ten calls a year and then they have had ten in a weekend here - most of them have been false alarms, not full action as they're like. Well - “We can't handle this. We are not used to that type of demand. We want to go back to where we know there is going to be a fire when we get called so that we're going to turn up”. … they are not used to dealing with the demands of an urban brigade.’ (Carol, Brigade 2 volunteer, 211003, 669)

A significant contribution was made to this component of the research by Tracy (pseudonym), a CFA volunteer, as a seconded CFA project officer. In addition to securing participation by research respondents, Tracey was herself a self-reflecting respondent with respect to the influences impacting upon the performance of her role; and thus added significantly to confirming the efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model as it related to her own volunteering and in the temporarily paid role as a project officer.
The selection of two urban brigades, in close proximity, was deliberate on two counts. Firstly, recruitment and welcoming in the urban situation frequently involves a stranger, to the brigade members, as a new recruit. This is different to the rural environment where people are mostly well known to each other. The close proximity gave the opportunity to explore differences, and similarities, that may exist and which aren’t geographically based.

Whilst the Brigade 2 undertaking of a project to review existing welcoming procedures – informed by the LCM Indicative Model - was the major source of model confirming data, the meetings with Brigade 1 volunteers served to provide a comparative (triangulating) background to the Brigade 2 project. Both brigades drew upon buddies as support for a new member, but with some difference in manner and consistency of approach.

Brigade 1 had a routine of a buddy especially assigned at the initial recruiting phase and then assigning another buddy to support the new recruit during the training period. Brigade 2 had a casual approach in assigning a buddy and in what way they would provide support for a new recruit.

Commenting upon buddy assigning and assisting issues -

‘The other things too - I mean we’ve been trying over the last twelve months here at Brigade 2 to implement a buddy system. And sometimes because we have had such a large influx of recruits come in - which we haven’t had a large number - it has been very difficult to give the right person to the right mentor. I know particularly when we have had a large influx of females I copped them all. We had five or six; and you know well where do you sit with them all. Because what happens is it’s like trying to work out where it sits--- but we are trying... And it is important that, as Fabian said, not everybody can be here all of the time; and not everybody has the expertise in the particular area to take you through an exercise. So I don’t see it as a detriment that Harold has had the experience to be able to go around different members and gain that little bit of experience it gets them open too. Because they have had the opportunity to show they know some stuff. ....’ (Carol, Brigade 2 volunteer, 211003, 669)

Both brigades had an established interview process, but Brigade 1 appeared to be more advanced, although only recently so, in formally exploring a new member’s expectations.

Commenting upon the recently established interview process -

‘We have an interview process which has only just been implemented – what three or four months ago. And that is before they do any training.

“What do you want to do?” “What can you do for us?” “Why do you want to be a member here?” It is a fairly lengthy sort of a process which obviously breaks
down a lot of the barriers. You know – “This is what we can do for you” “What can you do for us?” And at least we know where they want to go. Yeh, all they want to do is just go out and fight fires. Or all they want to do is just come along here and help us keep the station tidy – things like that. So at least we know; and obviously from there we can develop what sort of training they need." (Max, Brigade 1 volunteer, 131003, 723)

In both the Brigade 1 and the Brigade 2 instances, it was found appropriate to review the data through three prisms leading to data sets – i.e.

- The justification for attention to the manner of welcoming a new member
- Issues relating to gaining advantage from the new member and buddy relationship
- Projected outcomes from the new member and buddy relationship

Following assembly of insights – as above - each data set was drawn upon to inform construction of an activity theory derived overview which was then, in a confirming of efficacy manner, mapped against the LCM Indicative Model (see Figure 8.4, p. 179).

There was strong congruence between the generality of the Brigade 1 and Brigade 2 data. However, whilst both brigades have a common highly professional commitment to their fire fighting and other community safety roles, they do have differences in culture.

As an example of cultural difference between the brigades – Brigade 1 has a very active “junior” program which feeds recruitment in addition to facilitating personal development for young people. In comparison, Brigade 2 does not conduct a junior program and is very focussed upon the core fire fighting role with less whole-of-family orientation than is the Brigade 1 case.

It was also interesting that the Brigade 2 culture was described (by Ben) as having changed from a competition (inter- brigade running and other competitive events) culture to a training culture because members did not have time to devote to both preparation-for-competition training and the requirement for formal fire fighting training which now applies.

The view that ‘Once you can turn out to fires, I reckon you are entitled to have a say in what happens in the brigade. If you are willing to make an effort’ (Claude, Brigade 2
volunteer, 181103, B174) is indicative of the potential for variation in some aspect of a particular brigade culture under the influence of persuasive beliefs.

In the course of consideration of the usefulness of the LCM Indicative Model, as a guide to designing and conducting new member welcoming processes, it became apparent that the recruitment and induction process, as supported by a buddy and as aligned to a brigade culture, could be helpfully thought of as a **Partnership in Knowing** (Figure 8.3)

The summary of efficacy exploration outcomes, from the Brigades 1 and 2 focus upon “welcoming” is illustrated in Figure 8.4, and consequent upon demonstration of practical usefulness the “indicative” model qualifier is removed. This is an activity theory derived representation of questions which inform planning and implementing the welcoming of new members in a manner that lays a strong foundation for service as a CFA volunteer.

The Figure 8.4 questions are reflective prompts to initiate action and to inform action. As an example, the following extract of transcript is a suggestion for change at Brigade 2 away from the practice of a new member being a passive onlooker at training sessions.

Proposing that a new member become more quickly engaged as a learner -

*Making them involved in the training sessions and make sure that they actually are given, with a recruit liaison* (the buddy), *basic tasks like setting the hydrant and folding/rolling hoses*.

Somebody says “Mandy [the buddy] go and fold/roll a hose, I want you to set the hydrant”. You [the buddy] *take your recruit with you and show them how to do it at the same time. So it would be like having given...*
In this instance, there is responsiveness to valuing learning and its outcomes (including the new member in learning more quickly than would otherwise be the case), modifying a learning/training culture and nurturing the motivation of the new member – LCM in practice.
8.4 Outcomes from the 8th September 2003 Ballarat review meeting and broader exploration of “Selling training”

The participants at the 8th September review meeting focussed largely upon change that would assist strengthening engagement with training by volunteers. This ranged across issues such as being more sensitive and supportive regarding volunteers with learning problems (Dialogue 8.2) to establishing and maintaining a skills maintenance program (Dialogue 8.3).

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**Dialogue 8.2 – 8th September, example dialogue regarding language, literacy and numeracy issues  (Pseudonyms used)**

Walter (Volunteer) 369
Can I just ask a question here? Is it this [potential project] targeted at people who day to day don’t have any learning problems?

Lewis (Researcher) 392
It is whoever you want to target it at.

Walter 395
What provisions have you put in here to look at those who have difficulty in learning?

Lewis 395
None at this stage. But that’s in your hands

Walter   397
We have a WELL program running, and it is its second year, and it has not been taken up by the training managers [within brigades] very well. And it’s fallen on its ear because it has got a low priority within the CFA and yet the volunteers who have the learning difficulties are just as important to us on the fire ground as those who can learn quite easily.

Lewis 407
Yes

Walter 409
So whatever we put together needs to be able to incorporate everybody – not just those who are good at learning.

Lewis 412
But, you see, you might feel that looking at supporting people with language and literature weakness that might be the focus of this project.

Walter 419
We have already got one, at the moment, in its second year ---

Lewis 419
But it is not being taken up?

Walter 420
No, the training managers [within brigades] have got other priorities. And so therefore those people who have got the problems, who are good volunteers, are not going to be serviced.

......

Charles (Career member) 439
It is probably well worth including for consideration ---. As part of one of the outcomes here is to make sure that we don’t forget those people who do have ---

Bernard (Volunteer) 442
How big a problem is it?
Efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model – The three stories

Vince (Career member) 443
Huge [others agreeing]

Charles 445
Anecdotally, it is huge. We have never quantified it. We have never done a survey to say are you literate ---

Vince 449
Since minimum skills has come in, you will find a lot of those members have either stepped back out of the brigade or have come to the training and don’t turn up for the assessments. And they are the people in 98% of the cases who have learning difficulties.

Dialogue 8.2 and Dialogue 8.3 are indicative of the sharing of views which were confirming of the interconnectedness between valuing learning outcomes (including sensitively acknowledging and addressing gaps), having a learning environment (culture) which supports building upon and drawing from learning outcomes, and recognising and responding to motivations including being sensitive to learning anxieties. With the benefit of hindsight, the CFA could have been more sensitive to the language, literacy and numeracy limitations of some members and avoided the circumstance which led to aggrieved retirement of these volunteers.

Dialogue 8.3 – 8th September 2003 example dialogue regarding skills maintenance (Pseudonyms used)

Norm (Volunteer) 920
Because if you are ask that question [Could the CFA become seen and valued as a place of learning?] in the bigger brigades particularly in the outer metro areas and probably around Ballarat and around Bendigo – for most of those people it is a hobby. Whereas when you get further out it is an essential part of their community.

Lewis (Researcher) 925
Survival?

Norm 926
Survival, yes. So the answer to that question is going to vary dramatically depending upon where you ask the question.

Charles (Career member) 928
What’s important to CFA, as an organisation, is that CFA is nothing more than a beast that has provided a big red truck and some protective equipment. And the mere fact that we are wanting them to do some training is an annoyance - and that’s for quite a percentage of rural brigades. And this is the problem. I see that [the problem] we have with training is that a lot of these people either don’t realise or don’t want to realise actually how important the training will be for them – not just for CFA fire ground skills but encouraging them to be a learning person. You know, reinvigorating their desire to learn and things like that. And that –

Martin (Volunteer) 941
I don’t see it .

Cathy (Career member – also a volunteer) 941
Well that’s something that I ---

Charles 942
Well this is the problem. And I agree – I don’t see it either.

Cathy 943
Environment - We have got to try and put it across as a skill for life. That was probably taking the wrong concept. But I mean it as a life growing skill … And until the individual wants to grow within themselves, they will never grab the concept of having to do training.
Charles 950
Exactly.

Vince (Career member) 950
There has got to be a need Charles ---

Charles 951
Aye [say again]?

Vince 951
There has got to be a need - why they want to do it.

Charles 952
Yes, I totally agree.

Vince 952
Yes there has got to be a need.

Charles 952
And we haven't been able to get that need across.

Martin 953
Because we have been proposing somebody else's solutions.

Vince 954
Not their own ...

Glen 955
And also because training is being sold as a goal where it needs to be sold as a process – it is on-going.

Vince 958
You could always take the opposite stance that we are selling them a process without letting them know what the goal is. And they don't really know where they are going or where they going to end up.

Charles 960
And it is this process that we have got to talk about. We are talking about skills maintenance. We made a fatal flaw - we made many fatal flaws in CFA. And one of the fatal flaws is that we introduced this huge training requirement without any on-going skills maintenance program ---

Glen (Volunteer) 965
Without any training for life.

Charles 966
We don't. No, we don't do anything like that. And it is just so far from the truth.

So maybe this has a strong linkage to a skills maintenance program. Maybe, you know I have got a thing in the back of my mind, a vision, that skills maintenance will be launched CFA wide. Not just some mumbling about needing skills maintenance but a major launch statewide. You know, a brigade magazine, maybe even mail-outs, whatever. I see it as a much bigger issue than a lot of people are thinking about. [others agreeing] And maybe this [potential project] can be linked to that.

Cathie 979
Honestly, as I said, if you change the individual inner-self ---

Norm 981
But as we have also got --- We have also imposed upon ourselves that in June 2005 everybody will be trained. And I mean we have got to set time lines. But by the same token we are going to have more than 50% of our volunteers not trained by 2005. And there has been some figures done for structural [fire category] that it could be 2026 before we get them trained. So - before you get through everything in structures. So our ideals were that volunteers were going to embrace this training and they are going to turn up two or three nights a week to do all of this training and get it knocked over easy. But that was someone's academic thinking. In fact, you know, some of us have got another life.

[A little later on the sharing of views turned to “culture” as sampled below]
Dialogue 8.3 is indicative of the manner in which the participants in the Ballarat meeting kept returning to training/learning culture issues. No matter what the particular aspect of selling training, the interplay between respectively held attitudes towards learning and its outcomes by volunteers and CFA (corporately) were at the core of the discussion. Figure 8.5 summarises the required mutuality of relationships which characterise the aspired to Training/learning culture – as aspired to by these participants.
Impacting upon the operation summarised in Figure 8.5, through shaping the *valuing training/learning* culture, the views of the Ballarat participants suggest that four factors are in play –

- **Training Perceptions**
  Training is variously valued; skills maintenance is important; there are logistical constraints; proficiency in leadership is important; all learning is voluntary; learning must be active.

- **Learning Problems**
  Importance of recognising learning problems; volunteers with learning problems should be supported; to a degree, specialist support is required.

- **Motivations and Inhibitors**
  Learning threatens some; some cultures work against selling training; there is leverage available to sell training; innovation is required in some instances; emphasising the need and/or opportunity;

- **Management Issues**
  Importance of appropriately “pitching” the material and the delivery of training; maintaining an “embracing” approach – not “excluding”; operating and strengthening with change; competing priorities.

Paraphrased, consensus, view of Ballarat LCM Indicative Model review participants –

Training has value for both the CFA but also for lifelong application by the individual. And how this message is passed on is crucial to the valuing of training.

It is not just how the organisation passes the message on, but it is also how the individuals pass it on to others – existing members, new members, and potential members. In these regards, the three qualities of the LCM Model – *valuing learning outcomes*, *a culture which is supportive of learning*, and *being cognisant and responsive to motivation to be an remain as a volunteer* - are the foundation upon which training can be sold as a welcomed requirement.

Figure 8.5 - An environment – a culture – in which training will be welcomed

In the “Selling Training Story” each of the above factors is mapped against the LCM Indicative Model and then related to the need for change in the manner in which a
volunteer is supported to engage with training and to value its outcomes – cognisant that, for some volunteers, there are related anxieties. There was also a strong feeling that the CFA has a reluctance to learn from its volunteers and this inhibits the development and sustaining of learning sharing relationship.

In asserting the efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model, the Ballarat participants expressed views directed at the perception by some people that a formal training environment is threatening to them consequent upon their learning problems. In recognition of this potential inhibitor, the sharing of views foreshadowed giving motivating attention to reassurance that the learning experience is not like school; and the management of the learning process includes valuing what the trainee brings to the brigade and recognition that building upon this, by additional formal and informal learning, is an ongoing occurrence benefiting the brigade team, the community and the individual.

As for the other two stories, the “Selling Training Story” draws from across the broad spectrum of the research; and, throughout, perceived resistance to change (by a range of parties) was a recurring theme. But there was also much agreement that the informal and formal learning, through being a volunteer, was a significant benefit to the volunteer which might not always be recognised. Accordingly, Figure 8.6 is an activity theory derived overview of the relationship change benefiting the individual and framed by the LCM Model. As for the “welcoming a new member” exploration, practical usefulness of the model was demonstrated and the “indicative” model qualifier has been removed.
**Efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model – The three stories**

**M Quality:** Practices enhancing individual motivations to be and remain as a volunteer

Q9: How can a skills maintenance program be implemented which adds to the motivation to become and remain as a volunteer?

Q10: In what way could the importance of trust between members and the respect of the community be drawn upon as a learning – and retention – motivator?

Q11: How can a more equitable spread of the learning/training load add to volunteer motivation?

Q12: What adjustments to training delivery and assessment practices could be made which strengthen learning outcomes and add to the motivation to become and remain as a CFA volunteer member?

**C Quality:** Practices nurturing a brigade culture conducive to learning

Q5: What could be done to better encourage volunteers to contribute to beneficial change within the brigade (and/or more broadly within the CFA) by drawing upon what they know and can do and adding to this asset?

Q6: How can the brigade (and/or more broadly within the CFA), as a community of volunteers, strengthen their learning and growing together?

Q7: Are there opportunities for sharing of the load within the brigade (and/or more broadly within the CFA) in a manner that passes on knowledge and more broadly draws upon knowledge and skill?

Q8: By what means could volunteers be aided to recognise and value what they and others know and can do – across the broad spectrum and as they each build upon this asset consequent upon their CFA membership?

**L Quality:** Practices that value the learning outcomes of volunteers as in what a volunteer knows and can do

Q1: How can acknowledging and applauding what a volunteer brings to the CFA – by way of knowledge and skill – be used as a foundation for building an enthusiasm for further learning?

Q2: In what way(s) can contribution to the brigade, the local community, and the CFA, be used as a platform for valuing participation in training and drawing upon the broad spectrum of what a volunteer knows and can do?

Q3: In what way(s) can members of a brigade (and/or members in different brigades) support each other in their on-going learning? Note: The case of a volunteer with learning limitations (and/or other perceived inhibitors) is an example of where sensitive support may be required to reduce learning anxiety and to welcome on-going engagement with learning.

Q4: How can learning outcomes from CFA training and/or volunteer commitment be enhanced by Recognition of Prior Learning or other means of valuing what members bring to the CFA?

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Figure 8.6 – LCM Model and potentially helpful questions related to “selling training”
8.5 Outcomes from the North West Area consideration of “Strengthening Brigade Sustainability”

Consequent upon the difficulty in convening an action research orientated project group in the North West Area, the efficacy probing of the LCM Indicative Model took the form of a series of interviews with three volunteers and one CFA career member (also a volunteer) from the North West Area and a drawing from the broader Phase 4 inquiry to this point in the research.

In essence, brigade sustainability centres upon recruitment and retention and although the dynamics might be different, sustainability is an important issue across the spectrum of rural and urban brigades. Urban brigades must compete for a person’s volunteering time against other calls upon their time – including work and family. In the case of rural brigades and urban (town) brigades in regional Victoria the comment made by David at the outset of the scoping inquiry encapsulated the essence of the expressions of concern that caused CFA members from the North West Area to select strengthening brigade sustainability as the focus of their special interest.

“... in a lot of cases, the thing that holds a little town together is the CFA and the local footy club if they still have one. And so, to some extent, if it has got down to that, then the CFA becomes a social event as well as a bit of a glue, I suppose, within the community. And so that starts to broaden the bounds of what it [CFA] is about. It is not just about moving to response. It is about something that helps to hold the community together.” (David, CFA career staff member, interview 250902, lines 265-271)

The frequency and passion with which CFA members have echoed the sentiment of community glue is testament to the community safety joining and remaining motivations of rural CFA volunteer members. There is concern that the sustainability of some individual brigades is under threat and their future viability is uncertain. Helen’s comments (below and in the fuller context of Dialogue 8.4) are indicative of a shared sentiment that local brigade sustainability is a matter of special significance to a local rural community.

