THE GLOBALISM INSTITUTE

VicHealth

CREATING COMMUNITY

Celebrations, Arts and Wellbeing Within and Across Local Communities

Martin Mulligan, Kim Humphery, Paul James, Christopher Scanlon, Pia Smith and Nicky Welch

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Introduction

In recent years, social commentators have drawn attention to what they see as the dissolution of community in the capitalist West. It has been strongly argued that in the face of global social and economic change we have seen the diminution of a sense of secure wellbeing. To be sure, critics have long drawn attention to and lamented the loss of a whole range of things—community, the family, morals and manners, cultural traditions—particularly in the face of the socio-economic changes associated with modernizing processes. In the contemporary context, however, the speed and depth with which our lifeworld seems to be undergoing change has become a dominant theme within public discourse. It is a felt concern for many people, particularly within Western nations. Commentators have been quick to pick up on this latter public sense of a social world as somehow in disintegration.

In his recent book, *The Culture of New Capitalism (2006)*, the social critic Richard Sennett has argued that the new global economy has dissolved past certainties and created a range of new anxieties. He joins a host of other commentators from Christopher Lash (1977) to Zymunt Bauman (1995) and Teresa Brennan (2003) who have pointed to the social tensions that have arisen as older ontological certainties have broken apart or been pushed into the shadows. In the new, seemingly more fluid, and increasingly market-oriented work environment, Sennet suggests that people are required to be able to manage a multitude of short-term relationships, to constantly develop new skills and to let go of the past. This might enable people to reduce their dependency on other people and overcome possessiveness, but it also erodes commitment, gives people a more fragmented sense of their own life narratives and gives rise to the 'consumer-spectator-citizenship' as the dominant way of being (pp. 161–77). People thus struggle to find a 'mental and emotional anchor'(p. 183). Despite this sense of fragmentation, our research has suggested that, as Sennett himself finds, people are not passively accepting the dissolution of community or individual connection. They are vigorously attempting to 'make their experiences cohere' by creating a sense of 'narrative movement' in their lives (pp. 183–188). In retelling and reorganizing their lived experiences people seek to get 'beneath the surface' and capture a sense of 'narrative agency' by actively interpreting their own experiences. In other words, the process of making one's life is vexed, active and ambiguous, and this has deep consequences for questions of wellbeing. The fact that people are active in remaking their worlds has both positive and negative dimensions.

In Australia, commentators such as Richard Eckersley have reached similar conclusions about the search for meaning in an uncertain world (2004). Eckersley suggests that the emphasis on issues related to poverty and social inequality in the literature about the social determinants of health needs to be balanced by a similar interest in cultural factors and an awareness of people's growing anxiety about the future. Like Sennett and many others, Eckersley views the modern era in human history as having replaced old certainties with 'the exhilarating possibilities of human betterment through economic growth, social reform, scientific discovery and technological development' (p. 3). However, this dream has now come to an end, Eckersley insists, and we presently live in a consumeristic world 'characterized by ambivalence, ambiguity, relativism, pluralism, fragmentation and contingency' (p. 3). The search for wellbeing, he concludes, must shift to an emphasis on morality and more sustainable forms of meaning.

These are now familiar stories about the dissolution of social bonds and the problems facing us as individuals and communities in a highly market-oriented, technologically geared and socially-fragmenting world. Often, social commentators put these arguments in persuasive and passionate terms, and there is much of value in these expressed concerns. Social commentary, however, tends to operate at a level of sweeping generality that we must avoid in a report of this nature. Moreover, there is a tendency within such commentary, as Sennett acknowledges, to focus on a thematic of decline and domination to the detriment of recognizing the always partial and problematic nature of social change and the manner in which people and communities actively respond to and challenge the changes they experience. Painting the present—and people and populations—as rampantly consumeristic, disembedded from communities, morally negligent, and spiritually and psychologically confused and lost, may hold substantial content, but it ignores the fact that individuals also live in ways that are far from purely market-oriented. Life is lived on many levels, and despite the immense challenges, most people continue to seek deep and valued ties to friends, family and community, with consequences for their senses of wellbeing—both postive and negative.

This sense that there is much in the lives of individuals and in the dynamism of communities to be recognized, valued and sustained informs this study, as it does the various attempts by bodies such as VicHealth. Such bodies have to been attempting to utilize community and cultural networks to facilitate the maintenance and development of health and wellbeing. Ever since its inception in 1987 the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, known as VicHealth, has funded community-based cultural events, celebrations and community arts programs as one way of building stronger and healthier communities (VicHealth 2006). It places a higher emphasis than any other health promotion agency in Australia on addressing the social determinants of 'mental health and wellbeing' through community-building work and, in recent times, it has categorized the determinants of mental health and wellbeing under the broad headings of: (1) increased social inclusion; (2) freedom from discrimination and violence; and (3) increased access to economic resources (see VicHealth 2005). Its long practice of supporting community-based cultural activities has been linked to the particular aim of increasing social connectedness (2002), however, this strategy also needs to be seen as just one component of a broader strategy aimed at addressing all three of the determinants just listed.

Traditionally, cultural activities and the arts have played a significant role in helping individuals and groups of people to explore questions related to identity and social meaning. Since the early 1990s, there has been a growing tendency to try to define the social benefits of arts and cultural activities more precisely (see Chapter 2) and this has led to a body of literature proclaiming the health benefits of a whole range of cultural and arts action. One component of this literature argues that the arts and cultural activities such as community celebrations can help to improve the 'social determinants' of mental health and wellbeing at a community level. Thus the focus on 'wellbeing'—instead of more specific health 'outcomes'— has indeed become a preoccupation of health promotion agencies in Australia and elsewhere in the world.

More recently, as is evidenced in VicHealth's policy platform, there has been a shift in emphasis towards the notions of 'social connectedness' and 'social inclusion'. In his influential book *Bowling Alone* (2000), Robert Putnam argued for a general strengthening of 'social capital' but he concluded that, of all the domains in which this argument can be made, 'in none is the importance of social connectedness so well established as in the case of health and well-being' (p. 326). Inclusion is a laudable aim. However, the problem with terms such as 'social connectedness' and 'social inclusion' is that they are too abstract on their own to suggest clear strategies for actually reducing social isolation, and so the focus has tended to shift back to the more familiar concept of community-building at a local level. Even here, as we discuss in Chapter 5 of this report, the prevailing conception of what constitutes local communities tends to be rather static and one-dimensional. We need a much more sophisticated understanding of

the changing nature of contemporary community life. In this vein, numerous writers (see, for example, Mills and Brown 2004, Richards 2006) have argued that community arts and cultural events and activities have a very important role to play in building stronger local communities in the contemporary world. However, the ways in which this might work requires careful investigation.

It was this concern for further investigation that prompted VicHealth to commission two reviews of the relevant literature on the specific linkages between community arts and community wellbeing. The first was conducted by Globalism Institute researchers Douglas McQueen-Thomson and Christopher Ziguras in 2002; the second by Douglas McQueen-Thomson, Paul James and Christopher Ziguras in 2004. The conclusion reached within their reports was that the evidence concerning that linkage was actually rather weak, in part because all of the studies conducted up to that time had serious methodological and conceptual flaws.

This is not to suggest that the arts and cultural activities are without impact. A recent review of the community arts field conducted for the Australia Council for the Arts concluded that the field has become 'diverse, vibrant and professional' (Australia Council 2006, p. 1). It suggested that the arts are making a difference to people's lives by promoting more inclusive communities and encouraging cultural diversity and relations of respect and tolerance, creating shared senses of belonging and identity, strengthening communities and neighbourhoods, and enabling people to voice and express themselves (p. 3). Yet, as community-arts practitoners themselves argue, the impact of such work is difficult to measure, particularly if constrained by the need to demonstrate quantifiable and instrumental outcomes.

The problem of assessing the social impact of arts and cultural activities is not confined to studies solely concerned with the link between community arts and community wellbeing. Two subsequent reviews of the literature on broader claims for the social benefits of the arts (Cultural Ministers Council 2004 and McCarthy et al. 2004) reached very similar conclusions to McQueen-Thomson and Ziguras about the weaknesses of the research conducted in this area. Broadly, these weaknesses can be summarized as follows:

- A focus on a narrow range of projects funded by arts organizations or government agencies

- An emphasis on the self-referential assessments made by project initiators or key practitioners rather than project participants

- The use of very limited and often inappropriate research tools.

It was the review conducted by McQueen-Thomson, James and Ziguras that prompted the Globalism Institute and VicHealth to initiate the research reported here and to focus on the broad theme of cultural activities and community wellbeing. The intention was to specifically address the weaknesses in earlier research by developing a more sophisticated research methodology and by contextualizing the research findings in a more critical review of the claims made about the contribution that community-based art and cultural activities can make to the building of stronger and healthier communities. McQueen-Thomson, James and Ziguras had suggested that future research should concentrate entirely on the experiences of the participants in community arts projects—rather than the organizers. While following this lead, we have, however, modified this approach, concentrating on both participants and community-arts practitioners. In undertaking this research, we saw a need to deepen the understanding of what experienced practitioners had learnt from their practice by leading them through a critical-reflexive analysis of that practice. In this way it is possible to get beyond the self-referential nature of more shallow reflections. By the same token, in the pursuit of a methodologically sophisticated approach, we have sought evidence at the experiential level of participation and non-participation in community-based cultural activities.

The initial intention of the research was to examine the relationship between 'cultural

activities', social health and community wellbeing. During the course of the research, however, it became clear that terms such as 'cultural activities' and 'community cultural development' have been used so ambiguously that they have created considerable confusion. We thus moved to adopt the more specific terms of 'community arts' and 'community celebrations', and to define the kinds of activities we wanted to explore. The term 'community building' also has its weaknesses because it suggests a mechanical kind of process that might have an end result, while we will argue here that local communities are in a constant state of being made and remade. A major aim of this report will be to demonstrate the need for a more dynamic understanding of community formation in a changing world. We thus prefer to use the term 'community facilitators' to identify people who play an active role in creating a sense of community. In this sense, community building is an art in itself and that is why we have chosen the title 'Creating Communities'.

The present study has not been aimed at producing a new set of indicators for assessing the health and wellbeing outcomes of authentic community art practices and community celebrations. While we recognize the value in using 'key performance indicators' for helping practitioners and events organizers to think more deeply about the possible outcomes of their work, we argue that the emphasis on indicators gives too much ground to the language of instrumentalism and it threatens to throw the baby out with the bathwater in adequately understanding the less tangible, diffuse and often long-term outcomes of community art practices and community celebrations and events. Indeed, it will be argued that a strength of authentic art practices and grounded cultural activities is that they can have unpredictable and multi-layered outcomes. We thus need to develop a deeper understanding of what constitutes authenticity from this point of view. We also need accessible language, which does not resort either to simplistic instrumentalism or art mysticism, in order to understand the nature of good and authentic community arts practice and cultural action, because the outcomes of such practices and actions can be multiple, deep and enduring.

Broadly speaking, this study on the complex relationships between 'cultural activities'—used in the sense of community-based arts activities and celebrations—and community wellbeing has been innovative in the following ways:

- it has broadened the focus on what constitutes artistic and celebratory practices in local communities to include more 'organic' projects and celebrations as well as projects funded by arts organizations or government agencies;

- it has compared experiences across four very diverse Victorian communities over a period of three years and it has involved extensive processes of consultation with people involved in community development and community art in those four communities;

- it has used a range of carefully integrated research methods to generate diverse sets of data that have then been drawn into several levels of analysis (ee the next sections for a discussion of the sites and methodology);

- it has made a sustained attempt to understand both the local specificities of community art and community development practices and the influences on them of wider social processes and practices.

Presentations on the findings emerging from the study were given in each of the four case-study communities in order to gather feedback before the completion of this report.

The Research Sites

The research for this study was conducted across four research sites in Victoria that ranged from inner-urban to rural and regional. They included:

- the inner-urban, bayside Melbourne suburb of St Kilda, which has a 'colourful' history and which attracts large numbers of visitors, especially on weekends;

- the outer-urban Melbourne suburb of Broadmeadows, which has long had the

unwarranted reputation for being one of the worst places to live in the city and which is now at the centre of new urban developments;

- the popular rural Central Highlands town of Daylesford, which attracts large numbers of visitors and tourists and which is renowned for hosting a diverse array of significant cultural events; and

- the Hamilton region in the western district of Victoria, which once prided itself as being the 'wool capital of the world' until declining world prices for wool left the region vulnerable and falling behind some other regional centres in the western part of the state.

These four sites were selected to provide a spectrum of social and place-related experiences. Each of these four communities has experienced major economic and social transformations in recent decades and they each have a different relationship with Melbourne as a centre of Victoria's political and cultural life. Two of the communities, St Kilda and Daylesford, can be considered arts-rich; the Hamilton region has a relatively strong tradition in regard to 'elite' art but a fairly weak tradition in regard to community arts; and Broadmeadows has long been considered to be culturally deprived. Of course, it just as important to look at communities that have relatively weak or only new community art traditions as well as those who have established a reputation for success in this area.

At one end of the spectrum, inner-urban St Kilda hosts two significant populations—a large migrant population, particularly European Jewish, and a high proportion of young, upwardly mobile people. Alongside these relatively wealthy residents there continues to be a population with a much lower socio-economic standing, including residents of public housing and rooming houses and, indeed, homeless people. St Kilda is a long-established Melbourne suburb that has developed a rich tradition of using innovative community arts and celebratory activities—much of it funded by local government, the Port Phillip City Council—to foster inclusion and social connection. Within local government circles, Port Phillip City Council is seen as setting a high standard in regard to the fostering of local cultural development. However, gentrification has become a threat to the existing social diversity of the St Kilda community.

At the other end of the spectrum, Hamilton is a town of around 10,000 people that is approximately 300 kilometres from Melbourne. It stands at the centre of a region that has a surprising diversity of small towns, some of which are struggling for survival. Prior to the arrival of European migrants in the 1840s, Hamilton was a flourishing area for the Indigenous people and the arrival of the sheep industry established a long period of relative prosperity for the European settlers and their descendents. Despite the recent downturn in the wool industry, the legacy of prosperity continues to be reflected in a fairly high degree of social and political conservatism. The regional community has a low level of ethnic diversity.

Although Daylesford is a rural town that has also suffered from the restructuring of traditional rural industries, it has some advantages in being much closer (just over 100 kilometres) to Melbourne. Whereas Hamilton struggles to attract significant numbers of tourists, Daylesford has become a popular destination for weekend visitors. Known for its natural mineral springs and historic guest-houses, the area has a rich history dating back to a group of Swiss-Italian migrants who pioneered European settlement in the area during the gold rush in the 1850s. For a town of around 3,000 people, Daylesford—like the inner urban site of St Kilda—has a rich and varied cultural life. Its annual festivals range from the second largest gay and lesbian celebration in Australia (after the Sydney Mardi Gras), the Words in Winter Festival (a festival around reading and writing) to a national gathering of people wanting to celebrate cultural products of the Scottish Highlands. The annual agricultural show has comfortably survived the downturn in rural industries, a host of sporting clubs are thriving, and various venues cater for regular art exhibitions and music.

Finally, the peri-urban Melbourne suburb of Broadmeadows began in the 1950s as a hastily built public housing estate on the edge of the city. A strong community spirit evolved among people who lived in an area with inadequate infrastructure and facilities. Nonetheless, extraordinary media attention on the activities of 'gangs' of young people in the area meant that, by the 1970s, most people outside the area thought of it as a bad place to live. An influx of migrants from non-English speaking countries dramatically changed the population mix from the mid-1970s onwards, and currently over 33 per cent of the population comes from non-English-speaking backgrounds (see Chapter 3). With around 14 per cent of residents coming from the Middle East, high schools in the area now include some large Islamic colleges as well as a special Koori (Indigenous) high school. Census data reveals that the area still includes a large number of single-parent families, many families on very low incomes, and a relatively high proportion of people unable to find employment. The area has a very weak tradition in regard to community arts and, although the Hume City Council has initiated a range of innovative projects in recent years focusing on the creative potential of the area's ethnic diversity, this work is starting from a low base.

Research Methodology

The methodology used for this study involved a careful integration of quantitative and qualitative methods, including both random and targeted questionnaires, photonarrative techniques for exploring less conscious aspects of lived experience, lengthy strategic conversations with community arts practitioners and response interviews with project participants, and the collection of specific stories related to the projects and activities being examined in each community. The research also involved the collation of existing data relevant to the study (for example, extracted census data and other published surveys) and the construction of detailed profiles relating to the history and character of the four communities in which the research was conducted. In each area, particular people with relevant skills, knowledge and experience were asked to review our research plans and give advice on individuals and organizations we needed to consult. In the Hamilton region, the Globalism Institute has a well-established consultative association called the Critical Reference Group. It covers a range of research initiatives and was consulted in regard to the design and implementation of this research. The process of consultation was less formalized in regard to the other three communities, but in each case there was a process of active and repeated consultation with several key individuals (see Acknowledgements). Local consultants played a significant role in providing appropriate focus for the research within their own communities.

The Globalism Institute uses the term *social mapping* to describe the way in which our forms of data collection are linked to forms and methods of analysis. Using methods such as those mentioned above, we collect data ranging from statistics to lengthy interview transcripts, and revisit stories that can be interpreted in many ways. Much of this data includes a subjective dimension—even in the way that people respond to our questionnaires—and the empirical analysis of the diverse sets of data (aimed at detecting emerging patterns in and across the data) includes a consideration of both the clear, 'objective' outcomes apparent in the data and the subjectivities underpinning the ways in which people choose to articulate their lived experiences or tell their stories.

At one level, we adopt a Heideggerian approach to what constitutes a hermeneutic inquiry into the articulation of subjective, lived, experience (Mugerauer 1994, and Crotty 1998). At another level, moving beyond the experiential, we use a form of *conjunctural analysis* aimed at relating local experiences to broader social processes and socially prevailing modes of practice (James 2006, ch. 4). These different forms of analysis enable us to detect the specificities of what is happening within local communities and, at the same time, relate these findings to broader social themes, such as the changing nature of community life in the contemporary world. They also enable us to make well-grounded recommendations about alternative practices.

Surveys

The first questionnaire was constructed around key themes of contemporary community life as identified by the research team. Containing thirty-two questions, the questionnaire used ten-point Likert scales, multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions to elicit more detailed information. In total, 3,000 questionnaires were mailed to respondents homes, selected randomly from the Australian telephone directory. The response rate was approximately 10 per cent in the city areas of St Kilda and Broadmeadows and 20 per cent in the rural areas of Hamilton and Daylesford. This return rate was supplemented by collection of questionnaires in a non-random manner. A total of 411 valid questionnaires were returned. Questionnaires were deemed invalid if less than two pages were filled out.

The second questionnaire was constructed in response to themes that came from responses to the first questionnaire and some of the qualitative interviews (see below). Whereas the first survey sampled the experiences of many people who do not attend community events at all, the second questionnaire was designed to learn more about the experiences of those who do attend such events—without going into the detail covered by semi-structured interviews with a smaller number of project organizers and participants. The survey of event attendees sought to test the generalizability of their experiences related to three particular themes: the social and health benefits of attendance; the relationship between attendance and other events in the person's life; and reasons for attending this particular event. It was assumed that if a pattern could be detected as to when people choose to participate in community events then this could be taken into account in the way that such events are targeted at people within the community. Four-hundred completed questionnaires were collected at a range of events across the four research sites and these events ranged from a Multicultural Planting Festival in Broadmeadows to a play performed in St Kilda people living with mental illness.

The data from the two surveys (based on the 800 completed questionnaires) were analyzed using the statistical package SPSS 14.0 and key findings were discussed within the research team in relation to the findings emerging from the qualitative research. Findings from the two surveys were taken into account in addressing the social themes discussed in Chapters 5–7 and in drafting the key findings and recommendations in Chapter 10. Chapter 4 presents an overall summary of the survey results.

Photonarrative Method

The photonarrative method used in this research was adapted from a variety of research techniques that utilize cameras as a research tool. Other names include 'reflexive photography' (Harper 1984) 'photo novella' and 'photovoice' (Wang and Burris 1994, Wang et al. 1996, Wang and Burris 1997, Wang and Redwood Jones 2001). At the basic level, photonarrative entailed distributing cameras to participants in the project and asking them to take images which expressed their sense of community or at least some aspect of their community. While some advocates of this kind of research method argue that it can empower participants (see Wang 1996) our aim was more modest in trying to find non-threatening ways to explore the daily experiences of people living in the communities in which the research was conducted. Such a method can help people to give voice to experiences and perceptions that they may not have contemplated consciously before, and it can blur the boundary between research and self-expression. For this particular project, an advantage is that photography has an aesthetic dimension to it and the capturing of relevant images of lived experience is akin to a community arts project. While we made no claim that participation in such an activity would change people's lives, it is interesting to note that images and comments from participants formed the basis of a photographic exhibition held in St Kilda Town Hall under the title *Get a Streetlife*.

After the participants in the photonarrative research had the opportunity to take the images they wanted, a research team member conducted semi-structured interviews (lasting 40–90 minutes) about their choices and the outcomes. Again, this was a non-threatening process in

that the recorded conversations were more like a process of sharing and discussing photos than a formal interview. In all, 17 interviews were conducted; nine from St Kilda, three each from Daylesford and Hamilton and two from Broadmeadows. In Daylesford, participants were recruited through the local community health service. In St Kilda, they were recruited with assistance of the local community arts officer. In Broadmeadows, they were recruited with the assistance of a local community development agency that has worked in the state government's Neighbourhood Renewal Project, and in Hamilton the participants were recruited by the Globalism Institute's Critical Reference Group.

Case Study Interviews

In the early stages of the research, widespread consultations were held with community development workers, community arts officers and community 'facilitators' in each of the local communities regarding the choice of local projects, programs or events that might fall within the broad category of community arts or celebrations. In each case, a long list of nominations was compiled and a further round of consultations focused on the criteria that might inform the final choice of three to four case study projects or programs in each community. In the end, thirteen projects or programs were selected across the communities. In each case, lengthy strategic conversations (lasting one-and-a-half hours to two hours) were recorded with individual persons centrally involved with the conception, design and/or implementation of the project or program and, for eight of the projects or programs, response interviews lasting thirty to forty minutes were conducted with two participants. In all thirteen strategic conversations were undertaken and a further sixteen response interviews were conducted. The case-study interviews thus totaled twenty-nine interviews. The projects and programs that were examined in this way were:

- St Kilda: A range of arts programs for people with special needs (Marie Hapke and Giz James); Rawcus Theatre Company (Kate Sulan); and the work of visual artist Julie Shiels.

- Broadmeadows: The Weaving Lands Project (Anne Kershaw); the Multicultural Planting Festival (Natalia Valenzuela); and the Eid Festival (Neil Aykan).

- Daylesford: The community theatre work of Rebecca Lister; the community choir work of Anni Coyne; and the Swiss-Italian Festa (Jenny Beacham and Jon Stevens)

- Hamilton region: The Top of the Town Ball (Tony McGilvray); Dunkeld's 150th anniversary celebrations (Keith Warne); and the work of Alan McGregor as community arts officer.

While some of these projects and programs have been funded by VicHealth this was not taken into account at all in drawing up the long lists or in selecting the final case studies to be examined. We were careful not to be influenced by decisions about the merits of projects and programs previously made by VicHealth.

The strategic conversations with the key people in each of the case study projects or programs were constructed around the following themes: the person's history of engagement with local communities; critical reflections on the project or programs concerned; responses to VicHealth's 'determinants' for mental health and wellbeing of communities; and responses to a critique of 'inauthentic' community arts projects voiced by the commentator Jon Hawkes (2001). The researchers prepared carefully for each conversation and tried to extend and deepen the responses to each of the questions posed. All the recorded conversations were transcribed and analyzed both empirically and conjuncturally (see above).

Collected Stories

In a process very similar to that adopted for identifying the case-study projects and programs for each of the communities, consultations with relevant people resulted in the construction of a long list of local stories that seemed to be relevant to our research interests. A further

round of consultations focused on the determination of the criteria that would enable the final selection of the stories to be compiled and analyzed. The aim was to collect three diverse stories from within each of the communities. In all but two cases (which were already documented), these stories had to be captured in a concise written form by the researchers and this account needed to be checked and approved by people closely associated with the stories. In total, twelve stories were written up. The following stories were compiled and used as research data:

- St Kilda: Get a Streelife project (Ilka Tampke); Sex and Drugs Historical Tours Robyn Szechman); Anna Macarthur's experience (a perspective on the community from a new resident).

- Broadmeadows: Turkish Women's Voice; The Anti-Racism Action Band (A.R.A.B.); the use of public art in the refurbishment of the Dallas Shopping Centre.

- Daylesford: The 'bullboars' project in the Daylesford Secondary College for a national 'Farm to Table' food competiton; a 'Remembrance and Resistance' evening for people who had experienced 'coercive psychiatry'; the experiences of a community-engaged artist Petrus Spronk.

- Hamilton region: The Chameleon Artists Collective in Balmoral; a celebration to bury Macarthur's 'most boring town in Victoria' tag; Olive McVicker looks back at the arts in Hamilton, 1961-2005.

Constructing Social Profiles of the Research Sites

As well as consulting a wide range of local community facilitators in selecting case-study projects and programs and stories for collection, the research team compiled a detailed social profile of each of the four communities in order to contextualize our other explorations and findings. This involved a review of published material relating to the history of the area; a consideration of available social profile data, mainly taken from 2001 Census outcomes; and observational notes compiled by the researchers conducting fieldwork in the communities. Chapter 3 presents a critical review of the materials collected and it uses this review to nominate contemporary challenges for each of the communities. As well as reviewing published documents, Chapter 3 seeks to identify some gaps in what has been researched and documented. The community profiles compiled in this way were used to reflect on the extent to which community arts and celebrations are attempting to address contemporary challenges in each of the communities.

Structure of the Report

One of the innovative aspects of this research report is that it moves between an analysis of community art and celebration practices in diverse local communities and a discussion of broad 'social themes' that relate local experiences to broader social processes. In Chapters 5 to 9, we present a detailed analysis of our research data in relation to questions and concerns that have emerged across different bodies of literature that share an interest in the wellbeing of local communities in the context of global change. Some of the themes addressed in these five chapters emerged from our review of the literature on the social determinants of wellbeing and the role of the arts in addressing such determinants (see Chapter 2). So, for example, there has been much debate in the literature about the relevance of local communities in a changing world and about the usefulness of the notion of 'social inclusion' that grew out of Third Way politics promoted by the Blair government in the UK in the late 1990s. Other themes addressed in these chapters arose out of some of the prevailing concerns of the local communities in which we conducted the research—for example, questions of identity and belonging in a changing world and the use of stories from the past in promoting a unique sense of local identity. Of course, there is a national context for local discussions about history and identity—the so-called 'history wars' debate (see Chapter 8). However, we conclude that this has placed even more importance on collating what historian Inga Clendinnen has

called 'many true stories' in place of a single, official, historical narrative. As mentioned earlier, we are interested in ways in which the arts and cultural celebration can help people create narratives of meaning and agency in a changing world, and in Chapter 9 we reflect on what we have learnt from our research about issues related to agency, engagement and participation. This then links with the discussion about community arts practice that is picked up again at the end of Chapter 10.

The detailed social profiles of the local communities in which the research was conducted represents a further innovative aspect of this report (Chapter 3). This aspect of our approach demonstrates the importance we place on understanding the local specificity of the social experience we have explored—that is, the local end of local–global approach that underpins Chapters 5 to 9. We worked with our emerging understanding of the four diverse communities as we made our choices about exactly what we would investigate in each community. The international literature on 'sense of place' informed an earlier comparative study on community building in Daylesford and Broadmeadows that the Globalism Institute conducted for VicHealth (see Mulligan et al. 2004), and this earlier work has been extended in the construction of the social profiles and in the exploration of people, places and change in Chapter 7. In part, Chapter 3 is a review of the published material related to the social history and demographics of the four local communities, but it also seeks to identify some gaps in the published literature and draws on the observations of this project's fieldwork researchers to try to articulate some of the key challenges that these four communities are facing.

As mentioned above, we selected a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods that enabled us to explore both the objective and subjective dimensions of local experiences related to the arts, celebrations and community wellbeing. This has also enabled us to use the findings emerging from each method to interrogate the findings emerging from other methods and vice versa. So, for example, we used the outcomes of early qualitative interviews to shape some of the questions included in the random survey of residents and, in turn, the results of that survey were used to shape the participants survey and some of the subsequent qualitative interviews. The outcomes of the two surveys have been taken into account in the analysis presented in Chapters 5–7 and in shaping the findings and recommendations presented in Chapter 10. However, we also include an overall summary of the results of the two surveys (chapter 4) because the outcomes of those surveys will be of interest to a wide range of readers.

In taking a broad and innovative approach to the way we have presented our research findings we present a lengthy full report. No doubt some readers will start with the summary of findings and recommendations presented in Chapter 10. However, it is important to keep in mind that the report as a whole has been structured in order to do justice to the richness of the data collected and the generosity of those we surveyed and interviewed, therefore a close reading of individual chapters will yield different insights for different readers. In particular, Chapters 5 to 9 demonstrate, we believe, what it takes to properly contextualize local research, and those five chapters offer insights into the sustainability of local communities that go beyond the specific focus of this study. As with authentic art, a well-crafted analysis of rich social data can resonate differently with different readers depending on their own interests, backgrounds and predispositions.

2
Key Concepts and Research Background

An investigative project of this nature necessarily draws on a wide range of literatures, touching on diverse fields of both scholarly and applied research. One of the hallmarks of the kind of exploratory work undertaken here is the need for interdisciplinary engagement. Our work has thus been informed by literatures in the social sciences and humanities, in the human and bio-medical sciences, and in the arts and creative practices. This is an enormous range of fields to draw on, and each of the researchers involved in the project has brought overlapping knowledges and methodological skills to the task at hand. In this chapter, cognizant of the need for a succinct literature review, we discuss a limited array of key terms and literatures that are most germane to our work. In particular, we explore literatures and definitional accounts relating to community, wellbeing, social inclusion, the health impact of cultural activities, and the social value of arts practice.

The initial working title of the present research project, 'The Wellbeing of Communities', was a rather grand one. Recognizing the broad nature of such a task, however, we set out with a particular focus on exploring the manner in which cultural activities may contribute to community-building and, by implication, to the wellbeing of individuals through a connective process. In this emphasis community and personhood are not seen as dichotomous but as mutually constitutive. Such a position is now routinely accepted within the academy and by governments. Yet this connection between communities and people is often rhetorically rather than concretely recognized within social and economic policy, much of which reiterates an entrenched allegiance to a highly individualistic conception of personhood (our sense of self), agency (our ability to act purposefully), and mentality (our ways of thinking).

What has been of crucial importance to this project is precisely its focus on the sustainability of communities as an avenue to facilitating wellbeing. Rather than exploring states of wellbeing as individually possessed the emphasis has been on the social patterns of wellbeing. There is a very real sense in which we can say that communities (as well as families, households and other kinds of group social arrangements) have affective impact on those who move within them, feel they belong to them, and experience them. The positive impact (or current of feeling/emotion) of vibrant, sustainable communities is expressed through individual community members—and is reasonably assumed to be a key component of a sense of personal wellbeing. Beyond possible affective benefits, sustainable communities also, very importantly, sustain. They deliver very real material and emotional support, mutual pleasures, social interactions, social cohesion, communicative possibilities and so an (as we will discuss below). We should note here the crucial importance of recognizing that community is not in and of itself always productive of wellbeing and right action. Communities, even when they are quite cohesive, can contribute to a lack of wellbeing for some individuals who feel constrained, dominated of excluded, they can engender isolationism and a hostility to others, and they can be inherently conservative and suspicious of difference and change. Part of what we mean by sustainable communities is an ability to recognise and address the limitations of community rather than romanticise it, and to regard this reflexivity as an essential part of community building efforts.

Let us, however, begin this chapter proper by exploring more of what is meant by some of the terms so far used in this report. A good place to start is with the term 'community' itself.

Defining Community

'Community', observed Raymond Williams in his book Keywords, can be either 'the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships': 'What is most important, perhaps, is that unlike all other terms of social organization (state, nation, society, etc.) it seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term'. (1983, p. 76) Not surprisingly, community has become a pervasive term within much contemporary political, social and economic commentary analysis. Jim Walmsley began a recent review on the nature of community by saying that the word 'community' is used widely and loosely, to the extent that it now has a 'high level of use but a low level of meaning'. (2006, pp. 5–12) However, he goes on to say that definitions of community range from relatively stable, place-based human populations that share 'an awareness of common life and personal bonds' to ideological expressions of 'what should be rather than what is'.

For such a ubiquitous concept, though, 'community' is notoriously difficult to pin down. Indeed, it sometimes seems that the word has such a broad definition that it applies to everything and nothing at the same time. 'Community' is often used interchangeably with 'neighbourhood' to refer to the intimate bonds that come with living cheek-by-jowl with others in a shared space. Alternatively, it can refer to people bound by a particular identity defined by ethnicity or race (the Lebanese community, the Aboriginal community), religion (the Muslim community), or sexual orientation—the Gay and Lesbian community. Or, again, it can be defined by profession—the legal community or the business community. Cutting across all of these, community can also be defined by a particular mode of interaction, such as virtual or online communities. Like definitions of art, community often seems to be whatever people say it is, potentially incorporating every conceivable form of human grouping, even those that might otherwise strike one as contradictory.

Despite this variation it is possible to begin to specify different ways of thinking and talking about community, based on different ways of constituting community. The following discussion offers three distinct ways of characterizing community:

> *Grounded community*, in which the salient feature of community is taken to be people coming together in particular tangible settings based upon face-to-face relations or embodied engagement;

> *Way-of-life community*, in which the salient feature of community is comes from particular attitudes and practices held in common; and

> *Projected community*, in which the salient feature of community is neither embeddedness in particularistic relations, nor adherence to a particular way of life, but rather the active establishment of a creative space in which individuals engage in an open-ended processes of constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing identities and ethics for living.

Before elaborating these categories, a note of caution ought to be sounded about how these distinctions between different accounts of communities relate to each other. Specifically, the distinctions between communities as grounded, as a way of life, or as socially projected, are intended to point to the most obvious or overriding characteristic of a given community. It is not being claimed that such communities exist in 'pure' form. Rather, they are intended as offering an analytical framework across which the dominant manifestations of different communities can be mapped. One should therefore resist the temptation to pigeonhole this or that community into any one way of constituting community. Such an approach would likely lead to a reductive approach in which the complexity of a community is reduced to one of it dimensions. To take an example, it might be expected that communities in which

people live together check-by-jowl is an archetypal grounded community. However, of itself, the simple fact of coming into regular face-to-face contact with others indicates little about how those face-to-face relations are structured. The everyday experiences of being pressed against other train commuters in a global city and walking together across common ground in a tribal society are both instances of face-to-face contact, but they are worlds apart in terms of how communal bonds are structured and enacted. (James, 1996, pp. 21–37) In short, surface descriptions about how people interact with one another do not always reveal much about how such interactions and relations are structured.

In proposing this framework then the terms grounded community, way-of-life community, and projected community are used as structural rather than normatively charged terms. They refer to the way in which social bonds are framed, and do not imply any prior judgement about whether communities enacted in the dominance of one or other form of relationship are good, bad, or indifferent. (Such judgement comes later in relation to other principles.) The purpose here is to offer a way of thinking about how communities are constituted across different ways of living and relating to others. The aim is to see how communities are constituted through the intersection of different forms of social integration which overlay and overlap with one another. This approach is based on the work done by Paul James (1996 and 2006) who argues that in researching particular locales it is important to recognize both that communities are formed across different layers of integration and that one integrative form of structuring social life tends to assume a relative dominance. Thus, for example, an on-line community may be constituted as a projected community or way-of-life community, while the embodied dimension stands in a subordinate position, but it does not necessarily mean that embodied relations are completely irrelevant. Clarifying this further requires elaboration of the different ways of constituting community.

Grounded Community

Attachment to particular places and particular people are the salient features of what we are calling 'grounded communities'. In other words, relations of mutual presence and placement are central to structuring such communities. Except for periods of stress or political intensification around a particular community issue, questions about active social projection are subordinate in accounts and practices of grounded community. Such projection is usually seen in terms of what is already given and in place. In this setting, questions about the nature of one's way of life are assumed to take care of themselves so long as a given environment is in place—a neighbourhood for people to live with appropriate infrastructure such as public spaces and amenities, roads and buildings, along with high-quality services. Thus, adherence to particular ways of life tends to spring from a taken-for-granted sense of commonality. It arises from the face-to-face bonds with other persons in one's locale rather than from concentrating on the way-of-life itself. The members of such a community do not have to not work their way through community-development books, self-help pamphlets or etiquette manuals to 'know' about how to act with one another. Norms of behaviour emerge from people in the immediate vicinity. Even religious observance, which tends to break out of the confines of the here and now—in the sense that it looks forward to a world to come and goes back centuries—is strongly conditioned by local settings and is carried on through rituals and ways of living that are rooted in categories of embodiment and presence.

Grounded communities are bounded, both socially and ecologically. Just as natural eco-systems can be seriously disrupted by the introduction of outside organisms, accounts of community that arise in such settings tend to point to the disruptive effects of external forces. At one extreme this can lead to xenophobia and suspicion of outsiders. More positively it leads to the view that communities can be undermined if the tangible resources that sustain them are withdrawn, allowed to fall into a state of disrepair, or are restructured through processes over which the local community has no say or control. Customary tribal and traditional communities are examples in which grounded community is dominant. One expression of this conception of community can be seen in Ferdinand Tönnies' seminal work on community,

Gemienschaft und Gesellschaft, which roughly translates as Community and Society. (1887) Tönnies saw community and society as distinct social formations. Where Gemeinschaft or community is based on family life within villages ordered according to traditional folkways or religion, Gesellschaft, or society, is more akin to mass society where life is no longer ordered or structured through small-scale association, modelled after the family, but in large-scale, impersonal relations. Tönnies' argument is that with the advent of modernity, society re-orders community along more instrumentally rational ways.

Something of the notion of Gemienschaft survives in many mainstream ideas of community, particularly where local communities are seen to be threatened by centralization and loss of local control to government or corporate bureaucracy. This conception of community finds expression in some environmental philosophies where community is seen as allowing 'human-scale' development. Here community is a set of relations bound in place where a more 'authentic life' is said to be able to flourish away from the world of advertising, the media, and the state. Accounts of grounded community can also be seen to inform classical social democratic forms of politics. A good recent example of this is the vision of community set out in The Age of Insecurity by two British journalists Dan Elliott and Larry Atkinson. Writing in response to the Blair government's embrace of community, Elliott and Atkinson argue that community is only possible where people share relations of mutual presence with one another. These, they claim, are underpinned by shared institutions, set within a shared geographical and temporal framework. In Elliott and Atkinson's words, the 'essence of community is the living together cheek-by-jowl of a diversity of types'. (p. 279) 'Communities congregate around the local presences of institutions of all types: post offices, police stations, schools, hospitals. Without them, the community becomes a collection of houses: the linear city'.1 Advocating what they call 'green-Keynesianism', Atkinson and Elliott argue for the promotion of economic growth and the 'reinvestment of hard cash and assets' as a way of strengthening communal bonds. (p. 279) Furthermore, they advocate the protection of local economies from the destabilizing effects of global market forces through barriers to the free-flow of international capital, and the re-regulation of world finance and trade, as well as the protection of the natural environment.2 In addition to these measures, which are geared primarily to shoring up the spatial dimension of community at both the local and national levels, Atkinson and Elliott also argue for uniform trading hours and common days of rest and holidays as a way of securing the basic temporal conditions for a life lived in common. (pp. 282–3)

Community as a Way of Life

In contrast to accounts of grounded community, which emphasis the particularities of people and place as the salient features of community, accounts of community which give primacy to adherence to a particular way of living tend to specify certain norms of right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Communities as ways of life tend to arise wherever there are relationships of trust, co-operation, mutual obligation and reciprocity between people lifted out of the immediacy of place and presence. They develop wherever people agree, implicitly or explicitly, to abide by certain ways of life. Community here is essentially located in a regulative space rather than a convivial place, and it binds people into particular ways of living. Nikolas Rose, though not himself an advocate of such conceptions of community, provides a neat characterization of such accounts of community as 'a moral field binding persons into durable relations. It is a space of emotional relationships, through

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1   The authors go on to note the discrepancy between New Labour's policies of 'decentralization in the context of new regional assemblies and bureaucracies while acquiescing in, for example, the centralization of county constabularies into a handful of fortress-like headquarters buildings' (Elliott and Atkinson, The Age of Insecurity, p. 281).

