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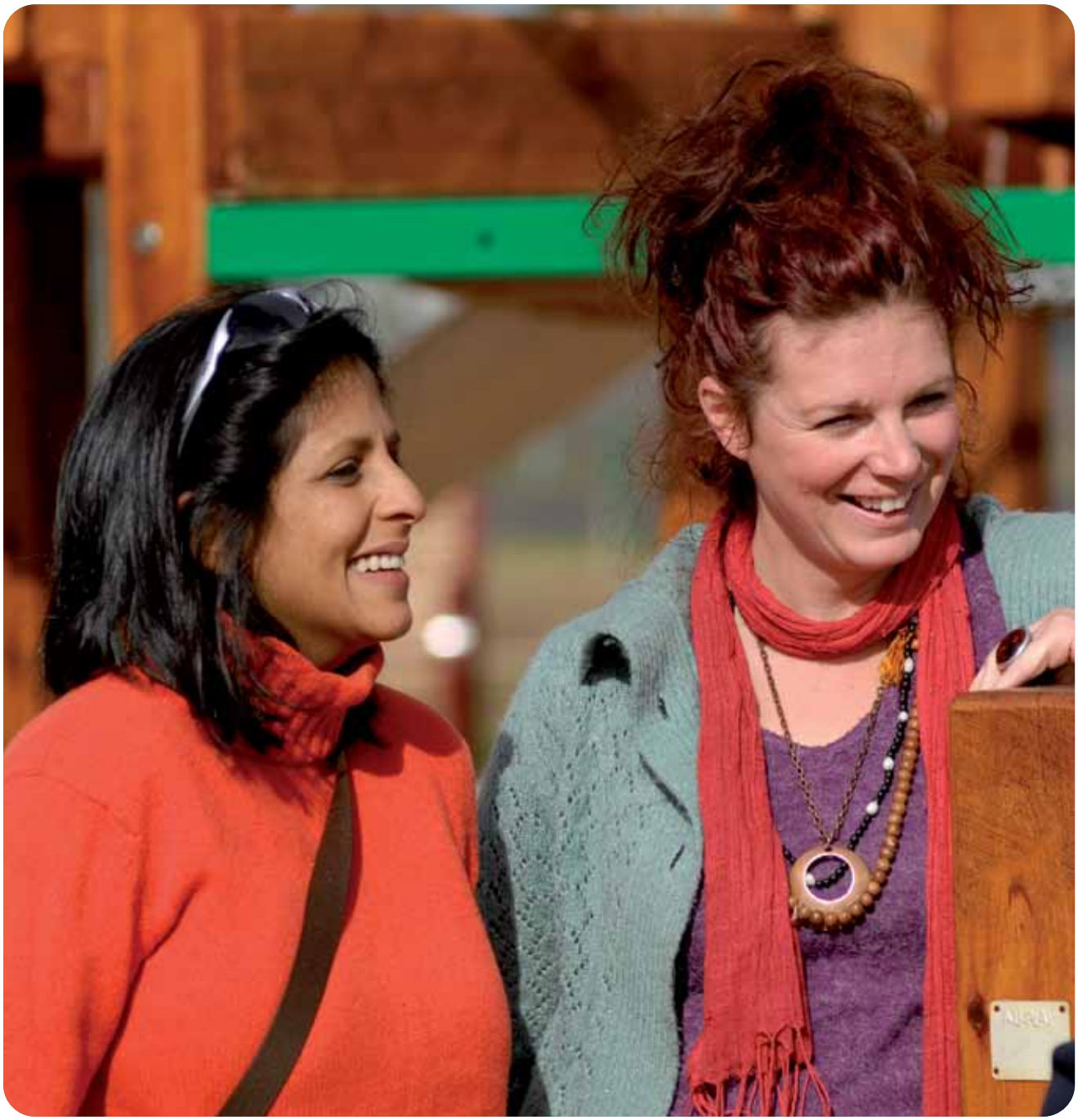

Indicators of community strength in Victoria: framework and evidence

Why social capital can build more resilient families and communities

State Government Victoria
Department of Planning and Community Development

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Executive summary

This report provides the underpinning framework and evidence for DPCD's community development work and its *Indicators of Community Strength* that track elements of this work (DPCD 2010). The indicators measure aspects of Victorian's ability to get help when needed, community participation, satisfaction with amenity in their local areas and select community attitudes (such as feeling safe) (Figure 1).

The framework is based on three types of networks that this review demonstrates are important for generating outcomes for both individuals and communities:

1. close personal "bonding" networks of family and close friends;
2. broader "bridging" networks generated through participation in education, employment and public life (sport, volunteering, clubs, etc); and
3. governance networks that link communities to decision-making institutions (Woolcock 1998) (Figure 1).

Communities need a balance of the three network types because each generates different benefits: individual resources; positive social practices; and better decision-making for whole communities or societies (described in detail below) (Figure 1).

The Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD)'s community development activities focus on building and supporting:

1. the community participation that promotes networks and connectedness in communities; and,
2. collaborative governance that ensures robust community planning matched to different communities' demography, economy, interests and needs.

This report provides the international evidence that these network building activities can have a significant impact on social and economic outcomes including:

for individuals …

- better physical and mental health
- positive parenting and improved child development
- success at school
- better employment outcomes
- more positive aging: better health, less institutionalisation and better cognitive functioning in older people

for communities …

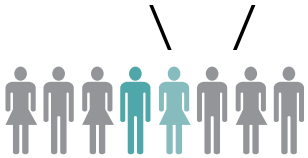
- providing the information individuals, organisations and businesses use to make decisions and generate new ideas (the spread of information and innovation)
- building social cohesion: a sense of solidarity and respect for others
- increasing inclusive attitudes and respect
- increasing a community's belief it can, and its willingness to, act collectively towards shared goals
- improving community planning that results in solid long term agreements – reducing controversy and creating support for implementation
- turning community assets into outcomes such as jobs, educational achievement, satisfaction, etc.

The benefits generated are so significant they make community development an important focus for government. DPCD tracks this work through a set of *Indicators of Community Strength*, collected in Victoria since 2001 (DPCD 2010).

The report is summarised in Figure 1. It shows: the network theory that provides the underpinning framework (column 1); the benefits proven to be generated by networks (column 2); the associated *Indicators of Community Strength* (column 3); and the activities of DPCD to foster participation and collaborative governance (column 4).

This document can be read alongside the data report *Indicators of Community Strength at the Local Government Area Level in Victoria 2008* (2010) DPCD: Melbourne.
Available at **www.dpcd.vic.gov.au** > Research and Publications > Indicators of Community Strength.