‘Well I think that, as I have said, the prime aim of the CFA is to fight fires. But in rural communities – especially smaller rural communities – the CFA, or the brigade, can also have a social impact ... you are doing something worthwhile for the community, but you also strengthen the social network of your community. It goes a long way towards making people feel valued and part of what is happening.’ (Helen, volunteer, interview 050304, lines 82-86)
Helen’s remarks have a resonance with the four target CFA outputs as defined in the 2004/05 Annual Plan –

1. Prevention: Strategies and services to prevent events or lessen their impact.
2. Preparedness: Strategies and services which allow CFA and the community to respond quickly and effectively to emergency events.
3. Response: Strategies and services which allow CFA to control, limit, or modify, the emergency to reduce the consequences.
4. Recovery: Community and organisational strategies to support affected communities.

Whilst Helen and other respondents to this research are strongly focussed upon the role of fire fighters, and see this aspect of community safety as the core function of the brigade, there is an acknowledgement of other outcomes from the existence of the brigade. However, the degree to which elements of this broader function are seen as worthy of deliberate action is variable, but Helen’s remarks, taken in the context of the four elements of the annual plan, point towards a greater depth to the need for local brigade sustainability than just addressing the response component of the plan.

Throughout the contact with Helen (April 2003 to June 2005) it was evident that she took a broad view of the who, the why, and the how which underpins brigade sustainability in rural environments, as exampled in Dialogue 8.4. In this extract of transcript, Helen identifies the linked importance of –

- valuing outcomes from learning which are brought into the brigade and acquired as a member;
- a brigade culture which manifests a wide view of who to recruit for what purpose and how to nurture personal growth as a volunteer; and
- recognising and responding to motivations.
Efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model – The three stories

Dialogue 8.4 – Extract of Interview with Helen (rural brigade volunteer) 5th March 2004
(Pseudonym)

Helen (Volunteer) 047
I think that making the most of what a volunteer knows is by asking – and sometimes there is not enough of that – it is assuming that people want to do something or know something. So actually asking a volunteer – maybe a potential volunteer, we will inquire – what their past history was with employment, hobbies, what they like doing, why they are in a community, if they are new to a community, if they have been here all of their lives. All of those things can impact on their general knowledge. And ask them what they can do and what they like doing.

Sometimes when people are actually asked, it gives them a sense of value; but it also helps direct what a brigade can do, how much they [the volunteer] can do, what skills they can utilise within the brigade. And sometimes by doing that it will encourage a volunteer to learn more.

Lewis (Researcher) 085
And so that is related to strengthening the brigade sustainability – is that an important part?

Helen 091
I think it is because too often a brigade can have a very structured focus that doesn’t always allow them a degree of flexibility. And, perhaps, can I highlight this with some anecdotal information ---

Lewis 102
Sure.

Helen 103
In our brigade we have a couple that moved to the area a number of years ago. Her husband joined the brigade, probably twelve months ago, and his wife works in another town. And I spoke with her recently at a function that wasn’t a CFA function, and she asked me how she could become involved in the brigade – because she would like to. She’d like to have some degree of contact, she’d like to do her first aid, she’d like to maybe do some leadership training courses. And the interesting thing was nobody had actually asked her. They’d joined up her husband but they didn’t ask (a) whether she would be interested, would she like to join and if so what would she like to do. And because she is a very quiet person, people had just overlooked her. And here it is two years down the track and she would really like to be part of it.

Lewis 130
Hm. Why didn’t she push herself forward?

Helen 139
She is not that sort of person. And that’s another aspect, too, I suppose – if people are quiet. And the opposite can apply, if someone is very outspoken and bombastic.

Lewis 146
Hm. On this issue of making the most of what people know and can do --- In the CFA context it might be very easy to think only in terms of the technical skills – the squirting the wet stuff on the hot stuff. What do you feel about that – is it that narrow, is it just technical skills or are there wider competencies?

Helen 165
When I talked about a limited focus, that’s what I meant. Sometimes in brigades – and after all that is the primary goal – if there is a fire, we want to be able to put it out. So because of that, sometimes that thinking doesn’t go any further. And yet to expand the brigade numbers, to expand the contact in the community, to create a more sustainable community and brigade I think we have to look outside of that. So it is not just learning how to turn the pump on and point the hose at the fire and know what foam does. It is also about communications. You might want more communications officers, you might want a network of that so that if someone is not there that day then you have somebody else.

First aid is another issue.

And being a secretary. You don’t have to be on the fire truck to be the secretary of a brigade, that could be someone that is either a younger person that is learning what is happening that could be trained up as a secretary. It could be somebody who has a disability that is just not able to physically climb on a fire truck – but why exclude them from that brigade activity. It may be a woman in the community that has very good secretarial skills that would be an absolute asset. But, it is that limited view, sometimes.

Or the treasurer. Sometimes you can have lots of other activities within the brigade – it could be fund raising. There could be other housekeeping tasks.
But you still have to be fire ready.

Yes.

One of the most interesting things that came out of that meeting [scoping workshop] was the way in which you and your colleagues were speaking about what I think I dubbed as appropriate self-interest, and in a rural environment people join the brigade because they are looking after themselves. And that is a very proper thing to do. So one clearly must never lose sight that that is the reason why the brigade exists – the principle reason - but there may be other values that come as a consequence of the brigade being there. That's led me through to pondering upon what I style as the CFA paradox – that it exists to fight fires - to protect property and life, but it works vigorously to not have that situation. And therefore, in terms of somebody's motivation to join, they join to fight fires – not maybe in the rural areas so much because of the self-interest, they are happy if there aren't any fires, they join to fight fires but they are happy if there aren't any fires. But there are other places in the CFA where I think there are motivations that have got to do with excitement and whatever, and joining for that and then finding that it is not going to happen – so it is a sort of paradox.

It could be a bit disappointing for some perhaps if they are looking for the adrenalin rush.

But that may be --- does that, in your brigade, does that paradox have any effect or not?

Not to the degree that it would have in some. I would say that there are only two or three people in our brigade that really love fighting fires – it is their goal and they think it is wonderful. The rest of the brigade will happily go out and fight a fire to protect the community assets. But if they don't go out and fight fires for a while then they are happy because it means that everyone is being careful.

So why then would you really be interested in bringing in these people with these broader competencies, if it has really only got to do with fighting fires?

Well I think that, as I have said, the prime aim of the CFA is to fight fires. But in rural communities – especially smaller rural communities – the CFA, or the brigade, can also have a social impact and the fact that you are doing something worthwhile for the community, but you also strengthen the social network of your community. It goes a long way towards making people feel valued and part of what is happening.

Yeh, I think it was also at the workshop where people were talking about things like community glue.

Because I think that if you have a community that is very fragmented, and people are very concerned about only looking after their own little spot, you don't have that glue keeping everything together. It is like living in the suburbs where no one knows their neighbour, or very few know their neighbour or the street. Whereas in a community --- in a lot of ways you do rely on other people, whether it be for something as fundamental as safety to something as nice as social or someone to just keep an eye on your house if you are away for a weekend.

What about what people might get as a consequence of joining the CFA – how might they add to their knowledge and skill base?

On a personal level?

Yes.
I think that for people coming into a community that haven’t had any contact with the CFA before, it is a broadening of their general knowledge of how small --- or how communities function. But, as I said, it is not just about fighting fires. You can also tap into someone’s leadership abilities that they may not have realised they had before – whether that be male or female. Someone may find that they really have a great organisational capacity – when there is a fire, they might be able to be a penciler at the fire and be able to coordinate things. They may be able to coordinate people to bring certain vehicles or bring water – a whole lot of things like that. And sometimes if no one has had the opportunity to do that, they may not learn a skill that they didn't know that they had the potential to ---

Yeh, or even discover something that they had that they didn't know that they had.

That's right. And also an element of enjoyment, too. To have the opportunity to be involved in something that they thought was only for middle aged men in the community to go out and fight fires.

In a subsequent interview (1st July 2005) commenting upon the Strengthening Brigade Sustainability Story and the efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model, Helen said –

‘Well, first off Lewis, I’d like to congratulate you on a job well done. You’ve certainly covered everything possible I think that certainly we discussed and certainly the original group that met at the Charlton fire shed. But I would like to say that it does make for very interesting reading and when you see everything put down on paper, and to go through it, I’m actually very impressed with the breadth of the comments... I think, now from your perspective it must be very hard to even to begin to look at something in hard copy from all the recordings that you did and all the data that was collected and well certainly from my perspective as a volunteer, I think its covered everything beautifully – it really has. It’s put things in a very easy format and I think it’s highlighted a lot of similarities, I suppose, between brigades and between people of what they’ve been thinking obviously for a long time but they’ve never been able to have the opportunity to put into words and I would hope that this is going to be not only a very useful tool to the CFA, but something that can be revisited on a fairly regular basis to make sure that volunteers and brigade sustainability are still being worked at.’ (Helen, volunteer, 010605, lines 9-20)

During this same period of contact with Helen, Vic (also a North West Area volunteer) had very similar views to Helen linking brigade sustainability with LCM values. Vic’s July 2005 summation of the Strengthening Brigade Sustainability Story and the LCM action summary tool (Figure 8.9) was –

‘I think it’s a pretty good generalisation of everything ... of the whole CFA thing that I see – and I see it from different viewpoints.’ (Vic, volunteer, 030605, lines 8-14)

Throughout the April 2003 to June 2006 contact with Vic, he was especially concerned with the impact upon older/long term volunteer members of the manner in which more formal requirements for training have been introduced - perceived by some to be imposed upon rural brigades.
‘Oh, I mean we have got people who are physically saying “Bugger the CFA - with all of their training – we have got a tank on the back of our truck, we will look after ourselves”. Now that frightens me too, because their trucks aren’t near as good as the CFA tankers. We have to sort of — we got them through the minimum skills part of it [new formal training. We have managed to get a big percentage of them through and it is an older person, less acceptable, ethic type thing – if that makes sense. The younger people are accepting it better than the older people. And that is pretty common knowledge anyway - I believe. We have to keep them happy, now that we have got them that far. We can’t sort of push too much more on to them – that’s what I am sort of trying to say. Understand what they know. If it means working in the old group fashion to run a fire – to a degree – let that happen. If they want to get their newer methods in place, well then perhaps the CFA are going to have to provide those people to run those things for us.’ (Vic, volunteer, 260204, 836)

In the above February 2004 interview (post development of the LCM Indicative Model), Vic went on to comment upon valuing what people know and can do in their local environment and the need to provide special training for those who might be called away to fight fires in different environments.

‘... let us do what we know well, locally. And accept that those who go away should have better training for other areas – like particularly the bush [as different to the grasslands and light timber of Vic’s environment]. Because, generally, when you are going away [other fire fighting environments] it is to fight in the bush it is not open grassland. Grassland fires are fast and furious and don’t generally run for very long. And they don’t give much time to get organised.’ (Vic, volunteer, 260204, 866)

Against this background of unquestioned support for the value of learning, but with some disquiet regarding manner of CFA approach, Vic was highly focused upon belief in oneself and trust in others that accrues from recognising and valuing outcomes from learning – across the breadth of lifelong learning. It is germane to the strength of Vic’s commitment to nurturing learning that he is a strong advocate (and doer) for involving young people in CFA junior activity.

Dialogue 8.5 is a glimpse into Vic’s views upon motivations and drawing upon what people know and can do within a volunteering environment; and as a foundation for rural brigade sustainability.
As exampled in Dialogue 8.5, in probing the efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model it was very much in mind that brigade sustainability is under the influence of local factors. And in
rural instances there is anecdotal evidence that some brigade members are remaining under sufferance, out of felt obligation, even though they feel poorly treated – including unwelcome imposition of formal training in skills that they feel are already possessed.

In commenting upon the factors that have caused some volunteers to remain as brigade members, notwithstanding what they perceived to be insensitive approaches to training issues and other bureaucratic operational matters, Vic made the following comment that highlighted the focus upon responding to fire emergency, even in the face of displeasure toward the CFA.

“So you know you can’t cheese people off. They are not there because they want to be there. They are there because they have got to be there ...” (Vic, volunteer fire fighter, interview 260204, lines 85-86)

But all is not lost. The manner in which the LCM Indicative Model was applauded at the 9th June 2005 North West Area meeting of functional managers, and advice that the model is now in use, bodes well for the future. The demonstrated practical usefulness of the model with respect to strengthening brigade sustainability – resonating with welcoming members and selling training - strengthened the appropriateness of removing the “indicative” qualifier from the model.

In addition to the LCM efficacy probing contact with Helen and Vic there was a less formal interview with Henry (volunteer brigade captain of an urban/rural town brigade) in which Henry summarised the value of making the most of what a volunteer knows and can do – as depicted in the LCM Model – as being the core of brigade sustainability. ‘That’s what it is all about’ (Henry, volunteer, 030504). And, as for the other stories demonstrating the origin and application of the LCM Model, the Strengthening Brigade Sustainability Story has been derived from across the breadth of the research and led to the notion of a recruiting and retaining hierarchy as depicted in Figure 6.6 (p. 142). Consequent upon Phase 4 of the research, Figure 8.7 illustrates the relationship between the LCM Model and this hierarchy.
Efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model – The three stories

Arising from the exploration of model efficacy, Figure 8.7 is an overview of circumstance and action with application across the diversity of CFA brigades. Notwithstanding an apparent need for change across a range of issues that impact upon the manner in which some volunteers see themselves as being valued by the CFA, and even in the face of diminishing rural population, there are LCM Model actionable changes within the influence of a local brigade.

As for the other two stories, an activity theory derived way of drawing upon the LCM model is offered in Figure 8.8. In this instance suggested actions, rather than prompting questions, are indicated as an example of the next step on from considering reflective questions.
Efficacy of the LCM Indicative Model – The three stories

**M Quality:** Practices enhancing individual motivations to be and remain as a volunteer

A9: Convene a small project group to assess the way in which the brigade actually demonstrates to members that they are valued as individuals. And then seek comments about this by sharing the assessment with the other members of the brigade.

A10: Invite members to identify what things motivate them and what things are irritating to them.

A11: Invite the officers of the brigade to develop a means of auditing the motivation qualities that exist within the brigade and how this might then be applied to assist recruitment and retention.

A12: Invite members of the brigade to suggest how they might like to personally assist others in the brigade.

**C Quality:** Practices nurturing a brigade culture conducive to learning

A5: Convene an open forum discussion of members to share views about the way in which knowledge and skill is valued in the brigade and how the further learning of members is variously supported or even (maybe) suppressed.

A6: Invite members to identify what they think is good about how the brigade approaches the training issues and suggest ways in which it might even be improved.

A7: Develop tools that support the learning culture – see page 27 for expansion of this suggestion.

A8: Invite members who are currently undertaking special functions to attempt to recruit “understudies” from within the brigade and/or recruit new members who might potentially share the load.

**L Quality:** Practices that value the learning outcomes of volunteers as in what a volunteer knows and can do

A1: Invite current members to reflect upon the knowledge and skill that they brought into the CFA and then identify how they have built upon this as a consequence of their CFA brigade membership.

A2: Convene a small working party to identify and review the formal and informal rules that exist within the brigade and which influence the way in which training is conducted within the brigade.

A3: Invite brigade members to suggest how they might best awaken a potential member to the value of what they already know and can do and how they can build upon this to their personal advantage by joining the brigade.

A4: Invite brigade members to have a go at recruiting a new member(s) through drawing upon what they know and can do as a CFA member.

Figure 8.8 – LCM Model and suggested activities as apply to strengthening brigade sustainability
Chapter Nine: Brigade leadership as the foundation for valuing of learning and its outcomes

9.1 Brigade leadership – encouraging or inhibiting

As a result of probing the efficacy of the LCM Model, as reviewed in Chapter Eight, it emerged that the quality and nature of brigade leadership is the foundation upon which making the most of what a volunteer knows and can do is constructed. This then led to a new direction in terms of a more thorough investigation of leadership at the brigade level. This chapter is an account of the expanded inquiry which included a revisiting of the general body of data arising from the earlier research.

Data informing a view on the connection between leadership and making the most of what a volunteer knows and can do were derived from the general inquiry, specific leadership orientated interviews, and two brigade captain focus groups.

The declaration ‘Members join for one reason and remain for another’ (paraphrasing of an oft repeated comment by research respondents) is an indicator of the importance of a brigade leader nurturing an environment in which a volunteer will find satisfaction and the motivation to remain even though what they find may not be what was expected. This sentiment was frequently associated with comment regarding the role of a brigade leader in encouraging or inhibiting a volunteer to draw upon the range of their knowledge and skill. Pamela’s (6.7, p. 132) approach to encouraging a volunteer to act upon an aspiration to take on new duties is an iconic example of a leader supporting learning to the benefit of the individual and to the brigade. In comparison, the case described by Oliver (as follows) is iconic of inhibiting a volunteer by disrespecting through not valuing or, possibly, responding to a perceived threat to a leader’s status.

Opening comments when interviewed on the role of leadership in drawing upon what a volunteer knows and can do -

‘Leadership is fascinating to me because I’ve seen a lot of it over the years both good and bad and I hadn’t really appreciated it in a volunteer context until I came to the CFA. And we spend a lot of time training volunteers in leadership in this Area for very good reasons because volunteer brigades, or any brigade, or any organisation, can’t operate without leadership of some description.'
However we want to influence that leadership into being good positive leadership because it’s necessary to drive the changes that we want driven in CFA. In terms of the influence it has over knowing what volunteers can do, it’s absolutely critical. We see it all the time where volunteer leaders in a negative sense actively disaffect people and drive them away from brigades. And a really good example is I was at a brigade not that long ago when a new volunteer member came in – he’d only been in 3 or 4 months – and met the captain for the first time in an official forum and started asking questions in an open forum about the brigade, and about training and about a whole range of things. And the captain said to him “You just need to be in the brigade a lot longer before you can ask those questions”. This was a very astute young person, held a degree, and I could just tell that he wasn’t going to last too long. And within six months - I tracked his progress through the brigade - within six months he was gone and sought another brigade to participate in. I’m not sure where he went from there but there was an example of a brigade that was struggling for numbers anyway through the day to get people out the door to fires; and because the brigade leader failed to accommodate this person’s values and view and questions, they lost that person to the brigade. Terrible. Probably never go back to that brigade. So that’s very, very sad – very sad.’ (Oliver, career staff member, 290605, lines 4-25)

There were echoes of Oliver’s concern and Pamela’s exhibiting positive learning leadership in the account given by Mary (190303, lines 582-592) of an instance where a new brigade captain withdrew a young volunteer, with a speech impediment, from being part of a team delivering the *Brigades in Schools* program on the grounds that he “didn’t look good”. In this instance, the volunteer relating this event was acutely aware of the confidence and self-esteem advantage gained by the volunteer in making a contribution and rising to a challenge, and the role that the previous supportive leader had played, only for all to be lost under the influence of a new undermining leader. Interestingly there was a contrasting instance, in another brigade, of actually seeing and acting upon the opportunity to support a member with a speech impediment - ‘... and he does stutter a bit when he gets nervous. So what do I do, I stick him on the radio. It is amazing what it does for him.’ (Cathie, career member, also a volunteer, 080903, B158)

Resonating with Cathie’s example, in the course of the inquiry there were frequent examples of volunteers learning and growing, in a personal capability/confidence and demeanour sense, as a consequence of their volunteering. This occurs under the influence of formal leadership, with the support of informal leadership, within the brigade. In essence the perception of self-worth, by a volunteer, is significantly influenced by the actions of brigade leadership in laying a brigade cultural foundation for this outcome.
Brigade leadership as the foundation for valuing of learning and its outcomes

‘I think, a lot of the time, it comes down to an individual brigade having a culture that says you are as important just as much as the guy who drives the truck is important. But I am not really sure how that happens from a global perspective.