2   In their own words: 'Companies should be told in no uncertain terms that they have to 'site here to sell here', and trade restrictions should be imposed to keep as much economic activity at the local level' (Elliott and Atkinson, The Age of Insecurity, p. 277).

which individual identities are constructed through their bonds to micro-cultures of values and meanings'. (1999, p. 172)

As distinct from conceptions of grounded community, the embeddedness of way-of-life communities in this or that place does not define the coherence of community. Since the salience of such communities lies in their normative coherence, such communities can be de-linked from particular groups of people and particular locales. In other words, they can be deterritorialized. Face-to-face relations may be important to such communities, but they might equally be constituted through virtual or technologically-mediated relations where people agree to abide by certain conventions and bonds. In this regard, it is a potentially more open and mobile form of community.

This kind of community has gained the recent attention of discipline of sociology. Since Ferdinand Tönnies introduced the terms Gemeinshaft and Gesellschaft to describe the shift from stable, mainly rural, communities to more mobile and urbanized communities, sociologists have been interested in ways in which communities have become more spatially dispersed (Walmsley, 2006). Over forty years ago, the US sociologist M. Webber suggested that improvements to communications and transport technologies had facilitated the emergence of 'communities without propinquity', that is, spatially dispersed communities that people can choose to belong to as a result of shared interests or shared values. Many did not share Webber's enthusiasm for this 'new' form of community—noting that for people such as the elderly or women with children the weakening of place-based communities had led to greater social isolation. However, a subsequent acceleration in technology-assisted compressions of time and space further shifted attention towards the importance of non-local communities. Increasingly, a distinction has been drawn between the terms 'community' and 'neighbourhood' on the assumption that better planning of neighbourhoods can facilitate social interaction and the emergence of community identity for those who need it. Again the emphasis is on the conscious choices that people might make about when and where to participate.

Communities constituted as a space for ways of life can be seen in communitarian accounts of community. Advocating what he calls a 'new communitarianism', US writer Amitai Etzioni defines community as 'webs of social relations that encompass shared meanings and above all shared values'. (Etzioni, 1998, p. xiii) This conception of community also underpins recent debates around social capital, where community is regarded as a means of generating abstracted relations of trust, co-operation, reciprocity and mutual obligation. Communities constituted in this way are claimed to be consonant with contemporary forms of globalization. Since webs of trust and co-operation can be enacted via highly-mediated forms of communication—although it is questionable as to how sustainable this is—it is true to say that community can be disembedded from the particularities of people and place. For new communitarians such as Etzioni, this is a virtue since it wards against settled communities becoming oppressive to individuals or sub-groups. If a particular community begins to exert undue control over its members, individuals have the capacity to withdraw from it and realized different connection. In Etzioni's words: 'People are at one and the same time, members of several communities, such as professional, residential and others. They can and do use these multi-memberships ... to protect themselves from excessive pressure by any one community'. (Etzioni, 1998, p. xiv. See also Mulgan, 1997, p. 229)

Community as Projected

Unlike the two other conceptions of community briefly described above, this notion of 'community' is not defined by attachment to a particular place to a particular group of people. Neither is it primarily defined by adherence to a shared set of norms or a tradition. The salient feature of aesthetic communities is community as a creative space, where people invent new ways of living, new forms of personhood. It is because of this primacy accorded to the creative, active and projected dimension of community that the word 'projected' is used. This

is perhaps the most difficult idea of community to grasp, partly because it is a much more nebulous idea of community.

For the advocates of projected community, community is less about the particularities of place and bonds with particular others or adherence to a particular normative frame and more an ongoing process of invention and self-reinvention. It is a means by which people create and recreate their lives with others. Typical ideas of community as referring to settled, stable and abiding bonds between people do not apply to such conceptions of community. Such communities tend be fleeting and unstable, constantly dissolving and re-generating, despite the best of intentions otherwise. The English sociologist Nikolas Rose captures something of this kind of community in advocating community as, 'imagined and enacted as mobile collectivities, as spaces of indeterminacy, of becoming. To community as essence, origin, fixity, one can thus counterpose community as a constructed form for the collective unworking of identities and moralities'. (1999, p. 194-5) Such communities, according to Rose, are 'practically enacted in all those hybridized, queer, subaltern and non-essentialized communities'. (1999, p. 195-6)

Projected communities, at least in their more self-reflexive form, can take the form of ongoing associations of people who seek politically expressed integration; associative communities which seek to enhance and support individual creativity, autonomy and freedom from hierarchically imposed constraints, within a pluralistic, multicultural society. However, projected communities can also be trivial or transitory. (Delanty 2003) They can be overgeneralized and more akin to advertising collations. Realised in this way, a community might be projected around a succession of rave parties, around meeting as strangers in so-called 'third place' of a Starbucks Café, or simply by being one of the autonomous floating denizens of a self-named creative city.

Projected communities can be conservative or radical, and the forms of projection differ. For example one of the forms of projected community life is around the understanding of a common aesthetic such as enjoying the fact that there are lots of things happening in the vicinity. Sometimes it is hard to see how such communities are coherent enough to warrant the label of community at all, although, in another sense, aesthetic communities evoke much about the contemporary nature of social life constituted through valorizing fleeting, highly-abstracted forms of social relations. This is not to say that in the metropolitan West we have moved beyond grounded communities or way-of-life communities, or that these other ways of community are withering away. Rather, under conditions where global exchange of goods and symbols, and where there is greater and greater mobility, these other forms of community are being overlaid and reconstituted by the logic of the projected community. One of our tasks is to map how communities are constituted and reconstituted through forms of community that take the form of projected community life—projected with the intention of enhancing wellbeing.

Wellbeing

The notion of 'wellbeing' can and has been both broadly and narrowly defined. In narrow economic terms it has been simply identified with wealth and prosperity, while in an equally narrow biomedical sense it has been equated with good health (or the absence of disease/ill-health). In somewhat broader terms, wellbeing has also, particularly within the field of social psychology, been identified as life satisfaction or happiness. In its most encompassing conception, commentators on wellbeing have insisted that such a state of being is thoroughly socially-embedded. In this very broad sense (one that informs our study), wellbeing is certainly connected with physical and mental health, with income and wealth, and with life satisfaction, but it is also very related to our sense of social connectedness, inclusion and participation, existential security and safety, political citizenship, self-development and actualization, and opportunities for education, recreation and creative expression.

Efforts to define wellbeing are made even more complicated by the fact that there is both an

objective and subjective sense in which we can talk about the wellbeing of individuals. Most commentators on wellbeing, particular when discussing Western populations, deal with what is termed subjective wellbeing. This is especially the case, for example, in psychometric attempts to measure population specific levels of life satisfaction/happiness, usually through the administration of surveys. One of the most significant and useful attempts to do this in the Australian context is known as the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index. (See Eckersley 2004 for an accessible discussion of this.) There is a sense also, however, that wellbeing can and indeed must be externally viewed and assessed. If individuals or communities are afflicted with high levels of ill-health and poverty but nevertheless report reasonable levels of wellbeing, then we need to confront this disjunction between objective and subjective realities rather than simply privilege individual consciousness as the ultimate indicator of how life should be lived. (Sen, 1985, makes a similar point.)

Wellbeing as Wealth, Health and Happiness

In reviewing and critiquing these approaches to wellbeing, perhaps the easiest assumption to undermine is the notion that wellbeing is indicated by levels of income and wealth. Unfortunately, however, this idea has also proved the most intransigent. Nationally and globally, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is still taken by governments as an overriding indicator, at least at an aggregate or national level, of wellbeing. Moreover, within conventional, and still dominant, utilitarian economic theory the ability of people to satisfy their needs and wants in the marketplace, underscored within such theory by levels of income and wealth, is the sole measure of satisfaction. The critique of this position is now decades old and well-founded. Writers such as Easterlin (1974) and Sen (1985) long ago problematized the assumed connection between money and life-satisfaction. Radical economists such as Sen also drew attention to the manner in which a focus on income and wealth, particularly within measures such as GDP, disguised factors that worked against wellbeing such as the inequality of wealth distribution and life opportunities that many people experience within rich and especially poor nations. Recently, elements of this critique have been very much revived by commentators critical of western overconsumption and materialism. For example, Tim Kasser (2002), an American psychologist involved in the measurement of wellbeing, has attempted also to measure levels of materialism and has (along with other researchers) found that highly materialistic people experience lower life satisfaction than those who are less oriented towards the accumulation of material possessions.

While reiterating the old adage that 'money doesn't buy you happiness' is of political importance in the contemporary era of neo-liberal global capitalism, some of the subtleties of earlier critiques such as that of Sen's have been lost within recent work on consumer society, not least because of the highly Western-oriented and post-materialist focus of many contemporary critics. Recent work thus tends to dismiss the material aspects of life as of fundamental importance to our wellbeing, downplaying or sidestepping the issue of poverty (in both rich and poor nations) and, as Headey and Wooden (2005) have recently argued, underestimating the factor of wealth (capital and assets) in underscoring people's sense of security. The material factors of income and wealth clearly remain important to wellbeing, and they take on varying levels of importance in the context of different national, communal and socio-economic situations. It is undoubtedly the case, however, that the material conditions of life are only a part of the story of wellbeing. So also is the very different concept of health.

Wellbeing and health are often treated as the same concept, or rather good health, broadly defined, has been equated with physical, emotional and social wellbeing. These are the three key elements of health outlined in perhaps the most important and influential twentieth-century definition of the state of good health contained in the preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization. It was ratified in the late-1940s (cited in Manderson 2005:1) and restated in the Alma-Ata Conference on Primary Health Care in 1978 (WHO 1978). In line with this health-oriented definition of wellbeing, modern governments have in large part relegated responsibility for what we might call 'wellbeing issues and interventions'

to their departments or administrative units that are focused on public health and medical management. The term 'wellbeing' for many thus has a physical or embodied ring to it; it is taken to be something chiefly to do with bodily and psychological states.

Lenore Manderson (2005) has noted how the long-standing and very broad WHO definition of health as wellbeing has had to compete, particularly at the level of government policy, with much narrower definitions of health as the national or global burden of disease. In other words there has been a tension within social policy between broad, wellbeing-oriented definitions of health and narrow, bio-medically defined definitions. We might add that even when a broader wellbeing-oriented definition is operative, governments have predictably emphasised individual physical and emotional factors, rather than attempted to address in any fundamental sense the social bases and conditions underlying wellbeing. Thus, as with the concept of wealth and income, health has often come to stand-in for a much broader sense of what wellbeing might be. As Manderson has stated: 'Wellbeing includes more than physical and mental health: it incorporates a sense of satisfaction, contentment, personal fulfilment and existential calm; much more so than health, it is a social construct'. (2005: 4)

This brings us directly to the issue of life-satisfaction and happiness. As mentioned above, a great deal of energy has been devoted to psychometrically 'measuring' people's stated levels of life-satisfaction or happiness, and treating these measurements as markers of wellbeing.[3] As with the renewed critique of materialism, there has been a recent and very palpable resurgence of commentator interest in the issue of happiness, to the point where a whole new 'happiness industry' can be said to have arisen involving everything from best-selling books to personal-happiness coaches (Scanlon, 2006). This perhaps eclipses the continued, if limited, usefulness of wellbeing surveys (surveys that we have selectively drawn on in designing the quantitative component of our own research). These surveys are of interest not only because they constructively consider wellbeing in the context of issues such as social connectedness, but also because they are able to trace changes or continuities in sentiment over time.

Having said this, we have already noted the sometimes problematically subjective nature of this survey evidence. A metrics of wellbeing based on scales of happiness/satisfaction has some further, fundamental problems. One of these is the tendency for such surveys to diminish the importance of aspects of wellbeing that cannot be quantified and, at the same time, to exaggerate the thematic of satisfaction to a point where we are left with a utilitarian, 'pleasure-principle' calculus of happiness. To be fair, researchers involved in the psychometrics of wellbeing have sometimes recognized these limits. Some have conceded, for example, that wellbeing can certainly coexist with feelings of unhappiness or dissatisfaction or that one might want to move beyond a pleasure/satisfaction based understanding of wellbeing in order to incorporate more abstract ideas about what gives life meaning. (Eckersley 2004 provides a useful discussion of this). Most of all, what renders such survey material limited is its inability to move beyond the individual respondent as the locus of evaluating wellbeing. Wellbeing thus remains a stated state, conceived in a theoretical paradigm which renders wellbeing as a purely conscious, psychological property of individuals variously connected to but not framed by their social and communal context. In other words, surveys can never achieve a dynamic understanding of wellbeing, they remain flat sheets of paper, yielding flat, if sometimes interesting and analytically useful, responses.

Towards a Fuller Conception of Wellbeing as Socially Constituted

How then do we understand wellbeing in less narrow and more dynamic ways? In beginning to answer this question we can return to the previously cited essay by Lenore Manderson. 'Wellbeing', she writes 'is not the state of individual bodies, but of bodies in society'. (2005: 12) This begins to grasp a dynamic that has often only been problematically conceptualized in discussions of wellbeing. Our states of wellbeing and ill-being in a fundamental, though

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3   See, for example, Diener, 2000; Myers, 2001; Eckersley, 2004.

not exclusive way articulate our life-world. Our wellbeing is situated in the world, even as it is felt and expressed through our bodies. While commentators and scholars have readily recognized the importance of social factors in detracting from or contributing to individual wellbeing, it is a somewhat more radical and difficult move to reconceptualize wellbeing as a largely collective rather than personal state.

This does not deny that our own personal histories and circumstances, such as experiencing the death of a loved one, personal ill-health, or the break-up of a relationship, affects our wellbeing. Rather, it is to recognize that our social and communal life-world is not simply the contextualbackground to our wellbeing but rather fundamentally constitutive of it. Such a conceptual position allows us to shift the locus of attention away from attempts to define the state of wellbeing to exploring the conditions of wellbeing. This is particularly germane to our research, given its focus on community. We would not claim originality here, merely a fraternity with recent efforts to 'rethink wellbeing' and to revitalize currents of thought that have emphasized the community-based conditions4 that facilitate a sense of wellbeing. This brings us to one of the commonly suggested indicators of wellbeing—social inclusion.

Social Inclusion

If social capital—in the form of resources of trust, shared norms and mutual networks—provides the theoretical underpinning for much recent analysis of contemporary social problems, then social inclusion has become the policy prescription for encouraging social change. Many commentators and governments around the globe, have embraced the idea of social inclusion and exclusion as a more comprehensive way of understanding and tackling social deprivation than more established ideas around equality which, according to the advocates of social inclusion, places too heavy an emphasis on the tangible aspects of wellbeing to the detriment of other, less tangible aspects such as people's social networks.

Levitas distinguishes three different streams of thought about social inclusion. (1998: ch. 1) The first defines social inclusion in broad terms of social, economic and political citizenship. Gross social-structural inequalities in wealth, status and power are identified as the core threats to full participation within society, with special emphasis given to deprivation as a barrier to social inclusion. On this account, social inclusion can be best addressed through a comprehensive program of economic redistribution to those who are unable to fully exercise their citizenship rights as a result of material deprivation.

The second discourse defines social inclusion in terms of moral failure and centres on the existence of an underclass mired in a 'cultures of dependency'. Levitas notes that this tends to be a highly gendered discourse, focusing on so-called 'welfare queens'—young, single mothers who manipulate supposedly generous welfare entitlements to support a lavish lifestyle—and young unemployed men, prone to criminal activity. This sees exclusion as a result of a more general moral decline within society which, it is claimed, is demonstrated by social ills such as increasing divorce, unemployment and crime rates. Redistributive economic policies are claimed to encourage such moral decline, creating cultures of dependency in which individuals can avoid taking on personal responsibilities such as work and family commitments. On this view, social inclusion is achieved through enforcing traditional norms and values, by withdrawing or reducing income support to those who are unemployed or fail to fit traditional models of the family. In Rose's words, '[t]he problems of the excluded, of the underclass, are to be resolved by a kind of moral rearmament … It is through moral reformation, through ethical reconstruction, that the excluded citizen is to be re-attached to a virtuous community'. (Rose, 1999, pp. 265-66).

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4   Or capabilities as Sen (1985) and Nussbaum (2005) have called them.

The third discourse on social inclusion identified by Levitas defines it in terms of social integration. According to this view, inclusion is achieved via participation in the paid work force. Paid employment provides the primary means by which individuals are integrated into society and underpins social cohesion. Economic and social policies are thus geared to increasing employment participation, even if the resulting jobs are poorly remunerated and the conditions are low. By focussing on social integration and social cohesion, questions about inequalities in power and wealth are sidestepped.

The first discourse on social inclusion and exclusion finds it clearest expression in the some of the earliest articulations of the concept, in Europe, particularly France, during the 1970s and 1980s when it began to become part of the policy lexicon and conceptual apparatus of the European Union through its policy documents and research bodies (see Room, 1999, pp. 166). The European Union uses the terms 'poverty' and 'social exclusion' interchangeably, defining them as follows:

Poverty and social exclusion refer to when people are prevented from participating fully in economic, social and civil life and/or when their access to income and other resources (personal, family, social and cultural) is so inadequate as to exclude them from enjoying a standard of living and quality of life that is regarded as acceptable by the society in which they live. In such situations people often are unable to fully access their fundamental rights (Director-General for Employment and Social Affairs Unit, 2002, p. 15).

In the Anglo context, commentators and policy-makers have sought to conceive of social inclusion and exclusion in a broader way, that does not confine it to poverty and welfare. Although poverty and welfare remain central, there has been a concerted effort to expand the concept of social inclusion and exclusion to encompass issues of social integration and wellbeing more generally. According to the English sociologist Anthony Giddens (1998a), who played a key role in developing much of the intellectual justification and conceptual tools of the first two terms of the Blair Government, social exclusion can be forced or voluntary. Forced exclusion refers to the exclusion of those in lower social and economic strata who lack the skills, resources or social capital to fully participate in society. Used in this way, 'social exclusion' is intended as a more encompassing term than what are considered more narrowly focused terms such as 'poverty' or 'inequality'. The latter concepts are claimed to be inadequate as a way of framing what are typically complex and multifaceted social problems. In other words, this use of concept of 'social exclusion' seeks to go beyond seeing poverty, poor health, and poor academic performance as discrete problems requiring discrete policy solutions, to an examination of the complex relationships between them. As Giddens explains,

Exclusion contrasts with being 'poor', 'deprived', or 'on a low income' in several ways. It is not a matter of differing from others in degree—having fewer resources—but of not sharing in opportunities that the majority have … Exclusion refers to circumstances that affect more or less the entire life of the individual, not just a few aspects of it (1998a:105).

Influenced by such ideas, the Blair Government's Social Exclusion Unit, established in 1997 within the Cabinet Office (which was moved to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in May 2002), defines this form of exclusion as 'shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown'. (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001, p. 10) 'Social exclusion' thus focuses on the ways in which people are systematically cut off from the resources—economic, social and political—that are necessary to fully participating in society.

This has had a number of consequences for policy practices. According to contemporary advocates of social inclusion the kinds of simple transfers of wealth characteristic of the traditional welfare state are inadequate responses to the problem of forced social exclusion. These assume that individuals possess basic skills such as literacy, numeracy and interpersonal skills, to use these resources in an optimal way. However, because of the emergence of

structural and generational unemployment, individuals can no longer be assumed to possess such basic skills. As such, there is a need to re-integrate individuals back into the basic norms of society so that they are able to develop the requisite skills to use such resources. (see Latham, 1998, pp. 203-4)

In theory, this applies not simply to those at the bottom, or what Levitas identifies in the second discourse of social exclusion as the 'underclass'. Contemporary advocates of social inclusion, such as Giddens, have sought to move away from stigmatizing the 'excluded' by arguing that exclusion can also be voluntary. Voluntary social exclusion refers to situations where people can afford to effectively secede from the rest of society, and their obligations to it, exemplified in such practices as tax evasion or choosing to live in a gated community (see Latham, 1998, p. 258; and Giddens, 1998b, pp. 103–5). The solution to voluntary social exclusion, according to the advocates of social inclusion, is to cultivate a broad commitment to the principles of the welfare state by granting universal access to welfare, rather than targeting welfare based on a particular 'segment' of a person's life, such as gender or ethnicity. Other strategies for discouraging exclusion at the top are more interventionist in form. In Australia, for example, while still a Labor MP, Mark Latham proposed 'new forms of moral regulation', making government assistance to the private sector dependent on the recipients adhering to a 'Code of Corporate Citizenship'. (Latham, 1998, p. 258)

While, in theory, voluntary and forced exclusion are treated as causally connected—that is, opting out of social and financial obligations by those at the top has the effect of further excluding those at the bottom, such that reducing voluntary exclusion is seen as key to solving forced exclusion (Giddens, 1998b, p. 105; and Latham, 1998, p. 258)—in practical political terms such nuances have tended to be lost The focus of much recent policy around social inclusion and exclusion has almost exclusively been on the forced exclusion of those at the bottom, with little attention paid or actions taken to re-connect those at the top into the social bonds of community.

Even here, inclusion has been understood in rather narrow terms as increased participation in the labour market, or educational courses and labour market schemes geared towards paid employment within the global market (see Holden, 1999, pp. 529–38). As former adviser to New Labour's Social Exclusion Unit, the body specifically established to tackle problems of exclusion, Geoff Mulgan claimed that exchange 'is the main means of inclusion: without being able to sell your labour, and without the cash that comes from successful exchange of labour, you are effectively excluded from participation in most forms of communal life'. (cited in Levitas, 1998:154) Inclusion within community is thus narrowed to be attachment to a network of production and exchange relations as a seller of labour.

Unlike goals of social, economic and political equality, which entail transformation of existing social relations of exchange and production, inclusion within the community entails no significant alteration of such relations. Its end is simply to integrate individuals into the dominant structures of society. What is overlooked though is the fact that many of the problems to which social exclusion refers are themselves consequences of the existing relations of exchange and production. As Hinkson notes:

social exclusion is not simply a policy failure of global politicians, it is a cultural contradiction relating to how global structures work. That is to say, where societies are re-organized around 'mental labour' and high technology there is a reduced need for a balance of bodily and mental activity in the act of production and there is a radically reduced need for physical labour and certain kinds of mental labour outside of the cyber-machine. Exclusion emerges as a consequence of this shift in cultural forces—where intellectual practices move into the foreground of social structures (1999:109-10).

With these criticisms in mind, in drawing on the notion of social inclusion in this report, we are using it in a critical manner, which acknowledges that if inclusion is to have any meaning it entails change to existing social and economic arrangements. In thinking about community

sustainability and issues of health and wellbeing, we are seeking to retrieve the fuller notion of inclusion, as not only about forced inclusion, but also about voluntary exclusion, particularly the possibilities of people opting out of community which mobility affords.

In seeking to recover the fuller, more nuanced version of social inclusion, Richard Sennett (1999, pp. 25–7) argues that if social inclusion is to have any substantive meaning, it must satisfy three basic criteria. These are mutual exchange by which people are recognized as included and to whom obligations are owed; ritual, which sustains the bonds between people; and witnesses to one's behaviour which, in Sennett's terms, entails accountability to, and dependence on, others.

For Sennett, there is much about existing social and economic structures, particularly contemporary work practices, which militate against the kinds of relations that are integral to inclusion. He notes that the proliferation of short-term contracts and casualized labour has severely diminished loyalty and the kinds of relationships through which mutual recognition might be created and sustained. Likewise, the obsession with autonomous work practices means that any form of dependence, like seeking direction from managers, is likely to be interpreted as incompetence. Responsibility for this falls on individual employees while managers are largely shielded from the consequences of their own decisions. In such circumstances, practices of social inclusion are hollowed out to a transactional arrangement; one that is unlikely to foster the kinds of wellbeing that are integral to sustainable communities.

As the following chapters of this report illustrate, community and the transforming nature of community ties is a concern for many, not just public intellectuals such as Sennett. Indeed, the desire for a fuller sense of communal bonds appears to strengthen at the very same time as social and economic change appears to partially undermine their sustainability—and this tension is clearly evident in the responses and comments of the diverse range of people consulted as part of this research. Yet we are concerned in this study not simply with wellbeing, community and social inclusion per se, but with how cultural activities—and community arts in particular—articulate with these aspects of everyday life. We thus move now from the realm of social theory to a more focused discussion of arts practice in relation to health and broader social outcomes.

Art, Cultural Activities and Health

'If health is about adaptation, understanding, and acceptance, then the arts may be more potent than anything that medicine has to offer'. (Smith, 2002, p. 1433) This statement by the editor of the British Medical Journal reflects the high value that is placed upon arts and cultural activities more generally by some members of the community. Intuitively such claims make sense and have widespread appeal. What empirical evidence is there, however, to support such claims? The links between people's involvement in community arts and cultural events and specific health outcomes have not been studied in great detail. A number of researchers have suggested that the links are obvious, while others, much like the literature on community arts and social outcomes more generally, bemoan the lack of appropriate methodology. This section outlines the literature on the specific links between arts practice —particularly community based arts and cultural activities—and health outcomes. The following and final section of this chapter explores the linkage between the arts and broader social outcomes underlying wellbeing.

Evaluation

Smith (2005) has argued that some of the health budget of governments might in fact be profitably moved into the arts budget. This, he suggests, will assist in addressing a widespread unhappiness and ill-ease that is characteristic of contemporary Western societies, and that medicine is unable to solve. Yet Hamilton et al. (2003) argue that the evidence that community arts promotes health and improves social inclusion is elusive. Similarly, Newman et al. (2003) suggests that in the field of evaluation research no topic offers greater challenge

than the task of quantifying the health/social impact of the arts and cultural activities. Indeed, a high level of difficulty in reconciling the views of community arts practitioners and health evaluations seems inherent. At present, funding models demand that community artists make claims for the outcomes of their work, but these claims are far from being tested. Testing such claims is difficult, yet not impossible suggests Newman et al., (2003). A step in this direction has been taken by Hoynes (2003) who outlines the need to develop a framework to link arts with social outcomes that identifies key concepts that directly links empirical data with the value of arts.

What then is the impact of involvement in community arts and cultural events upon health? In the view of the present writers, the impact has probably been previously overstated in terms of a direct and documentable connection and understated in terms of its importance and a constitutive medium of social relations. In other words, it appears that there is certainly an effect, however, as the discussion below indicates, it is difficult to extract exact techniques of measurement from the various confounding and cross-cutting factors.

Specific Health Outcomes from Involvement in the Arts and Cultural Activities

In a study investigating the health impact of arts practice, Matarasso found that almost half of those he surveyed that had taken part in a range of Gaelic festivals felt better or healthier as a result of their involvement. This was explained by suggesting that their enjoyment of the event added to an overall sense of wellbeing (Matarasso, 1996). Furthermore, the study suggests that there is scope for further research to investigate the impact that such festivals have on lowering rates of depression. (Matarasso, 1996) While such links may seem intuitive, however, Matarasso's body of work has been heavily critiqued, particularly in relation to methodological issues (see Merli, 2001). In relation to Matarasso's study, for example, the size of his study sample remains unclear, while little evidence is provided to support his claim that attendance at a single festival might lower depression. These shortcomings suggest the need for more exacting research into community arts that clearly differentiates between the momentary and longer term impacts of community-based arts practices and cultural events on general well-being.

Indeed, one such study that framed its outcomes in a more circumscribed manner than Matarasso was that of Hillman (2002). Hillman outlines the physical, emotional, social and cultural benefits attributed to involvement in participatory singing, suggesting that participants perceived no overall deterioration in their health over the twelve-month period of the research and reported statistically significant improvement in their quality of life (Hillman, 2002). This is not surprising, given that the empirical literature linking music to improved health is substantial. Stacy, Brittain and Kerr's (2002) review of the literature on singing and health, for example, demonstrates clear physical health and social benefits from involvement in singing. Ashley (2002) suggests these benefits are salient for men as well as women and Jenkins (2001) reviews research on the 'Mozart effect': the improvement of spatial-temporal reasoning following participant's listening to music by Mozart. More specifically, Clift and Hancox (2001, p. 248) note that participant's self-reports of the health benefits of being involved in a choral society included making new friends, increased feelings of positivity, and feeling spiritually uplifted. The physical health benefits of improved breathing and a reduction in overall stress were also noted. (Clift and Hancox, 2001)

In a different vein, it appears that community arts have the potential to affect health outcomes amongst the most marginalized members of the community. Research by Carson et al. (in press) outlines the community arts aspect of a larger community-based health promotion research project, an arts centre that was developed in an underprivileged urban school-location. They conclude on the basis of their research that community arts projects have the capacity to 'enhance individual wellbeing and to develop and regenerate community'. In addition, the authors recommend that community arts be recognized not simply for its benefits to 'upstream' determinants of health but also for the capacity of community arts to deliver

health-promotion messages. Thus, community arts may be valued both for instrumental benefits and its potential to stimulate community-building.

Carson's research in fact supports a number of empirical studies that document broader social (as opposed to health-specific) outcomes of involvement in the arts. These include research by Lowe (2000) whose research analyses the links between community art and community development. In particular, Lowe notes that improved social bonding and collective identities developed following the involvement of a community in an arts project. In fact, Lowe explicitly places her empirical data in a frame of grounded models of community (discussed above) and, following Tönnies, concludes that through the use of community arts it is possible to generate gemeinschaft where gesellschaft may previously have dominated. In a similar vein, Campbell (2001) argues that community arts involvement holds potential to build community, citizenship, and resilience among marginalized and impoverished rural youth.

While the studies so far cited provide growing evidence of beneficial links between arts and cultural activities and health, wellbeing and community integration, it must be emphasized again that this body of research is as yet rather slight. One reason for this is that research to date has been rather narrow in scope, concentrating on individual events, places and activities. It has also been methodologically limited. Our own study has attempted to address these limitations by concentrating on a range of events and activities across a range of community settings. Moreover, we have combined quantitative and qualitative methodologies in order to deepen the empirical basis of our findings. While this does not overcome the inherent, indeed inescapable, difficulties of assessing the impact of cultural activities on communities and individual wellbeing, it goes some way to extending the understanding of this issue. Our research findings relate very closely as well to the related discourse of how to 'value' the arts, particularly in social terms.

Valuing the Arts

A recent review of the North American literature on 'valuing the arts' compiled by Kevin McCarthy et al. for the RAND Corporation suggested that emphasizing how the arts can serve 'broad social and economic goals' it is a recent phenomenon (2004, p. xi). The report noted that as 'late as the 1960s and 1970s the value of the arts was still a given for the American public. By the early 1990s, however, the social and political pressures that culminated in what became known as the 'culture wars' put pressure on arts advocates to articulate the public value of the arts'. (p. xi)

McCarthy, et al. suggest that the major response to the social and political pressure of the 1990s was to emphasize the instrumental value of the arts and they argue that this emphasis leaves out a host of more intrinsic values that simply cannot be understood instrumentally. To make the non-instrumental values of the arts more visible and relate them to different domains of impact, McCarthy et al. suggest the construction of a matrix of values with one axis of the matrix being defined by a spectrum running from instrumental to intrinsic benefits and the other axis ranging from private to public benefits. While this is certainly helpful in spelling out a range of outcomes that are rarely, if ever, considered in the instrumental discourse on the benefits of the arts, it runs the risk of segregating and equating benefits when the reality is that they overlap and operate at different levels of personal and group engagement and over different time-fames. A crucial strength of the arts is that they can have a multitude of overlapping and interlocking purposes and outcomes, and it is impossible to represent this adequately with a two-dimensional map or matrix. This is especially the case with what has come to be termed 'community arts'.

The community arts movement in Australia started a little later than the equivalent movement in the United States. Indeed a long-term Australia practitioner, Geoff Hogg, has said that the Australian movement began in the 1970s and the first significant influences came from the US (personal communication, 2006). The pattern across the two countries has undoubtedly been similar in that the emphasis in Australia has similarly shifted, during the 1990s, to a discussion

of the instrumental social outcomes of the arts. Indeed, in making the argument that Australia now needs a new national 'cultural policy', the arts economist David Throsby (2006) has argued that Australia has experienced its own version of the 'culture wars' and that the Howard government has imposed a very conservative and inward looking de facto cultural policy while disparaging the idea that we might have an overt and negotiated cultural policy at all.

Throsby has been a key contributor to discussions in Australia and internationally on the value of the arts for society, conducting a ground-breaking survey for the Australia Council for the Arts in 1983 on the sorts of incomes that practicing artists in Australia can generate. Together with several different research partners he completed similar surveys in 1987, 1993 and 2002. The latest survey titled Don't Give up your Day Job: An Economic study of Professional Artists in Australia5 indicated that although changes in communication technologies, the opening up of global markets, and a new emphasis on the role of art in using creativity to drive economic development, had created some new opportunities for artists there was little real change in income-security for the vast majority of practicing artists in Australia. Over a period of fifteen years, the survey suggested, the number of practicing artists has increased by 2–3 per cent per annum, yet half of the artists surveyed in 2002 earned less than $7,300 a year from their artistic work and less than $30,000 a year from all income sources, a situation that was almost unchanged in comparative terms from what the 1987 survey revealed. For all the artists surveyed in 2002, the average income from their art work was just $17,000 a year and only $37,200 a year from all sources.

What we can conclude from the series of surveys completed by Throsby and his colleagues is that even if Australian society has come to value the arts more over the last few decades this is not showing up in the way that professional artists are valued in terms of economic support. Although the surveys do not distinguish the domains of practice in which the artists work, we can assume that the situation for those who choose to work predominantly as community artists is at least as bleak.

In Economics and Culture (2001) Throsby argues that economic theories of value—including the notion of 'contingency value' that emanates from the new field of environmental economics—have helped considerably in making the argument that the arts, including community arts, deserve stronger public and government support. He suggests that the notion of 'cultural capital' helps to make the argument that investment in this field must be long-term and aimed at preserving and accumulating the human and material assets that enable artists and cultural workers to operate effectively. This can involve, for example, the preservation of cultural heritage as an asset for contemporary cultural workers. Throsby also argues that cultural values can contribute to the broader discourse on sustainability because they help us address concerns related to material and non-material 'advancement', intra-generational and inter-generational equity, the need for global cultural diversity, the importance of the precautionary principle, and the realization that economic and cultural systems are interdependent. (p. 69)

Throsby stresses that cultural value is more complex than other forms of economic value and he suggests that it can be broken down into the following components: aesthetic value, spiritual value, social value, historic value, symbolic value, and authenticity value. He then goes on to suggest that we need an array of 'assessment methods' to complete an evaluation of such diverse values, including mapping, thick description, attitudinal analysis, content analysis, and expert appraisal (pp 29-30). However, Throsby admits that the 'broader role of culture in articulating essential values by which human being express their identity and work out ways of living together' need to be 'defined against different yardsticks from those we use to measure economic success'. (p. 134) Essentially. Throsby argues that the economic argument

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5   Compiled with co-researcher Virginia Hollister (2003).

for the value of culture and the arts to society has already been made in the literature that emerged in the 1990s and that while we can stretch the boundaries of that discourse, we need to understand its limits and keep in sight the non-material values that it cannot adequately comprehend.

Several Australian studies, in a similarly broad vein, have made bold attempts to move beyond the emphasis on the economic value of arts and culture to society. One of the most important and earliest of these was a study completed by Deidre Williams in 1996. It examined nine projects out of a batch of ninety-five projects funded by the Australia Council in 1991. Williams spent two years examining the impacts of these nine projects using surveys and guided interviews to gather the views of project organizers and members of the communities in which the projects were implemented. She concluded that the projects had indeed delivered social, educational and artistic benefits, as well as economic benefits, to the communities concerned. Among the social benefits she listed the following:

- Established networks of ongoing value

- Developed community identity

- Raised public awareness of an issue

- Lessened social isolation in the community

- Improved understanding of different cultures and lifestyles

- Inspired action on a social justice issue. (p. 124)

However, such outcomes could well be described as self-referential in that they were the sorts of outcomes the project organizers intended and which they used to promote the activities within the communities concerned. The study by Williams is open to the same sort of criticisms as the work of the arts advocate Francois Matarasso. As we noted in the previous section in discussing Matarasso's research, critics have suggested that his methods for determining the social impacts claimed by arts practitioners lack depth and rigour. A further major problem with Williams' report is that she fully embraces the economic language of 'indicators' in an attempt to give practitioners some tools with which they might predetermine the social outcomes of their work. In doing so, she dissolves her discussion of social outcomes into a rather abstract discussion about the accumulation of 'social capital'. In the end, the instrumental language of economics undermines her attempt to move beyond the constraints of economics and Williams herself (1997, p. 4) lamented that her report 'received little response from community arts practitioners'.

A more successful attempt to broaden Australian discussions about the social benefits of the arts is illustrated by the work of Brisbane-based artist and scholar, Michael Richards. Over a period of three years (2001–04) Richards worked on an Australian Research Council-funded study conducted by the Queensland University of Technology for the Queensland Arts Council on how autonomous local arts councils across Queensland contribute to the building of 'stronger communities'. In Grow the Arts, Reap the Harvest (2006) Richards suggested that the recent emergence of theories regarding the role of the arts in building 'creative industries' for economic development[6] had attracted new interest in the arts but 'because these theories subjugate the arts to an economic imperative, and are driven by an economic rationalist thrust, they adopt a blinkered view of the arts and ignore much of what is most valuable about them'. (p. 34) Richards argues that we need to go back to a more fundamental human understanding of the arts because 'the arts are a direct expression of what makes us human, and we cannot be truly human without them'. (p. 32)

6   See, for example, Florida (2003).

In making this argument Richards suggests that as infants we all learn how to relate to the world around us and have intercourse with that world through the process that Aristotle called mimesis (mimicry). In broader terms mimesis is thus fundamental to how the arts work in making sense of the social world. In noting that 'some benefits of the arts are specific to individuals' while 'others are more diffuse and are more easily thought of as community benefits', Richards cites work such as that of Matarasso's (1997) to suggest that the arts can help to create 'healthier, wealthier, stronger and more cohesive, resilient and sustainable communities'. (p.33) He also draws on the work of Mills and Brown (2004, p.11) who examined a range of projects and concluded that they had beneficial outcomes in the areas of health, ecologically sustainable development, improvements to public housing and place awareness, rural revitalization, community strengthening, active citizenship, and social inclusion and cultural diversity.

While Richards developed a deep understanding of the work of Queensland's local arts councils and the projects that they have supported (see also Richards and Mitchell 2006), and while he draws on a wide range of literature to analyse this field of practice, he does not deal adequately with criticisms made of the depth of some of the studies that he cites. As a result, his own work, like that of Williams, also becomes rather self-referential in that he fails to engage critically with claims made by arts practitioners or arts facilitators. In fact, he does not appear to examine 'bad practice' within the field and his analysis of 'good practice' does not go deep enough in order to enrich the work of practitioners. His work is thus aimed more at arts facilitators than the wide range of practitioners in the field.