Figure 1. Report summary: the underpinning framework for DPCDs community development activities including the evidence of benefits, the indicators that track them and the activities of DPCD in building networks

Network types	The potential positive outcomes of the network types	The DPCD Indicators of Community Strength	DPCD's activities building participation & collaborative governance …
Close Personal Networks Family, close friends **Broader bridging** Connections made through clubs, schools, workplaces, interest groups, etc  Influence and negotiation **Governance Networks** Connections with institutions (power, resources and ideas) Decision-making and service delivery institutions	**Practical help, contacts, advice, emotional support, information, material goods and other resources that help individuals:** Deal with everyday life, take on new challenges, develop new skills and explore new roles and responsibilities **Benefits for individuals:** The above and Resources that improve wellbeing: – Heath and psychological wellbeing – Positiveparenting and child development – Success at school – Better employment outcomes – Positive aging **Benefits for communities:** Positive social practices and better decision-making: – The spread of information and innovation; – Inclusive attitudes and respect; – Control of negative behaviours; – Collective efficacy; – Stronger community planning; and – Community assets turned into outcomes.	**Ability to get help** Could you raise $2000 in two days in an emergency (disadvantage) Can you get help from friends, family or neighbours when needed (social isolation) **Community participation** Attendance at community events Participation in organised sport Volunteers Membership of organised groups such as a sport, church, community or professional group Being the member of a group that has taken local action Parental participation in schools **Local area amenity** The local area has easy access to recreational and leisure facilities the local area has: – good services and facilities like shops, childcare,schools, libraries – opportunities to volunteer in local groups – a wide range of community and support groups – a pleasant environment, nice streets, well planned, open spaces **Community attitudes** Feels safe alone on the street after dark Feels multiculturalism makes life in the area better **Governance** Participation in decision-making boards and committees The local area has: – an active community, people dothings and get involved in local issues/activities Feels there are opportunities to have a real say on issues that are important Feels valued by society	**Providing participatory activities:** for example, sport and recreation activities, volunteering and grants that communities can apply to for any activity they feel will work in their context; **Funding the community infrastructure that facilitates participation:** for examples, libraries, sporting facilities, IT, parks, open space, public space, arts and cultural facilities, showgrounds, rail trails, etc. **Supporting and building the organisations through which people participate** including working with the community sector, local government, indigenous organisations and others. **Designing shared civic environments** that foster mixing and place attachment. **Creating and supporting institutional mechanisms for collaborative community planning** to ensure all interests in communities are represented and solutions are matched to the demography, economy, assets, interests and needs of the community. **Building governance capacity** to ensure equal participation in decision-making **Providing grants to support community planning processes** (through the Community Support Fund); **Creating an evidence base to support community planning** in the three areas of technical/empirical data, local knowledge and strategic analysis

Introduction

Communities are important. They provide resources, information and opportunities. They help shape our identity and promote feelings of safety, security and belonging. They provide social, recreational and learning opportunities and help foster positive civic norms. They can be wellsprings of enterprise and creativity and are invaluable in the face of disaster. Studies have shown they impact on our belief in what we can achieve in our lives (self efficacy) and this determines what we will take on, as well as our ability to rise to challenges, and deal with change (Rosenbaum, Reynolds & Deluca 2002).

A survey undertaken in 2004 found Victorians thought an ideal community had five features: good local facilities and services; friendly and helpful people; a pleasant environment; opportunities to participate; and government that was working for and with them to build a secure future (in particular towards safety, jobs, and local needs) (DPCD 2010). **Victorians therefore see ideal communities as having a mix of assets, amenity, connection, participation and strong governance.**

These characteristics in communities arise from the combined actions of local, state and federal government, business, non-government organisations and the community itself.

The role of government in supporting asset and amenity development in communities is relatively well understood. It involves a range of activities across planning, support for economic development, human capital development (schools, etc) and the provision of infrastructure and services. Many of these activities are the focus of DPCD's work.

Government's role in fostering connection, participation and strong governance however, is less well understood and the purpose of this report is to show why it is important. It also shows what DPCD does to develop these aspects of community. Through a literature review, the report demonstrates that significant individual, family and community benefits are generated from connection, participation and collaborative governance including in health, child development, education, employment, social cohesion, safety and community planning. The strength of these outcomes makes this area of work an important focus for government.

The evidence described in this report provides the underpinning framework and rationale for DPCD's community development work and its *Indicators of Community Strength* that track elements of this work (DPCD 2010). The indicators measure aspects of Victorian's ability to get help when needed, community participation, satisfaction with amenity in their local areas and select community attitudes (such as feeling safe) (Figure 1).

The contribution of networks to wellbeing and resilience

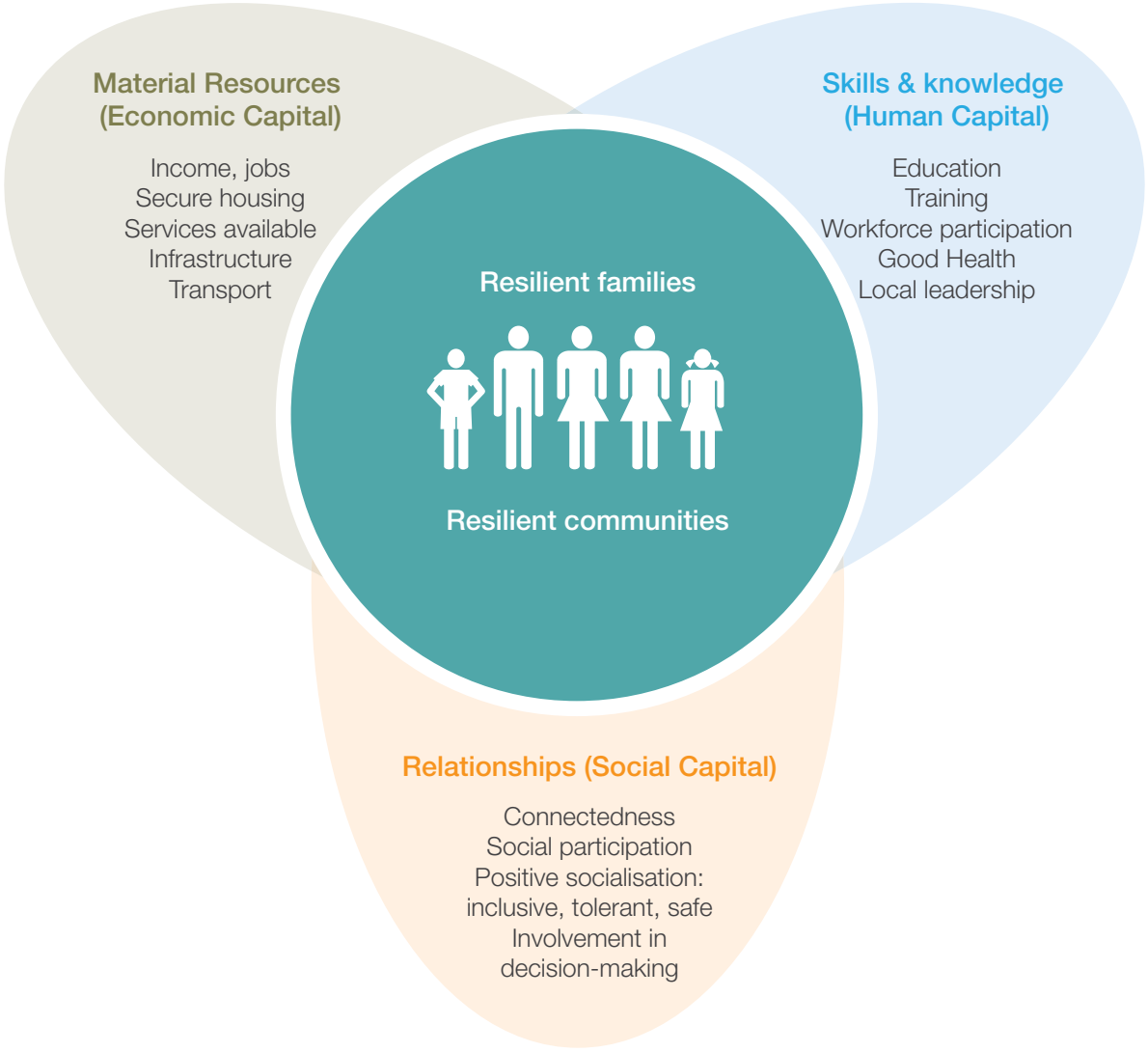
The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1985) was the first to argue that understanding an individual, community or society's standard of living required more than simply understanding its access to economic resources (accrued through land, labour, etc) and human capital (accrued through education and cultural goods). He argued the resources accrued through networks (social capital), was also important (Bourdieu 1985; Harker et al. 1990). The interrelationship of the resources that contribute to wellbeing and resilience in individuals, families and communities is shown in Figure 2.