I just know that anecdotally individual brigades have given a position and a title, for instance, that sometimes makes all the difference – “I am the communications person” or “I am the ...” You know, and they have a badge or a title on a wall that portrays that. Some times little things like that can make, particularly, the younger people feel important.’ (Carmel, career member and also a volunteer, 11102, lines 42-48)

9.2 Leadership influence upon moving from implicit to explicit valuing of learning and its outcomes

From the interviews and group sharing of views, it is evident that leadership support is a key factor in volunteers appropriately drawing upon what they know and can do, and thus “fit-in” as a valued member of the team. The implicit logic of this insight is such that deliberate supportive action may be only weakly asserted as a consequence of relying upon an assumption that this is already happening. Indeed, even in corporately sophisticated environments where there is a high level of learning consciousness and valuing, including leaders being consciously themselves learners (Gronn 1999, p. viii), it can be the case that deliberate action to support an individual to draw upon what they know and can do is absent. Whilst the learning organisation literature is a strong resource, the “coal-face how do you do it” steps tend to be submerged within global principles. For example, Redding & Catalanello (1994) address the role of corporate leadership in nurturing the learning organisation environment, but do not give overt attention to how a person is actually supported by their immediate leader to contribute through their learning. There is the appearance of an assumption that if the environment is sound, good things will follow.

Consequent upon the silences alluded to in the foregoing, and informed by the research underpinning this dissertation, three questions arise with respect to overt awakening and motivating action by brigade leadership which will lead to a volunteer achieving the status of a valued brigade member.

- How does a new member of a brigade identify the value of what they bring to the brigade?
• How does a member, even of long standing, of the brigade feel motivated and empowered to appropriately draw upon the range of what they know and can do so as to make a fuller, than otherwise, contribution?
• How do members of the brigade coalesce as a team that recognises and applauds the respective contributions, beyond the ordinary, that each makes to the achievement of the brigade?

Whilst there are multiple pathways to satisfy these questions, the contribution of leadership is a common factor. However, it can be the case that a leader has so absorbed the importance of these questions that they have become tacitly entrenched to the point that assumptions are made that these matters are being addressed.

Reinforcement of this “tacit but not explicit” valuing of matters pertaining to the LCM Model occurred frequently during the course of the study. As an example, associated with my presentation of the LCM Model at the 2003 Australian Disaster Conference, and my tentative apologising for presenting the obvious, the response came back ‘But it has not been said’ (paraphrased). From this reaction to the LCM Model, and taking the worth of bringing tacit knowledge back into the explicit realm lead from Maira and Scott-Morgan (1997, pp 221-225), there is much to be gained by supporting brigade leaders in bringing their tacit respect for the above questions back into the explicit realm of action and thus providing a modelling example for others – albeit that refreshing is required as what is front of mind, at one time slips, into the tacit realm over time. Figure 9.1 illustrates the cyclic nature of the overt valuing of the potential of all in the brigade.
It may be the case that the value of the LCM Model primarily resides in its usefulness as a leadership tool which is grounded in the explicit realm of critical reflection upon what self and others know and can do leading to individual and organisational transformative learning (Mezirow and Associates 1990). In this respect, the research points to the benefits that accrue from distributed brigade leadership which values learning outcomes and aligns with Raelin’s (2003) notions of collective and collaborative leadership within a leaderful organisation (Raelin 2003, pp. 113 – 205). In general terms, within a cohesive brigade – characterised by valuing of learning and its outcomes and exhibiting McGregor Theory Y predisposition toward trust and respect - the elected formal leadership recognises, values, and makes use of the informal leadership operating within the brigade. On the other hand in a somewhat fractured brigade, the captain may have an ownership stance which acts against drawing upon distributed leadership and thus mitigates against the individual and the group being heutagogically reactive to need (Hase & Kenyon 2000). Indeed, in a fractured brigade, there may be a perception of threat and even elected lieutenants may not be fully drawn upon, there isn’t collaboration within the collective leadership, consultation is sparse, the captain seems to be doing everything and, typically, a succession plan does not exist.
Commenting upon captains not delegating -

*But in every rural brigade that happens. You become a lieutenant and the lieutenants do nothing. Just like you [other captain] were saying, if the previous captain hasn’t delegated, the lieutenants do nothing and all of a sudden you are captain. And that was my situation. And all of a sudden you turn up at a big fire ground - “Help!”*  
(Gordon, volunteer captain, 140403, B471)

This dissertation posits that there is value accruing to all in a brigade where the leadership is actively drawing upon what volunteers know and can do in a manner which is respectful of a volunteer’s level of commitment and motivation for remaining as a volunteer. And, in this respect, the *respectful* qualification is very important as the intent is to motivate and avoiding inappropriately intruding into a volunteer’s personal space.

It could be the case that a volunteer is very keen to contribute more and hence leadership in this regard would be welcome. Alternatively, a volunteer may feel it to be an unwelcome imposition if more is sought from them; or they might even feel threatened by the prospect of an expectation to contribute more. Whatever the case, the position underpinning this dissertation is that a volunteer’s status as a valued member of a brigade, and hence motivation to remain within the family of the brigade, is heavily influenced by what the brigade recognises and applauds with regard to what the volunteer knows and can do. Furthermore, it is the valuing within the brigade that has precedence over what the CFA, corporately, may offer by way of applauding the contribution made by volunteers.

### 9.3 Volunteers principally identifying with their brigade

It is evident that CFA volunteers, at least initially, identify more closely with their brigade than they do with the CFA as a whole. This is not surprising given the local nature of the community safety service provided and the manner in which brigade members coalesce into a family. The volunteer commitment is local and the, trust building, bonding camaraderie of the brigade is a significant factor causing primary identification with the brigade.

Remarking upon how, in time, a volunteer will look beyond their brigade, but the CFA (corporately) does not appear to give due regard to the strength with which volunteers identify with their brigade -

*‘Yeh when Bill Jones [pseudonym] and myself sort of made the comment that Melbourne [CFA Headquarters] see Melbourne as the be all and end all and they don’t look out for the country first. And with a person joining the brigade they*
are interested in their brigade, then after a while they will think there is a bit more to this. So there is a group and they find out what brigades there are in the group – but they will never remember them all straight off. And then you find out really what region you are in. It takes time. But the way that the CFA put it together – “Here is the CFA” They are the top of the triangle.’ [others agreeing with Cathie and saying that the triangle should be inverted] (Cathie, career member also a volunteer 080903, 994)

Commenting upon increasing call upon volunteers in outer metropolitan Melbourne and the “pull” of the brigade which holds their interest and commitment – ‘So basically as we are all in developing areas, wherever it is, we are not going backwards, we are going forwards in terms of development and demands. It is the complexity of our normal life. And what we are finding is that volunteers lives are becoming more complicated. I go back to the stage that I believe that ninety nine percent of our successful volunteers join – like I said before – to get on fire trucks and have lights and sirens and go and have a bit of fun or whatever. And out of that then develops the team, they create mates – I have got some of my best friends from twenty seven years in the service, all that sort of stuff. Comradeship…’ (Gary, volunteer captain, 110204, 986)

Under these brigade focussed circumstances, volunteers sees themselves as contributing to the betterment of the brigade – strengthening and fulfilment of local goals. It follows that in so far as leadership is important, in nurturing drawing upon what is known and can be done, it is brigade leadership which impacts more so than the more remote CFA corporate leadership. But, this said, CFA corporate leadership, head office and regional, as offered in support of local brigade leadership is a significant factor and is gaining in valued influence, but is presently short of optimum.

Commenting upon strengthening relationships between brigades - ‘And the fact that I have worked with you, I have worked with you, I have worked with you – you know the fact – it is not just the brigade - we are not isolated anymore around here [urban sprawl]. Like Bill Jones [pseudonym and captain of another brigade] and I are fairly good mates because we know each other, we socialise and brigade wise we keep seeing each other on the fire ground. You know, you know all of the FOs at Frankston [brigade with career firefighters] because you turn out with them all of the time. So you get to see a lot more of your neighbours and therefore the brigades –You know, I honestly believe that in this area we are losing site of individual brigades we are becoming the CFA.’ (Doug volunteer captain 110204 B1093)

9.4 Leadership focus groups - brigade leadership taking the lead in making the most of what a volunteer knows and can do

There were eight respondents at each of the two focus groups contributing to this research study. The first group was made up of captains of six or more years in the role and the second group had participants with less than six years experience as a brigade captain.
The CFA (corporately) was interested in the possibility that relatively new-to-the-role captains may have significantly different views to longer-term captains. However the respective group views were found to be congruent.

The focus groups addressed –

- Why does a volunteer join and remain as a CFA member?
  What has this got to do with leadership?
- Does it help in keeping a member to know what a volunteer brings by way of knowledge and skill to the CFA?
  What has this got to do with leadership?
- How valuable, in other aspects of their life, is the knowledge and skill that a volunteer gets from being a CFA member?
  What has this got to do with leadership?
- Do volunteers really know and value all that they know and can do?
  What has this got to do with leadership?
- What is there about a CFA brigade that keeps a volunteer’s interest?
  What has this got to do with leadership?

Interestingly, some focus group respondents initially held the view that retention of volunteers is not in the control of brigade leadership. Whilst circumstances could exist where an environment characterised by laissez-faire leadership with respect to retention, might exhibit retention qualities, it is more probable that the contrary view ‘The type of leadership in the brigade can have a very major influence upon retention’ (Donald, volunteer captain, 120204, 838) is a more certain foundation upon which to build retention; and is related to brigade culture.

'Some people might join the brigade to meet other people, to meet the firees, different ideas. They get to meet other people. I know a lot of our members brought other members into it – they were sitting at home and doing nothing and they say “Why don’t you come and join the fire brigade” “Why?” “Come up and meet the boys or the girls”. Next minute, they love it. As soon as they set their foot on the pavement their feet are concreted to the ground.’

(Gary, volunteer captain, 110204, B220)

The movement from an initial position, by some brigade leaders, that brigade leadership does not influence retention to then a consensus view that leadership is a strong influence
had, at its beginning, a sense of frustration and powerlessness with regard to CFA corporately. Then through a process of leadership group sharing, informed by the LCM model, a new more positive consensus emerged consequent upon the realisation that brigade leaders had much of powerful influence within their control. In this expanding of view way, the LCM Model demonstrated its value as a reflective tool providing a platform from which brigade leadership can move beyond an initial spontaneous, and possibly too shallow, position.

The outcome from the brigade leaders’ sharing of views informed descriptions of best practice that assist with operationalising the broader research informed concepts of the LCM Model. Accordingly, Table 9.1 is a key point summary of the focus group derived insights and relevance to the LCM Model as informed by the broader inquiry.

Table 9.1 – CFA brigade leadership influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Focus group(s) derived, best practice, insights – expressed as indicative (suggested by the research data) best practice themes</th>
<th>Relationship to LCM Model – as informed by the broader inquiry</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence of brigade leadership upon a volunteer joining and remaining</td>
<td>A leader taking deliberate action to instil a sense of purpose and motivation to remain through satisfaction in being a volunteer.</td>
<td>A sense of purpose and achievement arises [M quality] from drawing upon outcomes from learning to make a contribution which is valued by self and others [C quality]. Supportive action by a leader may include assisting the volunteer to recognise and value what they know and can do and encouraging and supporting others in likewise valuing what the volunteer knows and can do – leading to the volunteer being acknowledged (by self and others) as a valued member of the brigade [L quality].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note: Whilst the best practice themes – for this and the following categories of influence - are primarily focussed upon the role of the brigade captain, these themes do extrapolate to others in the formal leadership group, in accord with their respective roles. The themes also have relevance to the informal leadership influences within the brigade, but in this instance are of an advisory nature describing the character of a brigade exhibiting leaderful...</td>
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<tr>
<td>A leader taking deliberate action to motivate – and support - volunteers to acquire new skills and thus build their sense of worth to the brigade and the brigade’s valuing of them. This includes being alert to, and responsive to, learning and related inhibitors which may threaten continuation as a volunteer – e.g. language, literacy and numeracy limitation, past negative experience of learning, and fear of failure.</td>
<td>By their actions, in this regard, a leader is demonstrating that they value learning and its outcomes [L quality] and are contributing to strengthening a brigade culture which nurtures learning [C quality]. Identifying and addressing issues which stand in the way of a volunteer participating in training or other forms of learning adds to a volunteer’s personal sense of worth and strengthens the volunteer’s status as a valued member of the brigade [M quality]</td>
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</table>
Brigade leadership as the foundation for valuing of learning and its outcomes

| attributes (Raelin 2003). | | By these actions a leader is asserting the value of training and, possibly, less formal learning [L quality] in a manner which is sensitive to volunteers’ respective engaging with learning circumstances [C quality] and satisfactions accrued from their volunteering [M quality]. |
|---|---|
| **A leader** exhibiting firmness with respect to creating and maintaining the brigade training focus, but flexibility in how this is implemented. This requires embracing a holistic valuing of learning and its outcomes as underpinning brigade capability; and includes being sensitive to egos and relationships within the brigade. | **A leader** being pro-active in initiating and supporting succession planning which is appropriate to the practice of electing volunteers to formal leadership roles, cognisant of the limited brigade membership pool from which leaders are elected, and responsive to the need to share the load and keep one’s life in balance with respect to obligations to self and other people – e.g. family and employer. |
| **A leader** being pro-active in initiating and supporting succession planning which is appropriate to the practice of electing volunteers to formal leadership roles, cognisant of the limited brigade membership pool from which leaders are elected, and responsive to the need to share the load and keep one’s life in balance with respect to obligations to self and other people – e.g. family and employer. | There is a probability that a brigade culture will change over time under the influence of changing leadership and other factors such as has recently occurred with the increased formal training requirement. It is best that this is of an evolutionary nature rather than consequent upon revolution within the brigade; and accordingly, an incumbent leadership team has an obligation to initiate and sustain a succession plan which progressively builds leadership learning outcomes [L quality] that are of a motivational nature across the brigade – not just those clearly identified as potential future leaders [M quality]. Under these circumstances, the notion of nurturing a leaderful (Raelin 2003) brigade environment [C quality] in which leadership qualities are valued by all and possessed (appropriately) by all has some attraction. In the case of a CFA brigade – where there are only a small total number of volunteers from which to draw leaders – the leaderful objective has special relevance. Of course there is the prospect of deliberate recruitment of leaders, but this has brigade cultural implications. |

| Influence of brigade leadership upon making the most of what a volunteer brings to the brigade by way of knowledge and skill | **A leader** recognising, valuing and drawing upon the skills of volunteers in such a manner that they grow – as confident and self-valuing individuals - through making the most of what they know and can do. Knowing, and appropriately drawing upon, what a new volunteer brings is the foundation upon which CFA generated learning outcomes are progressively valued by the volunteer and the collegiate body of the brigade. | A volunteer – especially a new volunteer – may not have sufficient knowledge of the need or opportunity to which they could contribute; and, in some instances, this may require the leader to support the volunteer in recognising that they possess (or can acquire) more of value than what might at first be apparent [L quality]. Even where a volunteer is alert to what they might bring, brigade leadership must nurture a brigade welcoming of such contribution [C quality] and support the volunteer in a manner which is consistent with the volunteer’s motivation to continue as a volunteer [M quality]. |
|---|---|
| **A leader** being alert (and responsive) to the importance of a volunteer having | Consequent upon the wide diversity of what individual volunteers value [M quality]. |


## Brigade leadership as the foundation for valuing of learning and its outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence of brigade leadership upon a volunteer acquiring knowledge and skills which are of value throughout life.</th>
<th>A leader being pro-active in drawing a volunteer’s attention to the value of the knowledge, skills and other personal attributes which they do and can acquire consequent upon their CFA service. And then encouraging (including creating opportunities) for individual volunteers to expand their – relevant throughout life - capability repertoire.</th>
<th>Pride [M quality] in being a CFA member, and thus strengthening of self-image, is fed by how brigade members see themselves (internal within the team valuing) [C quality] and also accrues from acknowledgement by the community of the brigade’s commitment to the community. However, it may be the case that the volunteer or the community really don’t appreciate the full range of value of the learning which underpins the worth of a CFA volunteer [L quality]. Accordingly,</th>
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<tr>
<td>a sense of reward from being a volunteer. This includes the leader (themselves) achieving a sense of reward from the effort which they contribute to the growth and well being of brigade members.</td>
<td>quality] as a reward for their service, the brigade expectation [C quality] may have two components – i.e. what the volunteer must contribute and could contribute. This implies a discretionary component in which an individual volunteer selectively (keeping their contribution in proper balance regarding other aspects of their life) draws upon what they know and can do [L quality] with the guidance/encouragement of brigade leadership.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A leader contributing to the building of trust– on and off the fire ground - between volunteers, career CFA personnel and others with whom volunteers interact. This includes the leader demonstrating confidence in the brigade members as a consequence of their exhibited knowledge, skill and commitment.</td>
<td>The &quot;need for trust&quot; across the spectrum of volunteer and career fire fighters (including Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) personnel) is an abiding sentiment within the CFA [C quality] and this clearly rests upon people demonstrating that they are competent [L quality] and committed [M quality]. In this regard, brigade leadership has a pivotal role in applauding, and hence, strengthening the trustworthy qualities which are displayed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A leader being alert to the need for - appropriate to the circumstance - leadership on and off the fire ground. Indeed the off-the-fire ground may be more influential in retaining a volunteer than what is applied on-the-fire ground.</td>
<td>Leadership on the fire ground has profound safety and protection of life and property intent and is asserted under pressure, command and control, circumstances in which there is little room for questioning and reflection; but, once off the fire ground, volunteers will reflect upon how well they were led, and acknowledged as a valuable member of the team [L, C &amp; M qualities] during turn-out. However, given that a volunteer’s commitment to the brigade involves lengthy periods between turn-outs, it is during these periods that a leader must be especially skilful in maintaining a volunteer’s interest [M quality], preserving the volunteer’s status as a valued member of the team [L quality] through making an appropriate (to their level of interest and brigade need) contribution to the brigade during the quiet times [C quality].</td>
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| 207 |
Brigade leadership has an internal (to the brigade) role in promoting the worth of learning and its outcomes to volunteers; and an external role - in a public relations and adding to volunteer self-perception of status sense – to increase public awareness of the nature and value of volunteer learning [L quality]. In addition to the motivational aspects of this, such action will lead to volunteers strengthening their realisation that they have, and can further build upon, much of personal value which is applicable throughout life and thus gain leverage from this which might otherwise not occur as a consequence of being out of mind.