There is a marked contrast between Richards' glowing assessment of what the arts are achieving at the level of local communities and the rather gloomy assessment made by the Victorian community arts advocate Jon Hawkes in his opening speech at the 2004 Fourth Pillar Conference held in Melbourne. Although Hawkes is widely credited, including by Richards, as being largely responsible for encouraging local government in Australia to see 'cultural vitality' as an essential 'fourth pillar' of sustainability (see Hawkes 2001), he used his 2004 speech to sharply criticize community art projects that subvert the authentic practice of art to achieve predetermined outcomes of possibly limited value. We will discuss these claims, and some objections to them, in more detail later in the report. We note here however that Hawkes clearly voiced some important concerns about the potential instrumental misuse of the arts and the need for greater critical reflection on community arts practice itself, concerns that have only been addressed in broad and abstract ways by the important studies conducted by Williams and Richards.

A 2006 international conference on Arts in Society held in Edinburgh, Scotland, suggested apropos Hawke's concerns that there is a growing number of arts practitioners who are now engaging in scholarly reflection on their own practices, either as individuals or in group projects. One such reported project was a study conducted by Celina McEwen from the Centre for Popular Education at the University of Technology in Sydney of a community-theatre project run by Urban Theatre Projects in western Sydney. McEwen (2006) drew on the work of the French theorists Deleuze and Guattari in demonstrating that a play performed in a backyard in the outer western suburb of Mt Druitt by a cast that included indigenous people from Australia and the Pacific became an intense experience of 'deterritorialization' and 'reterritorialization' for performers and audience alike. However, the conference as a whole confirmed that most exploratory and evaluative studies of the social impact of community arts practice are limited in scope and duration and that this problem does not appear to be confined to Australia.

Conclusion

In summary, our review of the literature on how society values the arts suggests that this topic has gathered interest internationally since the beginning of the 1990s—firstly, in regard to the economic value of the arts and, secondly, in relation to broadening the discussion beyond economic values. While the case has been made for economic benefits to society of the arts, explorations of non-instrumental values have proved much more complex. Some studies, both in Australia and internationally, have made progress in trying to articulate non-instrumental benefits of the arts to society, yet they struggle to grapple with the complex overlaying and interlocking nature of a diverse array of benefits. Australian studies on the social benefits of the arts continue to be too uncritical of claims made by arts practitioners and facilitators and they have made little progress in discerning the difference between good and bad practice in regard to community arts. Nevertheless, while the individual pieces of evidence regarding the social benefits of the arts may still be fairly weak the overall case is mounting that the arts have an important role to play in the search for meaning and the sustainability of community in a rapidly changing world. The irony is that, while there may be a growing sense that the arts are becoming increasingly important in social and communal terms, public funding for the arts is not growing and practicing artists rarely have an adequate income to concentrate on their practice. \

The present study is intimately concerned with what wellbeing is and where it lies, with the nature of community, and with the dynamics of particular communities in face of contemporary rapid social and economic change. Grappling with issues of social inclusion and exclusion is part and parcel of this concern. Much of this report remains theoretical in focus, but in the following chapters the theory becomes disguised, becomes grounded and textured in light of the detailed empirical exploration undertaken. Our theoretical concerns are also bounded by a central focus on the field of cultural activities and community arts practice and on a need to offer practical, policy relevant recommendations. This grounded/practical focus however allows us to simultaneously explore a set of different but related questions of differing theoretical and political magnitude, namely; how do cultural and arts activities and events contribute to the health and wellbeing of individuals and the sustainability of the communities of place and network of which they may be a part? What is the nature of cultural and artistic work of this type? How is community arts practice, thought about, pursued and transformed in this context? And, finally, but by no means to exhaust the possible list of questions, what might be the link between community and personhood, particularly in rapidly transforming life-worlds?

3

Community Arts Events and Festivals: Quantitative Data

The following overview is based upon data from two questionnaires completed during 2005 and early 2006. There are two key findings of this chapter; the first of which relates to the rate of attendance at and value placed upon community cultural events. In terms of a survey of a representative sample of the general population in four Victorian localities, reported attendance at community arts events and festivals amongst respondents was low. However, high numbers of these respondents reported that their community benefited from events in their area. This suggests that while they, personally, may not attend events, the general public within these four localities valued the contribution that such events offer their perceived local community as whole. Thus, events and festivals bring a sense of activity or excitement as well as a sense of community action, avowal and consolidation which is valued regardless of an individual's active participation. The second key finding reported in this chapter is that, amongst respondents specifically surveyed at a range of cultural events, the foremost motivation to attend was the stated desire to 'contribute to their community'. Thus, 40.7 per cent of respondents in the second series of questionnaires, when asked why they attended a particular event reported 'to support my community' while 38.6 per cent of respondents reported that, over time, they had attended community arts events and festivals when they wanted to 'give something to the community'. As a consequence, it might be said that those people who attend community-based cultural events are often people who, if not already involved in their community, show a willingness to become so, at least momentarily. It may be plausibly argued, therefore, that events do not tend to involve more marginalized or isolated members of the community—and this obviously raises questions not about the overall value of community-based cultural events but the extent to which they need to be carefully planned if they are to used specifically as a tool to address social exclusion..

The following sections give details of the data specific to each questionnaire, while the chapter concludes with an overall summary of the quantitative data which draws out key findings.

First Questionnaire: Questions of Community and Wellbeing

The first questionnaire was a broad-based enquiry into contemporary notions of community constructed by the research team in light of a range of similar questionnaires and the specific intellectual aims of this project. Containing thirty-two questions, the questionnaire used ten-point Likert scales, as well as multiple choice and open-ended questions. Detailed information was sought from respondents regarding the nature of contemporary community life. The questionnaire itself was piloted twice, first amongst colleagues and secondly amongst a sample size of 10 per cent of the expected final sample (involving students at Deakin University). As a result of this feedback a number of questions were reworded and/or reconceptualiszed.

Households in four study localities were randomly selected from the Telstra White Pages, the Australian telephone directory. In total 3000 questionnaires were mailed to homes across four areas. Residents of Hamilton and Daylesford received 1000 each and 2000 each were sent to residents of St Kilda and Broadmeadows.

The response rate was approximately 10 per cent in the city areas of St Kilda and Broadmeadows and 20 per cent in the rural areas of Hamilton and Daylesford. This return rate was

supplemented by collection of questionnaires in a non-random manner. In Broadmeadows, additional questionnaires were completed by attendees at the Neighbourhood Renewal Centre and Dallas Community House. In Daylesford additional questionnaires were collected from people present in the town centre during a day-long visit by the research team. Overall, a total of 411 valid questionnaires were returned. Questionnaires were deemed invalid if less than two pages were filled out.

Numbers of valid questionnaires returned in each area:

Broadmeadows	95
Daylesford	94
St Kilda	128
Hamilton	94

The sample consisted of relatively even numbers of males (44.5 per cent) and females (52.3 per cent). Gender was not specified by 3.2 per cent of participants. In terms of ethnicity, the sample comprised of 64 per cent of people who identified as Australian, 4.1 per cent British and 1 per cent each of European, German, Greek, New Zealand and Turkish background. This question regarding ethnicity was not responded to by 12.7 per cent of the sample.

It became clear from the results of our data that there were three different groups in the community arts and events realm:

- Organizers and those involved in running, staging and developing community arts events. These tend to be (1) community arts or community development workers and (2) enthusiastic community members

- Attendees. These are people who attend community arts events. They range from people who may attend one-off occasions through to those who will go to every event over a certain period.

- Non-attendees. Those who would not or do not attend community arts event for a variety of reasons including financial and health constraints, and specific safety concerns (such as taking young children to the St Kilda festival.

Perception of Regularity of Events

Question 19 of the first questionnaire asked 'How often does your community have public celebrations and rituals—such as street parties or local festivals?' A number of examples were included: the Broadmeadows Multicultural Planting Day, Daylesford's Swiss Italian Festa, the St Kilda Festival and Hamilton's Promenade of Sacred Music.

Across the sample of 411 respondents, 44 per cent believed that their community held public events every 6 months, while 20 per cent believed it was monthly (refer to Table 1). However, 13 per cent indicated that they were not sure. This may reflect a level of uncertainty over what these events might include. In Daylesford the perceived regularity of events was notably higher. This may reflect the fact that Daylesford has a high number of community arts events, notably higher than Hamilton and Broadmeadows. In Broadmeadows a higher number of respondents (25.3 per cent) were not sure about the regularity of events.

Table 1: Perception of Regularity of Events by Place (Percent Frequency)

	All (n=414)	Hamilton (n=94)	St Kilda (n=128)	Daylesford (n=94)	Broadmeadows (n=95)
Weekly	1.9	1.1	0.8	2.1	4.2
Monthly	20.4	16.0	18.8	36.2	11.6
Every six months	44.0	45.7	48.4	42.6	37.9
Once a year	17.8	27.7	21.1	6.4	14.7
Never	1.5	2.1	0	0	4.2
Not sure	12.7	7.4	8.6	10.6	25.3
No response	1.7	0	2.3	2.1	2.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Perceived Benefits of Events

A total of 353 respondents answered the question that stated 'I feel that my community benefits from these kinds of public celebrations and rituals'. Of those, 38 per cent agreed with the statement. Forty three respondents (11 per cent) had no strong feeling either way on this issue. Thirty respondents (7.3 per cent) either disagreed or strongly disagreed. When the categories were collapsed 65 per cent agreed that their community benefits from events while only 7 per cent disagreed.

The results in relation to this question suggested location differences in the belief that the community benefited from events. In Daylesford, 6 per cent disagreed while 72 per cent agreed that there was benefits to the community from community arts events. In St Kilda, by comparison, 10 per cent felt the community did not benefit from events, while only 62 per cent believed there was benefit. This may reflect a wider dissatisfaction with the annual St Kilda festival, an issue that is discussed elsewhere in the report. Results for this question also suggest differences among the relatively 'arts poor' communities. In Broadmeadows, 10 per cent of respondents indicated that their community did not benefit from community events, while only 55 per cent agreed that the community did benefit. In contrast, 2 per cent of Hamilton respondents indicated that their community did not benefit from events, while 74 per cent agreed that there was benefit.

Reported Attendance

Question 21 asked 'How often do you go along to such events'? This was a forced choice question offering three alternatives: 'I go to all the festivals and community arts events that are held in my area'; 'I go to some festival and community arts events'; and, ' I go to the occasional festival and community art event that is most relevant to me'. Overall, 8.8 per cent of questionnaire respondents reported attending all festivals and community arts event in their area. This was higher for residents of Daylesford (12.8 per cent) and lower for those living in St Kilda (7 per cent) and Hamilton (5.3 per cent). Surprisingly, 10.5 per cent of residents of Broadmeadows, despite being identified as an area comparatively poor in community arts activities, reported attending all events. This may reflect the low number of events in this locality, but also a higher number of attendees going to the few events on offer.

Similar numbers of respondents reported going to some festivals and community arts events (40.9 per cent) as did reported go to the occasional festival and community art event (39.7 per cent). In the response to this question however, as might be expected, there was a degree of difference between those communities deemed arts rich and those arts poor. For the communities deemed arts rich, St Kilda and Daylesford, 53 per cent in St Kilda and 46

per cent in Daylesford reported attending some festivals and community arts events. In Broadmeadows only 16.8 per cent reported attending some festivals and community arts events, while in Hamilton the percentage of overall respondents was higher at 44 per cent.

It is important to appreciate that reported attendance is likely to be influenced by two issues. The first of these is appreciating the wide definition of public celebrations and rituals and being able to operationalise this in practical terms. It is possible that attendance was under reported by those who had attended more events but did not feel that such events fell into this category. The Globalism Institute took a deliberately broad definition of the terms but that does not mean that respondents did likewise. In addition, it is possible that respondents had difficulty remembering attendance of events.

The remainder of this section discusses reported attendance by income level, place and level of education.

Reported Attendance by Self-Reported Income Level

Income levels were measured in this questionnaire by a simple self-report measure: noting if respondents considered themselves to be well-off, comfortable or struggling. A high proportion of the sample reported to be comfortable (62 per cent), while 21 per cent reported they were struggling. A lower number noted they were well off (14 per cent) while only 3 per cent overall, did not reply to this question. A total of 411 participants responded to the question of income. As might be expected, reported attendance was patterned by income (refer to Table 2). Forty six percent of those who considered themselves to be struggling, reported going to the occasional event, while 31 per cent reported going to some events. Of the 85 respondents to the questionnaire who reported to be struggling, 10 or 12 per cent, a comparatively high number, reported attending all community arts events in their area. This might reflect the free (no-cost) nature of events held in areas with a high proportion of those considered themselves to be struggling, as well as the lower overall number of events held in such areas.

Table 2: Reported Attendance by Self-Reported Income Level (Percent Frequency)

	Total (n=411)	Well-off (n=57)	Comfortable (n=254)	struggling (n=85)
I go to all the festivals in my area	8.8	3.5	8.7	11.8
I go to some festivals	40.9	56.1	42.1	30.6
I go to the occasional festival … that is most relevant to me	39.7	26.3	40.6	45.9
No response	10.7	14.0	8.7	11.8
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

Fifty seven respondents to the questionnaire (13.9 per cent overall) considered themselves to be well off. Of these, very few, 3.5 per cent reported going to all events and festivals held in their area. This finding may reflect the myriad of other leisure and entertainment choices available to the well-off. It was of-set however by the fact that a high 56.1 per cent of 'well-off respondents reported going to some festivals.

Attendance by Place

Overall 41 per cent of respondents reported attending some festivals and community arts events. However, results suggest some difference according to place (refer to Table 3). In St Kilda there were higher rates of reported attendance at some festivals and community arts events (53.1 per cent), compared to only 17 per cent in Broadmeadows. While in Daylesford there was a higher percentage of those who reported attending all the festivals and community arts events (12 per cent) as opposed to across all areas (8.8 per cent) and particularly compared to Hamilton (5.3 per cent). As might be expected, given that we had deemed them art-poor

areas, both Hamilton and Broadmeadows residents reported higher levels of attendance at the occasional festival only (47.9 per cent and 48.4 per cent respectively) than the average across all areas (39.7 per cent). Finally, a very high proportion of Broadmeadows residents did not answer this question (24.2 per cent). This may be due to the number of Broadmeadows resident who come from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Table 3: Reported Attendance by Place (Percent Frequency)

	Total	Hamilton (n=94)	St Kilda (n=128)	Daylesford (n=94)	Broadmeadows (n=95)
All the festivals in my area	8.8	5.3	7.0	12.8	10.5
Some festivals	40.9	43.6	53.1	45.7	16.8
The occasional festival most relevant	39.7	47.9	30.5	35.1	48.4
No response	10.7	3.2	9.4	6.4	24.2
Total		100	100.0	100.0	100.0

Attendance by Level of Education

There was not an obvious patterning of attendance by level of education (refer to Table 4). Only 14 respondents reported having only some primary school education. Of these respondents with only some primary education, a higher proportion (14.3 per cent) than the overall average of 8.8 per cent reported that 'I go to all the festivals and community arts events that are held in my area'. However, this may be influenced by age differences in education. The mean age for the group who reported having primary school education only was 60, quite different to the group with postgraduate education, whose mean age was 40. This suggests that level of education is influenced by age: that the older participants have reported lower levels of education.

It is, however, important to note the pattern that those who reported higher levels of education also reported attending events more frequently. This trend reversed for those reporting going to only occasional events. This might be explained by higher levels of education, but since the age range is lower for those with higher education, it may also be explained by age: in that those with young families are attending events more often.

Table 4: Reported Attendance by Level of Education (Percent Frequency)

	Total	Primary school (n=14)	Some Secondary school (n=77)	Completed secondary school (n=73)	Trade training (n=59)	University (n=82)	Post Graduate (n=92)
I go to all the festivals in my area	8.8	14.3	13.2	9.1	8.5	8.5	10.9
I go to some festivals	40.9	0	27.5	35.4	44.5	47.6	57.6
I go to the occasional festival … that is most relevant to me	39.7	71.4	46.2	42.7	37.7	37.8	27.2
No response	10.7	14.3	13.2	12.8	9.3	6.1	4.3
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Reasons for Non-Participation in Community Arts Events

Question number 22 of the first questionnaire was 'If you do not participate in community arts events could you please tell us why'? Again, this was a forced choice question where respondents were able to tick as many as were relevant from the following options: 'I don't know about them', 'I am too busy', 'I can't afford the meal/drinks cost that go with it', 'I'm not interested in community arts activities', 'I don't have anything in common with the people who go to those kinds of events', 'I don't think I'd get anything out of it', 'No reason ' or 'Other reason, please state'

The most common reason cited for non-attendance at events was encompassed by the 10 per cent of respondents who said they were too busy. Likewise, 7.5 per cent suggested that they did not know about events, while another 7.5 per cent of respondents said there was no reason for not going. A small 2.4 per cent of respondents said that they did not attend because they 'don't have anything in common with the people who go to these events'. Cost of associated food and beverages that would be purchased while at an event were reason enough for 5 per cent of the sample to suggest that they would not attend. Other reasons that were stated were practical ones: people did not attend because they were 'Limited by state of my health' or 'The events we do not attend do not interest me or they are not at a convenient time for my family'.

Some respondents gave a sense of feeling unwelcome at events. A Hamilton questionnaire respondent noted that 'Only the local ponces go', suggesting that art events in Hamilton were more likely to be attended by those well-heeled members of the community. Likewise in Daylesford, one questionnaire respondent noted that she 'Feels inferior to some of those who participate', implying that sometimes events had a tendency to be cliquey or elitist

Furthermore, some questionnaire respondents suggested that events were lacking in a crucial 'community' element. For some this was due to organisational issues—a Hume resident reporting that 'The community event catchment area is too large for my sense of community'. This reflects the expansive nature of funded events held in Hume, a local government area of almost 160 000 residents (Hume City Council, 2006). In a similar vein, another respondent said that events are 'not always conducive to meeting/engaging with people'. In both Daylesford

and St Kilda there was some sense that events were not for the local people, noting that 'They are dominated by tourists'.

Overall, however, a high 46 per cent of the questionnaire respondents gave no response to this question, suggesting that they did not have a strong reason for their non-attendance at events. It may be that people who do not attend and do not have any reason for their non-attendance at events do not necessarily perceive a lack of community value in cultural events. As has been noted, when likert scale categories were collapsed, 65 per cent of questionnaire respondents agreed that their community benefits from events while only 7 per cent disagreed. This may, somewhat ironically, imply that a high value is placed upon community events by non-attendees.

Second Questionnaire: Participants at Festivals

The following data is based upon the second questionnaire. The secondary questionnaire was constructed in response to themes that emerged from the primary questionnaire and the qualitative interviews conducted as part of this study. This second questionnaire was designed to reach a third group of people—participants who attended a specific event. This was in contrast to the many non-attendees who participated in the primary questionnaire and the organizers of events who were the focus of qualitative interviews. The questionnaire was administered at a range of events—seven in total.

The secondary questionnaire sought to test the generalizability amongst attendees of three themes. These were the social and health benefits of attendance, the life cycle of attendance and the reasons for attending events. It was assumed that if there was a life cycle of attendance, future community arts funding could target specific groups who were most likely to get the most from an event. A total of 400 questionnaires were collected at events and festivals. Unlike the first questionnaire, the sample consisted of more females (54.3 per cent) than males (38.1 per cent). Gender was not specified by 2.9 per cent of respondents.

Why Have You Come Along Today?

The first question of the second questionnaire was a forced choice question asking 'Why have you come along today'? Referring to Table 5, 33.6 per cent of respondents reported that attendance at a community arts event allowed them to 'have some fun'. Reporting fun as an expectation of attendance did, of course, vary according to event. More than 60 per cent of respondents reported that they had some fun at the Hume Multi-Cultural Planting Festival, whereas only slightly more than 30 per cent of respondents in attendance at the Daylesford Flower Festa felt like they had fun. In addition, 39.1 per cent of respondents aged between 16 and 19 said that they had come along to have some fun.

Overall responses indicated that the key factors motivating attendance was an interest in the event (45.2 per cent) and a desire to support one's community (40.7 per cent). Of importance also in motivating attendance was the desire to experience or maintain cultural traditions (31.9 per cent), to meet with friends and neighbours (29.8 per cent) and to do something different (27.1 per cent). '8 To experience or maintain cultural traditions' was an important motivating factor particularly for attendees at the Broadmeadows Planting Festival (55.4 per cent), The Preston Human Rights Day (58.7) and the Hamilton Mela (50 per cent). In contrast, interest in that particular event was an important motivation for attendees at the St Kilda RAG events (52.9 per cent) and the CERES Return of the Sacred Kingfisher event (52.3 per cent).

Overwhelmingly, people did not attend an event with the expectation that they would gain new skills, indeed a low 7.9 per cent reported attending and event for the purpose of skills acquisition. Even at the event where we consider it most likely that attendees might have gained ongoing skills (the RAG events) only 5.9 per cent of respondents noted that as a motivating factor in their attendance. The current emphasis on gaining new skills (and economic development) that is prominent in funding applications therefore, does not appear to be supported by the data. We do not have data to say if attendees at particular events did in

fact, despite expectations, gain new skills. However, it seems clear that for one-off events such as festivals, motivation to attend is not linked to expectations of gaining new skills.

Similarly, very low numbers of respondents reported that attending an event was a chance to get some exercise (7.1 per cent). This may reflect, in tandem with other issues, either cultural attitudes towards exercise or a lack of accessibility at events, as some venues were only accessible by car.

It seems clear from the results reported in Table 5 that respondents at events attended deliberately, as opposed to coming along because they had nothing else to do. Indeed, only 6 per cent of respondents reported having 'nothing else on today' as a motivating factor in their attendance. Likewise, only 12.1 per cent of respondents noted their attendance was a 'chance to get out of the house'.

Table 5: Reported Motivation for Attendance (Percent Frequency)

	Total
Something different to do	27.1
I come every year	22.4
Nice weather	16.7
To meet up with friends and neighbours	29.8
To meet new people	16.9
To have some fun	33.6
To spend time with the family	20.5
To experience or maintain cultural traditions	31.9
I'm interested in this event	45.2
To support my community	40.7
To get some exercise	7.1
Chance to get out of the house	12.1
I had nothing else on today	6
To pick up some new skills	7.9
Learn about area (local community)	13.3

Gender

There appeared to be clear differences in motivation to attend events by gender. As can be seen in Table 6, the most obvious was to spend time with family: 26.3 per cent of male respondents noted this while only 18 per cent of females responded this way. This might be explained by the high proportion of females who act as the primary carer: they may well have already spent a high amount of time with the family that week, whereas for males who may have been employed outside the home this was a key opportunity to spend time with the family.

The weather was clearly more of a motivating factor for men (21.9 per cent) than it was for women (12.7 per cent). Interestingly, while 12.5 per cent of male respondents noted that attendance at the event was the chance to 'to get some exercise', only 3.5 per cent of women felt the same way. This might be explained by women defining exercise in a more organized way as opposed to they incidental type of exercise gained through attendance.

Similarly, high numbers of both males (42.5 per cent) and females (43 per cent) reported they had attended the event to support their community. Indeed, this along with 'I am interested in this event' was the key reason given for attendance. A higher proportion of female

respondents (52.6 per cent) reported that their interest in this particular event was motivated by being interested in this event than men (40 per cent).

It appeared that, overall, men reported being motivated by general factors such as the weather, coming every year, spending time with family, getting some exercise, having nothing else on. In contrast, women reported being motivated by more specific reasons: meeting new people, being interested in a specific event and something different to do.

Table 6: Reported Motivation for Attendance by Gender (Percent Frequency)

	Total (n=400)	Male (n= 160)	Female (n=228)
Something different to do	27.1	26.9	30.3
I come every year	22.4	27.5	20.6
Nice weather	16.7	21.9	12.7
To meet up with friends and neighbours	29.8	33.1	29.4
To meet new people	16.9	13.8	18.4
To have some fun	33.6	35	34.2
To spend time with the family	20.5	26.3	18
To experience or maintain cultural traditions	31.9	32.5	31.6
I'm interested in this event	45.2	40	52.6
To support my community	40.7	42.5	43
To get some exercise	7.1	12.5	3.5
Chance to get out of the house	12.1	14.4	11.4
I had nothing else on today	6	9.4	4.4
To pick up some new skills	7.9	7.5	8.8
Learn about area (local community)	13.3	14.4	14
Total		100.0	100.0

Age

Across all age groups respondents were motivated to attend because of interest in a specific event (45.2 per cent) and a desire to have some fun (33.6 per cent)(refer to Table 7). As might be expected, a larger proportion of those aged 16 – 19 (39.1 per cent) deemed having fun as a motivation to attend a community arts event or festival.

The weather was a higher motivating factor for a larger percent of the aged 49+ group (32.3 per cent) than for those aged less than 49 (16 per cent). Coming along every year was noted by almost half of those aged 16 – 19, however this might be explained by their youth and lack of comparison experience. This younger group also were markedly lower in reporting being motivated to attend by the desire to support their community (13 per cent) as opposed to the composite group aged younger than 49 (42.7 per cent) and those older than 49 (41.9 per

cent).

While 29 per cent of the 49+ age group expected to meet new people, 32.3 per cent of this group, as noted in Section 2, actually did so. In contrast, while a low 13 per cent of those aged 16-19 and 16.6 per cent of those aged to 49 were motivated to attend to meet new people, of these age groups 26.1 per cent and 30.4 per cent respectively actually did so.

Table 7: Reported Motivation for Attendance by Age (Percent Frequency)

	Total	Age 16 – 19 (n= 23	Age to 49 (n=246)	Age 49 + (n=99)
Something different to do	27.1	34.8	28	32.3
I come every year	22.4	47.8	22.3	35.5
Nice weather	16.7	13	16	32.3
To meet up with friends and neighbours	29.8	39.1	31	32.3
To meet new people	16.9	13	16.6	29
To have some fun	33.6	39.1	34.8	38.7
To spend time with the family	20.5	17.4	21.2	22.6
To experience or maintain cultural traditions	31.9	21.7	33.2	35.5
I'm interested in this event	45.2	30.4	47.6	45.2
To support my community	40.7	13	42.7	41.9
To get some exercise	7.1	4.3	6.8	12.9
Chance to get out of the house	12.1	8.7	12	19.4
I had nothing else on today	6	4.3	6	6.5
To pick up some new skills	7.9	4.3	7.6	12.9
Learn about area (local community)	13.3	8.7	13.6	16.1
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

Living Status

It appeared from the data that the motivations to attend an event were patterned by living status: whether the respondent was living alone, with family, or with others. Referring to Table 8, for those who lived alone, the primary motivations of attending reported by the highest number of participants was 'I'm interested in this event' (59.7 per cent) and 'to support my community' (54.8 per cent). In addition, this group was strongly motivated by 'something different to do' (41.9 per cent), higher than those who lived with family (26 per cent) and those who lived with others (25.4 per cent). Finally, the weather was a higher motivating factor for those who live alone (22.6 per cent) than for the other two groups at 15.9 per cent and 14.1 per cent respectively.

As might be expected, for those who were living with family, motivation to attend to spend time with the family was higher (26.4 per cent) than it was for those who live alone (14.5 per cent) and those who live with others (8.5 per cent). In addition, for those who live with family the chance to 'experience or maintain cultural traditions' was a strong motivating factor (35.3 per cent), in comparison to the group who lived alone (25.8 per cent) and those who lived with others (28.2 per cent). This might be explained by the family orientation of this group for whom cultural experiences might well be important.

The most obvious motivations for attendance at events by those who reported living with others was a specific interest in the event (46.5 per cent) and to support their community (47.9 per cent). In addition to these motivations, however, and notably higher than the other two groups, was the chance to 'meet up with friends and neighbours' (43.7 per cent) and to 'have some fun' (40.8 per cent). Meeting up with friends and neighbours was markedly higher as a motivation for those who live with others than it was for those who live with family (27.5 per cent) or, more importantly, those who live alone (30.6 per cent). This may be explained by age: those who were living with others might be younger people for whom attendance at such events is an important way to foster social connections.

Table 8: Reported Motivation for Attendance by Living Status (Percent Frequency)

	Total	Live Alone (n=62)	Live with family (n= 258)	Live with others (n= 71)
Something different to do	27.1	41.9	26	25.4
I come every year	22.4	17.7	26	18.3
Nice weather	16.7	22.6	15.9	14.1
To meet up with friends and neighbours	29.8	30.6	27.5	43.7
To meet new people	16.9	19.4	16.7	15.5
To have some fun	33.6	29	34.5	40.8
To spend time with the family	20.5	14.5	26.4	8.5
To experience or maintain cultural traditions	31.9	25.8	35.3	28.2
I'm interested in this event	45.2	59.7	45.3	46.5
To support my community	40.7	54.8	38.4	47.9
To get some exercise	7.1	6.5	7.4	7
Chance to get out of the house	12.1	17.7	11.2	14.1
I had nothing else on today	6	8.1	5.4	8.5
To pick up some new skills	7.9	11.3	7.4	8.5
Learn about area (local community)	13.3	17.7	12.4	18.3
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

Health

Health status of questionnaire respondents was elicited by a closed-ended question: Compared to other people in Australia of the same age, do you consider yourself to be in good health or poor health? Responses were 'My health is generally good', 'My health is sometimes good and sometimes poor' or 'My health is generally poor'. As might be expected, the majority of respondents (80 per cent) reported 'My health is generally good' (refer to Table 9). In contrast, 11 per cent noted that 'My health is sometimes good and sometimes poor' while 1.7 per cent of respondents reported 'My health is generally poor'. Health status was not indicated by 2.4 per cent of the overall sample.

Only tenuous claims can be made about the group of respondents who reported poor health status since this was a very small proportion (2 per cent) of the overall sample. Nonetheless, there are a number of issues worth noting, in particular, the degree to which the weather was

an influencing factor on attendance.

The degree to which good weather was a factor in attendance differed by health status: those who reported better health were far less likely to be influenced in attending by good weather (15.5 per cent) than those whose health was sometimes good and sometimes poor (23.9 per cent). Weather was more of a motivating factor for a higher proportion of those who reported poor health (28.6 per cent). Having some fun was a motivating factor to attend for those respondents who reported they were in good health (35.4 per cent), higher than those who reported fair health (26.1 per cent) or poor health (28.6 per cent). Interest in the particular event was a low motivating factor for those in poor health (28.6 per cent) as opposed to those in good health (47.6 per cent) or those whose health was variable (43.5 per cent). Similarly, those with poor health status reported that having something different to do was a motivating factor (42.9 per cent). This was higher than those with good health (27.7) or those who reported fair health (26.1). This might suggest that for those in poor health attendance reflected the importance of having something different to do than attend any particular event. This is different to the motivation to attend of the overall sample.

Table 9: Reported Motivation for Attendance by Health status (Percent Frequency)

	Total	Health = good (n=336)	Health = fair (n= 46)	Health = poor (n= 11)
Something different to do	27.1	27.7	26.1	42.9
I come every year	22.4	22	39.1	x
Nice weather	16.7	15.5	23.9	28.6
To meet up with friends and neighbours	29.8	31	32.6	28.6
To meet new people	16.9	16.4	21.7	x
To have some fun	33.6	35.4	26.1	28.6
To spend time with the family	20.5	21.4	23.9	x
To experience or maintain cultural traditions	31.9	33.3	28.3	28.6
I'm interested in this event	45.2	47.6	43.5	28.6
To support my community	40.7	43.2	43.5	28.6
To get some exercise	7.1	6.5	10.9	x
Chance to get out of the house	12.1	11.6	19.6	14.3
I had nothing else on today	6	5.7	6.5	14.3
To pick up some new skills	7.9	7.1	8.7	14.3
Learn about area (local community)	13.3	13.4	15.2	14.3
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

Event

The secondary questionnaire was administered at seven different events: the Broadmeadows Multicultural Planting Festival, the RAG theatre performance and art exhibition, the MCCA Muslim Eid festival, Daylesford's Flower Festa, the CERES Kingfisher Festival, the Preston Human Rights Day and the Mela held in Hamilton. Each of these events attracted a different audience.

The Broadmeadows Multicultural Planting Festival is an annual event that combines environmental education with shared food and entertainment. Planting of trees was followed by a shared lunch, with numerous cultural communities providing traditional food. It must be noted that for very few of the respondents at the Broadmeadows Multicultural Planting Festival was English a first language. The importance of good weather cannot be underestimated for the success of this kind of event. Thus, 49 per cent of respondents reported attending this festival partly due to the good weather (refer to Table 10).

The St Kilda RAG comprised of two events: an exhibition and a theatre piece. 'The Exhibitionists' was an exhibition of visual art works highlighting the skills of members of KickstART Contemporary Art Class, a class for people with mental illness. The second event 'Whispering RAG' was advertised as a highly original, interactive theatrical event, performed and devised by members of RAG Theatre, people who live with mental illness.

Of the other festivals studied, the MCCA Muslim Eid Festival is the largest event for the local Muslim community held twice a year in Melbourne, and is well attended. The Daylesford Flower Festa, on the other hand, is a fundraising event for the Daylesford Swiss Italian Festa, held annually in April. Similarly, The Return of the Sacred Kingfisher Festival is an annual community celebration welcoming the Sacred Kingfisher back to its original habitat along the banks of Merri Creek in Brunswick. In a more 'one-off' vein, the Preston Human Rights Day was organized by the Migrant Resource Centre and aimed to firstly, increase knowledge of human rights, secondly, openly display culture, thirdly, involve school students and fourthly acknowledge the experience of others. Finally, the Hamilton Mela was another one-off event organized by RMIT's Globalism Institute, a forum to discuss and celebrate food.

Table 10: Reported Motivation for Attendance by Event (Percent Frequency)

	All	BM Planting Day (n=56)	St Kilda RAG (n=33)	Eid (n= 63)	Daylesford Flower Festa (n=63)	CERES Kingfisher (n=85)	Preston Human Rights (n= 45)	Hamilton Mela (n=50)
Something different to do	27.1	37.5	29.4	10.9	31.3	23.3	39.1	36
I come every year	22.4	41.1	8.8	60.9	29.7	11.6	x	x
Nice weather	16.7	50	11.8	21.9	12.5	10.5	15.2	x
To meet up with friends and neighbours	29.8	35.7	20.6	37.5	21.9	45.3	28.3	16
To meet new people	16.9	37.5	26.5	10.9	4.7	12.8	26.1	16
To have some fun	33.6	50	38.2	35.9	18.8	41.9	41.3	20
To spend time with the family	20.5	32.1	8.8	26.6	12.5	23.3	28.3	14
To experience or maintain cultural traditions	31.9	55.4	20.6	31.3	9.4	20.9	58.7	50

	All	BM Planting Day (n=56)	St Kilda RAG (n=33)	Eid (n= 63)	Daylesford Flower Festa (n=63)	CERES Kingfisher (n=85)	Preston Human Rights (n= 45)	Hamilton Mela (n=50)
I'm interested in this event	45.2	39.3	52.9	26.6	42.2	52.3	47.8	78
To support my community	40.7	60.7	35.3	37.5	43.8	46.5	41.3	28
To get some exercise	7.1	10.7	2.9	10.9	7.8	5.8	10.9	2
Chance to get out of the house	12.1	23.2	2.9	17.2	14.1	12.8	6.5	6
I had nothing else on today	6	12.5	5.9	3.1	1.6	7	6.5	8
To pick up some new skills	7.9	12.5	5.9	4.7	12.5	4.7	6.5	12
Learn about area (local community)	13.3	30.4	2.9	4.7	14.1	11.6	2.2	30
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

What have you got from coming along today?

The second question on the secondary questionnaire that was administered at events asked respondents to note what they had got from attending. This was different to the previous question that focused on the expected outcomes that motivated people to attend. Again, this was a forced choice question with an option for other outcomes that could be noted (refer to Table 11).

Table 11: Reported Benefits of Attendance (Percent Frequency)

	All
I found things in common with others	30.7
I learnt of services available in the community	22.4
I caught up with neighbours and friends	35.7
I spent time with family	26.7
I heard about local issues	19.3
I felt like I belonged to this community	33.8
I felt a bit on my own	2.9
I met new people	29.3
I had some fun	43.3
I was happier for coming along	38.3
It was good for my health	22.4
I did not feel that involved	1.7
It did nothing for me	0.2

The statements 'I was happier for coming along' and 'It was good for my health' were used

as proxy measures of mental and physical health respectively. Respondents made a direct link with occasions such as these and positive mental health outcomes, with 38.3 per cent noting that they were happier for coming along. Importantly, half (50 per cent) of attendees at the Broadmeadows Planting Day, more than half (53.1 per cent) of those at the Daylesford Flower Festa, and 52 per cent of those at the Hamilton Mela reported 'I was happier for coming along'.

The links between attendance at festivals/events and physical health were less clear, with 22.4 per cent of respondents noting that attendance was good for their health. This might be explained by assessing the complex meanings attached to health across a range of cultural groups. It is, therefore, difficult to capture a full picture of the links between health and festival attendance this way. Yet the perception amongst more than quarter of the respondents of some kind of health benefit of attendance is worth noting.

Respondents also identified other benefits as of key importance. Thus, 35.7 per cent of respondents reported having socialised with friends and neighbours, 33.8 per cent felt greater belonging to their community, while 43.3 per cent simply had fun. Importantly also, 30,7 per cent of respondents reported the benefits of feeling something in common with others, while 29.3 per cent met new people.

The responses 'I did not feel that involved' and 'It did nothing for me' were included in the secondary questionnaire in response to critiques of other community arts research that had only reported positive outcomes of events. These items were ticked by 4 and 2 per cent respectively. In real terms this means two people agreed with the statement 'I did not feel that involved' and only one person felt the festival they attended did nothing for them. In addition, 9 per cent of respondents said that 'I felt a bit on my own'. These are very low numbers of negative responses and may reflect the high numbers of participants who were involved in planting, food preparation or entertainment.

There was a clear age split for this question on the benefits of attendance. For respondents aged 30–39, 21.9 per cent reported they were 'happier for coming along', as opposed to only 3.8 per cent in both the upper and lower age groups, 16–19 years and 70–79 years.

Table 12: Reported Benefits of Attendance by Gender (Percent Frequency)

	All (n=400)	Male (n=160)	Female (n= 228)
I found things in common with others	30.7	30.6	31.6
I learnt of services available in the community	22.4	19.4	25.4
I caught up with neighbours and friends	35.7	37.5	38.6
I spent time with family	26.7	35	23.7
I heard about local issues	19.3	19.4	20.6
I felt like I belonged to this community	33.8	31.3	36.8
I felt a bit on my own	2.9	3.1	1.8
I met new people	29.3	31.9	28.9
I had some fun	43.3	45	45.6
I was happier for coming along	38.3	37.5	41.7
It was good for my health	22.4	25.6	21.9
I did not feel that involved	1.7	1.3	1.8
It did nothing for me	0.2	0.6	x
Total		100.0	100.0

Health Status

As has been noted, only tenuous claims can be made in relation to the group who reported poor health status since this was a very small proportion, less than 2 per cent of the overall sample. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note the pattern shown in Table 13, in particular in relation to health related benefits. For those respondents who reported that their health was poor, they noted twice as frequently (42.9 per cent) that attendance was good for their health as did the groups who reported their health being either good (21.7 per cent) or fair (28.3 per cent). Thus, it is plausible that those with poor health, while they may face practical barriers, stand to gain positive health benefits from attending events.