Research has established that three types of networks are important for generating resources:

4. close personal "bonding" networks of family and close friends;
5. broader "bridging" networks generated through participation in education, employment and public life (sport, volunteering, clubs, etc); and
6. governance networks that link communities to decision-making institutions (Woolcock 1998) (Figure 1).

Communities need a balance of the three network types because each generates different benefits: individual resources; positive social practices; and equitable decision-making across whole communities or societies (Figure 1).

Figure 2. The resources that contribute to an individual, family or community's social and economic wellbeing



The ability of broader networks to generate resources was demonstrated in the Black Saturday bushfires. Over $378 million and a myriad of other resources – from accommodation to food for horses to musical instruments – were drawn through Victorian networks to support those affected (Red Cross Victorian bushfires webpage http://www.redcross.org.au). In addition to these material resources, communities mounted a volunteer fire fighting response, cared for those affected, and are now working with a range of decision-makers to ensure their towns, and the industries that support them, recover and rebuild. The recent floods across Victoria also showed the importance of communities mobilising to help each other prepare, respond, clean up and recover.

These examples demonstrate the strong culture of participation in Victoria and the resources and social cohesion it creates.

There is, however, still work to be done, as was shown in the survey about what Victorian's feel makes an ideal community described above. While a large proportion reported connection, participation and strong governance were ideal, a smaller proportion felt they were attributes of the communities in which they lived (Table 1, published in full in DPCD 2010).

Outline of this report

The following review of the international literature describes the evidence that networks, and the participation that fosters them, generate positive outcomes for individuals, families and communities. The first section briefly outlines the importance of networks and describes DPCD's work in building them. The second describes the evidence of the positive benefits of networks for both individuals and communities.

Table 1. Select characteristics of communities Victorians think are important (select items from DPCD 2010b)

Community characteristics	% that consider characteristic to be important	% that think describes own community	% difference
The government is responsive to local needs	78	23	55
People have opportunities to participate in the decisions made by government	72	26	46
People are friendly, good neighbours, help others	90	62	28
It's an active community, people do things and get involved in local issues and activities	68	46	22
There's a wide range of community and support groups (sports clubs, neighbourhood houses, etc)	79	62	17
There are opportunities to volunteer in local groups	61	57	4

The importance of networks

Three types of networks have been identified as important for generating resources for individuals, families and communities: close personal networks; broader bridging networks; and governance networks.

Close personal networks

Close personal "bonding" networks of families and close friends are a source of practical help, material goods, contacts and emotional support (Figure 1). These resources provide the foundations for moving "out into the world", learning new skills, taking on challenges and exploring roles and experiences (Pope & Warr 2005). As will be shown later in this section, strong positive close networks can significantly improve an individual's health, wellbeing and success in life.

While government has no role in building these networks it does have a role in ensuring their wellbeing (through income support, employment, education, service provision, etc) and preventing the negative outcomes that can arise from them. These include when they are violent and undermining (as is the case in domestic violence and child abuse), stifling and marginalising (as has been shown for some young gay people in rural areas (Hillier et al. 1996)) or provide pressure to conform to negative cultures (for example, gangs, or peer influence normalising obesity, described later in this report).

Reviews of the international literature have concluded that bonding networks have the potential to be as negative as they can be positive (Lincoln 2000; Attree 2004). This reminds us that networks are not "necessarily good or used for the common good" (Lewis 2010). They only have the *potential* to generate benefits/resources. It is the quality, and the resources available, not the quantity of connections that matter. Some individuals have large networks through which few benefits are generated, while others have small networks that produce many resources.

While the role of government is relatively limited in this space, there are two concepts of relevance to DPCD's community development work: social isolation (where close networks are absent) and disadvantage (where networks are resource poor). These are tracked through the indicators *cannot get help from friends family and neighbours when needed* (social isolation) and *could not raise $2000 in two days in an emergency* (social disadvantage) (Figure 1, Column 3)

Broader bridging networks

The second type of network that is important for generating resources, for both individuals and communities, is the broader network of less close "bridging" connections ("weak ties" (Granovetter 1983)). These are generated through participation in education, employment and public life (interest groups, sport and recreation, volunteering, etc). While bonding networks consist of "people like yourself", broader networks are drawn from more diverse backgrounds (Szreter 2002). These ties can be more difficult to generate because they "span differences", such as socio-economic strata, and therefore take more energy to establish and maintain (Lewis 2010).

Bridging networks are important, in part, because they provide individuals with a wider pool from which resources can be drawn, but also because they can generate positive social practices that benefit whole communities. These include: fostering positive social norms (i.e. inclusive attitudes, respect, control of negative behaviours); spreading information and innovation; and providing the desire and mechanism for collective problem solving (described in the next section, *Evidence of the positive outcomes of networks)*.

Like bonding networks, broader bridging networks have the potential to be both positive and negative. If sectors of communities are excluded from them – or the participation from which they are built – they will not generate the benefits. This can lead to, or deepen, inequality in terms of both individual resources and social practices (Portes 1998; Szreter 2002).

In terms of individual resources, for example, the international literature has shown that economically disadvantaged groups can miss out on the benefits of broader networks (such as job referrals) because their ability to build networks is limited by their decreased involvement in education, employment and public life (Szreter 2002). Studies have shown these groups are more reliant on close personal networks for survival, but because their networks are also resource poor, they generate fewer benefits or strain others within the network (Granovetter 1983; Szreter 2002). This may be exacerbated by these populations having more people in their networks who have high levels of stress that require additional resources to deal with (Balaji 2007).

In terms of social practices, for example, international literature has shown advantaged networks can also isolate their connections to "people like themselves" and not form networks that "span differences" (Lasch 1996). While this can generate considerable material advantage for the group, it can also generate social costs. An example includes a group of family connected diamond trading companies in Europe, that have been accused of using their networks to evade billions of dollars tax ('Belgian Court Investigating Alleged Multi-Billion Diamond Fraud' IDEX Online News Room, February 15, 2009). While the network increased its individual resources, it has resulted in inequitable social practices that have affected the whole community.

DPCD's community development work in this area focuses on activities that foster the participation that builds broader networks (Figure 1, Column 3). These include:

- **Providing participatory activities** including sport and recreation activities, support for volunteering through a Volunteering Strategy and portal that connects volunteers to opportunities, and grants that communities can apply to for any activity they feel will work in their context;
- **Funding the community infrastructure that facilitates participation**: including libraries, sporting facilities, IT, parks, open space, public space, arts and cultural facilities, showgrounds, rail trails, etc.
- **Supporting and building the organisations through which people participate** including through the work of:
  - the *Office for the Community Sector* that undertakes cross-government activity to reduce unnecessary burden on community sector organisations and helps build their capacity to respond to the needs of Victorians;
  - the *Local Government Division* that does the same for Councils;
  - *Regional Teams* that are the first point of contact for anyone wanting to know about or engage with DPCD programs. Three metropolitan and five non-metropolitan regional teams broker and facilitate partnerships for shared outcomes across Government, business and the community. They deliver program activities at a local level, provide access to information about government programs and services, and coordinate place-based investments.
- **Designing shared civic environments** that foster mixing and place attachment.