**A leader** being pro-active as a motivator of volunteers to maintain skills (even in circumstances of low frequency turn-out), contribute to brigade capability (in a manner that is appropriate to the individual volunteer’s interest) and to recognise the value of outcomes from CFA learning in other aspects of the volunteer’s life.

*Note:* It is not suggested that a leader intrude upon a volunteer’s personal life. However, sometimes a volunteer may not – unaided - recognise the extent to which they have acquired new skills, knowledge and confidences which are transferable to other aspects of their life – such realisation can be highly motivational and potentially life changing.

**A leader** delegating duties within the brigade in a manner which adds to a volunteer’s “life repertoire” and serves to reduce the load upon the leadership team (particularly the captain). Appropriately done, this distributes ownership of brigade achievement, and goes a long way toward overcoming brigade members being reluctant to take on a leadership role – the prospect of a leadership role is not so daunting when there are seen to be people willing to help.

Individual motivation and team motivation requires a “pat on the back” for individuals and applause for a job well done by the team [M quality]. In circumstances of infrequent brigade turnout this requires innovative leadership to maintain skills levels and to draw upon the individual and collective competency base [L quality] in a manner which preserves individual enthusiasm, brigade cohesiveness, and fire readiness [C quality]. Importantly, this includes encouraging volunteers to recognise and draw upon (in other aspects of their life) the knowledge and skills which they gain through being a brigade member [L quality].

Drawing upon what is already known and bringing about new learning [L quality] through delegating is a powerful way to keep a volunteer’s interest and commitment to the brigade [M quality] – in addition to reducing the load upon the formal leadership this can be a source of satisfaction (pleasure in what they have contributed to the development of others) for the leaders. Whilst it is probable that a brigade has a predisposition to a principle function of fire response [C quality], in addition to this core fire protection and response function the range of community safety needs which are potentially relevant to the CFA brigade is very broad; and, hence, there are opportunities to expand the range of activity in accord with community benefit and volunteer interest. Of course, expansion of the activity of a brigade should be consequent upon rational decision of what is appropriate and
## Influence of Brigade Leadership upon a Volunteer Actually Recognising and Valuing What They Know and Can Do

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A leader</strong> acknowledging, in a timely manner and, importantly, within the brigade, the contribution made by individuals and team groupings.</td>
<td>For many volunteers the acknowledgement <a href="#">M quality</a> that they get within the brigade -- their family -- is said to be more motivating than external expression of appreciation. However, it could be the case that external appreciation is not expressed because of public ignorance -- or even apathy. Under these circumstances, brigade leadership has a role in both internally and externally promoting the worth of volunteers through their drawing upon knowledge and skill <a href="#">L quality</a> with a view to strengthening the volunteers' self-perception of their individual and collective worth <a href="#">C quality</a> -- this includes working toward strengthening the regard which CFA career fire fighters have for volunteers.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A leader</strong> facilitating de-briefing as soon as appropriate (due account for tiredness, etc) following brigade turn-out and/or conclusion of other brigade activity of a project nature.</td>
<td>The de-briefing is both a learning <a href="#">L quality</a> and applauding <a href="#">M quality</a> process which strengthens bonding within the brigade <a href="#">C quality</a>.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A leader</strong> encouraging volunteers to undertake training courses which are appropriate to their self-development (in a whole of life sense) in addition to expanding their CFA capability. This also requires (of the leader) contributing to facilitating access to these courses.</td>
<td>It can be the case that some -- if not many -- volunteers don't recognise the full worth of what they already know and can do. And being assisted to recognise that they have a significant foundation upon which to build <a href="#">L quality</a> through further learning can be an important realisation which adds to self-image <a href="#">M quality</a>. Having a propensity for volunteers to engage with further learning is a desirable attribute of a brigade which values and draws upon the capability resource of its members <a href="#">M quality</a>.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A leader</strong> encouraging members of the brigade to be open (honest) regarding their motivations for remaining as a volunteer. Whilst encouraging members to be open, the leader must also guide them in being respectful of others in expressing an opinion regarding organisational and operational matters -- i.e. sensitively honest, but not undermining of others.</td>
<td>In order to appropriately maintain a volunteer's interest <a href="#">M quality</a> it is necessary to have correct knowledge of what they seek from being a volunteer and how they feel about the brigade environment <a href="#">C quality</a>. Reliable insight -- in these regards -- enables brigade leadership to appropriately draw upon a volunteer's knowledge and skill and to add to the volunteer's valuing of these assets <a href="#">L quality</a>.</td>
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**Note:** Relying upon responses to surveys may be misplaced as what is declared may be more what is perceived to be expected rather than what is really the case.
Influence of a brigade leader upon the nature of the brigade which acts to keep a volunteer’s interest

A leader nurturing the sense of unified brigade family in changing times. This includes pro-actively minimising the presence of weakening of unity cliques within the brigade.

A sense of belonging is a factor in keeping a volunteer’s interest [M quality]. This requires that members of the brigade are getting on together [C quality] as a group. And fragmentation through cliques potentially undermines unity across the brigade; and is characterised by clique members valuing some members to the exclusion of others [L quality].

A leader having an awareness of what is going on in the brigade. This includes knowledge of positive bonding factors and threats to brigade unity.

The family nature of a brigade extends beyond the community safety reason for being to include personal issues – anxieties, frustrations, relationships (within and external to the brigade), hopes and ambitions. For these reasons, a leader is sometimes a confidant, bridge builder, wound healer, and other similar to a caring parent role. Accordingly, it is important to have knowledge of and responsiveness to relationship and other life issue factors impacting upon volunteer motivations [M quality], perceived value that a volunteer has about their own worth and what others perceive [L quality] and the influence of personal and clique issues upon the cohesiveness of the brigade [C quality].

In addition to responding to the questions giving rise to Table 9.1, and cognisant of the variable distinction made between generic meanings of leadership on the one hand and management on the other (Gronn 1999, pp. 3-20), each focus group was invited to share views regarding how the elected officers of a CFA brigade – captain and lieutenants – embrace both these functions if, indeed, they are seen to be markedly different.

The consensus view of the long-term captains was that there is a fine line between leadership and management, but it was possible to fulfil a planning and resource management role without having the qualities of a good leader such as modelling good practice and having the troops follow your lead. However, being attuned to what is going on, as was seen as a quality of a good leader, makes for better planning and resource management.

Interestingly, the more recent captains did not reach consensus other than to agree that it is a debatable matter and the roles do cross over. One polar view was that leadership is what occurs on the fire ground through autocratic control and command, and management
is the much more sensitive responsiveness to human relations as should occur back at the fire station. There was another view that management was to do with planning and leadership was making sure that what was planned actually did occur and this leadership did not necessarily have to come from the captain and could be distributed across the brigade. However, if the leadership failed the responsibility lay with the captain and is a management failure.

Notwithstanding the differences which may be said to exist between the leadership function and the management function, the observation by Jake (120204, 210) that a brigade leader has a responsibility to skill and draw upon members in a manner that is appropriate to the brigade underscored agreement that there are differences between brigades which require differences in approach. The nature of effective combination of management of the volunteer resource and leadership of volunteers was seen to vary according to local circumstances. As an encapsulating view, Jake’s comments and the general agreement was coupled with an expanding comment by Glen (120204, 212) that this could be seen as channelling and focussing a member’s contribution.

In a time of change, as is the case for the CFA, this leadership/management role resonates strongly with the Maira and Scott-Morgan (1997) mantra that within an accelerating organisation people should not be victims of change but should be supported as agents of change. Sensitive drawing upon a volunteer's capabilities, through leadership and management appropriate to circumstances, is the means by which a volunteer is brought into a change partnership.

9.5 Communities of practice as an embedded presence within a CFA brigade

For a volunteer to be an agent of change within a CFA brigade, the research data points to taking leverage from the family nature of a brigade. For a leader, this requires striving to achieve a circumstance where the culture of the brigade is inclusive of all members learning and contributing together as suits their respective interests, but with common good in mind. Such a culture invites consideration of its congruence with the notion of a community of practice (CoP) where, in the case of a CFA brigade, a distinction can be
made between the team functioning of the brigade as volunteers respond to emergency events and the broader voluntary learning and growing together which occurs within the family of the brigade. Importantly, brigade leadership is faced with the difficulty of maintaining volunteer interest and commitment during the periods between routine turn-out, which are generally not noticed and applauded by the public, and less frequent major events with their attached, but transient, public applause. It seems probable that brigade camaraderie in many brigades is more grounded, and sustained, in the CoP facet of membership than it is in responding to emergencies.

In introducing his concept of community of practice as a social theory of learning, Wenger (1998, pp. 4-5) advances the view that learning is a social participation and through this we have membership of a community, acquire a sense of identity, derive meaning, and engage in practice with others. This description applies to the nature of formal and informal learning through volunteering within a CFA brigade; and over which the elected captain and lieutenants have responsibility and influence – albeit subject to variation under the influence of brigade culture.

Notwithstanding some CFA volunteer resistance to the introduction of formal learning and assessment, there is a valuing of knowledge and skill and an embracing of further learning by brigade members as they feel is appropriate to their need and on their terms – cognisant that they are volunteers. Indeed, informal learning by volunteers through sharing from their life experiences and drawing upon the “external to CFA knowledge and skill” of each other is a bonding agent, although not necessarily overtly recognised, within the community of the brigade.

With the exception of rural brigades, where self-preservation and community expectation is the principal volunteer retention factor, for many members joining for one reason and remaining for another was a common theme emerging from the inquiry leading to the LCM Model.

“You find a lot of people join for one reason but remain for a totally different reason. [agreement from others in the focus group] Until you join you don’t really know what you are getting in to. But once you are in, then you start to realise that there is more to it than maybe what you joined for.’

(Mick, volunteer brigade captain, 120204, 344)
In other LCM Model scoping and exploring efficacy forums, Mick’s comment was frequently mirrored by explanations of joining a family where close personal bonding occurred as volunteers acquired skills, turned-out together and thus built the legend of their brigade, and developed trust in one another. Accordingly, the foundation of the LCM Model is the notion that a CFA Brigade is a community where people learn and grow together in the course of fulfilling their community safety purpose; and, importantly, this bonding as a family is a factor in retaining volunteers as members of the brigade. This has resonance with the view that ‘Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do better as they interact regularly’ (Wenger, E. 2006). The view that a CFA brigade has much akin to a community of practice is reinforced by CFA members awakening to the realisation that the basis upon which a volunteer is valued as a member of the brigade team comes down to valuing what they contribute through drawing upon what they know and can do – i.e. the camaraderie within the brigade is grounded within the Wenger description.

The “awakening” referred to in the foregoing was a frequent occurrence in the course of this research study. It was frequently the case that respondents (singularly or in groups) expressed a view that they had not reflected upon the possibility that valuing the outcomes from lifelong learning was connected to volunteer retention. However, upon having the possibility tabled for thought, the perception quickly moved to an emphatic position that “it” was pivotal to retaining a volunteer. But there are many nuances including giving meaning to the value of what is brought to the brigade, welcoming, ensuring a sense of ownership, and encouraging further learning – as typified in Dialogue 9.1.

Dialogue 9.1 – Extract from brigade captain focus group 12th February 2004 (Pseudonyms used)

Lewis 655 (Researcher)
How do you as leaders of a brigade relate to why a volunteer joins and remains – getting people in and keeping the troops there. What has that got to do with you as leaders? How do you as leaders influence that?

Donald 675 (Volunteer Captain)
Try and keep it interesting for them ---

Jake 675 (Volunteer Captain)
Yes that’s right.

Archie 676 (Volunteer Captain)
-- try to get them --- try to make them --- or give them ownership of what you are doing.
In Dialogue 9.1, there is agreement that a brigade leader has an important role in nurturing participation in the activities of the brigade from a drawing upon outcomes from learning perspective. And, interestingly, Cyril’s remarks invite consideration that in his brigade there are two “tribes/communities” (fire fighting and inter-brigade competitive running) within the brigade, each with an embedded CoP. There is also the possibility that in each case there is an extended CoP beyond the confines of the brigade. There is an appearance that the influence of the fire fighting community is attracting membership from the running community without necessarily diminishing the running community. This gives rise to the thought that what some refer to as cliques might, in some circumstances, be better thought of as communities of practice and thus be embraced rather than held in suspicion by the leadership.
Extract from 11th February 2004 captains focus group

1st brigade captain (B1088)
They go and have a drink after training around at a mates place because we banned alcohol from the station. The captain doesn’t get invited. He can have coffee at the station and lock up and wash the dishes.

2nd brigade captain (B1089)
Yes I found that, you know, because years ago it was all social stuff. Now, because of work pressures, home pressures and CFA pressures, you haven’t got the time for that sort of thing. So you end up with your little cliques.

In the following, and informed by the Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002, p.18) distinguishing between the formality of overtly convened project teams and the more informal nature of a community of practice, a very deliberate distinction can be made between the community safety task function of a CFA brigade and its somewhat invisible community of practice nature. It is recognised that “cliques” are not synonymous with “CoPs”. But such “cliques” may be precursors to more fully developed learning communities. Indeed, the potential fracturing of brigade unity by cliques may be mitigated by subtle leadership leading to morphing into communities of practice.

Whilst the development of fire fighting skill through formal training is readily acknowledged by CFA members as a significant part of being a volunteer, prompting was required to cause reflecting more upon the importance of valuing the broad spectrum of capabilities which volunteers bring to the CFA and acquire through their volunteering. However, once raised as an issue, there was ready recognition that the trustworthiness which volunteers seek in one another is nurtured by the less tangible sharing and growing together that arises from the totality (the what and with whom) of their interaction – i.e. community of practice growing together outcomes as opposed to potentially divisive tribal clique outcomes.

9.6 Leadership within a community of practice environment

For many volunteers, regarding their brigade as family leads on to having a strong sense of membership within a purposeful community. This dissertation posits that this is nurtured by an inclusive of all family sensitive leadership within the brigade.
This research study, yielding the LCM Model, indicates that nurturing a *valuing of learning brigade culture* is a significant attribute required of a brigade leader. And this *making the most of what a volunteer knows and can do* requires that a volunteer is perceived to be a customer (of the CFA) seeking to *satisfy wants and needs* through their volunteering. A volunteer member is seeking personal satisfaction across a spectrum of satisfactions – including fulfilling responsibilities - and it is incumbent upon brigade and CFA corporate leadership to co-jointly recognise and act accordingly as typified by the concluding activity theory derived questions and actions to each of the three stories - welcoming, selling training and brigade sustainability (Chapter 8).

The three stories, as reviewed in Chapter 8, display a resonance between drawing upon the LCM Model and the seven key principles for cultivating communities of practice (Wenger et al. 2002, pp. 51-64). Application of the key principles (see Table 9.2) is the pathway to designing for aliveness within an organisation (Wenger et al. (2002, p. 50) and these align strongly with attention to LCM brigade vibrancy factors as a pathway to retention of volunteers. However, as alluded to earlier, a distinction needs to be made between a CFA brigade as an enterprise team with a compelling community safety defined function and the brigade as a family voluntarily learning, growing and acting together in a manner which operates as the retention glue. To illustrate this relationship, Table 9.2 is a comparison between the Wenger et al. (2002) principles and CFA brigade leadership giving attention to the community of practice (CoP) character embedded within the brigade as a foundation upon which to build, and draw upon, operational capability.

| Seven principles for bringing an organisation alive through cultivating communities of practice (CoP) (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002, pp. 51-63) | Under the influence of leadership - relevance to drawing upon the LCM Model to create and maintain a vibrant CFA brigade in which the members freely, but sensitively, share views regarding maintaining brigade capability, valuing of each member, and enhancing community safety – they volunteer, socialise, learn, and grow together |
| Design for evolution: A CoP is organic. The range of interests and the focus changes with new members joining and others leaving the community. Accordingly, rigid design such as found in an organisation structure is not appropriate – inhibiting | It is from within the culture of a brigade that permission and motivation reside which give rise to members of the brigade individually and collectively drawing upon the breadth of their knowledge and skill to fulfil the community safety mission of the brigade. Whilst capability with respect to fire fighting is the core requirement of the brigade, the manner of achieving and maintaining this is not static – e.g. knowledge, technology and... |
of evolution. It is more appropriate to design in a manner – akin to lifelong learning – which anticipates and supports redesigning of the CoP in a manner that catalyzes community development. (Wenger et al 2002, p. 53)

<table>
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<th>of evolution. It is more appropriate to design in a manner – akin to lifelong learning – which anticipates and supports redesigning of the CoP in a manner that catalyzes community development. (Wenger et al 2002, p. 53)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>techniques are evolving, there is a shift from male dominance, availability for call-out changes under the influence of other calls upon a volunteer’s time, and the aging membership is giving way to younger members (where recruitment is possible). In addition to evolution with respect to fire fighting, and in response to broader community safety roles along with brigade sustaining needs, there are other possibilities which arise from the particular attributes and interests which volunteers bring to the community of the brigade from time to time. Under these circumstances, it adds to brigade efficacy if the abiding character of the brigade culture is such that it is a catalyst supporting making the best use of what volunteers know and can do in accord with community safety need and the opportunities inherent within the respective motivations of the members of the brigade as the community of the brigade is configured (evolves) from time to time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Open a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives:</strong> It is insider perspectives which drive and shape a CoP. An outsider does not have depth of understanding of the issues and the relationships between the players. However, bringing in an outside perspective can assist the insiders to better see the possibilities and better act as agents of change. (Wenger et al 2002, p. 54)</td>
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<tr>
<td>In the case of a CFA brigade, the necessarily quasi-military, command and control, influences which are largely CFA corporately asserted from outside of the brigade must accommodate the volunteer nature of the brigade – but sometimes a matter of tension. Under these circumstances, brigade leadership has a critically sensitive role in nurturing the internal (to the brigade) sense of family which is the bonding agent of the brigade community whilst also being a conduit for the outside command and control perspectives. Ideally, the culture of the brigade – under the stewardship of its formally appointed leaders and with the influence of informal leaders within the brigade - does embrace a valuing of the motivations of brigade members and have respect (valuing) for the CFA corporate perspectives and requirements. Being part of a larger disciplined force requires brigade members to recognise – within their local community of practice – that they are joined with other brigades and other community safety organisations as an expanded community of practice. Accordingly, a broad reaching external (to the brigade) dialogue regarding the possibilities expands the vigour of the brigade community of practice and reduces the possibility of a tunnel view regarding the benefits to brigade members (accruing from their sharing, learning and acting together) and the consequent strengthening of motivations and application of learning outcomes.</td>
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<td><strong>Invite different levels of participation:</strong> According to their level of interest, as it changes from time-to-time, CoP members move between core group, active, and peripheral roles. Accordingly, it is appropriate to make provision for this transition between levels of engagement which allows all members to feel they are a full member of the CoP even though their level of participation is variable. In addition to the CoP members there are external people – with an interest – such as customers, suppliers and intellectual neighbours. (Wenger et al 2002, p.55)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The volunteer structure of a brigade causes an ebbing and flowing of level of individual activity and commitment. Necessarily, for community safety purposes, leadership of the brigade relies upon a core group which will turn-out (consequent upon commitment and availability) and welcomes support from others as occurs from time to time. Under these circumstances, and whilst avoiding an appearance of compulsion, the supporting of learning culture of a brigade is strengthened by welcoming all into the CoP irrespective of their level of participation from time to time. Indeed, it does occur that peripheral members do become active members (in fire fighting and or broader membership roles) through increased motivation arising from a higher level of engagement with learning and greater recognition (by self and others) of what they have to offer. Managing, and welcoming, the flux of varying levels of participation – within the brigade CoP – is an important leadership function within the volunteering environment and is a characteristic of a cohesive brigade.</td>
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</table>
**Develop both public and private spaces**

A CoP typically has a public face (to its members, but not necessarily others) such as meetings or electronic convening to discuss issues and solve problems, etc. Through this device, members demonstrate their membership and see who else is involved. There is also a private space where members interact with one another and is likely to be the most active space. The private space builds relationships and lays the foundation for a strong public space – i.e. informing meeting agendas, energising projects, strengthening problem solving networks, evolving future directions. There is a mutuality between the public space and the private space – each contributes to the other (Wenger et al 2002, p. 58).