Table 13: Reported Benefits of Attendance by Health Status (Percent Frequency)

	Total	Health = good (n=336)	Health = fair (n= 46)	Health = poor (n= 11)
I found things in common with others	30.7	31.8	30.4	14.3
I learnt of services available in the community	22.4	23.8	19.6	28.6
I caught up with neighbours and friends	35.7	38.7	41.3	x
I spent time with family	26.7	27.7	39.1	x
I heard about local issues	19.3	19.3	21.7	42.9
I felt like I belonged to this community	33.8	35.4	37	x
I felt a bit on my own	2.9	1.5	6.5	14.3
I met new people	29.3	30.1	30.4	42.9
I had some fun	43.3	44.6	45.7	57.1
I was happier for coming along	38.3	37.8	50	42.9
It was good for my health	22.4	21.7	28.3	42.9
I did not feel that involved	1.7	0.9	4.3	x
It did nothing for me	0.2	0.3	x	x
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

Event

There were obvious differences in motivations for attendance across the range of events (refer to Table 14). More than half of those attendees at the Eid festival who responded to the questionnaire noted they had spent time with their family as a result to attending the festival. The emphasis on family was reflected in a comment one attendee wrote on the questionnaire 'The Eid festival is the best time we get the family together'.

Forty three percent of respondents reported that attendance at a community arts event allowed them to 'have some fun'. Reporting fun as a result of attendance did, of course, vary according to event. As we noted previously, more than 60 per cent of respondents reported that they had some fun at the Hume Multi-Cultural Planting Festival, whereas only slightly more than 30 per cent of respondents in attendance at the Daylesford Flower Festa felt like they had fun.

Table 14: Reported Benefits of Attendance by Event (Percent Frequency)

	All	BM Planting Day (n=56)	St Kilda RAG (n=33)	Eid (n= 63)	Daylesford Flower Festa (n=63)	CERES Kingfisher (n=85)	Preston Human Rights (n= 45)	Hamilton Mela (n=50)
I found things in common with others	30.7	48.2	20.6	34.4	26.6	20.9	28.3	50
I learnt of services available in the community	22.4	33.9	17.6	29.7	12.5	25.6	21.7	14
I caught up with neighbours and friends	35.7	51.8	14.7	45.3	31.3	55.8	21.7	18
I spent time with family	26.7	32.1	8.8	51.6	14.1	27.9	34.8	18
I heard about local issues	19.3	23.2	11.8	14.1	10.9	19.8	17.4	46
I felt like I belonged to this community	33.8	50	26.5	37.5	32.8	37.2	39.1	20
I felt a bit on my own	2.9	8.9	5.9	1.6	x	2.3	4.3	x
I met new people	29.3	50	32.4	26.6	14.1	18.6	43.5	44
I had some fun	43.3	62.5	41.2	40.6	31.3	44.2	50	52
I was happier for coming along	38.3	50	32.4	20.3	53.1	37.2	37	52
It was good for my health	22.4	35.7	23.5	10.9	21.9	24.4	23.9	26
I did not feel that involved	1.7	3.6	2.9	x	x	1.2	4.3	2
It did nothing for me	0.2	1.8	x	x	x	x	x	x
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Attendees at the Mela appeared to be motivated to hear about a local issue (46 per cent), more so than general participants at all events (19.3 per cent), suggesting that people attended the event because of the relevance to local interests. This is supported by the fact that 78 per cent indicated they attended because they were specifically interested in the Mela compared to respondents at other events, of which only 45.2 per cent had a specific interest in the event. Half indicated they attended the Mela to 'experience or maintain cultural traditions', compared to 31.9 per cent for other events. This suggests that, for participants at the Mela, the success of the event was in creating a sense of connectedness with others through their participation in an event where relative strangers could come together based on a shared interest in a local issues, not because of pre-existing social connections.

Of those who responded to the questionnaire completed at community arts events and celebrations, 22.4 per cent learnt of services available in the community. This represents a significant opportunity for health promoters. This figure was not stratified by gender: fairly even amounts of men and women reported the same. It was higher, however for those aged over 49, with 38.7 per cent reporting that they had learnt of services. This suggests that mature attendees might valuably be targeted with health promotion messages at such events. Especially relevant here are participants from non-English speaking backgrounds accessing services. This section of the population is noted as being low users of social and community services, and a number of reasons have been identified for this. The finding that 33.9 per cent of participants attending the Hume Multi-cultural planting festival, and 29.7 per cent of respondents at Eid, reported that they learnt of services available in the community is important in this regard. Both of these festivals were predominantly attended by people who spoke a language other than English at home. The high levels of respondents who learnt of services available in the community has important implications for health promotion. These results suggests that festivals of this kind could be better utilised to inform communities and individuals of services and promote healthy living.

Lifecycle of Attendance at Events

Question 3 of the secondary questionnaire was designed to elicit details of an attendance life cycle, an issue that had arisen in qualitative interviews. The question stated 'Thinking over the last 5-10 years, when have you come to events like this?' It was assumed that by gaining a clearer understanding of when people might have attended events over the past 5-10 years may provide useful data to base planning of future events. In response, a high proportion of attendees (38.6 per cent) stated that their past attendance at such events had been motivated by wanting to give something to the community (refer to Table 15).

The data clearly suggests the foremost motivation for attending community arts events over time was wanting to give something to the community (38.6 per cent of all respondents). This response was highest at the Broadmeadows Planting Festival (60.7 per cent of respondents), suggesting that communities based on ethnicity are particularly motivated over time to give to their new community. Likewise, established groups were also highly motivated to attend community events over time. Thus, 51.6 per cent of respondents at the Daylesford Flower Festa were motivated to attend community events over time in order to give something to their community.

In addition, women were somewhat more motivated to attend events over time in order to give something to the community (42.1 per cent) than were men (37.5 per cent). As this question reports on past behaviour it would be interesting to see if this differential attendance rate by gender changes over time as higher numbers of women are involved in the workforce for longer periods of time.

In contrast, for attendees at the Hamilton Mela and the Broadmeadows Eid festival, only 30 per cent and 31.3 per cent respectively noted that giving something to the community motivated their attendance at events over time. This might be explained by these latter two events being less participatory—the Hamilton Mela was a one-off event with high levels of

participation for organizers and speakers, but little for attendees. Likewise, Eid is held twice a year, dependant on the Muslim calendar, and unlike the planting day, does not require the majority of participants to be actively involved by dressing in national costume, preparing traditional food, or planting trees in the ground.

Table 15: Reported Attendance over Time by Gender (Percent Frequency)

	Total (n=400)	Male (n=160)	Female (n= 228)
I was new to the community	21.7	21.3	24.1
I had young children	13.8	18.8	11.4
I wanted to make new friends	15.5	16.9	15.8
I wanted an affordable day out	27.4	25.6	31.1
I wanted to give something to the community	38.6	37.5	42.1
My children had left home	2.4	2.5	2.2
I was a single parent	1.7	1.3	2.2
I had more time (such as retired)	10.7	12.5	11
I felt isolated	2.4	3.1	2.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Conclusion

This data on community arts festivals and events appear to support the contention that whilst there appears to be a low rate of attendance at community cultural events amongst the general population, such events are perceived by many, including non-attendees, as valuable assets to any community.

The data from the second questionnaire in particular suggests that a perhaps large number of such events are attended primarily by those who are motivated to do so in order to give something to their community. This suggests that those already possessing a sense of involvement in or belonging to specific communities (of either place and/or network) or those who show a willingness to develop such a sense of belonging, are the bulk of attendees at community arts events and festivals—at least as evidenced by those surveyed for this research. While 34 per cent of respondents to the secondary questionnaire were more likely to attend events when new to a community, only 8 per cent of respondents attended when they felt isolated. There may be a number of reasons for this including the difficulty of making friendships when feeling marginalized, unknown or depressed. Thus, it is plausible to suggest that festivals and events are not necessarily attracting those members of the community who most feel a sense of social exclusion. Those who are socially isolated might be more profitably targeted by health and welfare measures through alternate activities of a more ongoing and inclusive nature. The photonarrative data reported in Chapter Four sheds additional light upon this issue.

These results have given an overview of preliminary findings on community arts events and festivals. The key finding that the public generally value the contribution that events offer communities, regardless of active attendance, has methodological implications for future research. It suggests the importance of researching wider public outcomes of community cultural events rather than purely focusing on event specific outcomes and the perceived benefits to an attending public. In a much broader, and perhaps less measurable sense, events and festivals potentially provide (as we will argue later in this report) an important sense of community avowal or visibility, a source of public exhilaration in face of their festive and celebratory aspects, and a sense also of the pleasure of community presence and activity—all of which is clearly highly valued by a broad range of individuals.

4

Community Life
in a Changing World

Understanding community entails understanding a basic dimension of the human condition. Certainly there is an intensifying individualism across many parts of the globe, and there are individuals who are primarily concerned with the possibilities of escaping the constraints of local community life. However, the one thing we all have in common is that we all live somewhere in relation to some others and influences the nature of our daily life. It should go without saying that we all live somewhere, and at different times in our life we come to rely on other persons or community services located in our neighbourhood, but there is a curious resistance to such a claim in some quarters. More than that, persons tend to belong to or engage with a number of communities simultaneously. Most people have a sense of belonging to a broader region or a city that they circulate within. Most are part of interest-based or identity-oriented groups—local or dispersed—and many belong to some kind of workplace community, even if it can feel dysfunctional at times. Furthermore, different forms of community can overlap at the level of the locale, so that local community life can also be seen as being multi-faceted.

The public face and the ambiguous importance of community can be seen in the many public documents put out by local councils, aid agencies, and charitable organizations. Activists speak in the name of the community in criticizing the logic of centralization or big development, while corporations publicize their local community initiatives to press home their global virtuousness. Governments sidle up to communities through community partnerships and community-building initiatives, presenting community as a means to resolve seemingly intractable conflicts between competing interests and ends. Academics too are taken with trying to work out what makes communities work and what does not, and with developing indicators that purport to measure the relative success of communities in achieving certain ends. Even when we hear talk of 'community breakdown' or 'dysfunctional communities', such phrases are intended to evoke the changing nature of community, rather than to describe the end of community *per se*.

Studying Community

The present study is based on the understanding that people simultaneously belong to a range of associations—from the local to the global—and that those different levels of association can variously meet different individual and social needs. Some people are in a better position than others to make conscious choices about which levels of society that they want to participate in most actively—although the accelerated compression of time and space means that many people are so busy that choices are made without conscious design. Indeed, the contemporary emphasis on choice, freedom and autonomy can obscure the unique role that local communities can play, especially for those whose choices may be limited by their individual or social (structural) circumstances. Many of the community members and activists who were interviewed for the present study are trying to improve the quality of local life in creative ways and this would suggest that they are interested in the aesthetic and normative account of community life. However, many of them are also interested in ensuring that people whose choices for participation may be limited—such as through lack of money, lack of mobility, lack of knowledge, or lack of confidence—are not forgotten. They would argue that

if local communities do not work for their most vulnerable members then they fail to provide real security for anyone.

For this study we have examined the work of a range of people who have consciously chosen to participate in projects or programs that have the avowed aim of strengthening local, place-based, communities. They range from individuals who want to give something back to communities that have provided them with a sense of belonging, to arts practitioners who are excited by the challenge of engaging with the lives and experiences of 'ordinary' people, to people who identify themselves as community development workers. Several of the people interviewed for the case studies—such as the community-theatre worker Rebecca Lister, the visual artist and storyteller Julie Shiels, the social worker cum community arts innovator Marie Hapke, and the local government worker Anne Kershaw—said that an engagement with the arts has enabled the field of community development to get a more nuanced understanding of the nature of contemporary community life and the diverse needs of the people who happen to share a neighbourhood. It might even be argued that this relatively recent engagement with the arts has helped to rescue the community development paradigm from overly simplistic, even romanticized notions of what local communities can do.

All the case-study communities have experienced quite profound social and economic changes over recent decades. In all cases, there has been a fairly recent upsurge in the cost of living—especially in regard to housing—and this puts increasing pressure on people and families on low incomes. This is probably most marked in St Kilda and Daylesford where 'gentrification' has led to big increases in housing costs and an increased commercialization of local shopping centres. St Kilda and Daylesford also share the experience of regular influxes of visitors that can make the local community become less visible to itself and in both cases longer-term residents and long-established local families are feeling more marginalized by the changes that have taken place. The changes over recent decades have thus led to an increased layering of these local communities and the selected case studies and stories in both St Kilda and Daylesford focus on projects that explore the benefits to a community of local social diversity. In both cases, local stories are being used in creative ways in a conscious effort to build a stronger and deeper sense of belonging with an emphasis on stories from the past that can give the local community a unique sense of identity.

In contrast to the other case-study communities, the community that is centred on the old public housing estates in Broadmeadows and neighbouring Dallas has long suffered from a stigmatization that probably reached a peak in the late 1970s when the area became a popular target for the largely hostile Melbourne news media. Older residents say that they have become guarded about telling people outside the area where they live for fear of evoking responses that range from scorn to pity. Media reportage has portrayed the Broadmeadows area as being a tough place to live with very high levels of anti-social behaviour and rampant gangs of young people engaging in inter-gang 'warfare'. The toughness of the community is generally attributed to the fact that it began as a what is widely regarded as a disastrous social experiment when low-income families were dumped into hastily-constructed, broad-acre, public housing estates with very inadequate infrastructure and services. However, long-term residents argue that a strong 'Broady spirit' was forged in the face of such adversity and that the toughness can be seen as an expression of community resilience and a strong, albeit locally divided, sense of belonging.

Until the 1980s, people living in Broadmeadows travelled to Glenroy or further afield for shopping trips and for access to community services. However, the construction of the Western Ring Road created a major new barrier between Glenroy and Broadmeadows and the suburbs were placed in different municipalities when local government amalgamations were carried out in 1996. Broadmeadows has only recently become conscious of itself as a centre rather than a periphery and even now a large transport corridor—that includes a main road and parallel railway lines—cuts the older residential areas off from easy access to the burgeoning shopping centre and CBD. At the same time, the Broadmeadows community has become

increasingly layered from the late 1970s onwards with the arrival of increasing numbers of migrants and refugees—firstly from Vietnam and then, increasingly, from the Middle East As a result of its unusual history, the area has experienced a shallow and disrupted—yet richly complex—process of community formation. Until very recently community development work in the area has focused more on addressing social disadvantage than on building a stronger sense of community identity and the Hume City Council has taken a very big role in nurturing community-building programs and activities (in order to change internal and external perceptions of the area). As a result, our case studies and selected stories focus mainly on projects initiated by the council and/or projects that portray the multicultural character of the community as an asset rather than a liability. They also include examples of creative ways of addressing the problems of stigmatization.

Like Daylesford, the Hamilton region experienced a period of economic decline as a result of the demise of traditional rural industries that has been followed by a new surge based on the emergence of some new resource industries. Prolonged success for wool producers in the district had led to a higher level of prosperity and a higher degree of complacency than was the case for the Daylesford community (which had experienced more regular cycles of boom and bust), and the new economic 'boom' seems more narrowly based and fragile in the case of Hamilton. Hamilton remains the commercial centre for a diverse array of local towns and communities but its growth has fallen behind both Horsham to the north and the coastal towns of Warrnambool and Portland to the south. The local government amalgamations of 1996 created a better-resourced Southern Grampians Shire and this also appears to have created a stronger sense of regional identity. Projects and stories selected for the Hamilton region explore issues related to the identity and development of local towns in the region and the capacity of Hamilton as a centre to sustain important regional assets—such as a well-equipped hospital. They also reflect efforts to respond to the collapse of the prolonged wool boom and the period of uncertainty that followed by building a more inclusive, more complex, and less complacent sense of regional community identity and a stronger capacity to respond collectively to community needs.

Although participants in the project did not use the different terms for community outlined in Chapter 2, nevertheless, all of these conceptions of community came into play as they sought to make sense of their lives within community. In Chapter 2 we defined three common ways of conceiving of community as (1) *community-as-grounded*, in which the salient feature of community is taken to be people coming together in particular tangible settings; (2) *community-as-way-of-life*, in which the overriding feature of community is adherence to particular attitudes and practices; and (3) *community-as-projected*, in which the key feature of community is the active establishment of a creative space in which individuals engage in an open-ended processes of constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing identities for living. Perhaps most obviously, in spite of the modern world and a society awash with mediated information, the overriding association of community is grounded community involving a tangible place in which people live in close proximity to one another. Despite the rise of new forms of social integration and organization which transcend the immediate locale of community, people still tend to see community to be a place in which people live cheek-by-jowl with other people. One interviewee (Jennifer Ritchie Jones), for example, asked to define community towards the end of an interview, said simply 'It's just the place where you live, and the people who are within a certain area. Location and whoever happens to be there'. Moreover, community was spoken of as closely intertwined with work and roles. For example, neither the family, nor the nation was entirely absent from discussions of community. Many of the interviewees spoke of their links to community through their different social and professional roles (mother or daughter; teacher or artist, for example).

> One powerful image of this conception of community [one which Tönnies would
> have instantly recognized] was a photo of elderly people rugged up against the
> cold selling raffle tickets for a local cause: It was really a bitterly cold day, and

they're wrapped up in little knitted rugs, selling raffle tickets and I think in some
ways that's an image that is quite reflective of our community. People will always
be trying to do something for somebody else regardless of how inconvenient, and
the returns from selling raffle tickets are tiny, but they're still prepared to sit out
there and take their few dollars that they get. (Elizabeth Fenton)

The understanding of community as grounded or a way of life was also evident in the
comments regarding the internet as not being a real or authentic community. This aesthetic
conception of community, in which community is a highly abstractly mediated form of
community was taken to be a lesser idea of community. In the words of one interviewee,
thinking that such global communities are real 'is no substitute for a real community'.

According to the questionnaire results, most people were unsure how to define community
explicitly, but the data shows a clear yearning to be part of a community and experience
a 'sense of belonging' to others. There appeared to be a diversity of methods of defining
community. All respondents were split between defining it as in their neighbourhood or place
(24.1 per cent) and about a group of people (21.9 per cent). Of the respondents 26.8 per cent
suggested that definitions of community might include place and groups of people including
in workplaces, schools, community centres. A high number of respondents said that they were
not sure how to define community. The lack of respondents (nine out of 420 persons) who saw
the workplace as a source of community is significant. This is in direct contrast with literature
that suggests that work is becoming increasingly important to both identity and as a source
of community (Pocock, 2003; Trinca and Fox, 2004). The presumption in the literature is that
as work has become progressively more central in the lives of many workers, it increasingly
provides the social networks and satisfaction that define both individuals and family lives.
However, our data clearly challenges these suggestions. Likewise, only three respondents saw
their child's school as their main source of community. It is, of course, possible that the question
was misunderstood by respondents. Partial explanations for the difficulty respondents had
in defining community include the differing ideas of community even though there was a
consistent refrain of 'I believe in community'

The questionnaire results suggest that community is built and made rather than is just
'there', and that community members get the most from community when they are actively
participating and 'giving' to the community. Getting more specific in relation to the nature
of the relations within such communities, most interviewees mentioned the informality
of community life. Community life was seen as offering a relaxation of the kinds of social
divisions and distinctions associated with class—at least for a time. There is no 'standing on
ceremony' in community, as one person put it. The emphasis on the informality of grounded
community was also evident in the comments of interviewees who spoke of sausage-sizzles,
shopping at local shops and using local services as central to their idea of what community
was about. Some of the younger interviewers, in particular, saw informal activities such as
shopping and being in public space as important parts of their conceptions of community. A
young interviewee, for instance, explained

I feel like I know the community, because like, as I walk down the shops I know all
the owners, and I can go in … I enter a conversation with people, and they think
that's funny stuff that I'm saying, so then they start talking to me. So then I see
them the next time, and because we had such a conversation, it's remembered.

Though people tend to associate community with what we have termed 'grounded
community', this community has been overlaid with other ways of constituting community,
which are alter the nature of the relations of face-to-face community. There are a number of
manifestations of this, some of which were regarded as benign and consistent with the lived
reality of face-to-face community, and others which were regarded as less so. Two persons,
for example, made specific mention of ANZAC celebrations—and therefore the 'abstract

community' of the nation (James 1996)—as integral to their conception of community. Partly because of her close proximity to the War Memorial, one person who lives on St Kilda Road spoke about the importance of the ANZAC memorial in relation to community, linking the past and present. Another person, this time from Hamilton took pictures of the local ANZAC day service. When asked if she had any family or personal links to the war she answered 'no'. Her attendance at the ANZAC parade, rather, had more to do with a sense of national belonging and national values. In her words:

> I just think it's important to actually remember those people that—the actual freedom and the way Australia is a free country—that we actually owe it to those people that came before us, and the one's that are still living today.

Significantly, then, this aspect of community life was deeply felt even in the absence of social bonds of kinship or the face-to-face. While community was primarily seen as connected to the local and face-to-face social relations, it also overlapped with longer national-cultural narrative—even where the personal connection is missing. There was a sense here, then, of community as a way of life, and at times even aesthetic notion of projected community. That is, community was treated as a place where certain values of freedom had been established, which, though rooted in the local, went beyond it and were projected around national days of remembrance.

If we now relate this to the question of the contribution of celebrations and festivals, the present study found that the principal motivation for attending community arts events is the expressed desire to give something to the community. Of the respondents, 38.6 per cent said that they had attended community arts events when they 'wanted to give something to the community'. This response was slightly higher for women (42.1 per cent) than for men (37.5 per cent). There was clear evidence that certain events provided members of marginalized communities the opportunity to participate, celebrate and be involved in community. Two of the events we attended as part of the data collection was a performance titled 'Whispering Rag' by the RAG theatre group, and The Exhibitionists, a visual art exhibition. The interactive theatrical event was devised and performed by members of RAG Theatre, people who live with mental illness. This group is supported by the city of Port Phillip as part of their commitment to creating arts participation opportunities for people living with mental illness. The Exhibitionists displayed the skills of members of KickstART Contemporary Art Class, a class for people with mental illness.

These events were widely enjoyed by respondents. One attendee wrote 'Fantastic events like this should happen *all* the time'. For others, there was an element of surprise—'I Have never been to an event like this—[it was a] very good day out'. While for some the event was 'a great fun experience. A good positive memory'; for others, the performance offered a challenge. For this female respondent, she noted it was a 'bit frightening, at first in the dark, but soon became comfortable'. Clearly events such as these have wider aims than to provide a venue for audience attendance. As one respondent noted '[I] celebrate this innovative means of communicating about mental health issues and share a sense of humour about its trials with the people that suffer from it'.

Other audience members brought it back to a sense of grounded community and described themselves as attending festivals to support friends and family: a female respondent noted 'to support my sister who is performing', and another who noted she had come to see a family member perform—it was great to see my sister stepping out and enjoying herself'. Another respondent, a woman in her thirties, noted that they were working on the performance set of Rag theatre. She said she 'felt inspired to see the wonderful art that is created and delivered through community based programs'.

Furthermore, community arts events provide an outing opportunity for community groups. Similar to many others, one respondent wrote on the questionnaire that she had come along 'to bring a client to enjoy it with me and to catch up with industry contacts'. A male worker

agreed, he had come 'to bring a group along'; as had a female respondent who noted 'I wanted to support the actors, several of who I know quite well'. Another noted 'I have three clients who are participants, it is a pleasure seeing their achievements. I come to support people with disabilities in arts/performance/music—many of whom I know through work'. Likewise at the Preston Human Rights Day, a female attendee noted she had come as an 'activity for disabled clients, and we are always looking for entertainment'. A woman who identified herself as a respite worker noted she had come to 'provide different experience and some fun for clients who have a disability'. Such events clearly then provide a venue for community participation for otherwise marginalized community groups.

Community arts events also provided a safe environment for sectors of communities formed around ways of life to participate. The MCCA Muslim Eid Festival was an excellent example. As the largest event for the local Muslim community held twice a year in Melbourne, Muslims from across Victoria participate in the festival. This two-day festival was advertised as combining food, speakers, sideshows, sales and a safe and family friendly environment. The safety of the environment was reflected in questionnaire responses. One respondent said 'I feel very happy to be with so many Muslims' while others noted they were there to 'let the kids enjoy Eid' and to 'celebrate the coming together of our Muslim community'. A young woman noted that she had especially enjoyed the Eid festival as there were 'so many people I know—less judging'. At a time when the Muslim world is under intense scrutiny, the Eid festival offers a chance for the community to come together and celebrate.

For some, attending a community arts event was an unintended occasion that held an element of surprise. For a Daylesford couple, their presence at the Flower Festa was motivated by realizing there was something on—'We were passing and saw the signs'. Another Flower Festa attendee said she has 'met friends and acquaintances that I hadn't seen for a year' Likewise, an attendee at the Broadmeadows Planting Festival said she 'saw and met very nice and interesting people'. At the Kingfisher Festival one attendee came along not knowing too much about it and had this to say 'I didn't know what it would be—but I liked it'.

For some obviously out of town visitors, it was a chance to experience a more relaxed part of life. One attendee noted 'I found coming to the country I had time to 'smell the roses'. Similarly, a male in his fifties noted that he attended to 'relax away form the hectic city'. He added it is time to gather my thoughts, think out the future and possibly look at real estate. It is time for my wife and I to have time together and enjoy each others' company'. A third person, a younger visitor in his twenties, noted that he was in the area on a weekend away and that he thought it was a 'very good community event'. It is interesting to reflect on these visitors' expectation of community. Often country life is romanticized when the reality is sometimes different.

Other interviewees gave an insight into community being overtaken by more mobile forms of association identified here with aesthetic ideas of community. For example, one person who lived in an apartment complex on St Kilda Road where many international students lived, spoke about the fast-changing nature of his community. He mentioned that he knew the people who had lived in the building for a long time because he recognized their cars in the car park. The arrival and departure of other residents of the complex was registered by for-sale signs on the apartment's pin board, with people selling furniture and appliances in preparation for leaving home. A related, though more positive example of this kind of communal exchange, in which connection to others was mediated through the impersonal exchange of goods, was conveyed by a couple who spoke about the practice of informally exchanging goods left on the nature-strip. There was a sense here of community being overlaid by flows of people across the city or the globe. The idea of community conveyed here conformed to the aesthetic idea of projected community: a notion of community in a constant process of flux, created, dissolving and re-created. Not surprisingly, the St Kilda person who described the upheaval said that he did not feel that he was part of his community and that his parents had a stronger experience of community than he did.

There were other signs of community being overlaid by processes and activities which went beyond, and worked to re-frame face-to-face embodied relations of the local. Indeed, a common theme amongst the interviewees was that placed-based community was under threat from a variety of processes variously described as centralization or, more specifically, corporatization. Such concerns usually arose when people were asked to reflect on whether community life was weakening, strengthening or staying pretty much the same. In some cases, particular corporations were seen as having a detrimental impact on community. Another St Kilda person spoke about the spread of large corporations, displacing smaller shops, producing a less diverse, more anonymous community ecology which was seen as having a negative impact on the kinds of community who were likely to settle and live in St Kilda. She spoke about her community becoming 'less individualized, and less empathetic; more corporate. Unless the eclectic-ness still attracts those who have those qualities—if we can maintain that, then people will still want to live here and express that. But if it gets too Becton, too development, too Jeans West, then you'll get an average kind of mindset'.

The cause for such changes was seen to lie in economic processes:

> Rates and expensive rents. Like [the local shop-keeper] Charlie Weaver—that was just a disgrace that rent went up four times the amount that it was the year before. Now there's a handbag and jewellery shop. Charlie Weaver used to sell bats and gothic and spiders from Africa. It was just the most fantastic shop to go into. I think the demise of places like that is tragic. There were a couple of shops that all moved within a couple of months. They all moved to Chapel Street in Windsor. They're the winners. It's still accessible, and I have been there, but I would like them to be closer. The tragic shops they've got going here now. They are just irritating. They're too bright. It's more geared to the twenties-thirties and the tourist trade, catering to outsiders.

Similar sentiments were expressed by younger interviewees who, perhaps under the influence of their parents, also lamented the changing face of St Kilda:

> I think the whole look of Acland and Carlisle streets is cheapened by so many two-dollar shops and surfing shops. And who would surf on St Kilda beach? I think it's cheapened the place. There used to be more rustic shops and places where you'd know the people who worked in the shops. But the people who work in the shops now don't own the shops; they are just hired.

The concern here tended to be less with this or that corporation as with the form of social life which corporations stood for. In particular, corporations were identified with a way of life which appeared to be hostile to stable, settled forms of community, where individuals could develop a coherent identity and narrative. One person illustrated the general theme, arguing that community was weakening because of the economic changes and the rise of corporations. The weakening of community, he said, is 'to do with having a job':

> This thing at the moment of forcing people into work who are on pensions and on welfare. I'm all of that—except, exactly what jobs are these people going to do? Where are the jobs? What are they going to do? Is it going to earn them an adequate wage or is it going to give them pride, is it going to feed into their wellbeing and self-esteem? You get me started. It's to do with democracy, it's being supplanted by 'corpocracy' which is really the whole world being run by corporations. Corporations are driven by the sharemarkets, sharemarkets are driven by profits and they're all driven by efficiency which means getting the menial people who are semi- or partly skilled getting their job done by a machine. And so they are just being left by the wayside. Corporations and stock markets are driving marginal people out of a meaningful life. The cliché is the tea-lady. She had a pride—those sorts of jobs just don't exist anymore.

Corporations, in this sense, stand not simply for this or that corporation, but a way of doing things; a whole way of life which was seen as being at odds with the rhythms of community life. As the reference to the figure of the tea lady, who although occupying a low position within a hierarchy was still able to have pride in her position, makes clear, corporations were identified as antithetical to developing a sense of personal or collective narrative.

In relation to festivals and cultural occasionas we find similar issues raised when the events are corporatized. The obvious example is the now defunct St Kilda festival. At the time of research this festival, unbeknownst to our respondents, was 'taking a break'. Yet the community felt very strongly about the event, and it was loathed by many. One respondents, commenting specifically about the St Kilda festival noted that 'some of these events have moved beyond any sort of community celebration and have become a more commercial and less interesting event'.

Another somewhat different example bears out the same point but with different conclusions. An person from Hamilton, for example, mentioned the local McDonalds as a positive presence in her community because it was seen to be run by local people and provided a place for young people to socialize. As she explained,

> McDonalds are fantastic. They have some pretty crummy food … and I don't know [about] McDonalds as a whole. It gives a great contribution to this community with that store and the man who runs it ensures that there'll be decent behaviour around the store so it's a good safe place for kids… It's right on the edge of town and it's quite a good meeting place for kids to go, kids who are perhaps not independent or old enough that can go there after school.

The positive assessment of McDonalds contrasted markedly with her response to other global businesses, particularly, poker machines in the local pub and the banking industry. In particular, the bank was seen as sucking wealth out of the community and inflexible, a point she illustrated by reference to a young man who was not capable of managing his money on his own. An arrangement had been made to automatically withdraw funds from his account to pay his bills. One pay period before Christmas, however, his money had come through early and he had withdrawn all his money, leaving insufficient funds to pay his bills. The result was that he had incurred a $30 overdraft fee that snowballed into larger and larger amounts. The interviewee was disappointed and angry that local bank staff were not empowered to make decisions about such cases and to assist people who were clearly vulnerable in the community. Interestingly, the bank in question was the National Australia Bank, the same sponsors of the AusKick coaching clinic which another interviewee from Hamilton had spoken of in a positive manner. For this interviewee, at least, the attitude to corporations was influenced by how much people from the community felt that they could influence such organizations.

The different attitudes to the place of corporations in the community can be explained in terms of how people perceived different companies to be involved in the life of community, rather than whether they were a global or a local business. In the case of McDonalds there was a sense in which the relations of the face-to-face had been retained, because it was a local franchisee, and provided infrastructure to the community—even though it was an outlet in a global network of supply chains, branding and distribution. This contrasted with other businesses where people were seen as faceless; where centralization had stripped people of the face-to-face. The banking sector and the pokies, by contrast, seemed to be faceless interlopers into community and thus damaging in their effects. A similar sentiment was expressed in the above quote from the younger interviewee who lamented the fact that 'the people who work in the shops now don't own the shops; they are just hired'. While in each instance the ecology of community was being integrated and, to a degree, reconstituted through globally organized economic processes of production, exchange and communication, in the one case it was welcome because it was not seen as disrupting the rhythms of community, while in the others, it was viewed as undoing the very fabric of community.

Despite this pressure from the outside, community was treated as a positive phenomenon. In response to the question, 'How satisfied are you with feeling part of your community?' 68.6 per cent said they were satisfied. Only 10.5 per cent of all respondents said they were dissatisfied, while 17.3 per cent did not feel strongly either way. These overall responses hid some variety between places. Of the respondents from Hamilton, a high 84 per cent said they were satisfied with feeling part of their community. At the other end of the scale, only 58.9 per cent of residents of Broadmeadows who responded to the questionnaire were satisfied. Residents of Daylesford, reported a moderate rate of satisfaction with feeling part of the community generally (64.9 per cent), but also reported higher (14.9 per cent) rates of dissatisfaction than all respondents (10.5 per cent).

We want to shift the focus now and move in closer to the various communities in the study and to listen to some particular stories before concluding the chapter.

Community Life and Arts Practice in St Kilda

Visual artist Julie Shiels chooses to live and work in St Kilda because the place offers up a fascinating array of stories that she can work with. She said that as she walks from her home to her studio that adjoins the studios of other locally-engaged artists in a building located in the *Veg Out* Community Gardens she often finds new objects that appear to have interesting but unknown stories attached to them, and she finds herself wanting to know what those stories might be. There are too many stories for her to investigate, but it is this wealth of stories that stirs her imagination. Julie works, primarily, with computer-enhanced combinations of text and images that can be disseminated through the web or gathered into thematic exhibitions. She started out as a poster-maker and screen-printer in the early 1980s, before changing to other media because the strong chemicals were affecting her health badly. She got into community art through the North Richmond Community Health Centre. At this centre she was working primarily with migrant and refugee communities living in the high-rise housing estate who were, in turn, linked to more geographically dispersed diasporic communities and she found herself doing more administrative work than she wanted to. She decided to move her arts practice into the community in which she lived so that she could further explore her emerging interest in the 'pedestrian and the local … the things that happen on a daily basis … the minutiae of events … the wink, the nod, the grabbed conversation'.

In St Kilda she has been able to work more independently and on a range of short-term projects sponsored by Port Phillip council. The biggest single project she has worked on in this time was the 2002 *Memories, Margins and Markers* project that sought to turn a host of local stories across the whole Port Phillip municipality into works of art, including some permanent pieces of public art. This highly ambitious effort by Port Phillip City council to capture and preserve aspects of local history that might otherwise fade from view was made possible by a grant from VicHealth but it struggled initially to find a way to properly engage with the community in order to evoke relevant stories. Shiels was employed as the story-writer on the project after it had begun and she said she first had to dispense with the inappropriate methodology that had been adopted for community engagement. Before Shiels joined the project there had already been two or three public meetings to which local people were invited to bring their stories. However, the meetings lacked a facilitation process that could generate some creative energy and the stories that were being told were 'very banal and plodding'. With twenty-three years of experience in community engagement and a strong personal interest in story-telling, Shiels was able to turn such meetings into workshops that could work up selected stories into something more polished and interesting. 'Give me a texta up the front and I'll get people jumping out of their socks and getting excited', she said.

Shiels worked with twenty-three different community-based organizations across the municipality to gather the stories for the MMM project and that meant there was a great variety of stories to work with. It was very difficult to then select a small number of stories to turn into works of public art and this was made more difficult by the fact that people started

lobbying the elected municipal councillors to have their stories selected. Shiels tried to honour the gift of the stories by organizing temporary exhibitions of them all in local libraries. The final selection of the six stories that would be turned into permanent installations related to what they could reveal about the interesting history of different places where the installations would be mounted. Although Shiels was not employed as an artistic director for the project she assumed the role of working with the storytellers to conceptualize a visual representation of those stories and she stresses that her knowledge of the people and places involved was essential in making sure that the art did justice to the stories.

The visual artist Giz James—whose studio is very close to that of Julie Shiels in the *Veg Out* Community Gardens—said that she has gained fresh insights into the community in which she lives by running art classes for people with 'special needs' because they often 'enjoy simple pleasures and they express that enjoyment'. In recent years the people she has worked with have been able to display their work at an annual Festival of Difference that centres on the Gasworks theatre complex. Although people with disabilities have a strong presence in this festival it also features the work of other people that another interviewee, described as being 'outside the mainstream and who don't always get a public space to present their work'.

Julie Shiels also stressed that it feels safer to be in a community where you know some of the people likely to be out in the streets or public parks because the fear of the unknown is dissipated and you have the sense that people are looking out for you. After the completion of the MMM project, Ilka Tampke continued working for Port Phillip City council and another project she took on was called 'Get a streetlife!' aimed at getting people to make an effort to get to know some of their neighbours. The aims of this project were to reduce social isolation and increase safety and Tampke was able to work with Globalism Institute researcher Chris Scanlon in using the photonarrative technique to get people to reflect on their experiences of community life. Tampke used some of the images captured by people in the photonarrative exercise and put them together with quotes taken from interviews that completed the reflection on that exercise to mount the streetlife exhibition held at St Kilda Town Hall in 2005. As a result of this exhibition, Tampke and one of the local photographers who had organized and photographed a street party for the photonarrative exercise were invited to discuss the initiative on ABC Radio's *Life Matters* program and the segment stimulated a lively discussion with talk-back callers from all over the country.

Community Life and Arts Practice in Broadmeadows

The community centred on the suburbs of Broadmeadows and Dallas has, as we introduced earlier, grappled with a legacy of very bad social and physical planning since large numbers of people began arriving there in the 1950s, and the community has become increasingly layered with the arrival of ethnically diverse communities since the late 1970s. The process of community formation over a period of more than forty years has created the potential for serious social divisions. For example, the area is home to the largest Muslim community in Melbourne with its own separate Islamic secondary colleges, and this creates some local tension at a time when anti-Muslim sentiment is prevalent throughout the whole of the Western world. Hume City Council Arts and Cultural Planning Officer Anne Kershaw said that it is a very complex, multicultural, community in which people can have many linkages and associations that extend way beyond their neighbourhoods. Kershaw urged the Globalism Institute research team to look at the large Eid festivals that take place in the Broadmeadows area at the end of the Muslim month of Ramadan each year as an example of 'cultural maintenance' work that gives people the opportunity to maintain diverse cultural traditions and identities in their new social contexts. An organizer of one of the two Eid festivals, Neil Aykan, said that these two events are internationally unique in being oriented to families and in inviting participation by non-Muslims and people travel from all parts of Melbourne to attend. While they help to maintain important Muslim traditions they also serve to build bridges with the non-Muslim community in the Broadmeadows area.

At the same time, Kershaw is excited by the capacity of the Broadmeadows community to draw on diverse cultural traditions to create works of art that are uniquely multicultural (in the true meaning of that term). She talked at length about the *Weaving Lands* project that aimed to create a work of art for the newly established Global Learning Centre in Broadmeadows by bringing together a diverse array of people with weaving skills to work with on the project with the professional artist Wendy Golden. An aim of the project was to celebrate the natural beauty of the area's native grasslands and from within the community she was able to draw on Maori, Samoan, Vietnamese, and Kurdish weavers. She also brought in an indigenous Australian weaver, an Italian weaver, and members of Basket Makers of Victoria from elsewhere in Melbourne so that the project became a blend of local knowledge and skills (that had mostly been brought into the community from 'outside' traditions) and some external knowledge and skills that could enhance this celebration of Broadmeadows as a place. The outcome, a woven tree standing about two metres high, probably exceeded initial expectations, and it was displayed in the Global Learning Centre with an associated exhibition about the weavers and their different traditions. It was also put on display at the Melbourne Immigration Museum and in a gallery in Lilydale and this supported the attempts being made by Hume City Council to change negative external perceptions of what Broadmeadows is like as a place to live; the stigmatization of the area that has created a long and difficult legacy for residents.