Broader networks, and the participation that builds them, are tracked through indicators related to community participation, perceptions of local area amenity and community attitudes (Figure 1, Column 3).

Governance networks

The third type of network that is important for generating resources, is the governance network (sometimes called "linking" network (Woolcock 1998)). Governance networks link individuals and organisations to institutions and make decisions about the management and distribution of a society's, or community's, overall resources (Woolcock 1998).

Strong inclusive governance has been shown by the literature to have three significant outcomes. First, it builds collective efficacy – or a community's desire to, and belief that they can, deal with their problems collectively. Second, it leads to better community planning that matches solutions to the demography, economy, assets, interests and needs of the community. Finally, it provides the mechanism to take action to get things done – turning community resources into outcomes (described in the next section, *Evidence of the positive outcomes of networks)*.

Research has shown that participation in governance networks is built through participation in education, employment and public life (Perkins et al. 1996; Sampson et al. 1997). Participation fosters the social interaction, information sharing and feelings of solidarity that make people more likely to want to contribute to the common good and solve their problems collectively (Perkins et al. 1996; Sampson et al. 1997; McQueen-Thomson et al. 2004). It also gives people the skills and mentoring needed for complex civic problem solving (Perkins et al. 1996; Verba et al.1995; Baum et al. 1999). Volunteering, for example, has been shown to build skills and confidence in community members enabling them to take part in decision-making activities in community organisations (Perkins et al. 1996; Davis Smith 2000; Pope & Warr 2005). General participation is therefore an important precursor to strong governance.

Inclusion in governance networks of a diversity of population groups/interests, will increase the breadth of policy discussions, and ensure they incorporate the knowledge about problems and solutions held by all stakeholders ("organised interests": government agencies, non-government and not-for-profit organisations, businesses, advocacy groups, peak bodies and community groups) (Davis Smith 2001; Milner 2001). It can also ensure that the resources of all parties that have "levers" for an issue are harnessed for action. This is increasingly important as challenges emerge that no single organisation has the power to address without the cooperation of others (population growth, changes to the global economy, climate change, etc) (Innes 1996; Healey 1998).

Failing to involve all interests in decision-making about communities can produce significant costs. It can result in discriminatory policies, practices and resource allocation that create disadvantage or disgruntled stakeholders (Innes & Booher 1999; Innes & Booher 2005; Head 2007). It can also allow governance organisations to remain siloed and uncoordinated – focused only on their own issues – and unable to view problems through the lens of how life is lived in communities (Healey 1996). This can lead to inefficiency and waste because of poor targeting, underuse, gaps, doubling up or a need to revisit an idea because it failed to take into account the local context, interests and preferences (Innes & Booher 2005).

A less specific but more insidious outcome of exclusive or siloed governance is that decisions fail to be seen as legitimate, causing citizens to lose faith and trust in public institutions in general (Innes & Booher 2005; Laurian & Shaw 2009; Head 2007). Without confidence in the public realm people have nowhere to turn to with their anxieties about the future (Healey 1996).

Collaborative governance is as difficult as it is worthwhile (Healey 1996; Healey 1998). It is more complex and can take longer because it involves negotiation of complex divisions (Jennings 2004; Pope 2007; Pope & Lewis 2008). It requires careful planning, deliberate attention and possibly capacity building of the parties involved before decision-making can begin (Howden 2007).

DPCDs community development work in this area focuses on:

- **Creating and supporting institutional mechanisms for collaborative community planning** to ensure all interests in communities are represented and solutions are matched to the demography, economy, assets, interests and needs of the community. Examples include the creation of:
  - *Regional Teams* of community development officers and planners across Victoria that support local community planning;
  - *Local Indigenous Networks* across Victoria that identify local issues and priorities and plan for the future in Indigenous communities;
  - *Regional Management Forums* that facilitate State and local government authorities working more closely together;
  - *The Growth Areas Authority* that facilitates activities to help create greater certainty, faster decisions and better coordination for all parties involved in planning and development of Melbourne's growth areas;
  - *Various community broker projects* around issues that will be assisted by connecting community groups to decision-makers e.g. the transport connections projects, the community museums sector strengthening project, partnerships with developers and councils to provide community infrastructure in growth areas, etc.
- **Building governance capacity** to ensure equal participation in governance including:
  - Grants to support organisations build their capacity for community engagement or planning (for example, Local Government Capacity Grants, Volunteer Support Grants)
  - *Office of the Community Sector* work to improve the community sector by reducing red tape and building sector capacity
  - Leadership and governance training
- **Providing grants to support community planning processes** (through the *Community Support Fund*);
- **Creating an evidence base to support community planning** in the three areas of technical/empirical data, local knowledge and strategic analysis including:
  - New data about community wellbeing, tools to release data to communities (web tools, the regional and metropolitan atlases, information forums, etc), support to help communities use data;
  - Web based tools on running partnerships, community engagement and evaluation; and
  - Community forums, strategic roundtables and conferences.

Participation in governance is tracked by DPCD through its evaluation activities but also through indicators of participation in decision-making boards/communities and people feeling they can have a say on issues that are important to them (Figure 1, Column 3).

Evidence of the positive outcomes of networks

The following section describes the evidence that networks, and the participation that generates them, can generate positive outcomes. The first part examines the benefits for individuals (access to resources that improve wellbeing) and the second the benefits for communities (positive social practices and better decision-making).

Benefits for individuals: resources that improve wellbeing

Research studies show that broad networks are associated with a range of positive outcomes for individuals, including:

- improved health and psychological wellbeing;
- positive parenting and child development;
- success at school;
- better employment outcomes; and
- positive aging.

Each of these is discussed in turn in this section.

Health and psychological wellbeing

Key outcome: Networks and participation are associated with better physical and mental health

Good health underpins our ability to reach our full potential in life. Reviews of the international literature have shown that networks and participation are associated with a sense of wellbeing and better physical and mental health (Young & Glasgow 1998; Berkman & Glass 2000; Giles et al. 2005; Egan et al. 2008).

In terms of physical health, social isolation (the absence of networks) has been associated with increased death rates, particularly from heart disease and stroke (Berkman & Syme 1979; Rosenfeld 1997; National Heart Foundation 2003; Boden-Albala et al. 2005; Egan et al. 2008). This is likely to be in part due to networks influence on risk factors including on increased levels of physical activity, consumption of fruit and vegetables and resilience to negative life events (Lindström et al. 2000; Lindström et al. 2001; McNeill et al. 2006; Jetten et al. 2009).

However, social networks have also been implicated in obesity, with weight gain in individuals related to weight gain in their social networks in a 32 year longitudinal study (Christakis & Fowler 2007). The authors suggest some networks normalise obesity – which demonstrates the importance of broader networks for combating negative social norms. Nonetheless, reviews have concluded participation has an independent and positive effect on health – it is not merely that healthy people are more likely to participate (Young & Glasgow 1998). After reviewing the international evidence in 2003 the National Heart Foundation added social isolation to its list of risk factors for heart disease alongside smoking, high blood pressure/cholesterol, diabetes, physical inactivity and being overweight (National Heart Foundation 2003).