**Focus on value:** From its inception, a CoP yields value to its members from addressing problems and needs and adding to the body of knowledge from which members may draw. Valued outcomes may arise from even small interactions within the CoP, but even major activities may not yield immediately apparent valued outcomes. As value is recognised over time progressive identification, and promotion of awareness of the accruing value, is an important sustaining requirement of a CoP. (Wenger et al 2002, p. 59)

In the case of a brigade CoP there is a possibly unusual value requirement. Compared to others – such as enterprise or professional interest based convening – the value accruing to its members from a brigade CoP may be a principal factor in retaining these volunteers as members of the brigade. The interaction which members have through the CoP may be the “family” element which is said to be significant and it may e the principal environment in which the LCM Model is active.

**Combine familiarity and excitement:**

It is important that a CoP offers its members a comfortable environment – akin to the familiarity of a hometown – where members feel free to engage in candid discussions and are not at risk or accruing unwelcome obligations. However, it is also important that there is a level of excitement generated by events and encouragement to share new ideas which maintain the interest of members and attracts new members. (Wenger et al. 2002, p. 61)

“Trust” is an important interpersonal; quality within a CFA brigade. This applies primarily in a fire fighting situation, but also has a significant place in preserving and strengthening interpersonal relationships off the fire ground. However the requirement for technical trust, within the team, on the fire ground leaves no place for the “combining of familiarity and excitement”; therefore the off-the-fire ground CoP is the environment in which this combining can, and should, occur; and the LCM Model offers a framework for the designing and implementing of appropriate action.

**Create a rhythm for the community:**

The degree of “aliveness” of a CoP is connected to its rhythm of activity – events, meetings, contact between

The CFA paradox of existing to fight fires but striving in many ways to avoid the necessity has a close relationship to the volunteer “joining for one reason and remaining for another – finding a family”. It may be the case that the rhythm of the CoP (family) is
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Table 9.2 is but a glimpse at the sustaining complexity managed by formally appointed brigade leadership. In addition to brigade leaders responding to their dual, but joined, team leading (in a conventional enterprise sense) and CoP nurturing roles, they are faced with the requirement to serve two masters. On the one hand, a brigade leader has responsibilities to corporate CFA and on the other hand they have a responsibility to the community of the brigade across its dual facets. There is also the challenge of skilfully drawing upon the informal leadership operating within the brigade through acknowledging its presence and valuing when it is positively asserted.

With respect to inclusively drawing upon the informal leadership within the brigade, Table 9.2 is a framework from which to derive strategies that support sharing the CoP nurturing load of the formally appointed leadership. It is probable that informal leadership already asserts an influence within the CoP environment and, if so, having informal leaders identify with being part of a brigade with CoP leaderful qualities is an attractive sharing of the leadership load prospect.

‘Leaderful practice takes a fresh look at fellowship and suggests that fellowship and leadership are in essence part of the same process. If we have reached a point in our organizational evolution that we no longer need leaders “out in front”, then in the same vein, we no longer need our followers “back in line”. Followers and leaders are interchangeable parts in the conduct of leadership.’
(Raelin 2003, p. 36)

Although Raelin has the totality of an organisation in mind, this dissertation posits that there is usefulness in pursuing leaderful qualities within the CoP facet of the brigade and therefore adding to the aliveness (Wenger et al. 2002, p. 50) of the brigade. Although responding to emergency is necessarily in a command-and-control leadership paradigm there is a high level of fellowship drawn upon under these circumstances which has its
foundation in the aliveness of CoP learning and bonding. In nurturing brigade aliveness and responsiveness to command and control imperatives, the connection between leadership and fellowship, as identified by Raelin and the negotiation of meaning as the ability to experience the world in a learning generative meaningful way (Wenger 1998, p.4) within organisational contexts can be better made where leadership is supporting negotiating meaning across different perspectives (Wenger 1988, pp. 260-262). In this respect, the circumstances under which formal brigade leadership is appointed/elected and the consequent variability of confidence and leadership-versus-control effectiveness are significant issues which are enmeshed with the influence of non-elected leaders as they emerge and dissolve from time to time.

9.7 Impact of the vagaries of leadership

Notwithstanding the invisibility to its members of the community of practice nature of a CFA brigade existing alongside a visible emergency response function, during the course of this research there was frequent comment about the way in which individuals learn and grow and contribute to others or, alternatively, are suppressed under the influence of a negative brigade culture as shaped by the leadership in the brigade. Gary’s example (below) mirrors Wenger’s social theory of learning (Wenger 1998, p. 4) and points to the operation of a community of practice as an embedded facet of a brigade.

Commenting upon volunteer personal growth and building of self-esteem through joining a brigade -

'I have got a classic in our place. A young guy [recruited as parents were brigade members]– he was eighteen – but if you said boo to him he would have crawled up the wall and gone and hid out somewhere else. He has been with us three years, I suppose, and to over watch the change in this guy from being an absolute field mouse to somebody who will now actually talk – you know stand up and be seen – will get involved in meetings and actually ask questions and bring points of view up. And to his work on the fire ground – as such – to me as a leader, I believe that yes I have had something to do with it but I also believe that the culture of the CFA and the culture of the brigade has brought it out as well. I get a lot of satisfaction out of seeing things like that happen – you know. That you have had a hand in trying to help. Not help them – but you have brought someone out of their shell and they have given you something back as well – you get a bit of a kick out of that.'

(Gary, volunteer brigade captain, 110204, 598)

In Gary’s example, through his membership of the brigade community, the new recruit achieved self-confident identity. There was meaning to his learning as he grew into
becoming a valued member of the team and, in addition to the learning accrued in the course of turning-out, he exhibited confidence in being an active participant in brigade practice and presumably earned his place in the legend of the brigade as a contributor, on and off the fire ground.

Gary's example is also indicative of the role played by a brigade leader who values learning and the satisfaction which accrues from contributing to the learning of others and keeping them as a member of the brigade community. With respect to recruiting and retention, whilst the CFA is not competing with other organisations for the provision of service as is the focus of Saint-Onge and Wallace (2003) in their approach to *Leveraging Communities of Practice for Strategic Advantage* in commercial enterprises, the CFA brigade is competing for the time and commitment of volunteers against the calls of work, family and other interests. It is also the case that where a volunteering inclined person might join the CFA, there is competition from other volunteering organisations or even informal volunteering. Under these circumstances, it is more than just prudent for brigade leadership (captain and lieutenants) to give consideration to what makes, or could cause, the CFA to be competitive in the attracting and keeping of volunteers. As research indicates that learning new skills is a recruitment and retention incentive for emergency service volunteers (Aitken 2000; Fahey, Walker & Sleigh 2002), the notion of brigades as communities of practice is attractive as a strategy for gaining interest, for recruitment, and then for keeping volunteers. But this is probably a concept which is not in the mind of many brigade leaders given the variability of what they bring to the leadership role.

The variability of brigade leadership, consequent upon the practice of brigade members electing officers, was frequently raised by respondents throughout this research study. There is a chicken and egg conundrum here as given the practice of electing the formal leadership of captain and lieutenants the question arises - does the leadership shape the culture or does the culture shape the leadership? ‘And that brigade doesn’t want to do any training so they vote in a person who hates training’ (Mary, volunteer, 190303, line 311)

Incumbent brigade leaders do accept that there are leadership qualities which should be possessed by those elected. But there is a difficulty in integrating succession planning and
learning preparation for leadership given the uncertainties of election outcomes and the reluctance to take on positions of responsibility when the duties, perceived by some to be burdensome, are clearly articulated prior to accepting a leadership position. Dialogue 9.2 is indicative of the complexity associated with addressing this issue.

Dialogue 9.2 – Extract from 19th March 2003 Ballarat workshop (Pseudonyms used)

Vince B639 (career staff also a volunteer)
Taking the example of a person who has aspirations of being an officer – and done the training to do it – and on election night the popular vote voted in Fred Nerg – for example. How long does he keep coming back, how much more training does he do and keep getting knocked back and knocked back?

The way that would change is, the CFA, from their point of view, corporately they have got to say “This is the position description; and eventually this person – or group of persons – they have the qualifications. I’m sorry”, [insisting on appointment of the trained person]

Tim B649 (career staff also a volunteer)
What we have to be careful of there, is that nobody in the brigade’s got that position so we’ve got to be able to offer them the training ---

Vince B650
Oh, it doesn't happen overnight ---

Tim B651
Yeh, but if they get a position or they're put up for a position then we can train them within a reasonable time frame---

Norm B652 (volunteer)
But that doesn't happen.

Martin B654 (volunteer)
No, it doesn't happen.

Peter Bell B655
You come along in May – first Thursday in May – to our brigade...and someone will stand up and give lip service to the requirements of each position, the expectations, and then they'll sit down. The election will take place and nobody, but nobody, will be questioned. Only on the number of votes they get.

This exchange of views followed a discussion about the transportability of leadership/management training to other aspects of a volunteer’s life. It was felt that formal qualification could be facilitated by the CFA and as a condition of accepting nomination as a brigade leader. Once having assumed a leadership role, the difficulty of reliably determining why a brigade leader might quit the position is another nuance of the suitability for leadership issue as indicated by Donald’s comment below -

Commenting upon having a deep suspicion regarding the reliability of surveying volunteer attitudes -

'It is always one of the things that I reckon that's why I had an adverse reaction to the original captains forum was the fact that I think a lot of it was built on false premises. And that was the fact that they did some exit interviews of the captains and I happen to know from our external – this is a personal views by the way guys – my views of some of these people, and you saw the results, and
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the thing about the captain was that it was always the CFA that was to blame --- You know they have got a really bad captain, and he is asking him why did you leave the CFA? you know “Oh, because of bloody CFA, this and they don’t do that, and never answer your things and they expect you to do all of this work”. They are not going to actually say in that exit survey “Well actually, I am such a pathetic leader that I had absolutely no idea how to run the brigade and everything was getting on top of me so I just had to leave to save a bit of face”. They weren’t going to say that.

(Donald, volunteer captain, leaders focus group,110204, B938)

If the circumstance continues where appointment of a brigade leader is not tied to adequate support in taking up the role, the likelihood of installing brigade leaders with the attributes of encouraging volunteer members to consciously participate as members of a learning community of practice is problematic. However, as depicted in the circular change dynamic of Figure 6.4 (p. 133), there is the prospect of brigade members becoming more discriminatory in their choice of leaders as they strengthen their valuing of learning and its outcomes. There is also a giving of voice, by some leaders, to the importance of demonstrating competence and providing leadership as aspects of a requirement for increasing professionalism within the culture of the brigade.

Consistent with this view of “professionalism” is the observation of McLennan, Acker, Beason, Birch and Jamieson (2004, p. 44) that reasons for joining by volunteer fire fighters do include gaining new skills is indicative that that CFA volunteers do see themselves as members of a group of people with specialised knowledge and skill which they acquire through their volunteering. The members of the brigade are bonded by contributing to community safety and draw from the knowledge and skill that they bring to the CFA whilst, together, acquiring new knowledge and skills. However, the degree to which this is cause for welcoming new training regimes, as opposed to resenting what is regarded as an unwelcome imposition in some brigades, may be significantly influenced by the competing calls upon a volunteer’s time and commitment.

9.8 The strengths and fragility of CFA volunteers as a collegiate brigade community and leadership’s role in this

CFA volunteer members are clearly bonded, but not necessarily recognised by them as such in a community of practice where, caused by a shared concern for community safety they are a collegiate group growing in knowledge and expertise, and thus aligned to the
description of a CoP by Wenger, et al. (2002, p.4). The circumstances of CFA service cause this group to identify as a family at the brigade level with a shared passion for what they do. However, this can be a fragile bonding under the potentially eroding influences of other calls upon time and effort, a diminishing pool of potential volunteers and insensitive leadership.

Whilst cognisant of the difficulties, there are clearly CFA staff and volunteer personnel who are actively championing and contributing to leadership development and team building in a manner which is supportive of recruitment and retention. This, in addition, adds to the strength of the brigade community and adds to the life skills of those volunteers fortunate enough to participate in the programs. In Dialogue 9.3, Elizabeth (a CFA career member) begins with remarking upon the difficulty of CFA (corporately) making a contribution to brigades that are geographically dispersed and large in number. She then goes on to remark upon the distributed value of the leadership and team building programs which are impacting beyond the brigade level.

Dialogue 9.3 – Extract of interview 18th February 2003

(Pseudonym used)

Lewis 314 (Researcher)
In what way might valuing of what volunteers bring to and what they get from by way of knowledge and skill help retention?

Elizabeth 322 (Career member)
From a very brief scan of the overview document, I have wondered about that question. At a philosophical level, if people feel valued they are more likely to hang around. But given that, for example, across the two regions of CFA that I look after we are talking about one hundred and three brigades with average membership of twenty five to thirty people per brigade – there a lot of people there to have that sort of interaction with.

The minimum skills training program that you mentioned earlier is in some ways, for some of the volunteers, actually I think contributing towards them feeling valued by the CFA because of the safety emphasis. And I am sure there is the cynical response that the CFA is just doing it to cover its arse. But there is also the acknowledgement by the majority of people that we need to know “that I know what I am doing, and Joe that is working alongside me, that I know he knows what he is doing as well”. So that if something goes wrong we can still be safe.

Lewis 366
I have heard stories from within the CFA of people who have grown as a consequence of them being a volunteer – self-esteem, confidence. Some that, on occasions, it has been felt could never possibly rise to that level.

Elizabeth 374
Yes. In this area we run team building and leadership development programs where we take volunteers ... for a three day weekend basically of team building, leadership development activities, team problem solving, decision making. We set them tasks and provide some resources and figure out how they are going to achieve the end result including personal development type material, leadership styles, communication skills and all of those sorts of things. And we have huge results coming out of that where people go off and really do develop high level team work skills.

Lewis 407
Do they recognise that themselves?
We run a junior version of the program once every year for fifteen to eighteen year olds. And we evaluate that program both with participants and with parents. And the universal response from the participants, and the parents, is that there have been real pay-offs in self-confidence, self-esteem, personal organisation, things like getting their homework done on time – and even doing that where the particular kid would not have done that before. There is feedback coming from parents, and the kids themselves, saying that they are setting personal goals and working towards them.

Dialogue 9.3 is indicative of efforts being made across the CFA to strengthen the quality of brigade leadership which will yield many benefits including adding value to the organisational and administration support provided by corporate CFA. However, in the course of this research, there was a general view expressed by volunteers that corporate leadership was inhibiting or at best remote and not consultative, and brigade leadership, although close to the volunteer, was variable in terms of motivational quality.

The lack of consultation issue was a recurring theme and in the course of seeking to get on with Phase 4 of the research study, there was an appearance that CFA career members and brigade volunteer leaders are reticent about seeking participation by volunteers in projects on the basis that they are continually drawing upon the few who are willing. But the few are increasingly becoming sceptical that their contribution will make a difference; that is, no confidence that action will result so why bother and, in any case, espoused commitment to consultation is not followed through. The following comment, arising from expressions of frustration by respondents at the, 8th August 2003, LCM Indicative Model review meeting that good ideas are not systemically taken up, is indicative of a general perception.

‘So, you know, the problem is we talk about consultation. We talk about including people – and then we don't. It's all just words …’ (Norm, volunteer, 08093, B 074)

This perception of an unwillingness to consult was further evidenced by Jake's comment, made during the 12th December 2004 leadership meeting and supported by others at the meeting –

Remarking upon requiring experienced volunteers to undertake minimum skills training without regard to literacy issues - ‘That was why they left. They spat the dummy and left because they were getting so frustrated with the system that the leaders above it brought in. They hadn't consulted with us. They just
It is evident that the CFA is a complex leadership environment, made especially so because it is grounded in and relies upon volunteering. Under these circumstances the LCM Model has the potential for aiding reflection and action focused upon mutually serving the interests of corporate leaders, brigade leaders and volunteers as a collegiate brigade community being part of a larger collegiate whole. In respect of this larger collegiate whole, the joining forces by individual brigades to fight major fires in unfamiliar territory is a particular aspect of the apparent increasing frequency and escalating scale of wildfire events in South East Australia, requiring enhanced capability of both formal and informal leaders. Significantly, an aspect of this enhanced capability is the capacity to nurture the strength of bonding within a community of practice at both the brigade and the expanded CFA levels.

9.9 Leadership and change

Under circumstances of significant change, such as has recently occurred within the CFA with respect to formal training and assessment, the leadership of the formally appointed captain and lieutenants, and the influence of others in the brigade who assert informal leadership, takes on a special explaining, consulting and motivating significance.