Kershaw was also able to take advantage of Hume City Council's decision to upgrade the 1950s' shopping centre in Dallas by integrating works of public art that could reflect the complex, multicultural identity of that local community. She was able to secure funding from the state government's Community Jobs Program to employ twelve artists who either lived locally or who had cultural links into that community to work on an integrated concept for the public installations with appropriate support from the experienced Public Art Unit at RMIT University. The project team had the brief of consulting with the local community about the project and Kershaw admits that she was initially sceptical when they came up with the theme of stories from the Arabian Nights Dream because she wondered about its local relevance. However, on reflection, she warmed to the idea on the basis that theses are stories of wide and enduring appeal that have transcended their origins in the cities and towns of the Middle East.

As mentioned earlier, Broadmeadows has struggled for a long time to think of itself as a centre rather than the periphery of the city. Now it has a sophisticated CBD area with impressive community services. It has a unique Global Learning Centre that aims to help the local community become more globally connected (rather than become more isolated by changes to communications technologies). When the Global Learning Centre was built with generous corporate sponsorship it ran the risk of becoming something of a white elephant and it took some time for the community to embrace it. However, it housed the area's first public library and usage of the centre and its programs steadily increased to the point where it is now seen as a valuable community resource. Through the local schools and other community organizations the Global Learning Centre runs a program in computer literacy that aims to ensure that this community can be globally connected. This is also a community that is externally connected through the broader associations of residents, meaning that a project that begins locally can attract broader participation (as in the Eid festivals mentioned above) or extend beyond the area. A good example of the latter is provided by the story of the Anti Racism Action Band (ARAB) that was initiated by the Dallas-based Victorian Arab Social Service (VASS) and which had its first performance at the Annual General Meeting of VASS held in the Global Learning Centre in February 2004. By early 2006 ARAB had drawn in around a hundred young performers from the north and west metropolitan regions and they had performed to audiences totalling more than 20,000 at events held across Melbourne.

Given the rather compressed process for community formation in the Broadmeadows area it continues to be a community with limited traditions in regard to community events

and celebrations. For this reason the Hume City Council plays a strong role in generating community activities and they tend to be multicultural in character because the council wants to build an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect to reduce the potential for social division along ethnic lines. Paradoxically, the potential for social division also becomes an asset for building innovative community activities and a good example of this has been an annual Multicultural Planting Festival that has run for over ten years and has attracted national interest from organizations interested in nature conservation. The Multicultural Planting Festival was initiated by a local government environmental officer, Dimi Bouzalas, who wanted to build an environmental activity that would attract the participation of the various culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in the area. She knew that many of these people come from cultural traditions in which there are annual harvest festivals that celebrate nature's bounty and she felt that this could be applied in reverse to encourage participation in an activity that aims to restore degraded natural environments (environmental plantings). The model that was developed involves participation in a planting activity directed by the council's environment department followed by the sharing of food prepared by different ethnic community groups. Over time a sharing of different dance and music performances from the diverse communities was added to the program and in recent years the festival has attracted around 1,000 participants. While environmental consultants employed by the council have questioned the quality of the morning planting activity and questions have been also been raised about the return on council's financial investment in the day, the community development worker who has overseen the most recent festivals for council, Natalia Valenzuela, argues that the long period of preparation that goes into each annual event results in a sustained strengthening of cross-cultural awareness, substantial environmental education work (that often precedes the day) and a strengthening of civic pride in the area. She reports that people who have come from the 'less developed' nations of the world are horrified by the profligate use of energy and resources in our consumerist society and they feel they could teach Anglo-Australians some important things about how to live more frugally.

Community Life and Arts Practice in Daylesford

Rebecca Lister came to live in Daylesford in 1996 because her partner had got a job in the area. She was delighted to find that the Neighbourhood House had a regular 'Welcome Newcomers' morning tea because this allayed some of her fears about fitting into a fairly small rural community and she met some other women who were in a similar position to her. At that time the Powerhouse Art Space was also having regular open performance nights and this helped her to get in touch with people interested in community arts. Word soon spread that an experienced community-theatre person had arrived in town and Lister was invited to run theatre classes at the Neighbourhood House.

It was mainly women, some with young children, who attended Lister's theatre classes and some of them went on to form their own theatre group called Wild Card Players that lasted for a few years. Meanwhile Lister had noticed that some anti-social behaviour in the school that her children attended seemed to reflect the broader social divisions between long-established families and newcomers and she suggested some theatre work that could address issues such as bullying in a constructive way. Lister continued to work in the primary school—until she left the district in 2005—writing and directing school plays and establishing an annual *Art Attack* program that would continue after she left. She said that theatre is a great way to get a community talking about troubling issues. From her first big local community production—a play titled *Calling All Angels* that was staged in spectacular fashion beside the lake and attracted the interest of the whole town—to her last, a play called *Through the Mist* that was about the nearby town of Trentham and played to packed audiences in that town over two nights, she was able to address issues such as intolerance of others, young people leaving town, and people living with mental illness. She collected local stories to weave into her plays and some people said they were pleased to be able talk about things that had been hushed

up in the past For example, one woman told her that when she was young she had fallen pregnant, went away to have the baby and give it up for adoption, and when she returned everyone pretended it had never happened. Like Julie Shiels in St Kilda, Lister thinks that the sharing of a wide range of local stories can give people the sense that they live in an interestingly diverse community and this confirms the value of social diversity. It is timely, to affirm the value of social diversity in Daylesford because a rising cost of living, especially in regard to real estate, is making it harder for some families to stay in the town.

Of course, the loss of young people to nearby Ballarat or to Melbourne is a perennial problem for towns like Daylesford and Hepburn Springs and the local chef and community activist Gary Thomas, who made that journey himself, suggested that as much as it is important to welcome newcomers it is just as important to let the young know that they will truly be welcomed back if they decide to return. On the other hand, Lister and Jenny Beacham—who has chaired the organizing committee for the annual Swiss-Italian Festa for five years—say that there is no better way to get to know a community that you have chosen to join than to get involved in organizing major community activities and events. You begin to have more meaningful conversations with people in the street and hear stories that you would not have heard otherwise as the trust grows.

Like Rebecca Lister, Anni Coyne moved to the Daylesford district for personal reasons and joined some activities at the Neighbourhood House to get to know other people. She had mixed with a lot of 'arty people' as a teenager and always loved singing but had little confidence in her ability. When her marriage broke down she was left with a small child in a rather isolated house and looked for opportunities to sing as a way to break out of her social isolation. She began singing at Port Fairy and other music festivals and through these she got to know the prominent Victorian community choirs advocate Faye White. Under White's encouragement, Coyne offered to run a singing group through the Daylesford Neighbourhood House and she found that other women who felt isolated—often because they were at home with young children—were greatly attracted by the idea. Although Coyne was already thirty when she began this work, the enthusiasm of the women who joined her gave her a lot of confidence and she understood their needs because she had had the same experiences of isolation. Coyne says that community choirs can become a small community in themselves because you can share the pleasure of singing well together and then sit around, sometimes over a meal, to chat about shared life-experiences. She has worked with a women-only choir in Daylesford and a mixed choir in Ballan and although the dynamics are quite different she says they have both been enjoyable experiences for her. She introduces songs that range in mood from melancholic to uplifting and she feels that singing well together can be an excellent way to give voice to the emotions that people may be feeling in isolation. Coyne said that most people probably go through different life experiences and phases in their life when the opportunity to participate in local community activities can be more important. Coyne's choirs have also attracted some older people and people with disabilities. They provide an opportunity for newcomers to get to know other people with similar interests in music and art.

Like in St Kilda, people who live in Daylesford and Hepburn Springs experience regular influxes of visitors (especially on weekends) and at such times the local community can seem almost invisible. Unlike St Kilda, many people live in streets where many of the houses are empty during the week and this can exacerbate feelings of isolation. Petrus Spronk, a professional artist who has lived in the Daylesford area for eighteen years, said that the atmosphere changes quite a bit on the weekends and the orientation towards tourists and visitors—especially with the commercialization of the main street in Daylesford—can weaken a local sense of belonging. That is why, Spronk suggested, it is important for local people to find times and places to gather beyond the glare of the outsiders and activities at which people can share their artistic expressions—even if they are not always 'my cup of tea'—can be uplifting. For some years the small Cosy Corner Café fulfilled this function, and Spronk remembers one evening when 117 people crammed into that small space, but the people

who ran that got tired and moved on. Later the Powerhouse Art Space became a hive of local activity for a period of time, but it proved impossible to sustain the funding to keep it going. Spronk said that a range of local festivals from the Swiss-Italian Festa to the New Year's Eve parade provide important opportunities to get together and the regular Sunday Markets are probably the best place to meet and chat with other locals.

Spronk is very annoyed by the tourism promotion ploy that places Daylesford at the heart of a so-called 'Pure Indulgence Tour'. 'A lot of people are really struggling to live in our community because they do not live the indulgent lifestyle, they service it. And the serve it on a totally minimal wage because the service industry—whether it's making beds, or making coffee and serving food, or cleaning—it's not indulgent. That's hard yakka and not always paid well. So people who live here, or who were born here, find that they are struggling to pay the rent in their own town.'

Community and Arts Practice in the Hamilton Region

The economic downturn that affected the Hamilton region after the sharp decline in wool prices in the late 1980s sapped the confidence and morale of people living in the Hamilton and the surrounding small towns. According to local café owner and central organizer of the very successful 2004 Top of the Town fund-raising ball, Tony McGilvray, this makes community celebrations and gatherings more important than they were in the past. He has been involved in a range of community events that have helped to 'lift people's heads … instead of walking along with your head down, kicking a stone, worrying about the price of wool'. The Top of the Town Ball had been the most successful of all the events he has helped to organize because it turned a modest proposal for a fund-raising night into a huge challenge that would require a big effort, good teamwork and creative thinking to pull off. In raising nearly $270,000 for the Hamilton hospital the event surpassed all expectations and the evening went so well that all the organizers were 'just on a high; a lot of blokes walking around with their arms around each other. And some of the people who do not work together, or who do not socialize together, were all of a sudden intertangled. It was a very levelling sort of thing'. The project won both the Victorian and national fund-raising awards for 2004 and it also gave the town a night to remember.

McGilvray and co-organizers Frances Pekin and Roger Dunn agreed that the event caught the imagination of the town because it was imaginative and challenging in its conception. Everything was a bit special—from the site on a hill overlooking the town on which they erected huge marquees that could hold 500 guests, to the way the marquees were decorated, to the effort put into providing the best possible food, to the effort that everyone made to dress up and feel good on the night. About seventy students from Hamilton Alexander College acted as waiters and waitresses and when asked how you measure the success of such an event, McGilvray said, 'Years down the track you will hear a story of what the Top of the Town Ball did for someone and that's important because if it changes someone's life to any little degree that's a benefit. I know that it changed the lives of seventy kids because they were so vibrant in what they did. Parents rang me and said, 'My kid came home a different person'. So for the first time we have an opportunity to hang on to some of those kids'.

While Hamilton has faced some big challenges since the fall in wool prices, many of the smaller towns in the region have had even less cause for celebration. However, one cause for celebration appears to be simply that they have survived such an economic downturn and in the case of Macarthur they decided to turn an insult into a celebration by holding a special day to bury the tag of being 'the most boring town in Victoria' that was bestowed on them by Melbourne's *Sun* newspaper in 1984. To counter the harmful branding of the town, a resident historian gained the support of the local historical society to work on an oral history book that would tell the stories of some colourful residents, past and present, and it was the launching of this book titled *Boring: Not Likely*. It enabled the community to organize the ceremony around a symbolic event in which newspaper cuttings about the town's unwanted award

were buried in a specially constructed coffin. As with the work of Julie Shiels in St Kilda and Rebecca Lister in Daylesford the Macarthur oral history book demonstrated how a collection of colourful stories can change the way in which people feel about the community in which they live.

Sitting at the foot of the southern tip of the spectacular Grampians Range, Dunkeld has some advantages over other small towns in the region. The mountainous backdrop and easy access into the ranges make it an attractive destination for tourists and it is located on the arterial road between Ballarat and Hamilton. It also has a local boy who became a multi-millionaire outside the district and then reinvested much of that wealth back into Dunkeld. Butcher's son Alan Myers is one of Victoria's leading barristers and he is also chairman of the board for the Victorian National Art Gallery. His presence in the town evokes some resistance but he has invested a lot of money in basic infrastructure, he has turned the local hotel into a much more sophisticated establishment, and he underwrote a major celebration of the 150th anniversary of the early settlement being given the name Dunkeld in 2004. According to the chairman of the celebration's organizing committee, the late Keith Warne, financial support from Myers made a huge difference because it meant that a lot of work could be done to prepare the town and build the momentum for the celebration and because it enabled the committee to employ a full-time secretary to ensure that ideas could be acted on. It began as a celebration of the history of European settlement in the district and about six months before the event the town held a Scottish Night to acknowledge the fact that many of the early settlers came from Scotland: the Scottish has nostalgically named Dunkeld, Hamilton and the Grampians Range after places in their home country. However, it became a broader celebration of the way the town has changed since settlement and the big event, held over two days, attracted former residents or their descendants who had moved away from the district to various parts of Australia. Highlights included a re-enactment of scenes from history from settlement up to the present and the launching of a beautiful book of photographs of the contemporary community that had been commissioned by Alan Myers. Keith Warne said that many residents and former residents later said that the thing they enjoyed most was simply having venues and time to swap stories with others who had some kind of association with the town. For the organizers it seemed that Dunkeld was the centre of the world for a weekend and this was an unusual feeling for residents of such a small town. The town was able to celebrate often unseen linkages that extend across Australia and, historically, back to Scotland.

Warne said it was important to keep the organizing committee small, and he hand-picked people with a range of practical skills to play leading roles. The organizers then consulted widely with the community on what they wanted to see happen during the celebrations and they tried to include as many ideas as possible in the final program. He was delighted at the way local enthusiasm for the event built up during the year and many residents stepped up as volunteer workers and offered free accommodation for former residents and their families. A few residents complained that all the tidying up work done around town in preparation for the big weekend made it all look a bit too neat for them to feel comfortable but they also knew that some of the improvements would be long-term assets for the town. A highlight for the whole town came some months before the weekend when the photographer working on the book of photography mentioned above, Richard Crawley, gathered the entire community into the main street for a full community photo taken from the top of a 'cherry-picker' vehicle. It is very rare for an entire community to get together for any occasion so this was something special.

Terrie Nicholson and her family had only come to the Dunkeld area from Longreach in Queensland less than three years before the big town meeting that launched the plans for the anniversary celebrations yet she soon found herself in the position of paid secretary for the organizing committee for a year. She had been an active volunteer back in Longreach, especially with a range of sporting clubs, and had been actively involved with the Dunkeld Primary School that her children attended. She said the first meeting had been very positive

and she could see that there was a lot of community enthusiasm for the project. So it became a great way for her to get to know a lot more about the community she had recently entered and she has continued to be a volunteer with the school and the local historical museum since the end of the project. Both Nicholson and another member of the organizing committee, Joy Clarke, stressed that the success of the project owed much to the presence of Keith Warne who was respected by all and full of enthusiasm for what the celebration could do for a town that had passed through some tough times. When asked if such projects are good for the viability of small towns, Warne said you have to be very careful in talking about the viability of small towns in general because some may not be able to survive the steady loss of population to larger towns and centres. He suggested that all small rural towns in Australia need to think strategically about what their major assets are and put aside local divisions in planning for the future.

Like Dunkeld, the small town of Balmoral has been able to use its natural beauty to attract some 'sea-change/tree-change' urban refugees in recent years and the community now includes a significant number of practicing artists. One of them, Suiyin Honeywell—who had been an art teacher in the local school before leaving and then returning with a young family when her husband became the school principal—initiated a Chameleon Arts Collective which had the initial aim of helping the local artists to become more visible. People responded more enthusiastically to this initiative than Honeywell had expected and she found that other mothers of young children were keen to use their talents, artistic or organizational, to enrich the community's cultural life. The collective was able to get a grant from VicHealth to run a one-off *Cultural Quencher Exhibition* and the success of this enabled them to get a larger VicHealth grant to run a very successful, multi-faceted, *Feast of the Five Senses Festival*. According to active Chameleon Arts Collective member Amelia Johnston the group's projects have helped to overcome some of the problems of distance because they have reduced the need to travel to places like Ballarat, Geelong or Melbourne to sample a range of contemporary cultural activities. However, Johnston and Honeywell said it is still hard to get people living in Hamilton to take an interest in what is happening in the smaller towns of the region.

Conclusion

In his keynote address to the Fourth Pillar Conference held in the Melbourne Town Hall in November 2004, the experienced community-arts practitioner Jon Hawkes expressed some concerns about what he saw as an increasing subversion of community arts practices by some who had recently jumped on the bandwagon. In particular, he said that some projects seemed to place their emphasis on individual arts practices and professional outcomes rather than on participation and collective meaning-making that is less concerned with the final outcome. He feared a takeover of community-arts projects by professional artists or corporate interests who might have more commercial interests in the way that art is used for public purposes. He argued that community art projects should give people with difficult lives a chance to express their feelings and experiences—even if this means expressions of anger and frustration—rather than be manipulated to sanitize the image of a local community.

When experienced community arts practitioners were interviewed for the present study they were asked to comment on some of the concerns articulated by Hawkes and most of them felt that he had introduced some unnecessary polarizations because art projects usually involve some kind of productive interplay between individual and group processes. The best projects can have both good quality artistic outcomes and a good quality of participation and negotiation over meanings and representations. Some feared a return to a time when community arts were seen as being a token involvement with the arts, a hobby rather than an exercise in meaning-making.

Some practitioners agreed that local organizations, including local government bodies, want 'positive' artistic outcomes rather than expressions of anger but they suggested that most projects allow for the expression of a whole range of emotions. Many of the community arts

projects that were examined for this study had the specific aim of helping people feel less socially isolated and frustrated but practitioners—such as Marie Hapke, Giz James, Kate Sulan, Julie Shields, Rebecca Lister, Anne Kershaw, and Alan MacGregor—stressed that the work must arise out of the authentic experience of the people involved or otherwise the engagement needed to have a successful artistic outcome will simply not occur. They all said there is an important role for skilled artists but it is not an easy option for artists who do not really want to engage with people and groups, and 'opportunists' are not likely to stay in the field for long.

Many of the projects examined, from St Kilda's Community Ball, to the Multicultural Planting Festival and Eid Festivals in Broadmeadows, to the staging of one of Rebecca Lister's community plays or the Swiss-Italian Festa in the Daylesford area, to the Top of the Town Ball in Hamilton and Dunkeld's 150th anniversary celebrations, owed their success to the inclusive, celebratory atmosphere that was engendered by the organizers. The organizers would argue that we need more, not less, positive public celebrations in local communities, provided they capture the imagination of the community and create a special, sometimes 'magical' experience for participants. Whether it be a small rural community such as Macarthur holding its 'Paint the Town Red' day to bury the insulting tag of most boring town, or a complex, multicultural community in a place like Broadmeadows holding its annual feast associated with the Multicultural Planting Festival, successful public celebrations often demonstrate that local communities can do much more than they had imagined and this can lift their collective self-esteem and improve the perception that outsiders might have of them.

5

Social Division and Social Inclusion

We have been working with a broad notion of *social inclusion*. This means going beyond the usual emphasis on individual participation in the workforce to examine the capacity of a community to address collectively the causes of division and marginalization, to create conditions in which social networks can be projected or strengthened, and to reduce social isolation by organizing inclusive community activities that nurture a stronger and more meaningful sense of belonging. This is not to dismiss the need for work-readiness programs that aim to teach people skills they might need to become more employable. However, such programs need to be driven by employers and government agencies concerned with economic development and a reduction in welfare dependency, whereas organizations that are interested in the wellbeing of local communities need to think beyond the focus on employment and employability.

The local communities that we have chosen to work with have all gone through periods of economic restructuring that have altered employment prospects and even the demographic characteristics of the communities themselves. While organizations charged with the wellbeing of local communities are rarely consulted about major structural economic changes, they can seek to maximize local employment possibilities related to such changes. At the same time, there are structural causes for long-term, chronic unemployment and under-employment affecting some sectors of local communities and these are the people who probably face the greatest risk of social isolation. Caring communities need to ensure that people most adversely affected by economic changes are supported and that such changes do not cause new social divisions and disharmony. This relates to the impact of gentrification in the St Kilda area, the impacts of urban consolidation and the long-term decline in manufacturing in the Broadmeadows area, the demise of traditional rural industries and the rise of a 'new economy' focused on tourism in the Daylesford area, and the emergence of a narrowly-based 'new boom relying heavily on blue-gum plantations and mineral-sands mining in the Hamilton region.

We have chosen case studies of places that have targeted people who are socially isolated. We have also been interested in ways in which community arts have been employed to introduce more creativity into community development strategies, especially in St Kilda, Broadmeadows, and Daylesford. Both St Kilda and Daylesford have developed reputations for being diverse and tolerant communities and they have both established communities of practicing artists who can be drawn into community projects. They both have to deal with the regular influx of visitors, which has led to a commercialisation of the shopping centres and makes the local community less visible to itself. Permanent residents of Daylesford also say that it is rather odd to live in streets in which many houses are empty for much of the time, yet Daylesford has managed to avoid the kind of tourism that can turn living towns into museums. Since the 1950s, Broadmeadows has experienced poor social planning and infrastructure development, periodic influxes of new settlers from many parts of the world, periods of very high unemployment and continuing 'structural underemployment', adverse publicity in the media, and a recent growth in local development. All this has made community development work very challenging in this area. In the Hamilton region, patterns of European settlement have left some rather painful legacies but a surprising diversity of small towns. A long period of prosperity fostered an interest in 'elite' arts but the region has a thin tradition in community arts. So the selected case studies of community celebrations and community arts projects across the four communities reflected different challenges for community development and

different challenges for strengthening a sense of social inclusion.

Some, but not all, of the projects we have examined benefited from VicHealth sponsorship. VicHealth names 'social connectedness' as one of the main 'determinants' that can drive improvements to the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and the communities in which they live. In our case studies we asked the key organizers of successful community arts events about the relevance of these 'wellbeing determinants' for helping to better conceptualize the aims and outcomes of their work. We also asked these people to comment on a recent critique by the prominent Victorian practitioner of community cultural development, Jon Hawkes, which suggested that too many people are jumping on the 'bandwagon' of community arts with projects that do not address the needs or interests of local communities.

In such circumstances, practices of social inclusion are hollowed out to a transactional arrangement; one that is unlikely to foster the kinds the wellbeing that are integral to sustainable communities. Such transactional arrangements are unlikely to elicit the kinds of deeper social ties that underpin communities. Many of the concerns raised by Richard Sennett around the issue of inclusion cropped up during our interviews. In particular, there was a prevalent concern about the ways in which centralization and rationalization within business undermines people's sense of social inclusion. One person from Hamilton, for example, spoke of the way in which changes in the nature of work, particularly the loss of pathways up through an organisation, had undermined the potentially inclusive nature of work.

> I think there isn't quite as much dependence on each other that we once had, and maybe you hear about people saying, 'Oh I started off as the office boy, I just took the letters to the mailbox', and I think there'd be nobody who had such a simple job anymore and perhaps that person who got that job might now be dependent on some sort of government support and maybe … loses a lot of connections because someone working as a … low employee in an organisation would have contact with people at all sorts of levels whereas a person becomes dependent or … dependent on a payment but no involvement with someone else, I think that can be really potentially isolating. I think it's probably being addressed.

In this respect, there seemed to be a concern that work no longer provides the kind of structure or narrative to a career, where a person might start at the bottom of an organization and work their way up, there was a sense of here of people becoming isolated through either dead-end jobs, with few prospects for advancement, or by them becoming dependent, or partially dependent on welfare payments. The same interview expressed similar concerns about the trend towards centralization and rationalization in organizations, both public and private and in institutions such as the university.

Similar concerns cropped up the responses of another interviewee who spoke about a culture of 'getting caught up in some sort of a machine that is very separate from themselves. Very separate from some sense of deeper meaning. They focus on self in a way removed from community … I guess I'm talking about the corporate end'. Another person who lived in a city apartment reported that city living was not conducive to meeting new people, although he expressed a desire to have informal parties where people could meet with one another. Thus, even at the other end of the workforce, beyond 'dead-end' jobs, there seemed to be a sense that something was missing.

For the interviewees, involvement in community life, at its best, was seen as a 'haven in a heartless world'; an escape from the demands of work and what might be thought of as instrumentally rational social relations. But the interviews complicated the picture of social inclusion and social exclusion and social division beyond the dichotomy of dead-end jobs versus the well-remunerated but alienating work, or the stark choice of opting in or out of community. This had particular relevance to the way in which art and arts practice work in relation to social inclusion.

The importance and value of the arts has been bound up with various forms of exclusion, and certainly some of the interviewees associated art with a degree of distinction which, logically, required that some things be excluded. This points to a tension with social inclusion as a policy strategy, namely that pushed to its logical end, social inclusion begins to undermine itself. If something becomes so inclusive that the cost of admission are reduced to almost nothing, then it is likely that being included will not be valued that highly since the benefits of being included, while not necessarily insignificant, are much lower than would be the case where a more exclusive orientation rains.

A parallel example with clubs can help to illustrate the point. As an elite private club, the Melbourne Club is not open to all comers. Membership is highly sought after by elites precisely because the majority are excluded. Because the benefits of belonging to the club are not shared equally and are not open to all, the potential benefits to belonging are enormous. Compare this to the RACV where membership is open to anyone for an annual fee. While few would doubt the significant benefits that come with belonging to the RACV, they are of a fairly specific nature, being confine mainly to car travel and insurance, unlike the benefits conferred by belonging to the Melbourne Club, which are less defined and have the potential to be cross a range of different spheres of life—politically, economically, culturally, socially. Without this distinction, if the Melbourne Club opened its doors to all comers, and was as inclusive as the RACV then the benefits of belonging would be steadily eroded.

Something similar can be said to hold in relation to policies and strategies which seek to foster inclusion. If the barriers to inclusion are so low that anyone can be admitted, then the benefits of being included are likely to decline. Where there is no benefit to being included, people are likely to question why they should make the effort to be included. This is particularly so in the case of the arts, with their associations with quality and distinction. Whether we like it or not, in Western culture the arts are used by people to distinguish themselves and conferring distinction. While people often have different expectations of community arts, they do not escape the emphasis on distinction and difference completely. There is then, a question about the extent of inclusion within community arts; about whether it is an appropriate goal of policy in its own right, or whether it needs to be balanced by other, competing concerns. While this was not a dominant thread in the interviews, it did nevertheless arise in relation to ideas of quality artwork. One person, for example, spoke of seeing a high-quality piece of sculpture at a bush exhibition, noting the wonder of having something of that quality in her small community. Another respondent, talked about the streetscape where he lived which featured decorative fountains that lent prestige to people and their address: 'You feel like a bit of worthiness. Like, it's good living in the city. I dunno, I'm trying to say something. You're living in a concrete jungle, yet they still have this nice water'.

Although noted in passing, these remarks point to an important lesson about community arts practices which have implications for strategies that seek to increase or augment social inclusion. This is that such practices need to be of high quality to have people involved in them. Events or activities which place emphasis on participation over the quality of the end-product are not likely to attract people or to keep them interested.

Another complicating factor with regard to strategies of social inclusion concern how people used culture and the arts. Arts and culture should not be seen as automatically inclusive in the sense of creating tightly-knit communities where everyone knows one another. In some instances, arts practices were quite consciously used to maintain a distance between oneself and others. For example, one person who was a rooming house tenant in St Kilda used art—in his case, creative writing—to manage his relations to his community, while also lending a sense of narrative and structure to his life. He had experienced various problems with drugs and alcohol over the years. He did not value his community at all and tried to maintain some distance from it. Asked if the community was valuable to him, he answered, 'No, not at all. Not this community at all. You need to stay away from this sort of environment, otherwise things just snowball. You get people drinking, and next minute you are too. That's how it all

starts'.

However, this did not mean that he lived completely apart from his community. On the contrary, he used his writing as a way to connect to this community and manage a relation to it, without being dragged down by it. Specifically, he composed short stories about his own life and how he had managed to reinvent his life without drugs or alcohol. In his own words:

> I use my writing to help people. I give it to them and walk away. That way I don't take any of this shit on. I'm not a counsellor, and I don't want to be a counsellor—just yet anyway. I am trying to teach people that they can live a normal life.

Thus he had managed to find would might be called 'inclusion-at-a-distance' or, more simply, what might be called 'abstracted inclusion', where writing mediates the relation one has to the community more generally. In this respect, arts and cultural activities enabled a form of participation in community life that was characterized simultaneously by inclusion and exclusion.

This was not confined to communities marked by alcoholism and depression. Other respondents did not necessarily seek tight-knit forms of social inclusion, or see these as necessary to health and wellbeing. An interviewee from St Kilda explained that he personally preferred to opt in and out of the different communities of which he was a member. His own way of putting this was to say 'I'm not by nature a club person. I'd love to be a club person, I'd love to be a team person but it's not in my nature'. Consistent with this point of view, on the question of health and participation in community, he did not think that it was necessary to have strong connections to community for wellbeing. While he believed that tight-knit communities could be good for people's health, he also thought that communities which were characterized by what might be called 'cool civility'—that is, where people are polite and considerate in their dealings with each other, but not especially involved with their lives—were equally beneficial to wellbeing. In this view, it was only when a community actively worked to undermine individual's wellbeing, through the presence of violence for example, that it affected wellbeing.

One interpretation of this might be that social inclusion is sometimes taken for granted and therefore there is no need to seek any closer involvement in the community. It might therefore be a good example of the 'voluntary excluded' that Giddens writes about, where people are sufficiently comfortable and have the means to voluntarily opt out of the broader community. Or, it might reflect the views of persons who take their own inclusion so much for granted that they feel quite comfortable about dipping in and out of community. Neither of these interpretations are satisfactory, however, as the same interviewee expressed strong reservations about communities in which people did not actually meet face-to-face. In particular, he made a special point of talking about the internet, saying that he could not leave the interview without saying anything about it. While he was not against the internet *per se* and actually thought that in many respects it was 'wonderful', he argued that 'it's no substitute for a real community'. There was, in his view, a view that online communities are not real communities. They are in some sense, not authentic expressions of community. It's worth quoting him at length on the subject. He went on:

> I think it's just a bit of a trick that might take people ten or twenty years or a lifetime to wake up to the fact that they were duped. I don't know how self-esteem gets developed. How do share a joke—how do you actually laugh, people laughing—people looking eye-to-eye and they're chuckling about—how do you have a chuckle with someone via a chat room or a 'chuckle room'? I think it's just perverse really … I think the internet is very seductive interpersonally. You think that you're doing something meaningful and clever, but I don't think you are. It's hyped up—you feel like you're so damn cool. It's this thing about international citizenship—'I've got friends in Sweden, and Albania and Rumania!' … I think

it's sad really … Talking to some German friend that you might have and yet you don't know the people who live next door to you. Swapping recipes with someone in Germany, and you've never, you know, you're too sacred to borrow a cup of sugar or lemons from the lady next door to you. That's what's odd about it.

This response was not only interesting because it was volunteered spontaneously and was obviously strongly felt, but also because, as noted, he did not consider himself to be deeply involved in community, but preferred to move between the different communities of which he was a member. Similarly, he expressed concerns about people who did not have the self-esteem to be actively involved in community. He used a metaphor of having 'interpersonal chips' with which to gamble with and take risks with in social situations. People with high self-esteem were, he argued, able to 'gamble' more freely in social situations and therefore thought little of taking a risk with engaging with others. People with low self-esteem, on the other hand, were less likely to risk their chips in case it is not reciprocated.

There is a lot going on in this metaphor of seeing social life as, for some, a risky undertaking like a gamble, though there are elements here of what Sennett refers to through notions of mutual exchange and witnessing. While online communities entailed mutual exchange of a sort, his criticisms of them stemmed from the fact that such exchanges are not sufficiently rich or deep; their fleeting, temporary character of the exchange renders them inauthentic. This overlaps with a concern for recognition or, in Sennett's words, having 'witnesses to one's behaviour', as an integral part of social inclusion. As one person put it, 'Sometimes recognition's a really difficult thing. People are striving for that and they're very anxious when they're not getting it'. In this sense the participation in cultural and arts practices may offer people a means of recognition, although, as noted above, the concern with recognition needs to be balanced alongside a desire for distinction.

Inclusion/Exclusion

The quantitative data provides further insight into two issues relevant to social inclusion and exclusion. The first section addresses the slow and incremental nature of developing social inclusion. The following section outlines and discusses barriers to attendance at community arts events and extrapolates how that might relate to social exclusion.

Slow Build-up of Social Inclusion

Funding applications for VicHealth requires that applicants address how their event will address social inclusion. The underlying assumption appears to be that attendance at or participation in an event directly builds social inclusion. Yet our data suggests that social inclusion appears to be effected in a meaningful way only through long-term ongoing involvement in community arts. One female festival attendee commented that she had been involved with numerous other community arts events over a fifteen-year period. She noted 'I have gained friends, confidence and community links. [These are] very important to who I am today'. In this case, involvement in community arts had been an important source of community and identity. Yet it must be noted that this was over a fifteen-year period of being centrally involved. This example emphasizes the concern of many community arts practitioners who maintain that funding often only allows for short-term projects that do not encourage the more beneficial longer-term involvement. It seems that the expectation of inclusion via attendance only is a spurious one. Instead, to really feel part of a place, and 'get something' from the community, respondents reported having to put something in, or as this woman had done, many hours over a long period of time.

This point links to data that suggests the foremost motivation for attending community arts events was wanting to give something to the community. The question was designed to elicit details of an attendance life cycle, an issue that had arisen in qualitative interviews. In response to the question, 'Thinking over the last 5-10 years, when have you come to events like this?', 38.6 per cent of all respondents noted 'I wanted to give something to the community'. This was

highest at the Broadmeadows Planting Festival, at 60.7 per cent of respondents, suggesting that communities based on ethnicity are particularly motivated to give to their new community. Likewise, established groups were also highly motivated: 51.6 per cent of respondents at the Daylesford Flower Festa were motivated to attend to give something to their community. This event was locally known as a fundraising event for the Daylesford Swiss Italian Festa, held annually in April. In contrast, for attendees at the Hamilton Mela and the Broadmeadows Eid festival, only 30 per cent and 31.3 per cent respectively noted that giving something to the community motivated their attendance at events over time. This might be explained by these latter two events being less participatory—the Hamilton Mela was a one-off event with high levels of participation for organizers and speakers, but little for attendees. Likewise, Eid is held twice a year, dependant on the Muslim calendar, and unlike the planting day, does not require the majority of participants to be actively involved by dressing in national costume, preparing traditional food, or planting trees in the ground.

It would seem that the benefits of community arts are achieved over a long period of time. Furthermore, those benefits are compounded when driven by a motivation to give something to the community, above and beyond attendance. The data suggests that social inclusion builds up slowly over time. As is intuitive, friendships are not formed on the basis of a one-off meeting but rather they are the product of meeting and re-meeting friends and neighbours. Community arts events served as significant venues where people might do this. A significant proportion—37.5 per cent—of participants attending the Eid festival in Broadmeadows said that they had come along to meet up with friends and neighbours. Likewise, 45.3 per cent of participants at the CERES Kingfisher festival saw meeting up with friends and neighbours as a factor motivating attendance.

While rarely was meeting new people a motivation for attending an event, it appeared to be an added advantage for many respondents. Of all of those who filled out a questionnaire at an event, only 16.9 per cent said that they had come along today to 'meet new people'. However, half of the respondents at the Broadmeadows Planting festival noted that they had met new people, while at the Hamilton Mela and the Preston human rights day 44 per cent and 43.5 per cent did likewise. Lower numbers of meeting new people was reported by attendees at the Daylesford Flower Festa (14.1 per cent) and the CERES Kingfisher Festival (18.6 per cent), perhaps suggesting that those attending were already known.

Finding things in common with others was a widespread response to the question 'What have you got from coming along today'? Half of all respondents at the Hamilton Mela had found things in common with others, as had 48.2 per cent of those attending the Broadmeadows Planting day. Significantly lower numbers noted having found things in common with others after attending the St Kilda RAG event (20.6 per cent) and the CERES Kingfisher festival (20.9 per cent). The St Kilda event might be explained by it being an event that had a low rate of participation; the audience was not involved in the performance at all and was therefore unlikely to be in a situation to find things in common with others. In contrast the CERES event appeared to aim to be a participatory festival. Yet attendees appeared to be part of an established community.

In contrast, the mail-out survey linked attendance at community arts events specifically to the types of people who might attend such events. In response to the question 'If you do not participate in community arts events could you please tell us why'? Small numbers of respondents answered with 'I don't have anything in common with the people who go to those kinds of events'. This number was much higher amongst Broadmeadows residents (8.4 per cent) than it was for those who lived in Hamilton (3.2 per cent). Stereotypes often portray country people as rarely having contact with people who are different to themselves. This finding challenges suggestions of xenophobia amongst questionnaire respondents.

A Sense of Belonging

A significant finding of the questionnaire carried out at events was that people felt like they belonged to this community as a result of attending an event. At the Broadmeadows planting day, half of all of respondents noted this, as did 39.1 per cent of attendees at the Preston Human Rights Day. Events that scored lower on a feeling of belonging were the Hamilton Mela (20 per cent) and the St Kilda RAG event (26.5 per cent). There are too many factors to conclusively predict why that might be, but aligning oneself and feeling part of a marginalized community, such as the performers with a mental illness that made up the RAG event, may not be desirable. At the Hamilton Mela, perhaps attendees did not feel any sense of an obvious community, or at least that food issues were outside of the community structures.

Barriers to Inclusion

One obvious reason why people may not attend is simply the cost. While some of the events in the study were free, including the Broadmeadows Planting day, Preston Human Rights day and the Hamilton Mela, attendees at others incurred a cost. When combined with the cost of food and drinks that often accompany attendance at such events, for a family on a lower income, it was purported that cost could present a significant barrier.

Indeed, 9.7 per cent of all mail-out questionnaire respondents (n=411), reported that they do not participate in community arts events because 'I can't afford the meal/drinks cost that go with it'. Differences to this question based on place were evident—for residents of Daylesford and Broadmeadows 16 per cent and 15.8 per cent respectively did not attend events due to associated costs. This response was significant lower amongst Hamilton and St Kilda residents at 6.4 per cent and 3.1 per cent respectively. In comparison to other responses to this question, 10.5 per cent of all respondents noted that they did not attend events because they did not know about them and 16.5 per cent reported being to busy to attend. This suggests that for many, the decision not to attend community arts events was not based on financial constraints.

An additional issue is that of higher attendance based on the assumption that the event will be inexpensive. Acknowledging the difficultly of acquiring accurate data on prior behaviour, we designed a question that expanded on qualitative evidence of a life-cycle of event attendance. In a question designed to elicit when, across the previous ten years, people were more likely to attend a community arts event, 27.4 per cent of the sample reported attending events like this more often when they wanted an affordable day out. Once again, this question was stratified according to event. The CERES Kingfisher Festival is based in inner-city Brunswick, a suburb that is undergoing obvious gentrification. More than a third (38.4 per cent) of all respondents at the Kingfisher festival noted that they had attended community arts events in the past when they wanted an affordable day out. Yet only 21.7 per cent of respondents at the Preston Human Rights Day agreed with this statement. Interestingly, as noted earlier, the Kingfisher festival was significantly more expensive than other events at which questionnaires were completed. This suggests that while cost may have been barrier for attendees at that festival in the past, higher disposable incomes now mean that spending $12 plus the cost of food and drink is not prohibitive. Alternately, it may suggest that those who attend the Kingfisher festival have a much higher sense of what affordable means in comparison to other community arts attendees.