In terms of mental health, social isolation has been shown to be related to stress, anxiety, depression, decreased resilience to traumatic events, decreased psychological wellbeing and suicide (Durkheim in Haralambos & Holburn 1995; Young & Glasgow 1998; Berkman & Glass 2000; Giles et al. 2005; Balaji 2007; Jetten et al. 2009). Poor mental health outcomes in disadvantaged populations have been shown to be exacerbated by the absence of networks. For example, the erosion of networks created by long term unemployment has been found to 'seriously accentuate' the mental health problems that can arise with unemployment (Gallie in Lindsay 2009). In disadvantaged families, strong positive close personal ties have been found to reduce the impact of disadvantage on the psychological wellbeing of children by giving them a sense of personal security (Attree 2004). Volunteering has also been shown to mediate the negative psychological effects of disadvantage, with volunteers from disadvantaged backgrounds found to have similar levels of psychological well-being as professional, educated non-volunteers (Gerard 1985).

Positive parenting and child development

Key outcome: Networks and participation are associated with positive parenting and improved child development

The social, intellectual, physical, behavioural and emotional competencies that underpin wellbeing are developed in childhood under the influence of close personal networks. Reviews of the literature show broader networks and participation also impact on parenting and child development (Balaji 2007).

Even before birth, support from a network, and a good social climate in a neighbourhood, have been associated with positive development (fetal growth and increased birth weight - key markers of infant health) (Sellström & Bremberg 2006).

After birth, networks have been shown to reduce parental stress, enhance positive parenting (good supervision, reasonable discipline and a strong parent child bond) and foster adaptive parenting behaviours (Larzelere & Patterson 1990; Harris & Marmer 1996; Weatherburn & Lind 1998; Balaji 2007). In single parent families, supportive social networks have been found to enhance nurturing styles of parenting, positive parent-child interactions and a parent's ability to provide stimulating environments (Balaji 2007).

While bonding networks have the greatest influence on child development, broader networks have also been shown to increase developmental scores, enhance the social and emotional development of children and young people, and improve behaviour (Runyan et al. 1998; Attree 2004; Calvo-Armengol et al. in Mayer 2009). This is in part because broader networks can compensate for lower levels of family support (Almedom 2005).

After home and school, organised groups and clubs are thought to be the most likely source of young people's socialisation and development (Halpern 2002 in Wikeley et al. 2009). These environments connect young people to the world of adults and have been shown to provide access to role models, specialist expertise/skills and opportunities to develop fresh and broader perspectives on issues such as the management of their behaviour (Wikeley et al. 2009). As will be shown in the next section, these networks also impact significantly on young people's success in school.

Success at school

Key outcome: Networks and participation are associated with success at school

Education helps children develop a sense of themselves and others and fosters a creative and innovative culture. It is also a key pathway to economic and social success - offering a route out of disadvantage through better jobs, higher income and enhanced social welfare.

Close personal networks are the most important determinant of a child's success at school (Harris & Goodall 2007; DCSF 2008). Parent/adult support of formal learning (reading, interest/enthusiasm for school, helping with homework, ensuring children have eaten breakfast) has consistently been shown to improve achievement, increase completion, and decrease class cutting and behavioural problems (including worried/upset behaviour) (Coleman 1988; Wolfe & Haverman 2001; Desforges & Abouchaar 2003; Horvat et al. 2003; Atree 2004; DCSF 2008). Parental support of learning at home has been shown to have a greater impact on school success than schooling itself at the primary level, and continues to have influence in older children, although by this age this is largely on aspirations and staying at school (Desforges & Abouchaar 2003).

Broader networks also support success at school, although this has not been directly linked to achievement (Runyan et al. 1998; Attree 2004; Desforges & Abouchaar 2003). Three types of networks appear to contribute.

First, networks of parents have been shown to demonstrate to students that education is an important and valuable activity and the presence of these networks has been associated with reduced class cutting, detention and drop out (Sheldon 2002; Horvat et al. 2003; Desforges & Abouchaar 2003). Networks of parents are also an important source of information for parents about their child's interaction with other children and the school environment (school rules, procedures, curriculum, homework, assessment, etc). This puts parents in a better position to support children's learning and educational choices and influence the school environment (Sheldon 2002; Horvat et al. 2003; Desforges & Abouchaar 2003). Network size has been shown to predict involvement of parents at home and at school (Sheldon 2002).

Second, networks between adults and students have been shown to encourage children and model positive behaviour, leading to a more positive appreciation of learning at school (Wikeley et al. 2009). As was discussed in a previous section, children's networks with adults made through organised groups affect learning in school (Wikeley et al. 2009). Involvement in after school clubs gives students a more sophisticated understanding of themselves as learners by improving their self confidence, control, awareness of the need to take responsibility, and understanding of the transferability of skills and knowledge into different contexts (Wikeley et al. 2009). It also makes them more able to understand how educational relationships work and to better negotiate their relationships with teachers (Wikeley et al. 2009). This improves their access to curriculum and allows them to more fully engage with formal learning (Wikeley et al. 2009).

A survey in the US showed that students who participated in sporting and community organisations outside of school had better relationships with parents, teachers and friends, were more likely to enjoy school and were more likely to do homework (Harrison & Narayan 2002). They were less likely to truant, smoke cigarettes, use marijuana, vandalise property, get into fights, be sexually active or have sad or suicidal thoughts (Harrison & Narayan 2002). Students involved in activities such as clubs, bands or volunteer work that connected them to the broader community had the highest rates of healthy behaviours and the lowest rates of risk behaviours (Harrison & Narayan 2002). These positive outcomes were also found in an evaluation of a school program designed to enhance school and community connectedness (Alperstein & Raman 2003). This study additionally demonstrated that it was not just that healthier students participated, but that the participation led to benefits for students (Alperstein & Raman 2003).

The final type of network that may contribute to success at school is parents being involved in the school on the school board or in fundraising, organising social events/fetes or assisting with teaching and extra-curricular activities (school camps, sport, etc). These networks provide significant resources to schools, although the magnitude of these resources has not been reported in the academic literature (Desforges & Abouchaar 2003).

Better employment outcomes

Key outcome: Networks and participation are associated with better employment outcomes

Employment is a key pathway to economic and social success. Employed people are healthier and have greater self esteem, a better standard of living and less contact with the justice system.

Networks are important for many individuals in helping them to find, and move around, work. In the labour market workers need to be matched to jobs. This relies on information about jobs reaching potential employees and this occurs through a number of channels – including networks (Ioannides & Loury 2004). Summaries of the findings of various surveys of both employees and employers have estimated around half of job vacancies are filled through networks (see reviews in: Mayer 1990; Montgomery 1991; Granovetter 1995). Broader networks have been postulated as of more use than close personal networks as they are better source of information (Granovetter 1983). Higher socioeconomic status contacts have also been shown to lead to better search outcomes, because they have better information, and more influence (as reviewed in Lai et al. 1998).

Networks are important in the job search process in three main ways (Rosenberg & Kasinitz 1993):

1. They help job seekers find information about vacancies (as reviewed in Ziersch & Arthurson 2005);

2. They role model employment behaviour (or conversely role model norms and behaviours not consistent with work) (as reviewed in Ziersch & Arthurson 2005); and

3. They provide a device for employers to screen (vouch for, or referee) potential employees (as reviewed in Montgomery 1991; Ziersch & Arthurson 2005). For example, Rosenberg & Kasinitz (1993) argue the primary thing employers are looking for in unskilled positions is reliability, best found through personal referral. High income earners also report the breadth of connections willing to recommend them for jobs is critical in their job search strategies (Ketter 2009).