Remarking upon the impact of lack of forward planning under the influence of imposed change -

‘The brigades don’t see the actions of today and then reflect upon them in time...If they [brigade leaders and corporate leaders] were observant they might realise, perhaps, that some people are not happy with what is going on. And they don’t realise that if they don’t do something about it then they are going to lose that person. So they do nothing about it, and they lose that person. And even after they have lost the person, they still do nothing to try and get that person to return.’ (Mary, volunteer, 190303, lines 38-43)

Mary’s remarks were made in the context of being sensitive to anxieties and resistance during a transition to a more formal learning brigade environment; in other words the CFA organisational cultural change impacting upon the family of a particular brigade. Under these circumstances leaders (formal and informal) have a pivotal role in motivating and supporting members of the brigade family to preserve and build upon the embedded, but possibly not recognised, community of practice potential of the brigade.
In a time of change, the leaders must become *change leaders* or stand aside for those who are (Senge et al. 1999, p. 483). In this respect, the research indicating attractiveness of learning to some volunteers requires some qualification. In the course of the research study, it was clear that for some CFA volunteers the introduction of more formal learning and assessment has been a significant detractor which, possibly, through an evolutionary process of resignation and recruitment is leading to a transition to a new breed of volunteer who does value formal learning. However, it may have been the case that long term volunteers who reacted negatively to this change in learning culture would not have done so if the leadership (corporately and at brigade level) was more adept at leading change. Under these circumstances, it is probable that the nature of brigade leadership will change. Some brigade leaders will lose office and some will continue by adapting and embracing change whilst supporting others in doing so.

In supporting embracing and contributing to change, the formal brigade leadership is faced with managing a complex balancing requirement between the necessarily CFA command and control directives on the one hand and the vagaries of diverse volunteer self-determining expectations on the other hand. It follows from this insight that by bringing the informal leaders into the management process there is a partnership in both a positive dispersing of understanding and a sharing of the load. The essence of this research informed strategy is that there is the prospect that movement toward a brigade taking on the characteristics of a leaderful organisation (Raelin 2003) brings the volunteer members of the brigade inside the ownership of change rather than feeling that they are victims of change. In this respect, through drawing upon the power and influence of informal leadership, the formal leader is focussing upon shaping the direction of CFA corporately determined change more so than forcing change within the brigade (Raelin 2003, p. 156).

This dissertation posits that as the CFA environment is now largely characterised by evolution toward a learning culture, *leaderful* grounded inclusiveness within cultural change at the brigade level is reflected both in the conceptual constructing/ownership and application of the LCM Model. Formally elected leaders and informal leaders (as emerge and influence from time-to-time) have the capacity to strengthen or diminish operation of
the qualities which configure the LCM Model under the influence of their valuing of these qualities.

Cognisant of the new breed of volunteer and of the need to support existing volunteers to welcome learning culture change, the influence of distributed leadership to build upon the existing community of practice strength within the brigade family is pivotal to maintaining brigade capacity to fulfil its current function and expanding its capability to grow into new roles. These capability outcomes can be realised through members of the brigade being awakened to valuing what they may do or be as is a perspective of the meaning of capability (Seddon & Cairns 2002, p. 744 – citing Sen 1999, p. 75). The use of the LCM Model as a reflective and action framework is highly pertinent to achieving this capability of the individual and the team objective.
Chapter Ten: Securing CFA volunteer retention through making the most of what is known and can be done – You have really got to want to

10.1 Introduction

In asserting the utility value of the LCM Model, this concluding chapter addresses the particular organisational objective of achieving strengthened retention of CFA volunteers. However, Phases 1 and 2 of the inquiry were of a general scoping of people contributing to organisational achievement nature and, in addition to laying a foundation for the CFA research study, are a base from which to undertake further inquiry leading to strengthened insight regarding universal application of the LCM Model by differently specifying the sweet spot.

The CFA research supported the premise of a connection between the motivation of a person to contribute to, and remain, as a member of a group and the valuing by the group of that person. In a CFA brigade, the group is revealed to be appropriately thought of as a family consequent upon the close personal relationships which form and, in many instances, evolves as the reason for remaining as a volunteer. In the case of rural brigades, respondents frequently referred to the brigade as the only remaining glue holding the community together in the face of diminishing population and the evaporation of sports teams, etc.

The glue, bonding the CFA brigade as a family in both rural and urban settings, has its foundation in the valuing of individual volunteers by others in the brigade and in the valuing which a volunteer has for themselves as a member of the brigade. Fitting in as a trusted member of the team is grounded in what the volunteer knows and can do, as evidenced by what they contribute to the brigade in the pursuit of its local community safety purpose, but is not commonly explicitly thought of in possession of knowledge terms.

In accord with the valuing of members of the group anthropological basis of the starting premise, an ethnographic research methodology was adopted leading to an account of
book length form (Creswell 1998, p. 58). This is a collation of the Volunteers: making the most of learning 2003 report to Emergency Management Australia (Henry and Hughes 2003), the three stories - welcoming, selling training and brigade sustainability - (Hughes 2005), and the subsequent leadership story (Hughes 2006a). And mindful of the inherent ethnographic practice dilemma of achieving an insightful balance between researcher perception and research subjects' offered accounts, as may or may not be singularly a proper reflection of reality (Raithel 1998, pp. 325-328), a process of constant comparison of individual and group expressions of view was employed. The constant comparison approach was extrapolated from Glasser and Strauss (1999) and, although not intended to inform grounded theory, did mitigate against a dominant, possibly misleading, view prevailing. Also, consequent upon the researched environment being characterised by complex activity interactions (Engestrom & Miettinen 1999, pp. 9-13), activity theory was drawn upon as a prism through which to view these comparisons.

Attention to “Verstehen”, as constructing subjective understanding (Abel 1974), was achieved cognisant of the view that ‘an action has to be “understandable” in terms of established patterns of thought and behaviour’ attributed to Max Weber by Warriner (1974, p. 96). This was managed by constant comparison of respondent reflective responses, and so adding triangulating weight to the view that the conclusions made sense.

With respect to respondent responses, the reflection qualifier is, of itself, a significant outcome from the research. Typically, respondents did not immediately make a connection between drawing upon what a person knows and can do and retaining them as a member of the group. However, upon reflection, the connection was recognised. And, in some instances, the reflection caused a change in posture from expecting things to work out, with the responsibility for fitting in falling mostly upon the volunteer, to recognising the importance of overt action to support a volunteer in securing their valued, by self and others, place within the community of the brigade. In addition to confirming value, the exploring of efficacy of the LCM model, evidenced the need to make the issues visible and to motivate overt leadership action to draw upon the model as suits the circumstances of the environment and the richness of the vagaries of individual volunteer difference. Unless
prompted by leadership, there is a probability that individual volunteers will under-value what they bring or could bring to a brigade; and, likewise, they will under-value others. With due regard to the richness to be found in diversity, there isn’t a one size fits all definitive approach to making the most of what a person knows and can do. Achieving organisational outcomes through drawing upon the breadth and depth of outcomes from lifelong learning is not a mechanistic process as invites positivist research and actions, but is subject to humanistic vagaries. Accordingly, taking advantage from research study outcomes requires more of a context specific, interactive and prudently responsive, approach in contrast to a technical, recipe-driven, approach. The LCM model, and its association to leadership, is the reflective product of the inquiry. The model is offered as a non-positivist tool, possibly more appropriately regarded as a framework, upon which different actors may draw to suit the circumstances.

In acting to support an individual in drawing upon the outcomes from their lifelong learning so as to contribute to organisational achievement, in this case retention of volunteers, there is neither a specifically defined right way or a best way. However, the LCM Model is a framework for the devising and implementation of explicit, customised, action as an alternative to laissez faire not orchestrating outcomes or, at the other extreme, adoption of the Taylorist viewing people as machines Theory X stance (McGregor 1960, pp. 33-34). There is efficacious certainty in overtly integrating consideration and action regarding valuing learning and its outcomes, valuing the motivations underpinning a person’s willingness to contribute, and valuing a culture which nurtures a person making the most of what they know and can do. However, the designing and implementation of pathways to achieving this integration are subject to creative variation by the actors sensitively and responsibly responding to the particularities of the circumstances. Sensitivity is required in respect of the diversity of stakeholder needs and expectations; and responsibility relates to the satisfaction of organisational interests. Accordingly, the utility value of the LCM Model resides within its framework for thought and action qualities, especially in circumstances where these issues are not otherwise in mind by the actors.
10.2 Recapping upon inquiry outcomes – an overview

Whilst the research study had a background motivation to explore the broad relevance of drawing upon the breath of the outcomes from an individual’s lifelong learning to organisational achievement, the specific focus evolved to retaining CFA volunteers. The Indicative LCM model was the product of a series of scoping interviews and workshops and then, through a proving of efficacy phase, the model has been found to be a useful tool. And the quality of leadership, as particularly manifest through brigade leaders of formal and informal character, has been found to be the foundation upon which effective drawing upon the tool rests.

Throughout the three phases of the scoping inquiry there was evidence of a predisposition by both individuals and organisations toward invisibility of much of value that accrues from lifelong learning. Unless prompted, the individual just doesn’t think about this; and there is an organisational tendency to narrowly focus upon the technical expertise required in performing a role and to overlook that people are actually drawing upon a broader base of knowledge and skill in fulfilling their role. There is a self-perpetuating cycle of individuals not fully valuing what they know and can do which in turn leads to organisations, being assemblies of people, not valuing. In turn, this feeds a conditioned propensity of individuals to not fully value their stock of knowledge and skill assets. And so the cycle continues, as illustrated in Figure 10.1, unless interrupted in a manner which brings the holistic valuing of learning outcomes into play.

![Figure 10.1 - Self-perpetuating cycle of not recognising and not valuing](image)

The Phases 1 and 2 inquiry derived insights gave rise to the notion that making the most of what a person knows and can do requires overt recognition that a core of technical knowledge and skill is applied in the context of a much broader expansive field of ability. The “drawing-upon” expanding field increases in significance across a spectrum from
“technocrat” where the focus is narrowly upon technical capacity to “policy development and implementation” where the focus is upon the many dimensions of engaging with people as represented in Figure 5.2 (p. 79). This gave rise to the identification of –

- **NEED** to widely draw upon what is known and can be done as internally motivated by the individual or externally motivated by the organisation or some other agency;
- **ENCOURAGEMENT** to draw upon the breadth of what is known and can be done as underpinned by recognition of the value of the pertinent outcomes from lifelong learning; and
- **OPPORTUNITY** to contribute by appropriately drawing upon what is known and can be done as may require others to invite and assist with respect to acting upon the opportunity;

as the three pillars which support an organisation achieving beyond the ordinary by drawing upon the broad repertoire of the outcomes from an individual's lifelong learning. The Phase 3 inquiry strengthened this view and led to understanding the nature of the required action, within the CFA environment, as illustrated by Figure 6.3 (p. 124).

The derived understanding of the range of CFA volunteer activity was cognisant of the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery operational activities of the CFA; and noting a strong bias toward focusing upon fire fighting and appearing to value this to the exclusion of appropriately valuing other volunteer contributions. However, with such a broad scope of community safety service there is a need, and a place, for volunteers who bring to the CFA and acquire a broad range of knowledge and skill. ‘There is a place for everybody’ (CFA career member championing Broader Membership) according to their interest and with an appropriate level of commitment to the role.

The term “Broader Membership” is used to identify non-fire fighting volunteers, but brigade members have a tendency to under-value this form of volunteering in a manner akin to non-flying air force personnel compared to air crew. This privileging of the role of fire fighting, coupled with coronial recommendations consequent upon the Linton fire fighting volunteer deaths in December 1998, is causing a concentration upon fire fighting training.
Whilst fire fighting training is clearly a key element of CFA learning, the relative invisibility of other aspects of developing knowledge and skill relating to CFA operations is curious and puts at risk attaining and maintaining a critical mass of valuing learning and its outcomes.

Valuing, and drawing upon, learning and its outcomes in an all-inclusive sense encourages family memberships, keeps older members as active contributors and reservoirs of brigade knowledge, and expands the recruiting reach of the brigade. Recruiting a “broader membership” volunteer can lead to recruiting a fire fighter volunteer, and vice versa. To some degree, this resonates with the view that organisations should have the capacity to create ideas, and action, across multiple boundaries as exist within their structure and across time (Yeung, Ulrich, Nason & Von Glinow 1999, p. 122).

Although Yeung et al. (1999) are addressing the importance of organisational learning in the global marketplace, a CFA brigade functions within a large and somewhat complex organisation and has its own changing particularities such as local demographics, nature of community safety need and composition of volunteer personnel. The individual brigade exists to meet both abiding and spontaneous, volatile environment, community safety needs and competes with other volunteering organisations for volunteers. Compared with a commercial enterprise, it could be argued that a CFA brigade has as much, if not more, need to possess organisational learning capability so as to secure and hold its volunteer people as they build personal capability and contribute to brigade organisational capability.

Having recruited a volunteer from a geographically and availability limited potential pool, and invested in their training and other bringing into the team costs, there is a CFA organisational imperative to retain the volunteer. Clearly, passive assumption that a new volunteer will find their place and motivation to remain is thwart with risk, “She’ll be right” is not a responsible stance, and actions to be proactive in securing the volunteer as a continuing member of a brigade are called for. These, meta in nature, actions were identified by matching three, research derived, thematic sets – What potentially contributes to retention; What aids application of outcomes from lifelong learning; and What inhibits
application of outcomes from lifelong learning - against the need, encouragement and opportunity insights. These meta actions are –

- Action that asserts the value of learning in meeting the community safety need.
- Action that supports a volunteer in appropriately drawing upon the outcomes from the totality of their learning to date and to extend their learning.
- Action that acknowledges the esteem in which a volunteer is held as a consequence of them drawing upon the outcomes from their lifelong learning.

(Refer to Figure 6.3, p.124)

These three broad categories of action represent the operationalising of underlying principles which are respectively valuing outcomes from lifelong learning; a brigade culture which nurtures valuing of learning and its outcomes; and having regard for the motivation of a member to remain as a volunteer. From the inquiry derived insights pertaining to these principles, the LCM Indicative Model, coupling making the most of what a volunteer knows and can do with retention, was developed as shown in Figure 10.2.

Figure 10.2 – LCM Model as submitted to CFA personnel for comment upon efficacy

At the end of Phase 3 of the research, the LCM Model had indicative status and, accordingly, Phase 4 was then an exploration of efficacy of the model. Phase 4 informed the writing of the three stories – Welcoming a new member; Selling training; and Strengthening brigade sustainability. Phase 4 also yielded further insight as to the role of
formal and informal leadership as the foundation underpinning application of the LCM Model; leading to the writing of a fourth story – *Leadership*.

Phases 3 and 4 of the research study confirmed the foundation premise of a connection between a volunteer’s motivation to contribute and remain as a volunteer and the valuing of that volunteer by others in the brigade. Forging, and preserving, this strong connection was found to be relevant to maintaining the community safety capability of the brigade. In this regard, the long-term survival of the brigade, as it meets spontaneous and changing community safety needs and copes with new challenges associated with recruiting and keeping volunteers, resonates with the Stephenson view that an organisation’s culture in changing/challenging times should support autonomous development of its members as evidenced by the individual confidently contributing to and embracing change through learning (Stephenson 1999, p. 6).

Early in the inquiry, a tentative exploration was made of CFA personnel perceptions regarding whether they saw themselves as capable people, in the sense of confidently engaging with the unexpected, in much of the same way as paramedics were found to be by Wyatt (2002). Notwithstanding initial uncertainty by respondents, they quickly came to the view that *capability*, in accord with the Cairns definition, is a desirable personal attribute.

> ‘Capability is the confident and mindful application of both current and potential ability (competence and capacity) and values within varied and changing situations to formulate problems and actively work toward solutions as a self-managed learning process’. (Cairns, 1997, p.9)

As the research study proceeded though its third and fourth phases, individual and brigade (as a unit) resonance was found with the three key capability attributes of - *ability* embracing both competence and capacity to extend skills and knowledge, *self-efficacy* as a belief in self and more able to strive for success, and *values* functioning within acceptable boundaries and with regard to qualities such as trust, accountability, and integrity (Seddon & Cairns 2002 p. 752). It is clearly a brigade need to have a pool of *recognised as competent* volunteers upon which to draw and a capacity to expand the individual, and hence the group, range of competency to be willing and confident agents of change within an evolving environment and to address new, and possibly unexpected,
community safety needs. Competency is a foundation, but capability, as understood to be required when confidently responding to new challenges, is the requirement.

In a deepening of insight manner, and as an auxiliary finding from the probing of LCM Model efficacy, there is a demonstrated connection between achieving verisimilitude, “the story” being plausible, and summarising “the story” in an activity network format. Consistent with their experience, although sometimes requiring a shift in thinking or new appreciation of an issue, research respondents quickly recognised the mediating linkages and tensions within an activity theory network and were able to assess the plausibility of the LCM Model when set against these relationships. The activity network prism also afforded me, as the researcher, a verstehen (Weber 1974) vehicle for achieving sympathetic introspection (Hammersley 1989, p. 140 critiquing Blumer 1928) as an outside observer of a CFA brigade culture; and, in this respect, the verisimilitude quality of the research findings acknowledged by CFA members was confirming of the verstehen achieved by me.

The exploring of LCM Model efficacy component of this research study called upon CFA personnel to put themselves in the positions of their career and volunteer colleagues and to see things as others see them with respect to the connection between volunteer retention and appropriately drawing upon the outcomes from lifelong learning. In this respect, it was found that employing an activity network approach yielded key questions and appropriate actions that convincingly scoped the organisational environment in which making the most of what is known and can be done becomes a goal. In addition, this same approach was helpful in confirming the stance of you have really got to want to as subtitles this chapter. The desired outcome of appropriately drawing upon what a person knows and can do is tied to the will to do so. Then drawing upon the LCM Model by having confidence in its plausibility and, consequent upon being set against an activity context, supports identifying the need for and the taking of action.

As an overarching outcome from the research, and as is relevant to the CFA retention objective, it is evident that remaining as a CFA volunteer is both a very personal and a whole of brigade issue. The volunteer must value all three components of the LCM model in a manner that individually suits them. In this regard, the volunteer can be assisted by other members of the brigade sharing their respective views with the volunteer and working towards mutual understanding and valuing. In the absence of such sharing, dissatisfaction (on both sides) goes unnoticed and opportunities are lost. Putting the LCM model into effect requires a mechanism for sharing of views leading to action which may be overt such as an audit employing radar diagram mapping, as exampled in Henry and Hughes (2003, pp. 39-40), or achieving assured embedding within the psyche of the brigade.