The survey results showed lower numbers of attendees at the Broadmeadows Planting day, the Preston Human Rights day and the Hamilton Mela reporting higher past attendance based on affordability; despite the fact that these three events were free.

Further constraints that deterred people from attending events related to issues of community. A Broadmeadows resident reported that she did not attend more events because 'the community-event catchment area is too large for my sense of community', suggesting that events organized, for example across the City of Hume, fail to match individual conceptions of community. A related comment was that events 'are not always conducive to meeting/

engaging with people', a reflection once again on the slow, detailed nature of community-building.

Perceptions of Inclusion

It appears that the perception of being included is an all important facet of social inclusion. Some respondents showed evidence of self-imposed exclusion. In response to a question about non-attendance at community arts events, one Hamilton respondent remarked 'Only the local ponces go'. This may reflect that arts events in Hamilton are mostly targeted at high-end art rather than more participatory community arts. In a regional town such as Hamilton, social divisions are often linked to historical factors. Clearly this respondent saw that arts events in the town were not for him and was in fact targeted at a crowd to which he did not wish to belong. This theme of exclusion via a perception of not belonging was repeated in a response from an Eid attendee. When asked why she did not go events like this more often she replied 'Too many restrictions on what to wear to some events. Can't be yourself. A true Aussie!' This Muslim woman was dressed in a hijab. Her words suggest links between her identity as an Australian and her dress. In a similar vein, one attendee at the CERES Kingfisher festival noted the event was 'very friendly, lots of fun, no discrimination'. It was not clear from his answer what kind of discrimination he was referring to and what other kinds of events he had experienced such discrimination. In Daylesford a respondent to the mail-out questionnaire noted not attending events more often because she felt 'inferior to some of those who participate'. Clearly, feeling like they belonged was an important precipitator to attending community arts events.

The CERES Kingfisher festival provides a good case study of differing perceptions of community. One respondent, a female in the 20–29 year-old age-group noted 'we only just arrived and are already excited about being here—the music, the colour, the sense of community, happy people being themselves and enjoying life!'. Agreeing with the community themes, another female attendee noted 'The Kingfisher festival is a stand-out every year—community atmosphere unlike other festivals, I attend approximately ten to fifteen per year'. In contrast to these reports of a strong 'community feel' at the CERES event, another attendee at the same event noted a 'lack of inclusiveness'. This respondent 'felt the energy was closed and clicky, not embracive'. It is possible that within the same event, those who are part of the wider community and have been for some time, or find something in common with the group feel immediately part of the community, while others feel excluded.

At the same festival a respondent in the 50–59 year-old age-group noted the event was 'better than I expected—real community feel. I really believe that more such events would cement communities and enhance the physical and mental health of individuals, especially people with no support networks'. This respondent explicitly links attendance at events to health and well-being, suggesting a enhanced benefits for those with fewer social networks. There are two issues here. Firstly, the data does not actually support her contention of those with fewer social networks having better outcomes of attendance. Of those who responded to the question 'thinking over the last 5–10 years, when have you come to events like this? Only 2.4 per cent replied by noting 'I felt isolated'. It could be concluded that when people feel isolated attending a community art event is either too confronting, or, as was noted earlier, the events are not conducive to engaging with others in a meaningful way that would assist in overcoming isolation.

However, the data does support the link between event attendance and health and wellbeing more generally. If we use living status as one measure of isolation, 32.3 per cent of those who live alone noted that attendance was good for their health. This compares to 29.6 per cent of those who live with others, and only 19.8 per cent of those who live with family. This suggests there are greater perceived gains to be had for those who live alone. As would be expected, for those who self-rated their health as poor, the perceived health gains were much higher, in that 42.9 per cent noted that attendance was good for their health in comparison to 21.7 per

cent of those who reported being in good health.

Place-Specific Approaches to Social Inclusion

St Kilda

The St Kilda region has a highly regarded set of programs for people with 'special needs' that involve skilled artists and a range of arts media. Many of these programs are sponsored by the Port Phillip City Council. They have won awards and have led to public performances and exhibitions, including performances at the Melbourne International Festival (Rawcus Theatre Troupe) and the Melbourne Writers Festival (Roomers Magazine writing group). Many of these projects were initiated by the social worker Marie Hapke who joined the Recreation Department of the St Kilda Council in 1992 after working in community development in the old City of Hawthorn. Hapke had obtained an arts grant for a big project in Hawthorn called *Memorabilia* that created an exhibition about the lives of older people living in public housing in the area. In her first week at St Kilda she wrote a successful application for an Australia Council grant to turn an existing music group for people with mental illnesses into the RAG (Recreation Access Group) Theatre Troupe that had the aim of producing a musical for public performance. Performances by RAG during Mental Health Week led to them going on a state-wide tour in 1995 and around the same time Hapke obtained funding to establish the *Roomers Magazine* that would publish the writing of people living in rooming houses. According to Hapke, rooming houses can be depressing, even violent, places in which to live, and many people with special needs feel intensely isolated in them. The magazine gave them a chance to give voice to their difficult experiences and when they saw that copies of the magazine were on display in libraries and some shops they felt they had become more visible. Other projects have included the Bipolar Bears, a music band for people with mental illnesses; the Rawcus Theatre Company that is jointly sponsored by the City of Port Phillip and SCOPE Leisure Access (the former Spastic Society); art classes for special needs people run by the accomplished visual artist Giz James; and an upgrading of the annual Community Ball for older residents, that has been running for more than twenty years.

According to Hapke all these projects have been about

> visibility, voice, the place that typically marginalized people have in the communities, and reframing and repositioning them … I think all the arts are fantastic because they give you a reason to get people together in terms of events or something visual that can challenge the perceptions and prejudices that people have … Theatre, in particular, is a very powerful medium because it engages the audience very strongly at an emotional level. That's quite apart from the messages that come through the script. There might be a level of emotional engagement with an audience in an art exhibition, but I think theatre has top billing.

Hapke said that Rawcus Theatre Company stood out as a project that 'outstripped our expectations' and she felt that this was due to a combination of good people recruited to work on the project and the fact that it was able to attract good funding. Perhaps it has also been able to build on the accumulated successes of the earlier projects.

The biggest problem for those working with people of 'special needs' is that gentrification is leading to the steady demise of rooming houses and affordable accommodation in the area. While there is still a good stock of public housing in St Kilda and nearby South Melbourne, the tenants who live in these dwellings are feeling the rising cost of living and they out of place in increasingly trendy shopping centres. There are still some local characters who hang out in the streets and public spaces around St Kilda, and Marie Hapke said that local residents feel safer walking in the streets when they see the familiar faces and there 'aren't many places where women would be able to say that'. The visual artist Julie Shiels feels that it is the presence of 'different tribes, hanging out in public places' that gives the suburb a lot of its colour and character. She also said that these people help to start conversations between other residents

and she cited a story of standing in a queue in supermarket one day when she spotted Kenny, one of the street people, also standing in the queue. When she called out his name he could not hear her because he was too far away but another man in the queue behind her said 'oh, you know Kenny too' and they started chatting about their experiences of living in St Kilda. In 2005, Shiels put together a photographic exhibition titled 'One Degree of Separation' which featured images of St Kilda people above lists of other St Kilda people they know; the point being that the some common names cropped up across the separate lists. Shiels was also responsible for a well-known public art project that installed three structures in the image of milk crates in a public park where a group of drinkers—mostly Aboriginal—often gathered. On the day of the launch she received a text message on her phone from one of the drinkers who praised her work in traditional Koori terms by calling it 'deadly, sis'.

Walking from her home in St Kilda to her studio, Shiels often picks up objects or sees things that give her ideas for stories that can be incorporated into her art projects. She has honed her skills in turning some of them into exhibitions and public art works. The biggest project she has worked on was the 2002 *Memories, Margins and Markers* sponsored by Port Phillip City Council with VicHealth funding that aimed at installing works of public art across the municipality that would help to ensure that stories from the past and present are not lost through the process of gentrification. Shiels was employed as the writer of the stories that would be converted into works of art—with Ilka Tampke as project manager—but she also got very involved in working out how to represent the stories artistically. Shiels feels that this project was overly ambitious in its scope and timelines and she greatly appreciated Tampke's skills as an event manager. She tried to use the story-collecting process as an opportunity to teach other people in the community the skills she had acquired in this area over many years of practice and together they collected over 200 local stories that could be used. It was very difficult to then select the six stories that would be made into permanent installations, with other stories being used for temporary exhibitions, especially in local libraries.

Another visual artist who works from these same studios is Giz James who combines her own professional practice with the job of running art classes for people with disabilities at the Gasworks theatre and gallery. She organizes public exhibitions of their work. James said that the art classes and exhibitions take up a lot of her time and that there would be easier ways to earn the same money but she enjoys them because they bring so much joy to the participants, and because she feels she can learn from the rather innocent, childlike, view of the world. Kate Sulan finds similar enjoyment out of working with the people who have joined the Rawcus Theatre Company because 'you get the sense that it's a really special space for those performers. They tell you that all the time, or they bring you cards and cakes! Just because I think it's a different kind of space for them.' Sulan said that while she is happy that a project like Rawcus has therapeutic benefits for the participants she, as an artist, is more motivated by a desire to create really interesting artistic work and she has found that marginalised people have some fresh and challenging perspectives on contemporary life that can give their artistic work a special edge. A highlight for Sulan and members of Rawcus came when a slide of their work was shown at the public launch of the 2005 Melbourne International Festival because she felt that this confirms a genuine interest—as distinct from charitable interest—in their artistic output.

A difficulty with these kinds of projects is in measuring success because it can be quite expensive to run projects for relatively small numbers of people. While the benefits for individuals are clear, questions are raised about how many people benefit from this kind of investment, even in a high profile project such as Rawcus. The people we interviewed all stressed that it is far more important to measure success in terms of a depth of engagement rather than in terms of raw numbers but it can be difficult to sustain the funding for such programs. All these projects are about *targeted* social inclusion rather than a broader notion of social inclusion. They are about maintaining a *space* for social diversity against some pressures for more homogeneity.

Perhaps it is important to make the argument that the whole community can benefit from programs aimed at people with special needs in two ways. First, a reduction in the frustration and anger of people who have been marginalized can lead to a reduction in 'anti-social behaviour' and greater safety for people walking through public spaces. Secondly, the joy that people who have felt isolated feel when they are included and valued can be infectious and inspirational for others. Both Marie Hapke and Nelum Buddhadasa pointed out that the annual Community Ball is a great night for all who attend because the isolated and elderly put so much effort into preparing for it and are so happy on the night.

The Port Phillip City Council has sponsored another project aimed at increasing public safety and a sense of belonging by encouraging people to get to know a little more about their neighbours. The project, called *Get a StreetLife*, was given an artistic impetus by Ilka Tampke when she worked with the images and interview transcripts that came out of the photovoice research conducted by the Globalism Institute for this report to create an exhibition and free posters and coasters promoting the benefits of getting to know more about the people and places of your neighbourhood. This project created enough interest to be featured on ABC Radio National's *Life Matters* program and the on-air discussion of the project resulted in some lively 'talk-back' contributions from listeners around the country. People involved in developing a 'local drugs strategy' for the City of Port Phillip have faced a bigger challenge in getting residents to feel less threatened by the presence of sex workers and drug dealers in their neighbourhood. Prostitution and drugs have such a long history in the St Kilda that any efforts to eradicate them would fail and so Robyn Szechman came up with the idea of 'Sex and Drugs Historical Walking Tours' that would help participants see the human face of these entrenched 'social problems'. The tours use street theatre to bring to life stories from the past and some stories of people still caught up in the cycle of prostitution and drugs to show tour participants that the industry poses few risks to outsiders and that those who are caught in the cycle sympathy and support rather than fear.

Although the St Kilda community has a reputation for encouraging artistic endeavour, a musician who had moved to the area from Fitzroy, Anna Macarthur, said she found it much more difficult to break into the 'scene' in St Kilda because there are lots of 'gatekeepers'. She suggested that commercial interests who benefit from the regular influx of visitors and from the broader process of gentrification want to exercise some control over the nature of the area's cultural life.

Broadmeadows

Broadmeadows has a very rich local history and considerable natural beauty, yet it is best known as a community that emerged out of the rather disastrous experiment of dumping poor people into hastily constructed public housing estates built in 'empty paddocks' in the 1950s and 1960s. Although long-term residents speak proudly of the 'Broady spirit' that grew within a community that was largely left to its own resources in those early years, it has lacked the resources for non-essential community activities, such as community arts. It is a community that did not even have a local library until a good one was included in the recently constructed Global Learning Centre in the burgeoning Broadmeadows CBD. In the 1970s, Broadmeadows attracted a lot of undeserved and adverse media attention and it was widely perceived as being a bad place to live. Then the area went through a further crisis in the 1980s when a big downturn in manufacturing—especially at the huge Ford Motor Company factory—led to a sharp increase in local unemployment. There probably seemed few causes for public celebration and a poorly-resourced local government authority had other priorities. A Broadmeadows Festival has run for years but it has stumbled along as a low-energy and low-interest annual event. Only recently have there been attempts to develop stronger and more diverse community cultural activities and celebrations.

Two things have probably brought about a change in the prospects for a richer cultural life in the Broadmeadows area and they have both influenced the character of that emerging cultural

life. First, the local government amalgamations carried out by the Kennett government in 1996 initially polarized the Broadmeadows community but they did result in the creation of a better-resourced council that was determined to change the way the area is perceived externally. The Hume City Council was helped by the fact that the prolonged manufacturing downturn of the 1980s gave way to renewed growth in local industries during the 1990s and new housing developments to the north of Broadmeadows enabled them to turn a neglected shopping centre into an impressive activities district, servicing a much bigger region. Secondly, the ethnic diversity that had increased somewhat after the arrival of Vietnamese 'boat people' in the late-1970s accelerated during the 1990s to make the community one of the most ethnically diverse in Victoria. This latter trend has created both challenges and opportunities for local authorities wanting to build more dynamic and inclusive local communities.

Hume City Council faced a big challenge in creating a sense of identity for a new municipality that stretched from Broadmeadows to the more affluent, semi-rural community living in and around Sunbury. One attempt to forge some connections was a 'Heroes of Hume' project that brought together the stories of some unsung heroes—past and present—from across the district. However, the first exhibition of the collected stories led to a criticism from some residents of Broadmeadows that Sunbury stories were dominant and the decision was taken to continue collecting such stories on an ongoing basis. The Arts and Cultural Planner at Hume City Council, Anne Kershaw, was more successful in developing the format for a new, annual, district-wide Winter Music Festival. The secret for success here appears to be that events can be held in venues centred on both Broadmeadows and Sunbury, with the character of the events taking place in both centres being quite different. The Global Learning Centre in Broadmeadows—which attracted substantial investment from businesses with operations based in the area—has been able to host activities associated with the Winter Music Festival and it has given the council other opportunities for new cultural initiatives. For example, Anne Kershaw was able to take advantage of the opening of the new centre to plan a work of public art that cold celebrate both the cultural diversity and natural beauty of the Broadmeadows area. This is the *Weaving Lands* project that resulted in the creation of a woven 'tree' standing two metres tall that integrates the work of weavers originating in countries ranging from Australia to New Zealand, Samoa, Vietnam, Iraq, and Italy. Similarly, Kershaw also took advantage of work being done by Hume City Council to upgrade the rather shabby Dallas Shopping Centre in order to incorporate works of public art—designed by a team of twelve artists with local connections—that would reflect some of the stories of the local community and she obtained funding under VicHealth's Art and Environment Scheme for this work.

Hume City Council supports projects in the Broadmeadows area that aim to increase social harmony in a potentially divided community and change negative external perceptions of what the area is like. This agenda is overt and it means that cultural projects initiated by council have been rather top-down in their conception and implementation. However, the projects would fail in these objectives if they did not involve genuine and broad participation by people living in communities that are very complex in having overlapping layers of social and ethnic diversity. For the *Weaving Lands* project, Kershaw identified the opportunity but then handed over the artistic direction to a skilled practitioner in the art-form and concentrated on drawing in a range of people with traditional weaving skills, including some from outside the local community. She also handed over the artistic direction of the Dallas Shopping Centre project to the locally-connected artists and had to suppress some misgivings about what they decided. Both projects stimulated considerable local interest, extending beyond the people involved in design and production of the works.

The *Weaving Lands* project was interesting in the way it involved both 'insiders'—that is, weavers living in the area—and 'outsiders'—the artistic director and weavers living elsewhere in Melbourne. The 'inside' weavers brought to the project skills that originated in cultures outside Australia, while an Aboriginal weaver who lived elsewhere in Melbourne introduced the local, indigenous weaving traditions to the project. The project was grounded

in the fact that the final outcome was expected to celebrate the area as the home to beautiful natural grasslands and the weavers were asked to use the local fibres as much as possible. The project was designed to be housed at the new Global Learning Centre but it was also exhibited outside the area—in both Lilydale and at the Melbourne Immigration Museum—and this certainly helped the council's agenda of challenging negative external perceptions of the area.

As well as Hume City Council, other organizations that are interested in promoting tolerance and harmony within the ethnically diverse Broadmeadows community have turned to the arts and forms of creative expression to build cross-cultural curiosity and exchange. For example, the Victorian Arab Social Services organisation, based in Dallas, initiated the Anti-Racism Action Band (A.R.A.B.) to give young people of different ethnic origins a chance to express themselves in artforms ranging from traditional Arabic drumming and belly dancing to hip hop and stand-up comedy. From humble beginnings, with a first public performance at the Annual General Meeting of VASS in 2004, A.R.A.B. has involved more than 100 young people from across the north-western suburbs in over eighty performances with a total audience of more than 20,000. Although this project started in the Broadmeadows area it quickly involved young people and secondary schools from neighbouring areas and invitations to perform came from the whole north-west sector of Melbourne; perhaps demonstrating that a timely and innovative local idea can soon have wider reverberations. In particular, A.R.A.B. gave some potentially isolated young people a creative opportunity to challenge the causes of their isolation. The self-described 'legally blind Italian-Egyptian comedian' in A.R.A.B., Maysa Abouzeid, has said: 'I hide it but I do get depressed. I tried piano. It didn't work. I tried swimming. It didn't work. I tried running around the back yard. It didn't work. I tried cooking. It didn't work. I tried comedy with the A.R.A.B. project. *It worked*. The joy of writing and performing my own comedy gives me the spirit to be myself.'

Another interesting example of how social isolation was addressed by giving the people concerned a way to express their creativity came after the people involved with the Victorian government's Neighbourhood Renewal project in a specific section of Broadmeadows received the results of a community survey which showed that Turkish women were the most isolated in the community. Their response was to form a group for Turkish women to talk about their shared problems, led by an experienced Turkish-speaking community development worker, Diane Cakir. At first Cakir rejected requests from the women to bring food to the meetings but she eventually relented and found that the atmosphere immediately became more relaxed and conducive to meaningful conversation. Not long afterwards the women got the job of catering for an International Women's Day lunch in Broadmeadows and soon the requests for them to cater for community events multiplied. These women could express their creativity and cultural identity by cooking their traditional foods and others soon learnt that their contribution added a new element of celebration to community activities. The gift of food became a gift of participation for isolated women.

Because so many of the community arts projects in the Broadmeadows area have been initiated by government and non-government organizations with community development or social justice agendas they reflected a targeted approach to social inclusion. However, the projects that draw on the traditional skills and arts of the ethnically diverse community have a capacity to grow organically once the space for such projects is created. Another excellent example of this has been the annual Multicultural Planting Festival that was initiated over ten years ago by local government officers concerned with the restoration of degraded natural environments. The project began as an effort to involve members of the various ethnic communities living in the area in a planting day that would help them learn about native plants and animals and how to help protect them. People from the ethnic organizations thought that the activity would be more attractive if it also involved a sharing of food reflecting the diversity of cultural traditions of the participants and this began to take on the character of a 'harvest festival' that is common to many of the world's cultures. In line with

a spirit of celebration, the separate communities also offered to give free dance performances on the day and a format that involved a morning planting activity, followed by a large, shared lunch and then a sharing of cultural performances in the afternoon emerged and has been repeated ever since, involving around 1,000 participants annually.

The main organizer of the festival in recent years has been the experienced community development worker Natalia Valenzuela. She said that she spends most of the year going to different community organizations talking about their participation in the next festival and running workshops on things people can do to reduce bad environmental impacts of their households. For Valenzuela the long process of consultation and education is just as important as what is achieved on the day and she feels that a spirit of celebration is essential to maximising participation. Environmental consultants who help with the morning planting activity at these festivals have questioned the effectiveness of the planting component of the day because there are so many people that it is difficult to provide adequate expert supervision and excited children sometimes tread on newly-planted specimens. Even though 6,000 plants were put in place during these mass plantings in 2004 and 2005, the consultants wonder how many of them will survive if there are no follow-up activities to ensure that the plants get enough water and can get established before being strangled by weeds. However, Valenzuela says this is a narrow view of what is achieved through the entire process and that it discounts the importance of environmental education, which is enhanced by the process of getting your hands dirty putting plants into the ground. Others at Hume City Council may be reluctant to axe a project that attracts as many as 150 people to evaluation sessions but questions have been raised about the return on investment and, consequently, the sustainability of this unique multicultural gathering.

Local authorities and community organizations in the Broadmeadows area face a huge challenge in addressing issues related to structural unemployment and under-employment and this task cannot be left to them. Hume City Council has shown a capacity to draw down resources—as shown in corporate sponsorships of the Global Learning Centre project that also offers work readiness programs for the unemployed. The Council is also determined to sustain a stock of affordable housing in the district to counter the rising costs of real estate resulting from urban consolidation. However, the council must also find ways to work with other local organizations to build more effective social networks and better co-ordination of community services and projects. In such a complex, multi-layered community much is expected of local government authorities in leading new developments, co-ordinating the efforts of a large number of welfare-oriented organizations and programs, and in finding the resources that can turn good ideas into viable projects.

At the same time, there are other strong community-based organizations that can look after the needs of their own communities in ways that foster goodwill between communities. Two festivals are held in the area to mark Eid, the last four days that come at the end of the Muslim month of Ramadan and between them they attract over 20,000 participants. Coming at the end of thirty days of fasting and religious observance Eid emphasises the paying of respects to elders and the need to take action to resolve conflicts. Hence Muslims are expected to visit the homes of elderly relatives with a gift of food and also make an effort to visit someone with whom they have had a conflict to try to settle the differences. According to an organizer of one of the two Eid festivals in the Broadmeadows area, Neil Aykan, these two events are globally unique as an extension of the Eid tradition into an inclusive family fun day. It is also a departure from Muslim tradition to specifically invite non-Muslim participation in the event and formal invitations are extended to a wide range of local community leaders. Although the two Eid festivals are focused on necessary 'cultural maintenance work' (as distinct from multicultural sharing) they do build bridges between Muslims and non-Muslims at a time when this is sorely needed. In the current global context, people living in Broadmeadows can be rightly proud of this manifestation of tolerance and mutual respect. Furthermore, the Eid festivals have been so successful that they are totally self-sufficient financially, meaning that

they can add to the calendar of community celebrations without needing any funding from the council.

Daylesford

Earlier research by the Globalism Institute suggested that people living in the Daylesford area have good reason to feel positive about their community's reputation for being tolerant and inclusive. Since the 1970s there have been waves of new settlers, from those seeking alternative lifestyles to significant numbers of gays and lesbians, to 'tree change' people wanting to escape the pressures of urban living. Included among these waves of settlement have been skilled artists and writers and the town has a rich cultural life for a community of its size. It hosts the second largest festival of gay and lesbian pride in Australia—the annual Chill Out Festival—that sits alongside events such as the traditional annual Daylesford agricultural show. The unique program of festivals also includes the large Swiss-Italian Festa centred on Hepburn Springs, the Words in Winter Festival that celebrates writing in all its forms, and the Highlands Festival that attracts Scottish exiles and descendents from all over Australia.

The reputation for tolerance and inclusion was enhanced by the way the local community handled a difficult debate about the phasing out of logging in the surrounding Wombat Forest, even if the resultant community plan was stifled by higher authorities. At the same time, the ongoing 'restructuring' of rural industries has led the closure of all the textile mills in Daylesford, the closure of all but one of the area's many sawmills and an uncertain future for once-prosperous potato farmers. So while tourism brings new prosperity for some it does not provide secure employment for people with more traditional skills (especially with its emphasis on casual and contract employment). So there is a fairly hidden underclass of people who cannot enjoy the services provided by local businesses that thrive on the regular influxes of visitors.

When Rebecca Lister first came to Daylesford, with a background in both community development work and community theatre, she noticed that some of the tensions between the old and new residents were being played out among the children in the schoolyard of her young children's new school. Her offer to do some theatre work in the school that would seek to address issues related to bullying and intolerance in non-threatening ways was accepted and this work led to a bigger community theatre project that would address the perennial problem of young people leaving town to go and live in the city. This latter play, *Calling All Angels*, became a large-scale local production staged on and adjacent to Lake Daylesford and it created a demand for Lister's skills in running classes and performance nights on a regular basis, in nurturing a women's theatre group called Wildcards, and in working on other community plays. She continued working in the school, along with other artists, helping to sustain an annual event called Art Attack. After living in the community for ten years Lister and her family moved to Melbourne in 2005 and her last production was a play that focused on the life and times of a rather colourful woman doctor who lived and worked in the nearby town of Trentham for about 30 years. It played to packed audiences in the local community hall over two consecutive nights. Community theatre can be a powerful medium for reflecting the community back to itself in ways that can create dialogue and a sense of inclusion. Lister said it can also create bonds of friendship between the people involved in productions and that people can learn skills that give them greater self-confidence and an interest in future work with theatre. These observations were confirmed by both Katrina Cavanagh who got involved with projects run by Lister after feeling the isolation of being a single mother with young children living in a place she did not know, and by Hannah Mancini, a high school student who said that she had been both inspired and challenged by being involved in a number of Lister's plays.

In a similar way, the accomplished singer and choir-leader Anni Coyne has drawn on her own personal experiences of feeling isolated as a single mother with a young child when she has drawn other socially isolated women into singing workshops and choirs. Coyne did not set

out to establish a choir for women only and she has established a choir in the nearby town of Ballan that is mixed, but the choir in Daylesford feels that the atmosphere of trust that has been nurtured is enhanced by the fact that only women are involved. Sometimes the women will follow the model of a 'Vocal Nosh' that has been promoted across Victoria by community singing advocate Faye White. This involves moving from shared singing to the sharing of good healthy food and conversation. Furthermore, the women often meet for a coffee outside times for choir practice and Coyne has noticed that women who have met through their participation in the choir often get together at other times on their own initiative. Coyne had experience in working with people with disabilities before moving to Daylesford and she uses art-forms other than singing in some work she is doing for women suffering post-natal depression for the Creswick Health Centre. In 2005 the women's choir in Daylesford self-produced a CD that they recorded in the wonderfully ambient Convent Gallery and Coyne said this was a huge learning experience for all involved. Two members of the Daylesford choir, Fiona Robson and Summer Dew, said that membership of the choir had been much more rewarding for them personally than they had expected.

From the rich array of local festivals and events the Swiss-Italian Festa—which has revived interest in the unique Swiss-Italian heritage of Hepburn Springs in particular—is probably the most interesting (although Chill Out undoubtedly brings more money into the area each year). This old link back to Italy has not always been fashionable, particularly in the wake of Italy's alignment with Germany in World War II, and people with 'wog' surnames and broad Australian accents did not draw attention to their story for a long time. However, things Italian gradually gained more popularity in Australia—partly due to the influence of the very large Italian diaspora—and the rediscovery of this local heritage probably suited the aim of making the Daylesford area famous for the production and consumption of good food, following the establishment of the Lake House luxury small hotel and restaurant in the late 1970s. Migrants from Europe had long sustained an interest in the area's natural mineral springs and they created a European ambience that has suited the promotion of tourism over the last decade or so. Local fans of good food discovered that the Swiss-Italian descendants had recipes for long-neglected foods passed down through the generations and Daylesford has a strong local chapter of the international Slow Food Movement that began in Italy. A local chef who is also the president the school council at the Daylesford secondary college, Gary Thomas, got a group of students at the school to participate in an ambitious project to make traditional bullboar sausages from recipes handed down through the local Swiss-Italian families for a national competition that aimed to foster awareness of all the stages of food production—from the farm to the table. The students put in a big effort to win second prize in the national competition and they learnt a great deal about food and the history of their own community in the process.

Despite its ongoing popularity the Swiss-Italian Festa has been difficult to sustain over a period of more than ten years because it relies on the commitment and energy of a small band of volunteers. When the energies of some of the festival pioneers began to wane several years ago, two local people with no personal link to the Swiss-Italian heritage but a strong appreciation for what the annual event has done for the town—Jenny Beacham and Jon Stevens—stepped up to inject fresh energy into the organizational tasks. As a result the program of activities retained established favourites—such as a big community parade and a candle-lit procession—but they were able to add new and ambitious elements and extend more activities into Daylesford as well as Hepburn Springs. Stevens also said that the link back to towns in the area overlapping Italy and Switzerland was made more real and this has led to exchange visits and an interest in maintaining a living link; creating a global linkage for this local event. The focus that has emerged on the Swiss-Italian heritage raises questions about other stories from the past that are not so fashionable or easy to celebrate. For example, the stories of the conquest of the Dja Dja Wurrung people have been researched by some local historians but they find little public acknowledgement and the stories of gold-mining and logging are more suppressed than celebrated. Jenny Beacham feels that the emergence of the

Swiss-Italian story should make it easier for people to promote an interest in other important aspects of local history and identity but it remains to be seen if this will be the case. She certainly feels that the celebration of the Swiss-Italian heritage has been good for building civic pride and the local economy.

An advantage in having a strong tradition in community arts and performance is that it can give arts practitioners working with marginalized people some opportunities to give those people both voice and visibility. The steady gentrification of both Daylesford and Hepburn Springs has led to the closure of special accommodation places for people with mental illnesses and those people who still live in the district feel quite marginalised. In 2005 the Rural Access Worker based at the Hepburn Health Service in Daylesford, Fiona Strahan, organized the first Australian event to mark the international day when people gather to remember past victims of 'coercive psychiatry' and to support those who continue to suffer from coercive laws and practices in this regard. She got strong support from writers and performers based in the Daylesford area and Melbourne and together they organized a performance night in the restored Palais ballroom at Hepburn Springs, at which some victims of coercive psychiatry read moving extracts from their writings about their life experiences. The event was so successful that it was to be repeated in May 2006.

Hamilton Region

For a regional town of its size, Hamilton has a strong tradition in regard to elite arts. It has, for example, an excellent art gallery that has long benefited from the patronage of prosperous farmers. Since 1992 it has had a good Performing Arts Centre that is big enough to stage touring productions, such a Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and the Bell Shakespeare Company, as well as an Eisteddfod and the Western District Schools Drama Festival. The region has special interest groups, such as an art discussion group, a sacred music society, and a choir that celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in 2005. However, Hamilton has a rather weak tradition in regard community arts. According to McVicker, there was a 'golden age' that lasted ten years when the shire employed Alan MacGregor as a community arts officer. MacGregor established an innovative regional arts festival, launched a quarterly arts magazine, established a youth club for those who said they have nothing to do, built an arts-oriented website for the Shire, and developed ideas for linking the arts to the development of tourism. However, when he left the region in 1998 his position was abolished and all his initiatives, including the Southern Grampians Festival, perished.

MacGregor said that it was possible to start the festival because Arts Victoria was actively encouraging the development of new festivals in the early 1990s, following the success of festivals established in places such as Port Fairy and Mallacoota. The first in the series was held in Hamilton in 1992 and was quite small. In 1993, MacGregor made a big effort to involve the Gunditj Mara people in the festival and he brought in a skilled indigenous artist from Brisbane to facilitate that involvement. He said the focus on the arts encouraged local participation and the result was an unusually strong acknowledgement of the local indigenous story. Following the creation of the new, amalgamated, Southern Grampians Shire in 1996 the festival became more of a regional event and the name was changed from Hamilton Festival to Southern Grampians Festival and the next few years saw a proliferation of festival events across the region. Asked to name some highlights MacGregor said he was pleased at the level of engagement of young people in festival activities and he said a personal favourite was when a Ballarat theatre company came and did extracts from several Shakespeare plays in some of the smaller towns. He said he found it easier than expected to for effective local festival committees in the small towns and was pleased with the ideas they came up with. In naming weaknesses he said he may done too much himself and consequently did not succeed in passing on relevant skills to local people. However, the demise of the festival was undoubtedly due to the council's decision to downgrade community arts in the region by not replacing MacGregor as community arts officer.

It is not easy to address the painful legacy of the dispossession of the Gunditj Mara people as a result of European settlement and the prolonged 'Euramalla War' and the focus on Lake Condah as a site of national and international importance probably offers the best chance for this. At the same time, European settlement produced a surprising variety of local towns and communities and these different heritages have recently been celebrated in the revival of the traditional German Laternenfest in the town first settled by German migrants in 1853, Tarrington, and in the 150th anniversary of the naming of Dunkeld, which is based at the foot of the Australian version of the 'Grampians' and attracted a high proportion of Scottish settlers in its early years. Recent public celebrations and community arts events in a number of small towns in the region have been dependent on one or more of the following: generous support from local benefactors; the arrival of skilled artists who want to work collectively with others; and grants provided by bodies such as the Arts Council of Victoria, Regional Arts Victoria and VicHealth. Without sources of funding and/or skilled and well-connected artists it would be very difficult for small towns to have good quality events. Yet they help to give residents civic pride and they can also help people escape the social isolation that results from physical isolation and distance. In recent years the Balmoral Chameleon Arts Collective has been a great outlet for isolated women with young children and these women succeeded in creating a rich and locally distinct 'Feast of the Senses' arts festival that featured the first staging of an opera and a belly-dancing performance in the area and the public launch of a one-person play about the poet Adam Lindsay Gordon who had links to the district. According to Suiyin Honeywell, the practicing artist who initiated Chameleon after coming to Balmoral with young children when her husband became the principal of the local primary school, the Horsham area is ahead of the Hamilton region in fostering community arts and Hamilton should try to learn from some of their successes. Honeywell was critical of the Hamilton-based media for its lack of attention to the Feast of the Senses Festival, yet she feels a strong sense of belonging to the Hamilton region and wants to build a stronger network of community-based artists in the region.

The small township of Dunkeld, at the southern foot of the Grampians, held a very elaborate festival in October 2004 to mark the 150th anniversary of a change of name from Mt Sturgeon to Dunkeld. Whereas German settlers established the town of Hochkirk and the Irish established Kilarney, the early settlers in Dunkeld were predominantly Scottish and the anniversary organizer Keith Warne said that some celebrations of the Scottish heritage were important. However, the story of settlement soon broadened out from that beginning and the anniversary featured a range of speakers who could speak on different periods of history from the woodcutters to the story-tellers about soldier settlement. In the lead-up to the celebration the town reopened an old cemetery that was closed in 1900 and conducted research on some of the earliest families. Many people with old family ties to the district came for the celebration and areas were set aside for people to sit and swap family stories. However, the focus was not only on the past and a wonderful book of photographs of local life and local characters was launched and a beautiful modern tapestry was unveiled in the Royal Mail Hotel.

 Keith Warne said that people from Melbourne who came to Dunkeld for the anniversary were surprised that such a small community could organize such an elaborate event. Perhaps there is a view in the city that people in small rural communities are not capable of outstanding creativity and innovation. However, Alan MacGregor also confirmed that this is not the case. Perhaps one of the best examples of innovation in the Hamilton region came from the small town of Macarthur which was labelled 'the most boring town in Victoria' as the result of a competition run by the Melbourne *Sun* newspaper in 1984. No doubt the editors of the paper and the ex-resident who nominated Macarthur saw this as a bit of harmless fun at the time but the residents of the town said that the mud stuck and they became the target of many insulting jokes ever since. As a response to the insult the local historical society encouraged two residents to pull together a collection stories focused on local identities past and present and it was published under the title *Boring, Not Likely!* The launch of the book coincided with the twentieth anniversary of the *Sun's* competition and it was accompanied by a ceremonial

burial, in a coffin, of a collection of the offending newspaper articles. Macarthur's 'Paint the Town Red' day became a high energy event that attracted a lot of visitors and it went a long way towards answering the town's distant critics. The combination of exception creativity and rural pragmatism that was on display in Dunkeld's 150th anniversary and Macarthur's response to an insult were also on display when Hamilton pulled off a spectacular town ball that raised more than $260,000 for the local hospital and became the winner of a national fund-raising award for 2004. The 'Top of the Town Ball' was initiated after a massage therapist at the hospital, Judy Somerville, visited Hamilton café owner Tony McGilvray ('Gilly') seeking his support for a fund-raising event. Gilly said he could only invest his time and energy if it was going to be something exceptional rather than routine. Within an hour of the conversation beginning Gilly made two phone calls that resulted in free access to a site on a hill overlooking the town and free use of large marquees that could hold up to 500 people for the event that he then labelled the 'Top of the Town Ball'. Other skilled and resourceful people in the community then rose to the challenge and offered all kinds of support to make it a very special event.

Reflections on Social Inclusion

The community arts practitioners and event organizers who were interviewed for this research were all asked to comment on VicHealth's three 'determinants' for measuring improvements to the mental health and wellbeing of communities. These three are:

- A strengthening of 'social connectedness' to reduce social isolation;

- Reductions in discrimination and the threat of violence against individuals or sectors of a community to be achieved through a stronger understanding of the value of diversity;

- Access to 'economic participation' to ensure satisfactory individual and family incomes.

All those who were interviewed said they could readily provide evidence to demonstrate that individuals and groups of people had managed to escape from strong feelings of isolation through their participation in community events and art projects. However, many of the interviewees said that is the depth of engagement with individuals that is more important than the raw numbers of people who participate in programs or events. Some wondered if social connectedness would be sustained long after participation in programs or events but some also said that the long-term benefits may not show up for some time and even a sustained improvement in the social connectedness of an individual would make a project or event worthwhile. Experienced practitioners in the community arts stressed that participation in events and programs needs to be targeted and, again, success in this regard cannot be measured by raw numbers but by detailed knowledge of the individuals who participate.

Many of the projects and events that were selected as case studies for this research were specifically targeted at individuals or groups who tend to suffer discrimination and marginalization in their wider communities. Many of the arts projects for people with 'special needs' that have been supported by Port Phillip City Council have won widespread and justified acclaim for the ways in which they have challenged harmful perceptions about marginalised people living in St Kilda and nearby suburbs. People such as Giz James, Kate Sulan, Julie Shiels and Marie Hapke have not only won greater acceptance for themselves through their participation in art programs and events they have also made others in the community think more deeply about the importance of nurturing a sense of belonging to a local community. In the Broadmeadows area, events such as the Eid Festival and the Multicultural Planting Festival have probably exceeded expectations in building bridges of respect between ethnically diverse sectors of the community and the Anti-Racism Action Band (A.R.A.B.) definitely found a warmer reception than was anticipated. Rebecca Lister used theatre as a non-threatening way to address instances of conflict within the schoolyard that probably reflected a wider feeling of intolerance between the older and new rural communities centred on Daylesford. Single mothers living in small communities sometimes

face a degree of hostility that can exacerbate their feeling of isolation and Anni Coyne and Rebecca Lister were particularly effective in giving them a network to join. The way that people in Daylesford and nearby Hepburn Springs celebrate the Swiss-Italian heritage of their community probably represents the best example of how an old form of discrimination can be buried and the underlying diversity then turned into a positive community asset. And the people of Macarthur showed how an old and lingering slur on rural life can also be challenged in a creative way that affirms the value of 'ordinary' and diverse local lives.