Networks may also provide practical assistance that helps people search for, undertake and sustain employment, such as childcare (Ziersch & Arthurson 2005).

Networks developed through formal types of participation, such as education and volunteering, have been shown to be particularly important for connecting people to career paths and to labour markets that are better paid and more stable (Granovetter 1983; Menchick & Weisbrod 1987; Davis Smith 2000; Chapple 2002; Sacerdote & Marmos in Mayer 2009). Networks have been shown to provide more opportunity, compensate for less experience and qualifications, and attach people to jobs with longer tenure (Granovetter 1983; Chapple 2002; Finneran & Kelly 2003; Ioannides & Loury 2004).

Positive aging

Key outcome: Networks and participation are associated with better health, less institutionalisation and better cognitive functioning in older people

Positive aging ensures people stay independent and healthy for as long as possible.

Reviews of studies have found networks are an important determinant of older people's ability to remain independent in the community and socially isolated people are the most likely group to be institutionalised (Litwin 1996). Older people prefer to use formal help to gain some forms of assistance (such as transport and practical help (gardening, etc)) but prefer networks for others (such as personal care and emotional support) (Litwin 1996). Local networks have been shown to be the most adept at providing the latter – regardless of whether they are family or other contacts (Litwin 1996).

Longitudinal studies have shown social support from networks, and participation in local activities, is associated with better health amongst older people (Egan et al. 2008). An Australian longitudinal study of aging found that networks of friends generated health and wellbeing benefits for older people because they fostered healthy social habits and provided emotional support and material assistance (Giles et al. 2005).

Networks with children and relatives were not found to have the same protective effect (Giles et al. 2005).

In reviews of longitudinal studies, social contacts, living with others, and participation in social activities have also been found to have a protective effect against declining cognitive function, memory loss and dementia (Egan et al. 2008; Crooks et al. 2008; Ertel et al. 2008).

Benefits for communities: positive social practices and better decision-making

Research studies show that over and above benefits for individuals, broad networks can generate benefits for communities. In general, these relate to the ability of networks to share information, influence attitudes and behaviour, and foster effective community decision-making. Six benefits are examined in this section:

- the spread of information and innovation;
- inclusive attitudes and respect;
- control of negative behaviours;
- collective efficacy;
- stronger community planning; and
- community assets turned into outcomes.

Each of these is discussed in turn in this section.

The spread of information and innovation

Key outcome: Networks are an important source of the information individuals, organisations and businesses use to make decisions and generate new ideas

Shared information underpins learning and the generation of new ideas. Information is shared a number of ways, most commonly through networks – personal networks, computer networks and networks within and between organisations/companies (Castells 2000). Networks are therefore an important source of the information individuals, organisations and businesses use to make decisions.

Networks have been shown to be important in influencing individuals in every aspect of life from the uptake of new technologies (Mayer 2009), to the making of financial decisions (Duflo & Saez in Mayer 2009), to migration led development of small regional towns (Barr 2009), to the uptake of smoking, drugs and alcohol (Almedom 2005), to the seeking out of health care such as paediatric care, drug treatment, psychiatric services and preventative check ups (Derosa & Varda 2009). Many interventions in Australia have been successful as a result of using networks to transmit health knowledge to change behaviour. These include the HIV and maternal and child health strategies and some physical activity interventions (Commonwealth of Australia 2005; McNeill et al. 2006; Balaji 2007).

In business, networks have been shown to be important for organising economic exchanges and patterns of global production are now shaped by networks (Castells 2000). Network forms of organisation are replacing previous forms of business organisation, to make systems more efficient and profitable by reducing transaction costs and transmitting information about customer needs, jobs, new technologies, scientific advancements, new market opportunities and products (Castells 2000).

Networks are thought to be where most innovative ideas in business and science are generated and spread (Granovetter 1983; Innes & Booher 1999; Mayer 2009). Innovation arises largely from the interaction between firms and between firms and scientific institutions ("knowledge networks") (Krätke & Brandt 2009). This process is assisted as people move around jobs and create social ties between firms and institutions (Rosenkopf & Corredoira 2008). Enterprises in the global economy have been shown to use networks to help them adapt and innovate quickly (Granovetter 1988; Castells 2000). The ability to expand networks rapidly through information technology in particular, has become a key competitive advantage in global production systems (Castells 2000; David & Foray 2002 in Chapple 2006).

Inclusive attitudes and respect

Key outcome: Networks and participation build social cohesion: a sense of solidarity and respect for others

Networks are needed to produce cohesive communities because cohesion requires a degree of interaction (Kearns & Forrest 2000; Browning et al. 2004). Interaction builds shared values, common codes of behaviour and respect for others – even where there are differences and disagreements (Perkins et al. 1996; Sampson et al. 1997; McQueen-Thomson et al. 2004).

Societies are becoming more complex. There is more diversity amongst socio-cultural population groups (based on religion, ethnicity, sexuality, length of time living in an area, etc) and different economic positions (welfare, working, middle class, executive, etc) (Bourdieu in Harker et al. 1990; Healy 1996). Different groups have different tastes, social norms, lifestyles, beliefs, opinions and interests in how a community's resources should be distributed (Bourdieu in Harker et al. 1990). All these differences can lead to anxiety, tension, division and political conflict in communities (Healy 1996) and to some socio-economic population groups becoming segregated and polarised (Kearns & Forrest 2000).

Debate is needed to find ways to accommodate the array of different interests in communities (discussed in the next section) but this requires an underlying willingness to be inclusive. Any network that does not provide encounters with diverse groups and socio-cultural lifestyles, will identify intensely with its own idiosyncratic values and cultural outlooks, and sharply dissociate from non-members (Case et al. 1989).

Studies have shown that diverse interactions across networks can build more inclusive attitudes (Case et al. 1989). For example, educational institutions can provide opportunities to encounter diverse social groups and extend cultural experiences beyond particular reference groups (Case et al. 1989). One study in the US showed that contact with more diverse cultural values/meanings promoted inclusive racial attitudes in students (Case et al. 1989). In a Victorian study, participants of Neighbourhood Houses undertaking adult education and social activities also reported interactions between groups positively changed attitudes (Pope & Warr 2005).

Some studies have shown the contacts have to be "meaningful" – more than just people having proximity to each other (e.g. more than just putting students together in mixed ethnicity schools) (Bullock 1978; Halvorsen 2003).

Control of negative social behaviours: neighbourhood crime and safety

Key outcome: Networks and participation reduce negative behaviours and help people feel safe in their communities

Neighbourhood ties and participation and the shared norms they generate are a factor in the successful regulation of negative behaviours in communities such as neighbourhood crime (Sampson et al. 1997; Sampson 2004; Browning et al. 2004).

Networks in communities have been related to reduced crime, violence, community disharmony, and increased community ability to enforce ordinances/laws and restrict certain illicit behaviours such as the selling illegal drugs (Sampson et al. 1997; Hirschfield & Bowers 1997; Vershney 1998; Berkman & Glass 2000; Sampson et al. 2002; Sampson 2004).

Studies have also found collective efficacy – high levels of generalised social trust and widespread civic engagement – are associated with low homicide rates, regardless of the level of deprivation, the density of the population, and other socio-demographic influences (Rosenfeld, Messner & Baumer 2001; Sampson et al. 1997; Sampson 2004).

In Australia, areas with high levels of participation in community oriented activities have been shown to have lower levels of crime (Carach & Huntley 2002). The researchers suggest a doubling in the rate of membership in community organisations has the potential to reduce violent crime by up to a third and property crime by up to ten percent (Carach & Huntley 2002).