Consequent upon Phase 4, the LCM Model has been acknowledged as an efficacious descriptor of the conditions required to strengthen retention of volunteers and as a tool, or framework, from which to develop and implement actions contributing to retention. However, notwithstanding the logic and simplicity of the LCM model, there are significant context influences such as leadership and organisation structure that have profound capacity to support, or inhibit, desired outcomes as foreshadowed in the coupled activity network representation of Figure 10.3. In Figure 10.3, the LCM Model is a tool, or a framework, being applied within the CFA environment from the perspective of the volunteer as represented on the left hand side of the coupled network and the perspective of the brigade as represented on the right hand side of the coupled network.

A word of explanation regarding “the coupled network” of Figure 10.3 –

It would be appropriate to separately present an activity network representation from the volunteer’s perspective and from the brigade (as a unit) perspective, and then discuss the relationships between the two. However, the LCM Model is a tool to be drawn upon by both a volunteer and the brigade (as a unit) as the volunteer seeks to better self-manage, and/or influence, their learning and activity environment and the brigade is consciously seeking to strengthen the synergy between volunteer satisfaction and operational capability. Both the volunteer and the brigade have a common retention interest and the brigade is the common community. And as these commonalities are in the nature of a “hinge” which joins the interests of the volunteer and the brigade, the two activity networks have been coupled as one representation portraying the mutual dependency in satisfaction of a mutual commitment to contribute to strengthened community safety.

It should also be explained that, whereas a choice is available regarding which of the environment features – division of labour, community, rules – are placed at the pivot point, in the instance of drawing upon the LCM Model the outcomes of my research indicate that the community of the brigade has primacy and that division of labour and rules are influencing factors. Therefore the community of the brigade is located at the hinge position.
You have really got to want to...

Figure 10.3 – Joining of activity networks as applied to a volunteer and a brigade

The mutually influencing objects of the volunteer desiring to remain as a volunteer and the brigade seeking to retain the volunteer as a member. In turn, this leads on to enhanced community safety.

The common – hinged - mediating influence of the individual volunteer and the brigade (as a unit) drawing upon the notions of the LCM Model, with a mutual regard for retention and deriving individual and group support from within the community of the brigade.

From the volunteer’s perspective: The division of labour with respect to who contributes to making the most of what the volunteer knows and can do and thus adds to the motivation to remain as a member of the brigade.

From the volunteer’s perspective: The rules which impact upon the motivation to remain as a volunteer.

From the brigade’s perspective: The division of labour with respect to who contributes to making the most of what the volunteer knows and can do and thus adds to the motivation to remain as a member of the brigade.

From the brigade’s perspective: The rules which impact upon the motivation for the volunteer to remain as a volunteer.

The community of the brigade constructed as an amalgam of the response team and the learning and growing together community of practice. And under the influence of commitment to local community safety.

Rules, division of labour and community as the leadership foundation domain in which formal and informal leadership partner to value the volunteer and thus strengthen the volunteer’s motivation to remain as a member of the brigade. This – under the influence of leadership – strengthening of retention outcome is the core brigade attribute from which brigade capability to contribute to community safety is derived.

The mutually influencing objects of the volunteer desiring to remain as a volunteer and the brigade seeking to retain the volunteer as a member. In turn, this leads on to enhanced community safety.

The LCM Model as a tool to inform action which:
- Values the learning (L) outcomes of volunteers – What they know and can do
- Values a brigade culture (C) which supports learning and the application of its outcomes
- Values a volunteer’s motivation (M) to remain as a volunteer

The sweet spot: Mutually reinforcing intersection of the L, C & M values.
10.3 Positioning the LCM model as a tool, or framework, to be drawn upon by a volunteer and/or the brigade

Figure 10.3 is a coupling of two activity networks. The left hand side is a representation of the multiple mitigating influences, from a volunteer's perspective as the subject, where the object is retention – i.e. the volunteer remaining as a member of the brigade as a consequence of satisfaction that personal motivations are being met. The right hand side is a representation of the multiple mitigating influences, from the brigade's perspective as the subject, where the object is retention – i.e. the brigade retaining the member in the status of a valued member. And, in the cases of either the volunteer or the brigade, the parties are drawing upon the notions of the LCM Model as a tool which respectively guides the volunteer in fitting in and guides the brigade in supporting the volunteer in fitting in.

In the case of the volunteer, as an outcome from inquiry, this dissertation posits that awareness and valuing of the LCM Model provides a framework upon which a volunteer can if they so choose –

- explore and expand the relevance – to their own interest and that of the brigade - of the outcomes from their lifelong learning – i.e. *What do I really know and can do and what and how can I add to this in a manner which builds my personal capability and contributes to achievement by the brigade?*
- assess and influence (to the degree appropriate and possible as an individual) the nature of the brigade culture as it impacts upon their volunteering satisfaction – i.e. *What do I know about how this brigade works as a team of individuals and how can I best contribute to the nature of the brigade in a manner which is personally satisfying?*; and
- review and adjust the driving characteristic(s) of their motivation to remain as a volunteer – i.e. *Has my motivation to remain as a volunteer changed, or evolved, when compared with my joining motivation and what can I now do to best maintain my commitment to the brigade?*

In the foregoing, the “may choose” qualifier flags that such explorations by a volunteer are dependent upon circumstances existing where the volunteer is alert to the value of such
action and is motivated to do so. In this regard, and probably requiring the influence and support of brigade leadership or some other agent, there is affinity with Expectancy Theory as articulated by Victor Vroom (Vroom 1964; Vroom 1995). Expectancy Theory posits that motivation to take a course of action is influenced by whether the consequence from the action is perceived to be worthwhile (concept of Valence), whether there is an expectation of actually achieving an adequate outcome leading to a reward (concept of Expectancy), and whether the effort to achieve is justified given the reward as expected (concept of Force). Accordingly, it is my contention that the LCM Model/Expectancy Theory affinity arises because to undertake the auditing actions, listed above, a volunteer must regard these as worthwhile in terms of valence, expectancy, and force; and it is probable that alerting to the merit of doing so, with encouragement and support by brigade leadership, is required. In this regard, it is noted that Vroom saw Expectancy Theory as a model with heuristic value (Vroom 1995, p. xviii) and it is reasonable to propose that the theory is a tool from which brigade leadership can draw for the purpose of gaining insight and strategically motivating the volunteer to undertake reflection with an LCM Model orientation.

As indicated in the foregoing 1964 and 1995 referencing, Vroom’s Expectancy Theory has had currency since the 60s. However, whilst expressing appreciation for the manner in which the theory has been drawn upon over the years and acknowledging criticism, in the reprise component of the 1995 publication Vroom takes the opportunity to explain that with the benefit of hindsight he ‘…would now be much more cautious in stating the theory formally as I did in 1964.’ (Vroom 1995, p. xix). Although Vroom’s 1964 perception of his model was that it had heuristic value he acknowledges that the appearance of strict formulation as to how people make what they believe to be optimal decisions gave rise to justified criticism (Vroom 1995, p. xviii). With respect to valuing of the LCM Model, the Vroom experience of having to later explain the underpinning intent of his Expectancy Model sounds a caution and, accordingly, I again reiterate that the LCM Model is offered as a reflective tool with heuristic, facilitating discovery to inform action, intent and application to be drawn upon as suits the circumstances.
In the case of the brigade (as a unitary entity – represented by its formal leadership), this dissertation posits that drawing upon the LCM Model informs the design and implementation of actions upon which a brigade, through the agency of its leadership and other parties, can sensitively audit, and act upon,

- the degree to which what is known and can be done within the individual and collective membership of the brigade is recognised, valued and drawn upon – i.e. Cognisant of possibly new needs and opportunities, what can happen within the brigade which appropriately draws upon the individual and collective capabilities within the brigade?;

- the nature of the culture as it relates to drawing upon what individuals and groupings within the brigade know and can do – i.e. Cognisant of possibly new needs and opportunities, what can happen within the brigade which appropriately supports a sustaining of the brigade culture?; and

- the individual and collective motivations which influence the manner of drawing upon what is known and can be done – i.e. Cognisant of possibly new needs and opportunities, what can happen within the brigade which appropriately identifies and values the individual and collective motivations which underpin commitment to the brigade?

In the foregoing there is stress upon applying a “sensitive” approach and acting in response to new needs and opportunities. This is done to highlight the need for care with respect to what might be seen as intruding into personal spaces and avoiding a perception that audit and action is necessarily consequent upon a need for improvement. The positive possibility is that due-diligence in maintaining a good thing and being alert, and responsive, to changing circumstances are good organisational qualities. In both these respects, drawing upon the LCM Model requires capable brigade leaders with the indicative attributes of a capable person displaying ‘... justified confidence in their ability to take effective and appropriate action; explain what they are about; live and work effectively with others; and continue to learn from their experiences as individuals and in association with others, in a diverse and changing society.’ (Stephenson 1998, p.2).
For both the individual volunteer and the brigade, as shown in Figure 10.3, the impact of rules, the manner of division of labour, and the nature of the community of the brigade and its immediate environment, go to make up what I have styled as the **Leadership Foundation Domain** from which the LCM Model can be advantageously drawn upon. And it may be the case that the meaning, understanding and accepting perspectives are different when viewed by an individual volunteer as compared to the view of the brigade (as an entity). For example, a new volunteer may be keen to make suggestions regarding improvement in brigade administrative functioning, but there may be rule and brigade community sensitivities that properly need to be taken into account and of which the new volunteer is unaware. Another example is where a brigade may be in transition regarding accepting women as equal status fire fighters, but still preferring to have the women stand back away from the actual fire front as has been the case in one brigade where the women drive the truck to the fire, as they are daily close to the fire shed, but then step aside for the men to actually fight the fire when they arrive from their more distant places of work as a consequence of having to get off-farm employment.

In the course of the inquiry, there were anecdotes offered of how the rules, division of labour and community issues influenced the motivations and commitment of volunteers. And, in many instances, although clearly within the influence of formally elected brigade leaders, there is also influence asserted by those with informal leadership status. For example, a brigade captain and lieutenants have the capacity, if not always the will or confidence, to nurture appreciation of CFA rules relating to formal training and operations so as to have them valued and embraced rather than resisted or unwillingly complied with; and an LCM Model informed partnership with informal leadership within the brigade is very helpful. There were instances indicative of more general circumstances, related by respondents, where a change in leadership possessing a negative pre-disposition toward the CFA corporately to a new positively inclined leadership caused significant improvement in brigade attitude and culture; such change leading onto greater harmony and more effective operational capability.

Taking the view that brigade captains can be likened to middle management, and that a brigade is ideally a learning unit within a learning orientated organisation, there is
relevance in the Watkins and Marsick (1993, pp. 205-208) observation that middle management face the challenge of being caught in the middle, but have an evolving role of empowering their team through nurturing a collective vision. In the case of a brigade captain, not being a prisoner of the past, moulding and pursuing a vision for the brigade requires ownership partnering with brigade members and may require persuading those hierarchically above of the merit of the vision. Formal brigade leadership also has a particular role in leading those who assert informal leadership, and hence influence, within the brigade; and, in this respect, the LCM Model is a tool to be drawn upon in strengthening this partnership.

As brigade captains are themselves volunteers who are subject to election, and are subject to higher organisational obligations and constraints, the creating of shared vision ownership and a sense of empowerment is arguably a more challenging undertaking than typically applies in a non-volunteering organisation. Under these circumstances, and in association with others in the formal leadership team and those with informal leadership influence, drawing upon the LCM Model is helpful in designing and acting to give strategic attention to the foundation domain elements of rules, division of labour and community; and to do so with shared vision and empowerment within the brigade.

10.4 Community, retention object, and the LCM Model tool as the planning and action hinge

The abutting of the two activity networks - “volunteers perspective” and “brigade perspective” - along the “hinge” is informed by the inquiry finding that it is the community of the brigade and the brigade’s relationship to the local community which generates commitment by volunteer members of the brigade; and there is strong commonality of spirit between what is felt, and lived, by the individual volunteer and the brigade as a unit in this regard. The commoning of retention, albeit with potentially different motivations, as the object is a natural outcome from this being the focus of achieving community safety. And the status of the LCM Model as a common tool to be drawn upon for the purpose of designing and implementing strategies appropriate to the particularities of circumstances follows naturally from the intent of the inquiry informing this dissertation and its outcomes.
Whilst rules, formulated beyond the brigade or locally (to the brigade) devised, are governing elements and issues to be managed, they are secondary in terms of bonding agency. And whilst division of labour is a key element with respect to brigade functioning and cohesiveness, it is a thing to be managed, but is not within itself as primarily a bonding agent as is the case for the pride, trust and commitment accruing from identification with community. However, by focusing upon the "hinge" (as shown in Figure 10.3 and informed by this inquiry) as a common reflective core, the volunteer and the brigade can be pro-active in taking action to secure their respective satisfactions with due regard, to the rule and division of labour influencing factors.

The “hinge” logic arises from three pivotal questions –

- Regarding the retention object as the heart of the matter: **Is there sufficient commonality of reasons to remain as a volunteer and do these align with the brigade’s purpose in retaining volunteers?** Although there are different satisfaction nuances of individual volunteer expectations causing them to remain as a volunteer, for a cohesive and effective brigade there must be shared pride in, and commitment to, the community safety role.

- Regarding the strength of brigade community: **Is there sufficient common bonding within the brigade to generate pride and commitment?** Although the particularities of individual contribution to the community of the brigade will vary from time to time, and the nature of valued support will likewise vary, it is this sense of community – family – which has been found to be very significant in nurturing retention.

- Regarding how to make it happen: **Is there common valuing of the concepts and efficacy of the LCM Model as a reflective, informing of action, tool or framework?** Although there may be tacit appreciation of the common sense grounding of the model, it does not necessarily follow that individuals or group entities, such as a brigade, will take deliberate action addressing these matters; and, accordingly, overtly drawing upon the LCM Model as a reflective tool leading to action brings the issues into the explicit, **doing something**, realm.
Responding to the foregoing questions is pivotal to making the most of what people know and can do, in the context of group achievement and individual satisfaction, and the metaphor of a hinge is offered as a way in which this connectedness is affirmed.

10.5 Key LCM Model operationalising insights

The primacy of “will” appropriate to the degree of “transformative” learning

Throughout the research study, informing this dissertation, respondents have related instances where the processes, albeit not recognised as such, of transformative learning (Mezirow and Associates, 1990) and coupling with drawing upon what is consequently expanded knowledge and ability have yielded outcomes of high motivational/self-esteem value to individuals. These continuing transformative processes range across the spectrum of incidental learning, informal learning, non-formal education, and formal education (Foley, 1995, p. xiv). However, there has also been relating of instances where, appropriate to the circumstance, recognition of learning outcomes and valued drawing upon these outcomes have been of a relatively low transformative nature, but were none-the-less highly motivational and being valued as a contributor was enough in terms of personal satisfaction.

As the application of the LCM Model, as is the case in the retention instance, is to inform strengthening retention through making the most of what a CFA volunteer knows and can do, there is a transformation spectrum associated with use of the model. This spectrum ranges from acknowledging and valuing what a person knows and can do without emphasis upon transformation outcomes through to the acknowledging and valuing being joined with high level transformation outcomes – as illustrated in Figure 10.4. And it may be the case that within a group of people contributing and consequently learning together, although there is an appearance of commonality of effort and reward, there is difference individually accruing within this transformation spectrum. However, the common determining factor is the pivotal importance of “will” by all involved (doers and facilitators of the doing) to contribute to building and drawing, as is appropriate, upon the qualities of the LCM Model.
With Figure 10.4 in mind, it should be borne in mind that in undertaking a project or assuming a new role there is inherently learning through problem solving; and the degree to which critical reflection, as a device for understanding meaning, is a component of this learning is a determinant of the degree to which transformative learning is in play (Mezirow 1990, pp. 5-17). From a motivational perspective, Mezirow’s suggestion that understanding the meaning of experience through ‘free, full participation in critical and reflective discourse’ may have the status of a basic human right (Mezirow 1990, p11), is pertinent to the discourse intent of the LCM Model. Drawing upon the model involves reflective free and open discussion between the parties, albeit with varying levels of reflective critique along the Figure 10.4 spectrum.

In practice there is a probability that the CFA brigade, drawing upon the LCM Model, will be mostly toward the low transformative intent end of the spectrum. However, there clearly have been instances where the high end of the spectrum has been in play and it is appropriate that this realm be explicitly acknowledged and its potential acted upon where there is a need/opportunity and a will to overtly act.
Irrespective of the position in the transformation spectrum, at a given time or circumstance, where drawing upon what a CFA volunteer knows and can do is inevitably coupled with further learning, there is particular relevance to the observations by Peter Senge (1999a, pp. 45-46) that learning capability exists where people have a consistent capacity to produce results which are important to them and that people find satisfaction in membership of a team where there is mutual trust and alignment to a common purpose. The commitment to continue as a volunteer member of a brigade rests heavily upon the degree of personal satisfaction which is accruing and the trust which the volunteer has in other members of the brigade. In these respects the possession of “will” by all parties, participating in transformational learning to respond to the values of the LCM Model is pivotal to retaining the volunteer.

The development of the LCM Model rests upon the proposition that making the most of what a CFA volunteer knows and can do is in the interest of the brigade and the CFA as a corporate entity. However, whilst the inquiry informing the development of the model confirmed a general predisposition toward this broad valuing of lifelong learning and its outcomes, the CFA is a quasi-military organisation with command and control characteristics. In such an environment, the advocating and supporting of volunteers engaging in critical reflection, leading to transformative and emancipatory outcomes (Mezirow and Associates, 1990) with regard to themselves as individuals and as configured as a brigade, is problematic to some degree.

On the one hand the CFA as an organisation is engaged with change which includes relating to formal training, operational procedures and human resource issues (CFA 2005). But this change has pockets of “gate-keeping” conservative people, both career staff and volunteers, with varying pre-dispositions in relation to change. Under these circumstances, there is not a uniform welcoming of the rationale and the implicit transformative and emancipatory outcomes associated with the LCM Model. Consequently, within the CFA, there is not a uniformity of “will” to act upon the elements of the LCM Model.
Moving beyond the specifics of the CFA environment, Figure 10.5 is a representation of the diversity of potential welcoming and resisting stances which could be adopted by individuals, an organisation as an entity, and gatekeepers within the organisation.

In Figure 10.5, the top right hand quadrant is identified as a domain, hereafter referred to as the "**Capability Domain**", in which the linking characteristics of a learning organisation and a capable organisation are manifest. In this domain the individuals within an organisation are embracing learning and capability values in empathy with the organisation.