Many of the projects examined suggest that the arts can offer an effective and non-threatening way to address forms of prejudice and discrimination and some of the underlying social tensions that might relate to broader changes to the circumstances in which local communities operate such as economic restructuring.

It was more difficult for community arts practitioners and event organizers to demonstrate that their projects had led to improvements in economic participation. Some of the projects selected as case studies have clearly benefited local economies and local businesses and perhaps the most outstanding example of this was Hamilton's Top of the Town Ball that raised money and drew in outside funding for the hospital while at the same time leading to an increase in consumption in the town (for example, people buying outfits for the ball) and a much higher profile for businesses that sponsored the event. Similarly, by attracting some 20,000 participants, the Eid Festivals in the Broadmeadows area—which are financially self-sufficient—raise the profile of the local businesses that act as sponsors. The large anniversary celebration in Dunkeld was good for local businesses and the annual Swiss-Italian Festa brings money into the local economy. However, these benefits do not necessarily flow to people who otherwise struggle to obtain incomes and the benefits are largely transitory. Alan MacGregor said that he learnt from the fact that the projects he initiated in the Hamilton region all collapsed after his departure by trying to link community cultural projects more closely with council's housing economic development strategies where he now works in the Frankston area of Melbourne. He feels this might generate some employment prospects for cultural workers in the area and it might also ensure that new developments have a stronger local character.

In discussing the economic participation determinant for mental health and wellbeing, community arts practitioners and event organizers suggested that active participation in projects can give people some useful skills (for example, self-expression, writing skills, organizational skills) and a boost in self-confidence that may improve their prospects for getting and/or holding jobs. A few people who have developed artistic skills can earn some outcome from their future artistic output but this source of income would be very limited. Rather than trying too hard to justify community arts and celebrations in terms of longer-term income generation for individuals and families it may be more important to confirm the clear contribution they can make in regard to the two other determinants articulated by VicHealth (see above). Other approaches are needed in trying to generate local employment and in helping people obtain the necessary skills to get and keep paid jobs.

6

People, Places and Change

Most people credit the Chinese-American geographer Yi Fu Tuan with introducing the exploration of a 'sense of place' into academic literature. Tuan was a student of the Berkeley-based pioneer of the cultural geography movement in the United states, Carl Sauer, whose first significant work was a 1925 essay called *The Morphology of Landscapes*. In 1974, Tuan published a book called Topophilia in which he argued that it is important to distinguish between 'topophilia'—techniques for understanding what creates an affective bond between people and places—and the more dominant dispassionate academic exercise of 'topoanalysis'. During the 1970s, Sauer's cultural geography movement overlapped with the cultural landscapes movement initiated by John Brinckerhoff Jackson when he privately launched the influential journal Landscape in the 1960s. Jackson's research interest was in understanding 'vernacular' American landscapes and, in the 1970s the movement he inspired began a study of what they called 'the interpretation of ordinary landscapes'. A collection of this work was published in a 1997 volume called *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes* edited by Paul Groth and Todd Bressi. This includes work on urban landscapes and an interesting contribution by Dolores Hayden on the social construction of particular landscapes in Los Angeles which cites the work of French sociologist Henri Lefebvre.

Some writers in the cultural geography tradition have taken an interest in the aesthetic representations of local places. So, for example, in the volume edited by Groth and Bressi, Dennis Cosgrove writes about how Venice has come to represent itself through art and theatre and Jay Appleton is interested in the ways in which different kinds of landscapes have fostered different schools of landscape art. The 1997 book by leading US art critic Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentred World*, argued that globalization has created a paradoxical interest in artistic representations of diverse local places and the 2000 book by Roberto Dainotto argued that the growth in regional arts movements around the world suggests a trend towards 'localizing the aesthetic'.

In its exploration of people-place relationships, the cultural geography movement turned, increasingly, to the writings of philosopher Martin Heidegger and this link has been thoroughly explored in books by Robert Mugerauer (1994), Edward Casey (1987, 1997), and Jess Malpas (1999). According to Mugerauer (1994), Heidegger 'argued that we are preconceptually immersed in a life-world that discloses itself to us in many ways, from encounters with the non-human, to particular buildings, to texts that we read in particular circumstances'. For Mugerauer the importance of Heidegger's legacy is to understand that 'to become human is continually a matter of embodied placement and displacement and the attempt to arrive at or establish a new place, where we understand place as both a physical site and locus of meaning' (p. 156). Malpas (1999) suggested that the 'complex unity of place' enables us to explore issues of spatiality and embodiment; spatiality and agency; subjectivity and objectivity—that is, the complex interplay of space, time and self. He argued that place is an important starting place for an exploration of human agency because 'The unity and identity of place is only worked out in relation to the human subject as actively involved with its objective surroundings and within an intersubjective context'. In reflecting on the ways in which place scholars have used Heidegger's ideas, Keith Basso (1996) has written:

> as many writers have noted, places possess a marked capacity for triggering acts of self-reflection, inspiring thoughts about who one presently is, or memories of who one used to be, or musings on who one might become. And that is not

all. Place-based thoughts about the self lead to thoughts of other things—other places, other people, other times, whole networks of associations that ramify unaccountably within the expanding spheres of awareness that they themselves engender … As places animate the ideas and feelings of persons who attend to them, these same ideas and feelings animate the places on which attention has been bestowed, and the movement of this process—inward towards facets of the self, outward towards aspects of the external world … cannot be known in advance. When places are actively sensed, the physical landscape becomes wedded to the landscape of the mind, to the roving imagination. (p. 55).

Basso went on to argue that reflections on places can move easily from being an individual pursuit to a matter of dialogue and shared experience because 'Deliberately and otherwise, people are forever presenting each other with culturally mediated images of where and how they dwell. In large and small ways they are forever performing acts that reproduce and express their own sense of place.' (p. 57)

Basso's essay is included in a volume that grew out of a symposium of US-based place scholars that included Edward Casey and Clifford Geertz. Geertz was asked to observe the symposium and provide some concluding reflections and in his Afterword in the published volume he wrote:

For all the uprooting, the homelessness, the migrations, forced or voluntary, the dislocations of traditional relationships, the struggle over homelands, borders and rights of recognition, for all the destruction of familiar landscapes and the manufacturing of new ones, and for all the loss of local stabilities and local originalities, the sense of place, and the specificities of place, seem, however tense and darkened, barely diminished in the modern world. (p. 261)

Geertz suggested that 'displacement creates profound attachments' and he approvingly cited a rhetorical question by Gertrude Stein when she asked 'What good are roots if you can't take them with you?' He suggested that the exploration of senses of place requires more conscious effort in the modern context but it may be even more important because we need 'a grasp of what it means to be here rather than there, now rather than then, without which our understanding will be thin, general, surface and incomplete'. (p. 262)

While the US-based cultural geography movement may have a tendency to romanticize people-place relationships a more skeptical approach has been adopted by the human geography movement in the UK, influenced as it was by the Marxism or post-Marxism of writers such as Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams. Even though Williams had a tendency to write romantically about his homeland of Wales, the UK scholars have been interested in the ways in which social divisions emerge locally and the dominance of hegemonic place stories over many hidden narratives. The UK human geographer who has probably made the biggest contribution to the literature on sense of place is Doreen Massey and in her very influential book *Space, Place and Gender* (1994) she warned strongly of the danger of 'place essentialism' that is likely to link place interpretations to simplistic, 'romantic' and conservative political agendas. Prevailing interpretations of particular places, Massey argued, are likely to be those that suit the needs of power elites and they commonly exclude the experiences of women, migrants and ethnic minorities. In highlighting the gentrification of old working-class suburbs of London, she noted that some people can exercise choice about the places where they want to 'belong' while many others have little or no choice about where they live and little or no influence on plans for the future of their local communities. This concern about the ways in which people-place relationships are represented has been extended by Zygmunt Bauman (2000) when he wrote, rather lyrically, that:

the rich and the poor live in different spaces; the space inhabited by the rich is global and virtual, the space of the poor is local and all-too-real for comfort. In the first space, reality is soft and pliable; the inhabitants may shape and re-shape it at will … The second space is full of borders and border guards, and the most

tangible of borders are those between reality and fantasy. [p. 76].

While Massey has articulated her strong concerns about the dangers of 'place essentialism' she remains convinced that an emphasis on the spatiality of contemporary life can undercut equally dangerous grand narratives that might segregate the poor spatially (as in notions such as the 'Global South') of temporally (as in the idea that the poor are 'behind' in their 'development'). In an interesting essay titled 'Spaces of Politics' (1999) she suggested that there are three important things about how we might 'reimagine' space or spatiality. Firstly, there is the realization that spaces are 'constituted through a process of interaction' and, hence, they are a 'product of interrelations'. Her second point is that if space is the product of interrelations then 'it must be predicated on the existence of plurality' even if that plurality is often hidden from view. We can reimagine space 'as the sphere of the possibility of more than one voice' or 'the sphere in which distinct narratives co-exist' because, Massey argued, 'multiplicity and space are co-constitutive'. What interests Massey is the existence of 'trajectories which are not simply alignable into one linear story' because an understanding of spatiality 'entails the recognition that there is more than one story going on in the world and that these stories have, at least, a relative autonomy'. (p. 281) She stresses that the autonomy of coexisting stories can only be relative because they inevitably interact and change each other but the outcomes of such interactions cannot always be predicted in advance and Massey's third major point is that coexisting multiplicity can be a source of disruption that can give rise to the genuinely novel.

When we think of the spatial, Massey argued, we must think of its most creative and disruptive potential that derives from 'happenstance arrangements-in-relation-to-each-other of multiple narratives' (p. 283). It is commonly accepted in 'Western' human geography, she noted, that space is socially constructed and she commented that it is

… precisely because it is the product of relations, relations which are active practices, material and embedded, practices which have to be carried out, space is in a process of becoming … It is always, therefore, also in a sense unfinished. There are always connections yet to be made, juxtapositions yet to flower into interaction (or not), potential links which may never be established. 'Space', then, can never be that completed simultaneity in which all interconnections have been established, in which everywhere is already (and at that moment unchangingly) linked to everywhere else. There are always loose ends in space. It is always integrally space-time. [p. 284-285].

By keeping itself open to the creative potential that comes from allowing difference to express itself—rather than be captured within a dominant, linear, narrative—Massey argues that this way of re-imaging spatiality can give rise to a politics of 'radical openness' that has been sought by writers such as Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, and Laclau and Mouffe. The politics of space, she suggests, 'revolves around the openness of the future, the interrelatedness of identities and the nature of our relations with different others' (p. 292).

A leading Australian 'sense of place' scholar, John Cameron, has taken Massey's concerns about place essentialism to heart in arguing for a practice that consciously explores a multiplicity of place stories in a multiplicity of local places (2003a). He has argued that this sort of practice might deepen our appreciation of the multicultural nature of Australian society and also take forward the stalled public debate on what a 'reconciliation' between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians could mean at a local level. And the award-winning local history book by Mark McKenna—Looking for Blackfellas Point: An Australian History of Place (2002)—has certainly demonstrated how an interest in pre-settlement history can enhance an appreciation for local landscapes. Cameron convened five national gatherings of Australian sense of place scholars from 1996 to 2004 and the first two such gatherings resulted in the writings collected together in Changing Places: Re-imagining Australia (Cameron 2003b). The emerging trend in Australian place writing that is represented in this volume has much more in common with the sense of place writing associated with the US cultural geography movement than with Massey's 'politics of space'. Australian ecofeminist writer Val Plumwood shares Massey's

interest in using spatiality to enhance a politics of engagement across difference but she writes mainly about relationships between humans and non-human 'others'.

In his Introduction to the 1999 edition of Culture as praxis, Zygmunt Bauman adopted a similar attitude to Massey in teasing out the possibilities of what can emerge from the coexistence of multiple identities. ''Identity'', he noted, has become a matter of acute reflection once the likelihood of its survival without reflection began to dwindle—when instead of something obvious and given it begins to look like something problematic and a task.' (p. xxix). Bauman cited Stuart Hall in saying that in late-modern times, identities are 'increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiple, constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions'. Bauman suggested that in this context 'cultural identities can only emerge as outcomes of a long chain of 'secondary processes' of choice, selective retention and recombination (which, most importantly, do not grind to a halt once the identity in question does emerge).' Bauman concluded his discussion on the emergence of new identities in the context of cultural plurality by saying:

For more than a century, culture was posited primarily as technologies of discrimination and separation, factories of differences and oppositions. Yet dialogue and negotiation are also cultural phenomena and as such are given in our times of plurality an ever-rising, perhaps decisive, importance…. After all, living together, talking to each other and successfully negotiating mutually satisfactory solutions to our joint problems are … the norm, not an exception. [p. lii].

Communities of Place

Communities are inextricably linked to place and a sense of place is integral to what community is and the relations that develop within it. However, such a commonplace can lead to the assumption that place is a straightforward matter, that people simply living cheek-by-jowl in a place makes for a community. In short, places are imbued with cultural significance and social meanings that are constantly being made and re-made. This makes place much more than simply physical or tangible environment inhabited by groups of individuals and groups. This makes the connection to place irreducible to the idea of something like 'locale', in which a group of people happen to live cheek-by-jowl. Place, by contrast carries something of a social—even ontological component—entwined with how people understand themselves and the world in which they live

When asked about whether community referred to people or place or was a combination of both, most of the interviewees found it difficult to separate people from place. Some opted for people over place, since they did not feel that their community was elsewhere. This seemed to be more prevalent in the city. Two of the interviewees from St Kilda said 'I don't think we are part of a community that is physically located around the area we live … It's not just about your physical community, because it's not about where we are physically located'. Another, who lived along St Kilda Road explained that his community was away from where he actually lived:

> I actually spend a lot of time in the pubs around where my parents live. If we go out for a coffee, we go to Acland St or Fitzroy St. We live next to Chapel St, but we don't go there at all; it's not our scene. We'll go to South Melbourne, but once again, that's not where we are comfortable, or where we like to go. St Kilda would be our local area where we would spend a bit of time, go for a coffee and have a bit of breakfast.

However, even privileging one dimension of community, say people, as primary to community, some interviewees would be referred back to places in talking about the significance of community. A good example was a person from Daylesford who said that 'Ultimately the people are more important than the physical thing.

We lived in suburbs like Brunswick and Preston for ten years. You wouldn't describe them particularly aesthetic places, but there were thriving communities particularly in Brunswick'. The primacy of people, however, was immediately qualified by the nature of the place. We got to know people in the street, and older migrant couples, and a couple of gay blokes over the road. It was a mix. School kids I taught from the same street were Turkish or Greek or from Lebanon. I really liked that, and there is not that diversity of ethnicity up here. It is reasonably diverse for a country town. I grew up in the country, but further west, and that was pretty homogenous. There is diversity here because of Johnny-come-latelies like me, and there is a pretty big gay population. And then there are the tenth-generation locals—which they always preface their letters to the editor with. The aesthetics are certainly important, and a lot of people here take that fairly seriously. So new developments do attract attention, and that's fair enough, because some of them are crap. There are questions about what tourism does for a town. Lots of casual work basically. There are not a lot of career opportunities for kids who want to stay in the town, so kids tend to move out.

Here the notion of the street, diversity of the place and the aesthetics of the place are closely intertwined with the interrelationships between people. While the focus here is on the people, references to place and, more specifically, the aesthetics of a place—how it looks—are closely tied to place; it would be surprising to find letters to the editor prefaced with as a 'tenth-generation local' in a metropolitan daily. Even when the relations between people are seen as primary to community, the texture of such relationships is still tied to community.

The complex interrelationship between people and place was expressed through the idea of places having a particular 'energy'. Asked whether community was primarily defined by place or people one St Kilda resident explained:

For me, it is definitely connection to place as well, because I believe that each space, everything holds an energy. And different places are defined through different characteristics that are built up through the history and the connection of the people and the culture of the people. So it's probably built up through the people. But for me, the landscape is part of it as well. Even the smells. Just that memory association just draws you to it.

A similar idea was expressed by a community arts practitioner working in the Daylesford region. Asked about her community and place, she replied 'It's very personal … Personally I feel there is an energy here that is unique. There are a lot of really extraordinary wonderful woman in this town who are active and intelligent, and beautifully aesthetic.'

While reference to the energy of a place may sound somewhat mystical, in the context in which they were used here, it seems more like an attempt to grasp something of the ineffable, intangible relationship that grows between people and place; a sense of place being much more than simply outside of the person or a locale, but as something that is internal to one's experience of sociality. This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that many of the pictures taken by one person from St Kilda were of the details of the place where she lived. Rather than wide-open spaces, her images depicted mosaics and tiling, for example, suggesting an intimate, interior dimension to place. This is perhaps a clear way of the difference between locale—the brute physical environment in which one live—and place which is necessarily entwined with one's sense of self and social life. This is a neat example of Keith Basso's (1996, p. 55) observation that '[p]lace-based thoughts about the self lead to thoughts of other things—other places, other people, other times, whole networks of associations that ramify unaccountably within the expanding spheres of awareness that they themselves engender'.

Similarly, an interviewee from Creswick, just outside Daylesford, told of his experience of visiting the Town Hall for the first time and the sense of wellbeing it gave him.

> There's something about old things that are beautiful, and the town hall is an absolute treasure. I've been living in Creswick for seven or eight years, and I only saw the hall a few months ago, even though it is so close to our house. I was blown away. When you walk around it, there is about a million dollars worth of stuff in there from our past, and our community doesn't even know it's there.

Place in this instance, was a link to the past. It was part of the richness of the community that, for him, went unnoticed for the most part. The same interviewee spoke about the nearby George's Lake as a source of wellbeing: 'It gives you a sense of well-being. Peacefulness … It's pristine.' The aesthetics of place here gave rise to an opportunity to think about the past, a sense of history and place within which one was an agent.

For others, reflection on the particular place within their community was situated opened up reflection on other, geographically remote places. In some cases, it seemed as though a particular place could not be spoken about except by reference to other places. Specifically, the immediate place of community seemed to have been overlaid and cross-cut by other places, which though geographically remote, were spoken of as near. An interviewee from Hamilton, spoke about the place of Hamilton in the same breath as Bosnian children who had visited the town, East Timorese survivors of Indonesia's occupation and those affected by the 2005 Boxing Day Tsunami. Place was not limited to the geographical locale of Hamilton but conceivable only within a larger global setting. This is perhaps the polar opposite to what Massey (1996) calls 'place essentialism'.

In other interviews, other places provided a sense of identity to one's own community. Other places were thought of as reference points by which to think about one's own community. One interviewee in St Kilda contrasted the diversity she experienced in her own community with what she perceived as the homogeneity of other places, such as outer-suburban housing estates and high-density developments which were perceived as lacking individuality were contrasted with her own experience. The design of place, particularly the diversity of urban design, was seen as a reflection of the diversity within community: 'You need a bit more individual personality that attracts more than people than just those who are attracted to Lego-land'. Though admitting that she had not visited such outer-suburban development, the architectural styles of such developments suggested to her a lack of diversity. While the depiction of other places might not be necessarily accurate, in this instance it provided a way of grounding the identity of one's own place and, by extension, one's own identity. While perhaps an example of 'place essentialism' in that it sets up a simply dichotomy between places of diversity and places where homogeneity reigns, it is likely that an imagined other place is a common way of developing a sense of identity.

At the same, too rigid an identity, even one that stresses diversity and a bohemian lifestyle, can be a constraint. Particular places, after all, have resonances and associations—both good and bad—with people. These need not necessarily be negative stereotypes—in fact they can carry quite positive connotations—but as stereotypes, they tend to be one-dimensional accounts that are not always helpful or representative of the place in which one lives. For example, a business owner explained how when she first moved to Albert Park, she would use South Melbourne as her address because, in her own words, it 'had a 'businessy' sound to it, whereas 'Albert Park' sounded as if I was working from home'. In short, Albert Park was too much associated with celebrations and leisure, rather than business.

While it is important to be sensitive to the limits of 'place essentialism', it should not deter thinking about the distinctiveness of place and the possibilities that different places offer, as well as the constraints on action. Such concerns can be seen as having direct relevance to community arts, in considering how suited particular arts and cultural practices are to different communities. Specifically, this is to think about the direction of the relationship between place and arts and culture; to ask whether some places give rise to arts and cultural practices, or whether cultural activities make a place. This question was raised directly by one interviewee, who saw the photonarrative process itself as an opportunity to reflect on

the relationship between the aesthetic, creative process and people and place. He wondered whether the photonarrative project would work successfully in other communities, or whether there was something specific to St Kilda —with its already high levels of arts and cultural activity—which made the project work. In the words of this interviewee:

> I think it [the photonarrative project] worked fantastically. … But, I immediately flipped to say, Albury? Or say Hamilton or Broadmeadows or Lilydale or Narre Warren? But even that terrible event the other night out at Dandenong, that bashing or whatever: I asked, 'How would this program work in Dandenong?' I think the place, there is something about the aesthetic of the place. … It's a bit of the horse and cart: which came first? Did the interconnected and vibrant community that begot these programs … which came first?

Such considerations are significant and directly relevant to the role that community arts and cultural practices play, or might play, in developing a sense of place. The question is all the more pressing in light of recent literature on creativity and economic development which has highlighted the importance of the aesthetics of place in building vibrant and economically prosperous communities (see Florida 2003, 2004). While much of this literature is concerned, not with the distinctiveness of particular places, but in presenting places in ways that are attractive to (mainly) young people with skills in the technology sector (Scanlon 2005), it has given prominence to the relationship between people and place in thinking about community sustainability.

In thinking through his question, the interviewee further suggested that creativity and cultural events might work better when they are celebrations of what 'had already been achieved and what existed' rather than an attempt to bring something into being. In divided communities, by contrast, where there are few services and little infrastructure, cultural and artistic activities may be an inadequate and inappropriate tool of social transformation. In the words of this interviewee, it may be that in other communities' the 'needs are far, far more fundamental than a sort of aesthetic indulgence'.

While care should be taken to ward against invidious distinctions between those communities which have 'made it' and therefore have something to celebrate and those communities which have not made it (or less generously, are deemed to have failed) and are therefore assumed to have little or nothing to celebrate, calling attention to the differences between communities is a first step in ensuring community arts and cultural activities are tailored to the places and people in which they are enacted. In particular, it focuses attention on the role of arts and cultural activities in constituting a place. Such solutions cannot be off the shelf, or transplanted from another place, but need to be constantly thought anew—something that community arts practitioners are sensitive to. As the interviewee himself concluded: 'I think the whole art and music is the way to go for those areas [beset by deep divisions] but they have got to be very cleverly devised'.

This sentiment resonates with an interviewee in Creswick near Daylesford in whose view community and cultural events targeted at tourists were often put ahead of basic infrastructure.

> We have a lot of cycle races and stuff like that, but you only have to drive around to see that a lot of the corners are full with gravel. The council workers are just patching, not repairing the roads. I haven't seen any road construction since I've been here. They just put a few shovels of gravel over a hole and a bit of wet mix on top of it. And yet they expect our community to grow and flourish.

The complex entwining of people and place makes any attempt to direct this relationship extremely difficult. Attempting to instrumentally engineer an aesthetic of place or to use it as a tool to achieve a particular end, whether it's attracting certain people with certain skills or promoting wellbeing, is likely to be a complicated undertaking, even for those with the best of intentions. This is the danger of a projected community, even if projection of community can

often be important to sustaining wellbeing. Without attending to such sensitivities of place and people, such efforts are likely to be regarded as outside interference

Throughout the interviews, there was a sense of one's place being subjected to change that are beyond control. This ranged from increasing traffic and poor infrastructure and polluted rivers in Creswick, near Daylesford to influxes of tourists, particularly in Daylesford and St Kilda. There was a sense here of one's sense of place being continually disrupted by outside forces. The sense of place that had developed within a community was being reconfigured by other forces, most of them external to the place and insensitive to the particular rhythms of place. An interviewee from Creswick, near Daylesford told how the local creek had been disrupted by water management authorities. He felt powerless to change this, claiming that 'Those sort of things are decided by bureaucrats. A large number of our community did stand up, but they were not listened to. They say now 'What's the use of even trying?' And that is kind of how it feels with the water issue.'

Survey Responses

There was a clear sense amongst respondents that there was a limit to the involvement in the often demanding commitments related to community arts. A recurring theme in the data was that community arts are often dependent on the leadership of enthusiastic individuals and personalities. A number of respondents to the questionnaires noted that, while they had benefited from their involvement in many ways, so too had there been a cost One female respondent, involved for many years in community arts noted the personal toll of her commitment: 'I used to be much more involved but 2005 New Year's Resolution was to have a much needed rest!' While such involvement in community arts is clearly very fulfilling, it cannot be ignored that volunteers make sacrifices to be involved. These findings underscored the concept of a 'lifecycle' of involvement: that over time organizers may have periods where they are more or less involved in community events, dependant on their life stage. This was reflected in a comment by another respondent: 'At times I have been involved in most community activities but due to my current life (i.e. work and children) my involvement is less so'. A degree of change of organizers is necessary within the arts communities to maintain fresh, innovative ideas and events. Nonetheless, the factors that ensure volunteers and organizers avoid burnout may be a valuable addition to future research.

Community Change

For some questionnaire respondents there was a clear sense that their community was in a state of change. This perception of community change did not always appear to be embraced or even well accepted. A theme repeated throughout the quantitative data was a degree of impatience with one particular community event, the St Kilda festival. Many saw the festival attracting a crowd that they did not relate to, or felt unsafe around. Respondents such as this were common from St Kilda residents: 'Major events like the St Kilda Festival have very little relevance to the local community. The St Kilda Festival brings a big crowd who drink a lot. I do not take small children anymore.' Thus, there appeared to be concerns over safety and an implication that the St Kilda festival was not a 'community' event. In a similar vein, the terminology of tourism was evoked by some respondents who noted: 'St Kilda Festival is not my community—it is tourists to St Kilda' and 'Too many 'tourists' [at the festival]. Too busy'. These visitors to St Kilda were not especially welcomed by 'local' St Kilda residents and were seen to be disturbing the peace. These comments seem particularly odd given the long history of St Kilda as a tourist destination.

For some questionnaire respondents, the nature of events did not match their desires for community. One young woman noted: 'Too much of a 'madding crowd' at St Kilda Festival and too much loud trendy people and music instead of something with a bit more soul'. It was not clear what this respondent would have considered to have more soul. Nonetheless, there was a clear indication from many that, if given the choice, they would prefer not to have the St Kilda festival staged in their suburb. This responded noted that he avoided: 'Imposed

community events, such as the St Kilda Festival, where the drink bottles are left behind'. Similarly, this respondent noted: 'My local St Kilda Festival is not for St Kilda people but for 400,000 outsiders'.

These respondents suggested that events like the St Kilda festival would not take if a process of appropriate consultation with the local community took place. It appeared that amongst respondents motivated enough to return our mail out questionnaire, the St Kilda festival was an imposition: it was too large, too loud, and was not for the 'locals'.

While this theme was repeated repeatedly, it seems worth examining the comment 'I do not take small children anymore'. Was this a reflection on a quieter, safer time, in St Kilda, or even more broadly, in the community? These comments can be seen purely as remarks about the undesirability of the St Kilda festival, an event with a twenty-five year history, which, after a break in 2006, was staged next in February 2007. However, there are obvious common themes to these comments that go beyond the dislike of the festival itself. It suggests three relevant issues: firstly, that events held in St Kilda ought to be for the locals. This is despite St Kilda having a long history of being a tourist destination. Secondly, the tourists were unwelcome: they were a danger to small children, leaving behind rubbish and drinking too much and creating access difficulties. Finally, the comments implied that cost of the festival in terms of rubbish, problems of access and noise were not worth the scant benefits the festival offered the 'community'.

This dissatisfaction with the St Kilda festival may reflect community change, in particular, the rising gentrification of St Kilda. Certainly, 2001 Census data suggested the marked growth of young income-rich residents in St Kilda, a trend that is likely to have increased since. In the five years leading up to 2001 the municipality of Port Phillip more generally saw significant increases in the number of young children, adults between the ages of 30-34 and 55-64 years old, and people who speak only English at home. There were also increases in couples without children and people who live alone. There was a notable increase in numbers of employed people, people with higher incomes and people with university educations. In contrast, there were significant decreases in people aged over 65 years old and people who spoke languages other than English, especially Russian, Greek and Polish speakers. There were fewer unemployed people, fewer people with lower incomes and fewer families with children. As with other inner city locations, Port Phillip is losing some of its economic and ethnic diversity in favour of a more highly educated young population with larger disposable incomes. These more board changes are reflected in the suburb of St Kilda. Thus, St Kilda appears to have changed from a suburb known for its rich diversity to a more homogenous, wealthy demographic. It is not inconceivable that, while attracted to St Kilda for its quirkiness, these new residents may develop an intolerance for practical realities of the disturbances to daily life that such quirkiness entails.

A Place-Specific Approach

The literature on 'sense of place' reviewed at the beginning of this chapter makes three important points about how people can learn to deepen their appreciation of the local: a) by using places to trigger deeper reflection on personal identity (memories, associations, etc); b) by learning more about the natural and human stories of place (going back to the stories of the indigenous inhabitants); and c) by overcoming a sense of displacement and an unfilled desire to belong again by learning to love the places in which you are currently dwelling. Australian literature on sense of place expressed the hope that a greater love of places can help to 'ground' abstract national debates about Australian identity (eg, the unsuccessful push for a republic) and reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. Doreen Massey has warned against a 'place essentialism' that would promote one story of local places at the expense of others and Zygmunt Bauman has said that the rich can more easily attain a love of places because they can exercise a lot more choice about where they dwell. However, an exploration of place can also become a celebration of social diversity.

St Kilda has long-evoked a love of place on the part of many residents and visitors both because of its natural features (as a bayside suburb) and because of its 'colourful' history. As discussed in chapter 3, it experienced a rapid growth of multiculturalism with the arrival of European refugees in the aftermath of World War II but its cosmopolitanism has become somewhat commercialized and 'frozen' in order to preserve an 'ambience' that attracts visitors. As discussed in earlier chapters the 'gentrification' of St Kilda is leading to a reduction in the social diversity of residents and Port Phillip City Council has tried hard to halt or reverse this trend. One way of doing so has been to establish a wide range of programs for more marginalised residents – people with 'special needs' – so that they might enjoy their lives more and also to increase appreciation for them in the broader local community. Community art projects and stories selected for this study have often focused on the promotion of social diversity through the use of a diversity of place stories. They have aimed to make social diversity more visible so that it might become a matter of more conscious reflection and local conversation.

By contrast, Broadmeadows was largely seen as a tabula rasa when the decision was made to establish broad-acre public housing estates in the area in the 1950s to overcome a Melbourne-wide shortage of affordable housing. As the local historian Andrew Lemon noted, the area's rich and interesting local history has been largely hidden from view until very recent times but it has now become a new 'resource' for the community. The prevailing story that did emerge within the Broadmeadows community from the 1950s through to the 1990s was one of a resilient local community that found its own ways to cope with neglect and poor planning – the triumph of the 'Broady spirit'. However, from the late 1970s onwards the area became home to one of the most multicultural communities in Australia and with high numbers of migrants from the Middle East, local tensions have emerged in the period since the events of September 11, 2001. The inter-ethnic tensions of recent years have made local negotiations for coexistence necessary, with, for example, the formation of an effective inter-faith council involving a range of the area's religious leaders working together to promote religious tolerance. In this context, the area's two Eid Festivals are particularly interesting but they are less connected into local places than the equally interesting Multicultural Planting Festival. Hume City Council has adopted the dual strategy of promoting a greater love of place in a community that includes a high proportion of immigrants – ie a new sense of belonging for people who have experienced dislocation -- while, at the same time, trying to make this community better connected globally.

The community centred on Daylesford has gone through many disruptions since the 1970s due to the steady demise of traditional rural industries and the rise of the 'new economy' focused on tourism. While there is a low level of ethnic diversity in this community there is a relatively high level of social diversity resulting from several 'waves' of settlement that have been described in earlier chapters. Like St Kilda, the rising cost of living in Daylesford is resulting in a reduction in social diversity and many community leaders are trying to halt that trend. Landscapes that were deeply scarred by gold-mining in the 1860s have been carefully 'restored' although the ambience is distinctly English rather than 'Australian' and in this case the creation of a neo-Europe has been more successful than in most part of Australia. The story of the indigenous Dja Dja Wurrung people has largely been erased while successful use has been made of the interesting, 'indigenous' story of settlement by a cluster of families who migrated to Australia from an area overlapping Italy and Switzerland at the time of the Gold Rush. Daylesford and Hepburn Springs are relying heavily on their natural assets (eg, the mineral springs) and stories from the past to forge an identity that can work for residents and visitors alike. There are, however, unresolved concerns over the environmental impacts of a growing population and regular influxes of visitors – for example a high usage of water. Many fear that the sustainability of an economy that promotes place appreciation is at risk.

Like Daylesford, people living in the Hamilton region have experienced disruptions resulting from the demise of traditional rural industries, although this decline started much later here.

Unlike Daylesford, the indigenous people – the Gunditjmara – are visibly present in the region and official recognition of the national heritage status of the Lake Condah area, where they carried out extensive eel 'farming' for thousands of years, has given extra weight to that story . There is no easy way for people living in the region to come to terms with the story of violent conquest of the lands of the Gunditjmara people and the ongoing brutal treatment of the survivors. Many 'dark stories' haunt the memories of those whose families have lived in the area for generations. However, the story of settlement also produced some culturally diverse small towns and their survival in difficult economic circumstances is testament to the love of place that has grown for non-indigenous residents in the period since settlement.

A new economic 'boom' for the area has been based very narrowly on the bluegum and mineral sands industries and efforts to diversify local food production have met limited success. An area blessed with good soils, relatively reliable rainfall, and beautiful natural features (including the southern end of the spectacular Grampians range) should probably feel less nervous about the future. However, some residents suggest that a long period of relative prosperity, which had rested primarily on a buoyant wool industry, created considerable complacency and the shock of economic downturn hit this community harder than others more used to periods of hardship. As a regional centre, Hamilton has fallen behind Horsham to the north and the coastal towns of Warrnambool and Portland to the south and the region struggles to attract a significant number of tourists. Although there is a low level of ethnic diversity in the region there is clearly a need for inclusive strategies to build a stronger sense of regional identity and confidence for the future. This might help to address the perennial problem of the outward drift of young people and it might help to create a more secure economic environment for struggling farmers.

Across the four communities, interviews with people involved in community arts and public celebrations have provided an opportunity to test claims that place consciousness can build a stronger sense of identity at levels ranging from the personal to the regional and claims that deeper reflections about self can lead to stronger interest in 'otherness' and the multiplicity of coexisting and interacting identities. While the need to negotiate difference is most overt in the case of Broadmeadows, we can now consider the role of place consciousness in projects aimed at increasing social inclusion across all four communities.

Place Stories in St Kilda

In working with artistic interpretations of local stories, Julie Shiels seems more interested in the social history of the area rather than its specific natural features. She said it makes her feel more 'human' to simply sit and listen to the stories of some of the local street people. For example, she said that she enjoys spending a bit of time with an old busker known to all as Whiskers because 'you give him two bucks and he gives you two bucks worth. The stuff he tells you is just fantastic. It's really entertaining; he's doing his thing, singing and talking and so on. It makes me feel like my neighbourhood is human. I can ignore the BMW Four Wheel Drives hogging the disability car park.' However, it may be that this approach to temporality – ie, the willingness to take the time to listen to someone's stories – is something that can nurture a stronger sense of place. Shiels said that she loves the Aboriginal notion of 'sit down comedy' in which people sit around to swap funny stories and when working on the Memories Margins and Markers project she chose to make one of the public art installations a permanent version of the milk crates that local Aboriginal people would gather around in a particular park to share a drink and some stories. This particular installation came under fire from the Herald-Sun's shock-jock columnist Andrew Bolt because he thought it celebrated irresponsible and anti-social behaviour but this only made Shiels appreciate what she had learnt from the Aboriginal 'parkies'.

In designing the six works of public art used to represent the array of stories collected for the MMM project she had to think more deeply about the relationship between the stories and the spaces in which they might be presented. One that attracted a lot of attention, represented

the story of an old dockworker, Tommy, who used to take off his 'street clothes' and boots and leave them on and beside the seawall at Middle Park before swimming all the way to work at Williamstown, returning in the afternoon to find his clothes waiting for him. Perhaps this story evoked a strong reaction because it seems to suggest an 'age of innocence' when no-one would steel Tommy's cloths and boots in his absence and it suggests the resilience of the workers who would take such a long swim (Tommy was not alone). However, it probably also appeals because it is about taking a daily dip in the salty waters that lap at the edge of the bayside neighbourhood and many would see this as a healthy thing to do.

Giz James is a visual artist who chooses to live and work in St Kilda because she finds it visually exciting. However, the people with special needs who joined her regular art classes were mostly interested in learning how to paint portraits of people and a sense of place is not evident in their work. She speculated that while the rooming houses in which they live may sometimes be beautiful old buildings, they are normally tough social environments that are not likely to evoke pleasant thoughts of place. In 2004 James approached Hotel Sofitel in the city to proposed a project in which she would complete a series of paintings looking out from the hotel across St Kilda to the bay beyond and over a 12 month period she worked in Room 3601 to complete nine major works that were eventually mounted as an exhibition in the lobby of the hotel. This made her more determined to encourage others to paint people within their local environments and in 2006 she got the support of the Gasworks art centre to mount an exhibition of such works by a range of residents.

Of course, much of the St Kilda art – paintings and photographs – that is sold primarily to visitors through shops or the regular Sunday markets evokes iconic landmarks of the place (from Luna Park to the pier). However, community art in the area is probably more interested in getting beyond the iconic images that are so well known. Many of the projects that use various artforms to support people with special needs are interested in making invisible stories more visible, rather than working with icons.

One of the things that has long made St Kilda famous as a place is the presence of sex-workers and City of Port Phillip worker Robyn Szechman developed a theatrical way of making their stories more visible through the Sex and Drugs Historical Tours. While there are many in the community who would like to keep these stories less visible, those involved with the project say it helps to 'humanize' an 'industry' that is complex in its causes and effects and this approach can help health workers in their efforts to provide a way out for people who want to escape the cycle of drugs and prostitution.

Some would accuse community artists such as Julie Shiels and Giz James of romanticizing stories from the past that are no longer relevant to a changing local community. However, they have had the support of Port Phillip City Council and other local organizations in promoting the benefits of sustaining social diversity.

Place Stories in Broadmeadows

As discussed in earlier chapters, Hume City Council has sought to change internal and external perceptions of what Broadmeadows is like as a place to live in order to reduce the negative effects of long-term stigmatization. In this context, the Weaving Lands project was particularly interesting because it aimed to foster a greater appreciation of the natural beauty of the area's indigenous grasslands while, at the same time, acknowledging the presence in the community of people with an array of traditional weaving skills. The result was an impressive work of art that celebrates Broadmeadows as a place located within a Global Learning Centre that aims to make the community more globally connected.

According to Kershaw, it is quite a challenge to get people to appreciate the area's basalt grasslands because they are 'not woody, or rainforest, or anything that is visually appealing, or understood, or appreciated by people. It's more a sort of dry functional environment.' However, she initially got the idea for a weaving project when the initiator of the Multicultural Planting Festivals, Dimi Bouzalas, told her that at one of the planting festivals a group

of Kurdish women had picked grasses and woven them into hats to wear because that is what they used to do during harvest festivals in Turkey. She later heard of a project run by Port Phillip City Council that aimed to revive lost skills in basket making within the local Aboriginal community and she then set out to bring together elements of those two stories. She employed a professional artist, Wendy Golden, to work with an array of weavers from within the local community and beyond and when the woven tree was completed she asked the respected local Aboriginal elder Norm Hunter to give it an appropriate Aboriginal name.