More recent research has elaborated on why broader networks are the key in the control of crime. Communities characterised by dense close personal ties have been shown to have less regulatory capacity than those with weaker broader ties (Browning et al. 2004). This appears to be because close personal networks can protect offenders from formal social control when those offenders are also strongly connected to the community (for example, where a neighbour does not report a crime because they are strongly attached to the offender's relatives) (Browning et al. 2004). Broader networks appear to promote social cohesion and informal social control, without fostering the mutual obligation that competes with the collective goal of crime control (Browning et al. 2004).

Networks in neighbourhoods (informal integration) can also give residents a sense of belonging which helps them feel safe in their local area (Henning & Leiberg 1996; Ross & Jang 2000). General community connection appears to be better at reducing fear than local networks specifically designed to combat crime (e.g. Neighbourhood Watch), which can increase levels of fear (Norris & Kaniastry in Ross & Jang 2000). General ties can provide a sense of identity, security and feeling of home (Henning & Leiberg 1996).

Increasing the sense of safety in local areas increases people's use of them (for example, for physical activity) (Henning & Leiberg 1996). It should be noted that networks are not the main driver of feeling unsafe in local areas. Visible signs of disorder and incivility appear to be more significant (Ross & Jung 2000). While networks have been shown to lessen the negative effects of disorder, they do not replace interventions that restore amenity.

Collective efficacy

Key outcome: Collaborative governance increases a community's belief it can, and increases its willingness to, act collectively towards shared goals

Collective efficacy relates to a community's belief in its ability to deal with problems collectively and take action towards shared goals (Sampson et al. 1997; Sampson 2004). Collective efficacy is related to levels of "generalised trust" in a community, and is the reason individuals are willing to intervene for the public good, and make sacrifices for goals that can only be met if others also take action (for example by paying tax, saving water) (Sampson et al. 1997). Collective efficacy is a pre-requisite to community planning because it creates a climate in which people are willing to co-operate to reach goals.

Collective efficacy has been shown to provide resilience in communities. For example, in deprived communities it has a protective effect on children's anti-social behaviour (Odgers et al. 2009), in class rooms it deceases bullying (Sapouna 2009) and in disadvantaged communities it mitigates against further disadvantage such as low birth weight and poor school outcomes (Vinson 2004).

Collective efficacy has been shown to be related to both the presence of networks in communities and participation in community based organisations (Chavis & Wandersman 1990; Sampson et al. 1997). Participation in voluntary organisations has been shown to build collective efficacy in three ways. First, it influences civic norms, bestowing a sense of altruism and citizenship in members (Knoke 1990; Kay & Bradbury 2009). Second, it skills members in political and negotiating skills (Knoke 1990). Finally, interaction between members has been shown to inspire them to work together to solve problems and take action to improve community life (Knoke 1990; Perkins et al. 1996; Innes 1996; Sampson et al. 2002).

Strong and democratic governance also builds collective efficacy (Szreter 2002). The two exist in a positive feedback situation (Szreter 2002). Collaborative governance leads to better services and infrastructure for a community, which in turn gives the community more faith in government, which in turn increases the number of people willing to become involved in governance networks and policy debates because of the belief it will make a difference (Szreter 2002). It has been argued that when people are disillusioned with government, they stay engaged predominantly in close personal networks, and collective efficacy is diminished (Szreter 2002).

Collective efficacy also appears to be diminished by the segregation of interest groups. For example, studies of new middle class communities on the fringes of cities and gated communities, have shown residents can lose contact with social issues such as homelessness, and become unsympathetic to them (Lasch 1996).

Stronger community planning

Key outcome: Collaborative governance can undertake community planning that results in solid long term agreements – reducing controversy and creating support for implementation

Community planning is a set of methods for involving organised interests in decision-making about communities. Its overall purpose is to better identify and assess issues and determine solutions that are matched to a community's demography, economy, assets, interests and needs. Effective community planning is underpinned by three types of information: technical information (empirical and expert knowledge); local knowledge; and strategic/ political knowledge (Innes 1996). Collaborative governance provides the process for bringing the parties with these three types of information together. Few organisations hold all three (Innes & Booher 2005).

Good community planning has been shown to raise public and organisational awareness of issues by broadening people's understanding of their own and others interests, needs and experiences (Burby 2003; Delli Carpini et al. 2004; Laurian & Shaw 2009). It can give people and organisations a better sense of who is responsible for certain outcomes (where previously they may have held "government" responsible) and help them better understand the constraints under which other decision-making organisations work (Burton et al. 2004; Head 2007; Richardson in Burton 2009; Pope 2007; Pope & Lewis 2008). This can shift interests from adversarial win-lose positions towards a willingness to search for a course of action that has broad support (Burby 2003; Delli Carpini Zet al. 2004).

Ultimately community planning can produce solid long term agreements – reducing controversy and creating support for implementation (Burby 2003; Laurian & Shaw 2009). Importantly, it can also lead to innovation and creative solutions which can lead to benefits and unexpected spin offs (Innes & Booher 1999; Burton et al. 2004).

The success of community planning is evidenced by tangible products (formal agreements, plans, policies, legislation/regulation or proposals for public debate) and the degree to which they are implemented (Innes & Booher 1999). A study of the ability of plans to get adopted and actioned in the US involving 60 local governments demonstrated that plans with broad stakeholder involvement were more likely to be adopted and had more of their proposals implemented (Burby 2003). Other studies have also reported the changes that result from collaborative planning are longer lasting and more pervasive (Innes & Booher 2003).

Collaborative planning has successfully been attempted in many places across many geographic scales.

In the US collaborative planning has been used to deal with growth management across 14 states (north and south, urban and rural, and three of the largest metropolitan areas) (Innes et al. 1994). In New Jersey the collaborative process of five years, involving all interests and around 50 000 citizens, resulted in a *Growth Management Plan* (Innes & Booher 1999). The Plan was successfully passed into legislation and implemented by all agencies.

Here in Australia, a similar process was undertaken in Perth. *Dialogue with a City* involved the State Government of Western Australia, the City of Perth Council, 9100 residents, industry bodies, environmental groups and a comprehensive range of community organisations in a year of deliberative planning exercises to determine how Perth would address its growth (Western Australian Planning Commission 2004).

The activities resulted in the *Network City: Community Planning Strategy for Perth and Peel* which has been adopted by the WA State Government and grants were made available for local communities to undertake additional collaborative planning to support the strategy at the local level (Western Australian Planning Commission 2004).

Collaborative planning has also been used to address disadvantage in communities – particularly in urban areas. Neighbourhood renewal or revitalisation projects in public housing states both here and overseas have been successful (see the next section) as has collaborative planning to create more equitable local economic strategies in poorer urban areas. For example, in Boston, Massachusetts an economic development strategy proposed by the city council and Redevelopment Authority for the city's poorest areas met with residents concerns the strategy was likely to gentrify their area – pushing them out to poorly serviced places (particularly by transport) (Jennings 2004). A new community plan was developed in consultation with residents and community organisations on principles that would ensure: 1) residents were not displaced; 2) the needs of residents would drive housing and service strategies; and 3) the plan would be holistic, linking economic development to improving transport, education and housing.

A governance group was set up with members nominated by both the Mayor (including elected officials) and the Residents Council. The group sought proposals to generate wealth through activities based on the assets and resources of the neighbourhood which they found were: significant land parcels that could be developed; an existing 1 200 small businesses; and the considerable wealth in the form of savings held by residents (Jennings 2004).