In the case of the CFA, the inquiry has highlighted the usefulness of a brigade culture nurturing drawing upon the outcomes from lifelong learning. This brigade cultural requirement has some alignment with having willingness for a work-place paradigm shift towards learner managed learning as advocated by Hase (1998, p. 70) and as a step toward becoming a capable organisation. The degree of this alignment is to do with members of the brigade contributing together, and hence learning together in the sense that learning is broadly taken to mean conscious continuance of the breadth of lifelong learning and drawing upon the accruing outcomes in a manner which contributes to brigade achievement.
A CFA brigade is a workplace in which volunteer members are purposefully pursuing their commitment as a volunteer in a manner which aligns with the “purposive and sensible action” observable indicator of the all round human quality of capability (Stephenson & Cairns (1999, p. 3) drawing upon Weaver, (1994)). Pertinent to the premise that volunteer brigade members are influenced to remain as members because of their being valued as contributing members of the brigade family, Weaver (1994, p. 7) acknowledges the profound impact upon him of the philosopher Professor John Macmurray making clear to him that “All meaningful knowledge is for the sake of action, and all meaningful action for the sake of friendship”. From these coalescing sentiments, and triangulating outcomes from the inquiry informing this dissertation, there is a very close relationship between people developing and drawing upon their capability within a learning organisation environment, the pursuit of organisational capability, and people being committed to team membership as a consequence of being acknowledged as a valued member of the team – hence the value in striving for the Capability Domain of Figure 10.5.

The worth of striving for positioning within the Capability Domain quadrant of Figure 10.5 applies equally to the volunteer as it does to the brigade as a unit. To achieve and maintain satisfaction as a member of the brigade, a volunteer must find their place as a valued member of the team through a self-managed process of how best to draw upon what they know and can do and how to build upon this. However, this requires a nurturing brigade culture which welcomes a volunteer behaving in a personally capable way; and associated with this is the need to support the volunteer to act upon their responsibility for self-management within the quasi-military bounds of command-and-control.

In the course of the focus groups’ sharing of views regarding what is meant by leadership and is this different to management, the brigade captains put different interpretations upon the meaning of each role. Some captains defined leadership in terms of what others thought to be the management role, and vice versa. However, there was common understanding of the requirement for brigade leadership to be effective in providing the composite of leadership and management. A significant part of this composite role is to embrace and act upon the values embedded within the LCM Model and to do this in a manner which is appropriate according to need, time and place as is a feature of the
provision of emergency service. There are circumstances where unquestioning response to command is required and there are other circumstances where the variable, appropriate to circumstance, processes underpinning transformative learning are of high value to the individual and to the brigade.

Across all quadrants of Figure 10.5, the inquiry informing this dissertation indicates the existence, in some instances, of CFA gatekeepers with a predisposition to obstruct transformative learning. For example, taking the view that a brigade captain can be regarded as a potential gatekeeper the captain can have a significant influence upon volunteer attitudes toward further learning and can seek to obstruct corporate intentions. But, conversely, it could be the case that a brigade captain is keen to contribute as CFA corporately would value, but feels hindered in this regard by a person of influence, up the line, in the corporate structure or even powerful cliques within the brigade. There are frustrations which arise and which could be the cause of brigade leadership resignations and diminished commitment by volunteers within the affected brigade.

In drawing upon Figure 10.5, it should be borne in mind that the prevailing conditions of learner attitude, organisation stance, and gatekeeper pre-disposition, are not necessarily static. A learner who is at first resisting engaging in an experience which could lead to transformative outcomes may come to recognise values which cause welcoming to develop. An organisation which is at first welcoming may change its position to resisting consequent upon organisation change in structure, philosophy, and/or goals. And a gatekeeper, hitherto predisposed to striving to hold a gate closed, may, as an accidental learner, come to be a champion of transformative learning. In all these respects, the matter of “will” to act upon the LCM Model is the prime factor in deriving advantage from the model.

Making the implicit explicit

The recurring anecdotal reporting of CFA volunteers achieving personal growth as a consequence of their volunteering, and the contract cleaning and waste management insights of phase 2, are aligned with the transformative and emancipatory learning outcomes when adults engage in critical reflection predicated by Mezirow (1990). There is
much to be gained by bringing about a circumstance where an adult, in this instance a CFA volunteer, is given cause to identify and reflect upon the myriad learning outcomes from the diversity of their lifelong learning. In this respect, consequent upon discovering and increasing the visibility of the extent of what is known and can be done, there is a significant win/win opportunity for the CFA to support volunteers in achieving recognition of prior learning toward the gaining of qualifications which have application in both their volunteering and work roles.

In overtly drawing upon the LCM Model as a reflective tool, the gains in newly valuing the breadth and depth of what is known and can be done accrue to the brigade member and possibly their family and associates, the brigade, and the local community served by the brigade. Accordingly, Figure 10.6 is a representation of the expanding cycle of outcomes which are predicated to apply under the circumstances where CFA volunteers, under the influence of brigade leadership, overtly reflect upon what they individually, and as a collegiate group, know and can do.

Figure 10.6 – Reflection, valuing and action cycle leading to expanded drawing upon what is known and can be done

In the course of commenting upon the efficacy of the LCM Model – the telling of their own stories and offering anecdotes relating to others – the CFA research respondents related instances where the awakening to the worth of what was known and could be done was helpful in accommodating to change and solving problems. And through this there was an
accruing of expanded learning outcomes and empowerment as agents of change, not victims of change.

The LCM Model is applauded by its reviewers in Phase 4 of the inquiry as articulating common sense and as having the special attribute of making explicit what is tacitly known about the connection between valuing what people know and can do and their commitment to contribute. This valuing of making the implicit explicit, arises because with the prevalence of “tacit invisibility” there can be a belief, and a complacency, that needs and opportunities are actually being acted upon when this is not the case. There is also a possibility that the nurturing of a sustaining culture of “making the most of learning outcomes” is being only weakly addressed if at all. Accordingly, beyond being cautionary regarding complacency and assumption in respect of making the most of what people know and can do, this dissertation offers the LCM Model as a device for bringing the implicit into the realm of the explicit as characterises the process of organisational learning (Maira & Scott-Morgan, 1996, p. 221).

As the LCM Model evolved from the research, it was noted that CFA career and volunteer personnel valued simply articulated concepts and practical guiding suggestions for action which are within their authority, suited to the resources within their environment, and within their emotional and technical capacity. In all of these respects, the activity theory derived questions and actions which conclude each of the stories, as reviewed in Chapter 8 were welcomed as practical places to begin consideration of “what to do” and useful in guiding “how to do” action.

The valuing of learning, culture, and motivation questions and activities, informed by the inquiry and derived through the prism of activity theory being well grounded in the inquiry outcomes are best regarded as examples of what is helpful in recovering knowledge from the tacit realm and to inform overt action leading to enhancing individual and organisational capability.
At this point it is appropriate to clarify what is meant by individual and organisational capability in the context of relevance to a CFA brigade. Cairns (1999) has described capability thus –

‘Capability is a well developed international concept which refers to the confident ability to handle problems and issues, in a self-managed manner, in both familiar and unfamiliar situations (Stephenson and Weil, 1992; Cairns, 1997; Stephenson and Yorke, 1999). Capability covers developing and applying current competence as well as future potential within acceptable agreed values boundaries (for example, honesty and integrity) and, importantly, the concept also includes the idea that self-efficacy is a key motivational driver. Self-efficacy is a concept developed by the psychologist Albert Bandura, of Stanford University in the USA, which describes the way we believe in our own capabilities to complete tasks.’ (Cairns, 1999, p.3)

Using the above as a reference point it is clear that a community is well served by a circumstance where a CFA volunteer, and volunteers as an organisational group comprising a brigade, possess and draw upon the qualities of capability. The circumstances of maintaining community safety with respect to fire avoidance, response, and recovery resonate strongly with the concept of capability, but as for the LCM Model there is the hazard of implicitly assuming that these capability qualities are in place.

Cairns (1997, p.8) uses the construct of what he calls a Capability Learning Spiral to illustrate the relationship between personal capability attributes and learning outcomes under conditions of successful learning or learning failure. Successful learning spirals upwards, and failure of learning spirals down, around the amalgam of values, attitudes & beliefs (which Cairns refers to as a silo), and self-efficacy (as a second silo), and specialist knowledge & skills (as a third silo). The intersection of these silos is identified by Cairns as the learning commitment core and reflects the circumstances of learning and drawing upon what volunteers know and can do.

There is marked resonance between the Cairns’ capability learning model and the LCM Model. Indeed, the LCM Model has a place within each of the capability silos as well as being a companion resource with respect to the totality of the Cairns’ capability learning model. A CFA brigade, and the individual volunteers within the brigade, would have much to gain where the LCM Model is drawn upon with the capability strengthening implications of the capability learning model in mind.
Taking cognisance of the above, the change orientated and capability strengthening questions and actions concluding each of the stories (Chapter 8) have been crafted as supporting a move from implicit assumption to explicit action. These questions and actions have been acknowledged as helpful by CFA respondents to the exploring of efficacy phase of the inquiry.

Assisting people to recognise and value what they and others know and can do
The key theme residing within each component of the LCM Model is that the nature and value of what a person knows and can do, the outcomes from their lifelong learning, should be recognised by the person and those with whom they interact to achieve beneficial outcomes as a team. However, as asserted by respondents to this inquiry, people tend to not recognise the full breadth and value of what they know and can do.

Of course the spectrum, of not recognising to knowing and valuing the full extent of what one knows and can do, has many gradations and may not be linear in the sense that there may be a myriad of societal and/or organisational imposed pathways and nuances. For example, a person might be a prisoner of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1992) by being mentally and or emotionally locked into a system which sets rules and boundaries upon what is valuable as knowledge and is acceptable as action drawing upon knowledge such as was the case for many women prior to emancipation. Or a person might be functioning in an environment which only permits single loop learning, not allowing reflection on why and pursuit of alternatives, and is consigned to skilled incompetence (Argyris, 1990) by being kept in their place and only drawing partially on what they know and can do and hence, through not fully valuing what they know and can do, some of this asset remains invisible to them. There is also the circumstance, which is sometimes a carry over from school, where a person has been “put down” by others and has come, erroneously, to believe that they have only a low level of capacity.

As a foil against the foregoing, in the instance of the CFA and, similarly, across the volunteering sector, in raising a volunteer's consciousness of the value of the breadth and depth of knowledge and skill which they bring to the brigade there is both personal advantage and brigade advantage accruing. On the one hand, the volunteer has a
justifiably expanded view of self-worth to the brigade and with positive implications for other facets of their life. And, on the other hand, the brigade now has expanded insight as to how the volunteer may potentially contribute. Accordingly, a process of discovery as was explored in the “Welcoming Story” (Chapter 8) yields mutual benefits. In such a process the volunteer is informed of brigade needs and opportunities, and hence encouraged to think broadly and share the knowledge of what they bring to the brigade - as illustrated in Figure 10.7 which is a detailed reworking of Figure 1.1 (p. 5)

The value of the brigade initiating a sensitive audit in respect of matching what a volunteer brings, or can acquire by building upon this foundation, against brigade need and opportunity and supporting the volunteer in recognising, and valuing, a fuller pallet of what they know and can do than what would otherwise be the case, is a simple underpinning notion. However, the “best” way of achieving this will vary from case to case; and, accordingly, the utility of Figure 10.7 lies in bringing to front of mind the usefulness of initiating self-disclosure and feedback conversation of a Johari Window (Pfeiffer & Jones, 1974) type. Importantly, this conversation must be grounded in mutual trust and appropriate to the circumstances.

As referred to earlier, there is opportunity for the CFA to assist a volunteer in gaining recognition of prior learning (RPL) to the mutual advantage of the volunteer and the
brigade. As this is a formal process it is probably best done at a time when the bond between the volunteer and the CFA is well consolidated, and, of course with the volunteer welcoming the opportunity. There are significant self-discovery and motivational benefits potentially accruing from a formal RPL process. And, even when less formally conducted, there is high personal and team value in co-operatively exploring what a volunteer brings to the CFA and what they progressively acquire as additional skill and knowledge (Cameron 2004).

**Dependence upon leadership**

Even if a particular CFA brigade is less learning organisation orientated than is held to be appropriate, maintaining volunteer commitment requires overt respect for the volunteer and, by implication, acknowledging the value of what they know and can do as the asset upon which they draw in contributing to the brigade. If this is not the case, as the volunteer is not under the same constraints as would typically pertain to paid employment they will take their “bucket” and go home. Under these circumstances, the role of a formally installed brigade leader includes, as a significant component, facilitating building upon what a volunteer initially brings, facilitating appropriate drawing upon this accruing asset with respect to brigade need/opportunity and the volunteer's interest, as may vary from time-to-time, and acknowledging the volunteer's value to the team. In this instance, the identification of “formally installed” leader is very deliberate as there will also be informal leadership influences within the brigade which will be an asset to the formal leadership, or potentially disruptive, according to how well the informal leadership is formally led.

In addition to the above long abiding need to respect the volunteer, as a volunteer, there is also a probability that as leadership in workplaces evolves toward the “learning organisation” character, volunteers will become less tolerant of brigade leadership which is insensitive to the LCM Model qualities. In this respect, there is alignment with the Marquardt (1996, p. 106) view that past leadership styles will not be acceptable in the learning organisations of the future. In particular, the CFA brigade circumstance resonates with the view that evolving to a learning organisation is moving ‘from steady-state control to learning, empowerment, and continuous change’ (Marquardt 1996, p. 106). Marquardt goes on to example this evolution as involving a transition from continual change to
transformation; transition from performance appraisal to performance management; and
transition from control to empowerment – in all of these respects, the inquiry informing
development of the LCM Model indicates a desirability for CFA brigade formal and
informal leadership to be in alignment with these transitions.

As commented upon in Chapter 9, the Raelin (2003) notion of a leaderful organisation,
where leadership qualities are manifest in everyone, has much to commend it when
applied to a CFA brigade. In building upon this, the Marquardt (1996, p. 106) assertion that
helping those around him or her to learn is the most important responsibility of a manager
can be usefully extended. The extension is to assert that a manager/leader also has a
responsibility, and much to gain, from assisting the groups whom they lead to learn as
groups through attention to nurturing leaderful and self-efficacy qualities throughout the
group. By this means the learning how to learn has outcomes which yield benefit to the
individual and to the group as a cooperative unit striving to achieve individual and common
goals.

Individual and brigade capability is strengthened by all drawing upon the LCM Model as a
reflective tool and taking the operationalising steps of nurturing the will to support
transformative learning as is appropriate to the need of the brigade and the interests of the
volunteers. Making common sense, which is implicitly held, explicit with respect to retaining
a volunteer as a valued member of a brigade, and assisting all to recognise and value what
each individually and collectively bring to the brigade are also examples of goals to be
pursued in supporting brigade learning leading on to strengthening individual and brigade
capability. Acting upon these goals requires formal leadership support, and the influence of
informal leadership from within the brigade with due regard to the rules, division of labour
and community as illustrated in Figure 10.3.

10.6 Conclusion - You have really got to want to

Drawing upon the five years of research and reflection specifically informing this
dissertation, and a lifetime of even broader experience, there is an overarching criticality of
“really wanting to” when the opportunity arises to draw upon what you know and can do
and to support others in doing the same. In the absence of these two dimensions of will to
make it happen, there is much that could be achieved which just withers on the vine and you will never know what could have been. In developing the leadership story, Figure 10.8 emerged as illustrating the potential aligning, and discord, stances between the individual volunteer and brigade leadership with respect to striving for and attaining achievement.

In Figure 10.8, the possibilities range from neither the volunteer nor the collective brigade leadership having a commitment – a will to make it happen - to achievement through to both parties having high commitment to achievement. The zones of neutrality are inserted to convey the notion that there is a difference between a “knowing” intent (positive or negative) and the circumstance where the possibilities have just not been contemplated; and thus giving rise to the appropriateness of changing of predisposition in negative circumstances or an awakening of the possibilities in other circumstances.

Regarding the awakening of possibilities, the conducting of research, informing this dissertation, has been done cognisant of the probability that in some instances individuals will perceive the topic and the outcomes as esoteric, academic, treatment of issues which are beyond the motivational and practice simplicity of a CFA brigade – i.e. “What is all of
the fuss about? We just get on with the job and don’t need to get into this sort of stuff ". This is a different nuance to the applauding, as has occurred, “It is common sense, but it hasn’t been said before”. And those people who have anxieties regarding learning are another, potential awakening of possibilities, category.

In the course of the research, there was frequent mention of the language, literacy and numeracy issues which caused some volunteers to become anxious regarding participation in formal training as is now required. For these volunteers it may be the case that they have an even more general initial aversion to the idea that they are actors in a learning environment as they equate this with school and stress. Accordingly, to recruit these people as enthusiastic holistic learners both achieving and contributing through their volunteering, requires sensitivity in re-orientating perceptions of self and value of learning and its outcomes. In this respect, in the course of the research, it became apparent that this need was not universally recognised across the CFA leadership cohort – if you haven’t lived it, it is very difficult to feel it.

Another position, revealed by the inquiry as relevant, on the embracing of the LCM Model spectrum is that which pertains to circumstances where assumptions might be made that volunteers with a high level of apparent self-efficacy can look after themselves regarding “fitting in”. In the course of the inquiry – drawing upon the Cairns (1997, p.2) citing of Wood and Bandura (1989) -

‘Perceived self-efficacy concerns people’s beliefs in their capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to exercise control over events in their lives. There is a difference between possessing skills and being able to use them well and consistently under difficult circumstances. To be successful, one not only must possess the required skills, but also a resilient self-belief in one’s capabilities to exercise control over events to accomplish desired goals. People with the same skills may, therefore, perform poorly, adequately, or extraordinarily, depending on whether their self-beliefs of efficacy enhance or impair their motivation and problem-solving affects.’ (Cairns (1997) citing of Wood and Bandura (1989, p. 364))

it was evident that respondents (having chosen to participate) exhibited self-efficacy attributes, but yet, in some instances, recited circumstances of where they had need of LCM Model related support which was not immediately forthcoming. Even self-efficacious
volunteers require support from brigade leadership as they strive to make an appropriate contribution.

For some volunteers, having confidence in what they know and can do - having personal control over the nature of their volunteering and comfortable with their own capability - is an established circumstance. However for others, who are even highly successful in other aspects of their life, there are LCM Model related unfulfilled needs in respect of their volunteering. Even a self-efficacious person may have the capacity to act unaided to a degree but, even so, in respect of these matters as they apply to themself, there will be sensitivities regarding avoiding appearing to be intruding upon the space of others and fitting in as an equal partner in the team. And, of course, there are gradations between these two poles.

In conclusion, whilst there is a clear, research confirmed, LCM Model logic to an individual, or to organisations as constructs of people in groups, making the most of what is known and can be done, you have really got to want to as an individual and as a leader of individuals supporting others. The will to do so is a paramount companion to transformative learning facilitated by the logic of the LCM Model. The primacy of “will” in the operationalising of the LCM Model is further enhanced by the three other contributing forces – making the implicit explicit, assisting people to recognise and value what they and others know and can do, and recognising that this is dependent upon certain qualities of leadership.

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