The final plan sought to strengthen small business, increase home ownership to create a stable workforce in the area, examine links to transport to connect residents, and to connect their area to other neighbourhoods, and link young people and adults to training institutions (Jennings 2004). This strategy was aimed to ensure some wealth stayed in the neighbourhood – providing a secure social and economic infrastructure – rather than all being removed by "giant institutions [and] chain corporations".

The plan was adopted and a review of the planning process declared it was a good model "for building urban economies and neighbourhoods that are supportive for all people in the city" (Jennings 2004).

There are many other case studies that demonstrate that collaborative community planning leads to stronger plans including in the areas of:

- overall spending and revenue in local areas (Innes & Booher 2005);
- the delivery of infrastructure in new growth suburbs (Pope 2007; Pope 2010);
- improved amenity in local communities (Gastil in Delli Carpini et al. 2004);
- improved health care across a US state (Delli Carpini et al. 2004);
- resolving conflicts between racial groups and police (Newburn & Jones 2002);
- reducing crime (Newburn & Jones 2002); and
- dealing with sensitive environmental issues such as where to put a waste dump, environmental flows in rivers and managing limited water supplies in an agricultural area (Innes & Booher 2003; Innes & Booher 2005).

In all these cases, new or stronger personal and professional relationships were created and trust was built (Innes & Booher 1999; Innes & Booher 2003; Newburn & Jones 2002; Innes & Booher 2005; Pope 2007; Pope 2010). A mutual understanding of each others interest and shared definitions of the problem developed as did a willingness to share knowledge (Innes & Booher 1999; Innes & Booher 2005; Pope 2007; Pope 2010). These factors facilitated genuine communication and joint problem solving even when the issues involved conflicting interests (Innes & Booher 1999).

These are examples of where the success of the planning was judged (through evaluation) by the adoption of the plan. Over the longer term however, stronger community planning should lead to communities being able to turn their resources into outcomes.

Community assets turned into outcomes (such as jobs, educational achievement, satisfaction, etc)

Key outcome: Collaborative governance can turn community assets into outcomes

Collaborative governance not only gives people the willingness to enter into, public policy debate and plan solutions, but provides a mechanism to take action to get things done, including implementing plans and designing and delivering services (Wandersman et al. 1985; Innes et al 1994; Verba et al.1995; Perkins et al. 1996; Burby 2003;). This allows a community to turn their economic, natural, social and cultural assets into specific outcomes such as employment, increased economic opportunities, adequate social welfare provision and improved community facilities (Browning & Cagney 2002).

Studies have shown that communities with collaborative governance are more effective at attracting and maintaining relevant resources, services and initiatives including recreational space, sporting facilities, community health services, clinics, police and resources for crime control, fire services, improved amenity, traffic safety improvements and social activities (Wilkinson et al. 1998; Gillies 1998; Szreter 2002; Browning & Cagney 2002; Carr 2003; McNeill et al. 2006). For example, a study of citizen participation in 39 neighbourhoods (involving hundred's of residents) in the US found those with active "block associations" were able to repair footpaths, paint houses, increase police protection, reduce crime, regulate traffic, promote safety, improve sanitation and provide social activities for residents (Wandersman et al. 1985). Those without block associations experienced no change (Wandersman et al. 1985).

Communities with collaborative governance have also been shown to be more effective at lobbying in response to proposed cuts in services (Sampson et al. 1997).

Perhaps one of the most difficult areas where communities have been able to turn resources into outcomes is in the regeneration of severely deprived (usually public housing dominated) communities. While not all projects of these types have worked, some have been extremely successful.

Examples include two regeneration areas in Britain that have now been running for over 20 years. Both areas undertook community led planning around the issues of family life, environment, safety, business/work, education, participation and sustainability (Wind-Cowie 2010). Both have been able to demonstrate a significant shift in outcomes including:

- in Castle Vale – decreased unemployment, decreased number of residents on benefits and increased number of young people staying at and achieving at school; and
- in Balsall Heath – decreased crime and increased satisfaction of residents with living in the neighbourhood and increased feelings they can influence decision-making (both increased to above the rates for of residents in the city) (Wind-Cowie 2010).

Neighbourhood Renewal in public housing areas in Victoria is a similar project that has been able to demonstrate outcomes. After eight years it has demonstrated a:

- 4% reduction in unemployment from 17% to 13%, double the rate of reduction in unemployment for Victoria;
- 12% increase in further education qualifications;
- 3.5 day reduction in average secondary school absenteeism;
- 12% reduction in overall crime and 27% in property crimes;
- 6% reduction in substantiated cases of child protection;
- 33% perceived improvement in housing conditions and 23% in the physical environment; and
- 14% increase in resident perceptions that Neighbourhood Renewal has improved government performance (DHS 2008).

Conclusion

Networks are a significant source of resources for individuals, families and communities, including:

for individuals …

- better physical and mental health
- positive parenting and improved child development
- success at school
- better employment outcomes
- more positive aging: better health, less institutionalisation and better cognitive functioning in older people

for communities …

- providing the information individuals, organisations and businesses use to make decisions and generate new ideas (the spread of information and innovation)
- building social cohesion: a sense of solidarity and respect for others
- increasing inclusive attitudes and respect
- increasing a community's belief it can, and its willingness to, act collectively towards shared goals
- improving community planning that results in solid long term agreements – reducing controversy and creating support for implementation
- turning community assets into outcomes such as jobs, educational achievement, satisfaction, etc

Community development in DPCD focuses on building and supporting community participation and collaborative governance because of their link to these positive outcomes. DPCD has a set of *Indicators of Community Strength* to track these across the Victorian community.

Inclusion is the key to community development's activities. Not all participation is positive. If community and governance networks lack diversity, they can become divisive and separatist (Szreter 2002). If participation involves a diversity of population groups, it will increase the likelihood that different types of people will become involved in policy debates (Davis Smith 2001; Milner 2001). This ensures policies take into account a wide range of interests in communities. Inclusive participation and collaborative planning take longer but ultimately lead to better long term outcomes (Burton 2009).

Place is also important to community development's activities because places experience different issues and face different challenges. In addition, population groups, and therefore negative and positive outcomes, cluster in places (Vinson 2004; Sampson 2004; Vinson 2007). In terms of social capital the literature is definitive – disadvantaged population groups participate less in broader bridging and governance networks (Granovetter 1983; Tigges 1998; Szreter 2002). This can mean they miss out on the benefits, including being able to draw the resources into their areas needed to sustain basic institutions (Browning & Cagney 2002).

Community development actions based on network theory have significant potential to help communities with many of the most pressing complex problems they are facing (change, growth, decline, disadvantage, climate change, etc). These activities are not, however, a panacea. They complement, rather than replace, actions needed in economic development, human capital development and social services. They provide the underpinning that ensures other strategies work.

This report addresses the "why" of community development and not the "how" but we know the "how" is critical. Creating participation and collaborative governance requires both a particular type of policy culture, and skills in planning, to ensure it is representative, inclusive and ultimately producing outcomes for communities (Healey 1998). The *indicators of community strength* help highlight the importance of this area of work.

This document can be read alongside the data report *Indicators of Community Strength at the Local Government Area Level in Victoria 2008* (2010) DPCD: Melbourne

Available at **www.dpcd.vic.gov.au** > Research and Publications > Indicators of Community Strength.

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