Kershaw involved both Basket Makers Victoria and the Natural Dye Makers (a group associated with Plant Craft Cottage at the Melbourne Botanical Gardens) in the project and she was interested to see that when they came to look at remnant grasslands in the Broadmeadows Valley Park they had been quite surprised at how rich this environment is. This sort of external response probably encourages locals to value their environment even more and Kershaw was delighted when the Galgi-ngarrak Yirranboi Tree was borrowed for exhibition at Melbourne's Immigration Museum.

An interesting outcome of the Weaving Lands project was that it raised the profile of Maori people who are determined to sustain an interest in traditional cultural practices for Maori people who are permanently settled in Melbourne. When the weavers involved in the project were invited to demonstrate their skills in a public event there was very strong interest in the skills of Maori weaver Kiri Dewes and a Maori dance troupe performed at the opening of the project exhibition at the Global Learning Centre. The project not only led to more invitations for Dewes to conduct weaving classes, it also increased interest within the Maori community in her Maori language classes. Dewes pointed out that Maori language was banned in New Zealand schools for about 50 years and people of her generation became very proficient in English. However, 'language is our vehicle into the depth of whatever culture you belong to' and she is pleased to see that many Maori people living in Australia – from toddlers to elders - - are determined to learn the language in order to retain their roots. Weaving is also important, Dewes said, because the flax plant, used for weaving, is also a symbol of the extended family with the dead leaves on the ground representing the ancestors, the brown and curling ends of the leaves representing the grandparents, all the leaves together are the extended family and the central shoot of the plant, which Maoris call 'rito', is the infant that is surrounded by the family. Dewes came to Australia because much of her family was already here and she now feels she has an important role to play as a community elder.

Dewes said she could only use flax for her weaving because the plant is so important to Maori identity but she stressed that her culture teaches people to not waste what nature provides -- 'if you look after a plant you are using it will look after you'-- and to learn what local nature can offer you. She thought it was a 'great gesture' to name the woven tree as a 'tree of the land even though everyone contributed to it.'

Although the annual Multicultural Planting Festival was begun by Dimi Bouzalas as a way of getting the environmental messages of the Council's environment department out to the migrant communities, it quickly turned into a celebration of the coexistence of so many cultural traditions in the one area (or space). To borrow Doreen Massey's terminology, these festivals have made 'coexisting multiplicity' more visible and they have encouraged a positive curiosity in what different cultural traditions have to offer their new local community. The emphasis on celebrating nature's providence and on giving gifts of food creates a degree of goodwill between coexisting communities that can be drawn on when there are instances of inter-ethnic tension, and this was probably seen in the way that the hastily-formed inter-faith council was able to combat anti-Muslim sentiment in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent Bali bombs. Anne Kershaw says that some projects – such as the Weaving Lands project – explore the potential of intercultural influences while some others – such as the Eid Festivals – are about 'cultural maintenance'. The Multicultural Planting Festival is more about cultural maintenance than cultural fusion but it emphasizes the fact that the communities share the same space and that they must join together to care for their

shared local environment. The simple fact of making the area's cultural diversity more visible can also lead to other possibilities for intercultural exchanges and, as already noted, the Weaving Lands project grew, in part, out of the Multicultural Planting Festivals.

Assyrian Iraqi refugee Mesko Ayouz told the researchers that her community is delighted to have the opportunity – at the Multicultural Planting Festival – to show off a culinary tradition that they are very proud of, but she also stressed that the planting aspect of the festival makes her feel like she belongs in Australia. She said that there is a planting festival in Iraq in March when families go outside to have a picnic and to plant some trees. 'But here in Australia, when I plant a tree, I feel that I am one of them here.' Festival organizer Natalia Valenzuela said that people often tell her that a highlight of the day is to get your hands in the dirt and feel like you are giving something back to the land that is now your home. She said it is the combination of connecting to the environment, giving the gift of food, and celebrating the multicultural nature of the community that has made the series of festivals so special. She also said that much of the environmental education work takes place when she goes out to community organizations in the lead-up to each festival to talk about what the festival's aims are.

Hume City Council Greening Officer, Anna Zsoldos, said that participation in the festival had risen dramatically since Valenzuela came on board and used her pre-existing networks to promote the event. Zsoldos said that she became 'fearful that it had become too big and that the more important thing for the communities was the celebration and the food rather than the planting. 'But all the feedback has been about the importance of the planting and the contribution to the environment.' She said that some people who come to the festival want to plant olive trees, like they have in their country of origin, or they want to plant trees rather than grasses and she has to explain that the area is suited to the re-establishment of grasslands not forests. 'I spend a lot of time explaining the difference between the overstorey and the understorey, for example,' she said. However, she is buoyed by the fact that individuals get so much from the planting activity and she told the story of a woman from Iraq who had only been in the country a very short time and could hardly speak English but she 'just wanted to plant'. According to Zsoldos, 'those experiences where they are just connecting to the land … are incredibly important'.

It appears that community arts projects in the Broadmeadows area are starting to make good use of the area's natural history and its contemporary cultural diversity. However, they make little overt use of the area's 'hidden history' that the historian Andrew Lemon wrote about.

Place Stories in Daylesford

Although few residents appear to know this, Daylesford is named after a town in the hilly Cotswalds district of England and a big effort has gone into giving the town its English ambience. Local legend has it that very large old-growth Eucalypts were cut down on the summit of Wombat Hill – and simply burnt rather than being turned into timber – to make way for a very English botanical gardens that features a collection of now-mature conifers and pines from around the world. Old photographs reveal that the landscape was deeply scarred by the gold rush of the 1850s and 60s, and names such as Cornish Hill and Italian Hill refer to the time when the miners clustered into distinct sub-communities. However, in the 1920s (CHECK) thriving Chinese market gardens were closed down to make way for the artificial lake that increases the English ambience and the old slag-heaps were hidden behind newly-planted trees. Even the cool and often misty weather is reminiscent of England and the town's 'old world charm' has long been a tourist attraction. Scottish people also seem to feel at home in this landscape because an annual Highlands Festival attracts people of Scottish descent from all parts of Australia.

In this context, it is interesting that the Swiss-Italian Festa has become the biggest celebration of the town's cultural heritage and this is probably because it is a highly unusual heritage in Australian terms. The use of the Swiss-Italian story has been discussed in an earlier chapter. However, the local historian Clare Gervasoni – herself a descendent of the Swiss-Italian

migrants – has said that the town can thank these European settlers for protecting some of the area's mineral springs from the ravages of mining because they saw the mineral water as a kind of 'liquid gold'. It is undoubtedly true that people from a range of European countries have been attracted to the Daylesford area because of the mineral waters and the proprietor of the iconic Lake House hotel and restaurant, Alla Wolf-Tasker, talks of many childhood holidays in the town with her Russian parents; getting together with other Russian migrants to share food and music.[7] She has also said that many people from Eastern Europe come to Dayleford for barbecues in the summer holidays and other residents say that many people of European descent come regularly on 'pilgrimages' to the most famous springs in the reserve adjacent to Hepburn Springs township. So the town's English heritage has probably morphed into more of a pan-European heritage.

At the same time, the ethnic diversity of people living in the area is relatively low and so the cosmopolitanism refers more to the past than the present. Even the large number of people in the area with Italian surnames are now third or fourth generation residents with broad Australian accents and very little Italian language. As mentioned in an earlier chapter there have been times in Australian history when an Italian heritage was seen as a liability rather than an asset in Australia and the descendents of the Swiss-Italian settlers have enjoyed the fact that a fading heritage has been re-discovered and celebrated so overtly. The value of this heritage was confirmed when the students at the Daylesford Secondary College won second prize in a national 'Farm to Table Challenge' competition by making bullboar sausages using recipes passed down by the Swiss-Italian settlers.

However, while the story of the Swiss-Italian settlers has now become fashionable within the community others stories related to patterns of settlement are more divisive. As mentioned above, the impacts of gold-mining have been largely hidden from view and the decision of the Victorian government in 2003 to phase out long-term logging operations in the surrounding Wombat State Forest created local tensions. Earlier research by the Globalism Institute (Mulligan et al 2004) suggested that the community centered on Daylesford managed the difficult local debate about the phasing out of the logging industry relatively well, even though jobs were lost as a result of the ban. This probably reflected the fact that local logging operations had already declined for economic reasons and people promoting tourism in the area felt that intact forests were more important to the local economy than the declining timber industry. The negotiated community action plan for the Wombat Forest stressed the potential for forms of 'ecotourism' that could draw on the detailed knowledge of forest ecology gained by former loggers. While the proximity of intact native forest is already helping to attract visitors to Trentham, this factor has not emerged strongly in the promotion of tourism in Daylesford and Hepburn Springs. Yet the very presence of such a large area of forest tempers the emphasis on the European ambience of the two towns. The artist Petrus Spronk said it is the forest that attracts people like him to the area and he has used his column in the local newspaper to urge readers to engage in a 'trinity' of health-giving practices: daily walks in the forest, growing your own vegetables in the garden, and taking time out for quiet reflection in order to nurture your creative potential. Spronk spent a lot of time traveling the world, absorbing various artistic influences, before deciding to settle in the Daylesford area and his thoughts on his decision to settle here probably reflect the sentiment expressed by Gertrude Stein when she said 'What good are roots if you can't take them with you?' (as cited by Geertz). However, his trinity of place-related meditative practices confirms what 'sense of place' writers, such as Keith Basso (ref?), have said about ways in which places can evoke deep reflection about self and relationships with other people and places.

Like Julie Shiels in St Kilda, Spronk is interested in creating works of art that can celebrate a diversity of experiences. When Hepburn Shire Council carried out a redevelopment of the

7   Wolf-Tasker talked of her experience in an interview with Martin Mulligan conducted for an earlier research project conducted by the Globalism Institute (see Mulligan *et al* 2004

mineral springs reserve at Hepburn Springs he won a contract to create some permanent installations and he decided to collect the memories of people who are now more than 80s years old and have a selection of them set into large basalt boulders. He also created a brass chair with an upside-down book on it in memory of the man who spent many years collecting entrance fees and welcoming visitors to the park. People tend to take such public places for granted, he suggested, and he wanted more people to know the story of how the park was created and cared for over so many years.

As a community theatre practitioner Rebecca Lister has also been interested in local stories that have significant resonance within the community – perhaps because they raise issues that are not openly discussed – and stories that reflect the changing nature of community life. For her last play before leaving the district to live in Melbourne, she worked with the community at Trentham and she decided to focus on the story of a former local doctor, Dr Gwynneth Wisewold. According to Lister, Wisewold 'was very alternate, she was a chain smoker, she wore men's clothes, she drove an old ute, she drove a motorbike, she would come and visit at any time of day and night.' It took quite a while for the citizens of Trentham to get used to their rather unusual woman doctor but she certainly won a place in their hearts and stayed in the area for around 30 years. The play, called Through the Mist, allowed Lister to explore changing social norms over time and to promote a message of tolerance for difference. Some of the community plays that Lister pulled together during her time in Daylesford provoked some public debate. Jenny Beacham recalled that one of the plays she staged in the Daylesford Town Hall 'caused a bit of discussion. [But] it didn't hurt, and it wasn't unmanageable. [It was just] saying things as they are.' According to Jon Stevens, art provides ways of raising some difficult issues in non-threatening ways and as a regional arts officer in the two shires of Hepburn and Mooroolbark (check spelling?) he wishes there were a lot more people like Rebecca Lister and Anni Coyne trying to make a career in community arts practice.

Place Stories in the Hamilton Region

Until recently, Hamilton was content to label itself 'the wool capital of the world'; the region that could produce the world's finest Merino wool. The large annual sheep industry show – 'Sheepvention' – was a celebration of this principal source of the region's prosperity. At the time when the region's own Malcolm Fraser was prime minister of the country, the term 'western district grazier' was synonymous with 'privilege and power'. Of course, there were many struggling farmers in the past and there are still wealthy graziers in the district today, but the long-term downturn in wool prices, starting in the late 1980s, shook the community out of its relative complacency and made people think much more carefully about the region's assets and potential beyond a reliance on sheep and cattle. Perhaps it also made people think more deeply about the region's history. More than in most regions in Australia, settlers coming from Scotland, England, Ireland and Germany had set out to create landscapes that were reminiscent of 'home' and the region is littered with place names that reflect this nostalgic practice. While clusters of settlers gave some of the small towns a distinctive identity – eg, Scottish at Dunkeld and Germans at Tarrington (once called Hochkirch) – the combined effect was the creation of a 'neo-Europe' that made little reference to presettlement landscapes or the history of the indigenous people.

Throughout the 1980s, the Gunditjmara people started to get more organized and were able to effectively challenge some prevailing local myths about the story of European settlement. They expressed their anger at the way in which they had been forced to leave the 'mission settlement' at Lake Condah and told the story of how their ancestors had developed an extensive practice in 'eel-farming' in that area, only recently confirmed by detailed archaeological evidence.

Alan MacGregor arrived in the district as a community arts officer employed by the Hamilton Shire Council just as the wool industry was into its decline in the late 1980s. As discussed in an earlier chapter, he initiated a wide range of projects to reach different sectors of the Hamilton community and he decided to initiate an annual Hamilton Festival to 'bring people

into that common format to participate in the arts and to celebrate various aspects of place and community'. His main aim was to encourage more people to participate in art practices because there 'is sometimes a very narrow view of arts in rural communities and many people are excluded, or at best neglected and so are unable to participate in a genuine way, to explore and celebrate their stories.' However, he also wanted the festival to reflect dialogues in the community about the history and identity of the region and, in 1993, he made a special effort to highlight the story of the Gunditjmara people by engaging an indigenous artist from Brisbane to work with them and by also bringing in a performance group from Melbourne that had worked with other indigenous communities to produce musical performances. The guest artist and performers worked with Gunditjmara people to run workshops in Hamilton and a number of the smaller towns and this enabled some of the elders – such as Johnny Lovett – to travel with the group and tell local stories that were not widely known. The festival also resulted in the painting by Gunditjmara women of a large, four-panel, work of public art depicting the story of the Gunditjmara, which was on permanent display at the Hamilton Education Centre until that particular centre closed down.

As discussed in an earlier chapter, the Hamilton Festival morphed into a more regional Southern Grampians Festival when the Hamilton Shire was amalgamated with neighbouring shires to become the Southern /Grampians Shire and it went from strength to strength until MacGregor left the district and was not replaced as a community arts officer. Tarrington has been able to sustain its annual German-influenced 'Laternenfest' since 1995 and Balmoral was able to get funding from VicHealth to run its Festival of the Five Senses in 2005. In the neighbouring district, the town of Lake Bolac has initiated an annual 'eel festival' that celebrates the ancient link between the indigenous people and the eels. However, Hamilton continues to go without a significant cultural festival to sit alongside Sheepvention. The prominent local chef and community activist Tony MacGilvray has been the driving force behind a number of successful community gatherings and celebrations – including the Top of the Town Ball, Boys and Their Toys, and The World's Longest Lunch – but while they can be seen as celebrations of rural pragmatism and community spirit they have not really been cultural projects.

A great deal of work went into the preparations for Dunkeld's weekend celebration of the 150th anniversary of the naming of the town and a range of related community events and activities took place in the lead-up to the weekend. While the town's Scottish heritage was acknowledged (and was the focus of a particular activity several months before the main celebration), the organizing committee was determined to acknowledge the contribution of different waves of settlers that came at different times and they did this on the weekend by scheduling a series of presentations that focused on different aspects of the town's evolution. In the lead-up to the festival they put a lot of effort into the restoration of an old, abandoned, cemetery and this triggered research on people and stories that had been largely forgotten. The chairman of the celebration organizing committee, Keith Warne, said that they were not able to find a way to add to existing knowledge about the indigenous people of this particular area and there appear to be no surviving descendants. He did, however, point out that the local Dunkeld History Museum has managed to gather an impressive collection of Aboriginal artefacts that are on permanent display and there is local interest in finding out more about the indigenous history of a place that is located at the base of the impressive peaks of Mt Sturgeon and Mt Abrupt. The jagged peaks at the southern tip of the Grampians range stand as a much-loved backdrop to Dunkeld yet little is known of the significance of these landmarks to the indigenous society (not even their Aboriginal names) and this lurks as a ghostly silence. Hanging in the Hamilton Regional Art Gallery is a wonderful painting by the influential landscape painter Nicholas Chevalier (who spent 13 years in Victoria in the 1850s and 60s) which depicts a gentle scene of an Aboriginal family camped by the Wannon River with 'Mt Sturgeon' in the background. Yet many such families appear to have disappeared without trace.

There is relatively little ethnic diversity in the Hamilton regional community. Coleraine farmer and chairman of that town's thriving 'community bank', John Kane, has developed plans for a water recycling project linked to the town's sewerage treatment facility and he would like to attract some south-east Asian market gardeners to take advantage of free water in order to demonstrate that there is room in the region for diligent small-scale vegetable production. Kane believes that the lack of cultural plurality is something that has contributed, historically, a kind of complacency that left the region ill-prepared for the collapse of the prolonged wool boom.[8]

Conclusions

Many of the people interviewed for this study, who were involved in establishing and/or managing community arts projects and community celebrations, said that their work has increased their own sense of belonging in the places in which they dwell and work. Many said that the work has enhanced their own personal 'sense of place' and that they had tried, in turn, to enhance the place-consciousness of the people they work with. Anne Kershaw, in Broadmeadows, and Rebecca Lister, in Daylesford, said that their own sense of place had sometimes been challenged by the perspectives of people they worked with but they both felt this had given them a stronger appreciation for the complexity of place stories that have created multi-layered local communities. Rebecca Lister found it very difficult to leave a place that she had learnt so much about through 10 years of community theatre.

Celebrations of place – ranging from Dunkeld's 150th anniversary weekend to the annual Multicultural Planting Festival in Broadmeadows – can spark local dialogue about what exactly is being celebrated and how a diversity of stories might be properly honoured. Coexistence in shared spaces can lead to efforts to reconcile past conflicts and differences, as demonstrated in the way the 1993 Hamilton Festival chose to honour the stories of the Gunditj Mara people or in the way that the Eid Festivals in Broadmeadows have sought to build bridges between Muslims and non-Muslims living in that region.

While many of the cultural projects that were examined for this study chose to celebrate the diversity of local human stories, few of them made a conscious link to local landscapes or natural history. Perhaps the outstanding examples of honouring the natural stories of place were two Broadmeadows projects – Weaving Lands and the Multicultural Planting Festival. This reflects the desire of the Hume City Council to increase 'civic pride' by challenge prevailing perceptions that Broadmeadows is an area of very limited natural beauty. In St Kilda, Daylesford and the Hamilton region appreciation for the natural charms of place are probably assumed more than they are consciously explored in work related to place identities.

Some of the case study projects examined here appear to confirm suggestions in the literature on 'sense of place' that place-awareness is something that can link individual, subjective, reflections on identity with broader community-wide questions of identity and change, in ways that can be both affirming and deeply challenging. Cultural activities may be a relatively non-threatening way to explore different 'lived experiences' of place. At the same time, broad economic trends are threatening to reduce social diversity in some of the communities examined, whether this be the result of 'gentrification' in St Kilda and Daylesford or the demise of traditional rural industries in both Daylesford and the Hamilton region. A lack of ethnic diversity in both Daylesford and the Hamilton region also reduces the necessity to negotiate across difference. In this context it is understandable, yet still paradoxical, that the place that begins with the lowest level of place appreciation – ie Broadmeadows – has spawned cultural activities that are more consciously exploring the issues related to people, place and change, although the leading role of Hume City Council in initiating some of these

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8   John Kane made these points in an interview carried out by Martin Mulligan and Yaso Nadarajah as part of an evaluation of the Hnadbury Fellowship program that had supported his work on water recycling.

projects must be acknowledged.

7

Identity and Belonging

Soon after he became prime minister in 1996, John Howard gave a speech in which he declared that, 'One of the more insidious developments in Australian political life over the past decade or so has been the attempt to rewrite Australian history in the service of a partisan political cause'.[9] According to historians Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark, the bitterness in this remark was partly the result of Howard's determination to discredit the legacy of the previous Prime Minister, Paul Keating, who had long tormented Howard by describing him as a small-minded traditionalist who clung to dreams of life in the 1950s. During his time as prime minister, Keating had worked with his speechwriter—the historian Don Watson—to craft a series of big-picture speeches aimed at giving Australia a new sense of identity.

Howard picked up an epithet from his favourite historian Geoffrey Blainey to describe Keating's vision as 'the black armband' view of Australian history. Blainey earned his reputation as a historian by writing accessible, sometimes witty, accounts of Australian history which often featured success stories of 'small' men and women who acted on big dreams; the Aussie 'battlers' that Howard wanted to claim as his own. Blainey was stirred to action by the way in which the 1988 bicentennial anniversary of the arrival of the First Fleet sparked a public debate about aspects of our history that had long been neglected—most critically, the murder of Aboriginal people across all the contact zones of Australian 'settlement'. Aboriginal people protesting the celebration of the 'white invasion' coined the slogan 'White Australia has a black history', and Blainey tried to turn that around by coining his now famous barb. After he launched his attack on 'black armband' historians, Blainey quickly became the darling of political conservatives who felt they had been losing the 'history wars'. He was put up as a rival to the liberal historian Manning Clark, even though Blainey himself retained respect for his former teacher.[10] Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark have pointed out that the term 'history wars' was already being used in the United states when Howard began his assault on the Australian 'revisionists'.[11] Howard's cultural offensive has not only involved the patronage of historians who suit his purpose; it has also involved selective appointments to the governing bodies of organisations—such as the ABC and the National Museum—who present history to the public. It has involved the awarding of consultancies on the development of school curricula to people who share this view.[12] Emboldened by this new context, the retired academic Keith Windschuttle began his own petty and bitter attack—first in the pages of *Quadrant* journal and later in a widely-discussed book titled *The Fabrication of Australian History*—on all the historians trying to piece together the sorry story of the violence perpetrated on the indigenous people. This new episode of denial was used to justify Howard's refusal to issue a public apology to the victims of policies that had removed Aboriginal children from their families following the release of a detailed report on the way that policy had been practiced.

9   As cited by Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark in The History Wars, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2003.

10   According to Macintyre and Clark, *The History Wars*, p. 10.

11   Macintyre and Clark, *The History Wars*, p. 9.

12   Macintyre and Clark, *The History Wars*, p. 5

Inga Clendinnen used her 1999 Boyer Lectures on ABC radio to express her deep concern about the sustained attack on historians who continue to piece together stories that create moral dilemmas for contemporary Australians. She suggested that it is important to acknowledge the achievements of settlers who 'built a society where the centuries-old shackles of class were struck off in a generation', even if their egalitarianism was limited to people of Anglo-Celt origins. However, we will never attain a secure sense of ourselves as a nation, she said, if we continue to deny a 'birthstain of injustice and exclusion'. We need not one but many 'true stories', Clendinnen argued that 'not Black Armband history and not triumphalist white-out history either, but good history, true stories of the making of this present land, none of them simple, some of them painful, all of them part of our own individual histories.'[13]

In the first of her 1999 Boyer lectures, Clendinnen cited the philosopher Martha Nussbaum as saying that 'three qualities' are necessary for responsible citizenship in a complex world: 'an ability to critically examine oneself and one's traditions; an ability to see beyond immediate group loyalties and to extend to strangers the moral concern we 'naturally' extend to friends and kin; … [and] the ability to see unobvious connections between sequences of human actions, and to recognize their likely consequences, intended and unintended'. The capacity to extend our sense of responsibility involves what Nussbaum called 'narrative imagination'.

Most of the published local histories in Australia either leave out the history of violent conflict between the settlers and the indigenous people or they treat it dispassionately. Henry Reynolds certainly became an interested (as distinct from disinterested) observer in his writings on the 'frontier wars' but he focused on broad regions and broad themes. His work encouraged a generation of scholarship on specific stories of conflict but they became a genre in themselves rather than a part of broader local histories. Meanwhile, many local historians seem to have adopted the view that the sad history of settlement is now far removed from the history that has shaped the communities concerned. A notable exception has been Mark McKenna's award-winning account of the research he conducted on the history of an area where he had purchased a block of land on the south coast of NSW,[14] in which he set out to demonstrate that research on the story of the local indigenous people can give one a much richer sense of belonging locally.

Perhaps it is not surprising that non-Aboriginal historians have been able to write more empathetic accounts of the experiences of the settlers who faced difficult circumstances and Marilyn Lake's critical review of the failed policy of 'soldier settlement' in Victoria[15] is a good example of research that helps us understand the failings of a triumphalist attitude towards the land. Lake was especially interested in the stories of desperate isolation felt by the wives of the soldier-settler farmers. The comparatively recent interest in women's stories has also led to interesting research on the prominent roles played by women—often as unpaid volunteers—in a host of community organizations.

Stories of settlement have sometimes focused on uncommon migrations and a good example of how this can be documented and analysed is in Don Watson's *Caledonia Australis: Scottish settlement in South Gippsland*. As mentioned in earlier chapters, the story of settlement in the Daylesford area of Victoria by migrants coming from an area overlapping Italy and Switzerland has been well integrated into the way that community presents its identity to the world and the local historian Clare Gervasoni—herself a descendant of the Swiss-Italian migrants—has taken on the task of documenting that particular heritage.

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13   See the transcript of Clendinnen's final, sixth, Boyer lecture. Transcripts of the Boyer lectures are available through the ABC website.

14   McKenna's book, titled *Looking for Blackfellas Point: An Australian History of Place*, was published in 2002 by UNSW Press and it won both the NSW Premier's Prize and the Queensland Premier's Prize for history writing in that year.

15   This was the subject of Lake's PhD and it resulted in the publication *The Limits of Hope: Soldier Settlement in Victoria 1915-38*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1987.

Most local communities in Victoria have a historical society and an increasing number have some kind of local history centre or museum. These organizations are commonly run by passionate volunteers—many of them retirees—and their most common interest is in local family histories or genealogies. They often put together the stories of 'historical buildings' or 'colourful' local identities who may have established a name for themselves beyond their local area. They tend to be good at collecting materials—and they often hold important 'primary' data—but the information is commonly presented in a dry way with little analysis. Few local collections are presented with interesting and innovative interpretation. Passionate volunteers sometimes become 'gatekeepers' who want to control access and interpretation.

There are, of course, exceptions to this characterization of local history 'buffs'. An example that has come to the attention of the Globalism Institute is the work of Warrnambool-based historian Bernard Wallace whose own research has focused on the history of place names in the western district of Victoria. Wallace also works with young unemployed people selected to participate in Green Corps projects that are focused on environmental restoration. Wallace thinks it is important to complement the physical work of restoring degraded environments with some research on the history of the local places where this work is being carried out and he has been delighted at the enthusiasm shown for such research by the project participants. This research has led to the creation of interpretive signs and information boards, but perhaps more importantly it has made the work of restoration seem more valuable to those involved.

There are, of course, countless stories from the past that can be dredged up and used for contemporary purposes. Local communities that attract tourists and other visitors are interested in how their past can be presented in a way that will enhance the experience of the visitors and make them want to return. The identity of a town or place can become an economic resource and this ensures that considerable scrutiny will be given to the way that local history is presented. In his award-winning study of the popular tourist town of Beechworth, Tom Griffith drew an important distinction between the 'public history' that is allowed to be presented to the world with official endorsements (e.g. by local government authorities) and a much broader 'local history' that is rarely documented and even more rarely published. Local history can be a source for renewal of the public history—enabling a local identity to grow and change over time. However, Griffiths pointed out that local business owners and local government authorities are likely to take a conservative attitude towards the way that the 'public' history is presented and this can lead to local disengagement with that history. Local history may often be seen as being surreptitious—even subversive—but it is more likely to interest local residents who can gain from it a richer sense of belonging. However, the divide between public history and local history means that the latter is rarely subjected to the rigours of critical review and it will contain many stories of dubious veracity or authenticity. The sharp divide between public history and local history has not been helpful.

Of course, increased mobility and the impacts of globalization mean that local communities can no longer rest on taken-for-granted assumptions about past identities and their contemporary relevance. Zygmunt Bauman suggested that in the new world context, 'cultural identities can only emerge as outcomes of a long chain of 'secondary processes' of choice, selective retention and recombination (which, most importantly, do not grind to a halt once the identity in question does emerge)' (Bauman 1999). In the context of local communities, the coexistence of multiple identities, all forged in the way described by Bauman, means that an overall identity is a matter of negotiation. How can stories from the past enhance, rather than hinder, the prospects for inclusive negotiations and satisfactory outcomes? What can the stories have in common?

In thinking about these questions, and how identities are constructed within current conditions of globalization, Manuel Castells distinguishes three forms and sources of identity formation in so-called 'network societies' and economies: 'legitimizing identities', 'resentment identities' and 'transformative project identities'. Legitimizing identities are those identities that emerge and are structured around the legitimating institutions of a society, such as those of civil society

and the state, even as they are in the process of being contested and reconstructed (Castells 1997, pp. 7–8). In Castells' analysis, contemporary practices of globalization are manifested by the rise of informational, network societies. In his view, the structures of informational, network societies seriously disrupt the structuring of the global/local industrial and civic institutions that once provided the grounds for legitimate identities. In Castells' words, the changes wrought by globalization have 'drained away' the sources of legitimizing identities:

> The institutions and organizations of civil society that were constructed around the democratic state, and around the social contract between capital and labour, have become, by and large, empty shells, decreasingly able to relate to people's lives and values in most societies (Castells 1997: 355).

The two other sources of identity formation—resentment and transformative project identities—emerge, in part, as challenges to legitimizing identities. The difference between these identities is the way in which this challenge manifests itself. In the case of resentment identities, the challenge is defensive in nature. It takes the form of refusal and a regressive assertion of the boundaries between those who occupy the dominant and subordinate positions. Parochial, community-centred resentment base their resistance on shared history, geographical location, and/or biology.

The formation of resentment identities have been shaped by the way, under present conditions of globalization, have withdrawn from protecting their citizens' socio-economic security to uncertain, fragile global market forces. The formation of resentment identities is stimulated by the global re-structuring of the political economy of nation-states and their failure to address the alienation, disaffection and miseries of those who are marginalised in the process. The mounting scepticism that citizens express about government is an expression of their sense of being cheated by parties of all political persuasions as the public good—the common wealth—is dissolved, dissipated, and they themselves disenfranchised. Resentment identity formation re-defines the legitimacy and authenticity of global/local links around exclusionary criteria: racism, religious fundamentalism, chauvinism, xenophobia and nationalist politics. In Australia, the rise of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party and the culture and history wars can be seen as a powerful expression of resentment identities, to the extent that these are based on a resentment to others—indigenous people, immigrants and refugees, for example—who are viewed as having an unfair claim on the state's resources.

In contrast to both resentment identities and dominating identities, Castell's third source of identity formation, transformative project identities, develop out of resentment identities but go beyond them strategically appropriating the resources of legitimizing identities. They challenge legitimizing identities through refusing their legitimacy, and channelling their resources into a positive project of political, social and economic transformation. Transformative project identities sometimes overlap with sources of legitimating identity formation through democratising institutions of the state and civil society. For instance, the establishment of Green parties arose from within the environmental movement to occupy increasingly significant positions of power in the state, but these do not define or contain them. They parts of larger movements, and are not necessarily any more important than any other part. Transformative project identities can thus be thought of as sitting in between and drawing on both resentment and legitimizing identities, using and re-working the resources of both in ways intended to cut across and ultimately re-work the boundaries of both n new ways. In doing so, transformative project identities seek to avoid reinforcing the boundaries between dominating interests and the subordinated. They aim not simply at supplanting legitimizing identities by capturing the commanding heights of the state or institutions of civil society, but to create different ways of living and being, based around culturally different ways of relating to others. Transformative project identities necessarily have to be fluid and open in their tactical engagement with and responses to dominating identities.

The sources and forms of identity formation are structured via de-centralised networks which

are suited to structures and logic of contemporary globalization and the new communications technologies, as opposed to the relatively nation-centred institutions of most states (Castells 1997: 360-361). This de-centralised form of organisation gives transformative project identities their power to produce subjects who are 'the collective social actor through which individuals reach holistic meaning in their experience' (Castells 1997: 10). It is through such social actors and their collective agency that transformative project identities contribute to innovation in cultural, social and economic structures.

Some forty-five years ago Judith Wright wrote an essay in which she argued that Australians need to feel more unsettled before we can find a deeper, more authentic, sense of belonging in this land. She wrote that

> Australia is still, for us, not a country but a state—or states—of mind. We do not yet speak from within her, but from outside: from the state of mind that describes, rather than expresses, its surroundings, or from the state of mind that imposes itself upon, rather than lives through, landscape and event…[16]

This comment remains disturbingly apposite today, notwithstanding the emergence of a promising national debate about Australian identity during the 1990s. That debate was overshadowed by the onset of the 'history wars' described above. Whereas the history wars have largely been fought at a national level, involving rival politicians and their favourite historians, we probably need a more decentred debate that will draw on rich local histories as well as the contested larger narratives. This is to move beyond the apparent certainties of legitimizing identities and the unproductive, parochial assumptions of resentment identities to identities that are have more in common with Castells' notion of transformative project identities. To succeed in such a large endeavour we will need a good amount of Nussbaum's 'narrative imagination' and that is where the arts come to the fore.

Exploring Identities

For the participants in the photonarrative research, notions of identity and belonging seemed to pose few questions or concerns. Identity, in particular, seemed to be reasonably easy to articulate. The interviewees had a reasonably strong reflexive sense of identity. Often these were linked to neighbourhood and place. This was particularly so in inner-city St Kilda and outer-suburban Broadmeadows. A respondent from St Kilda, for example, made a quite explicit link between cultural identity and place, noting that 'Other places on the other side of the world in the northern hemisphere, are defined by their cultural identity. In places in Paris or Italy or Greece, they are defined by [cultural] identity. Even down to the microcosm, the neighbourhood, it's most definitely defined'. In this person's view, St Kilda was similar in this regard to the extent that 'cultural stuff has been going on for quite some time now'. Expanding on the notion of 'cultural identity', he explained further:

> It's a protection from the harder parts of St Kilda. I know that East St Kilda is divided by Brighton Road. It's like a huge river. You put your life at risk crossing it. And then you are suddenly into this belt of whatever St Kilda is. Whatever that mixture is—rich and poor, and diverse, and a whole lot of stuff. But equally, you go to Fitzroy, and they are totally different people there.

The theme of diversity and cultural identity was evident in other respondents from St Kilda. This came up in the words of one interviewer from the inner-city setting of Port Phillip who made mention of other communities in articulating her own identity. In talking about her own community, she distinguished it from planned housing estates on the outskirts of Melbourne built *en masse* by large building companies and frequently advertised on television. As she explained: 'Their lives are different. See, we are a bit spoilt and a bit fussy. They are just happy

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16   Wright's essay was titled 'The Upside-Down Hut' and it was published in *Australian Letters*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1961, pp. 30–4

for a safe home'. Such communities were viewed as being homogeneous and standardized in contrast to the diversity and variety of the inner city.

Another respondent from St Kilda also wondered whether the research would work in another community, where there was not as strong or an obvious tradition of arts and cultural activities. This respondent wondered whether

> a community there, their needs are far, far more fundamental than a sort of aesthetic indulgence of … this was a celebration of what already had already been achieved and what existed, I thought it really reinforced what I already thought was here. It fed back into it; it fed back into the loop. Photographing and recognizing what I liked and enjoyed here, because I was here I wanted to show it off and round and round we went. That's why I wonder if you take off down to Dandenong or Narre Warren…

In both of these responses, there was a fair degree of reflexivity about their own communities, insofar as they understood that Port Phillip was a place with a rich tradition of community arts and cultural activities, and that this was a central element of who they were. This identity, was however, partly developed in relation to a set of others who were perceived, rightly or wrongly, as less privileged than themselves. There was sense of here of the self-deprecating— descriptions of themselves as 'fussy' and needing to engage in 'aesthetic indulgence'. This occurred along with an acknowledgement that arts and cultural activities are not everyone's cup of tea, or that they may be a diversion when the life of the community is seen as more precarious and the needs more pressing.

A similar reflexivity around questions of identity was evident in the remarks of another interviewee from Port Phillip, who noted the focus on image and location of the place in which he lived. This interviewee lived in one of the large apartment blocks along St Kilda Road. As noted previously in the section on place and belonging, the same respondent had few deep connections to his community; he registered how long he had been neighbours with people by whether he knew their car in the car park. One of his images showed a cup from a fast food outlet in front of the apartment complex. He was struck by the contradiction of living in an address with a prestige while continuing to eat at fast food outlets because grocery shopping had become a chore:

> living in the fancy buildings with the lights in the ground, and the big '450' stands out as 'this is my address'. You can't get make it any bigger than that, can you. You can't miss the big '450'. So it's living in a fancy building, but you are still getting back to your $5.95 meal with a Sub and your Coke … It's a nice residential address, yet it's still got a little bit of every-day fast food.

Juxtaposing the prestigious address and the fast-food packaging, this respondent noted the way in which locale and identity are fused; that one's choice of residence said something about who you are and what you do. It also suggested a degree of fakery around living in the building; of appearing to live the high life in a luxurious apartment complex with a central address, while eating at fast-food chains. In one sense, it was a comment about the showiness of one's address and the ordinariness of everyday life; the fact that one's address didn't really determine who you are. Extending this further, it suggests (and does no more than suggest) that the attempt to transcend the ordinariness of life through luxury living is always something of illusion; that no matter how ostentatious the building—'the fancy buildings with the lights in the ground, and the big '450' stands out as 'this is my address''—one's life is remains embedded within the ordinariness of life.

The connection between status and identity came out particularly strongly in interviews with younger participants. A girl from St Kilda, for example, noted that

> I think that people who come from St Kilda are really proud, because it's such a groovy place. When I tell people I come from St Kilda, they say, 'Oh, that is so

cool. Like the St Kilda Festival. Oh man, it's better than even living in the city'. Yeah, it's great. So then people become really cocky, and say 'I'm from St Kilda '.

In her peer group, then, living in St Kilda was a means of carried status, such that it could be used in leverage against others. To use Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural capital', living in St Kilda was a point of distinction within her peer group; a means establishing and asserting her identity and status within a peer-group hierarchy.

Another younger participant, this time from Broadmeadows enthusiastically identified with the place where she lived. In her own words, she said, 'I like Broady. I'm a Broady girl—'I'm a Broady girl, in a Broady world'', she said laughing. Embracing her identity in this way was all the more remarkable since she had only been in Australia for two years having emigrated from Lebanon. However, identity as a 'Broady girl' had not come at the expense of her Lebanese identity; she maintained extensive familial and friendship connections in Lebanon and felt that these were equally part of the communities to which she belonged. The strength of this identity was echoed in the other interviewee from Broadmeadows, who also identified herself as a 'Broady girl':

> even though we are fully aware that the outside ideas, is that the area are not always positive, 'Broady Girl' or 'Broady Boy' means something to everybody who lives in this state, whether you say it with pride or not, it's really the other person's problem how they take it … I'm a hundred per cent proud of being from Broady—and I'm Turkish to top it off, and us having the highest Turkish population in the country, so it feels totally at home here … we have so many different cultures, and I think that we really, really do that well.

Many of the photos that this interviewee had taken were around the International Womens' Day celebrations in the City of Hume. This was another important aspect of her identity and one that had touched her quite deeply. The experience of going along to the celebration, she said, had made her quite emotional because of the supportive atmosphere. This was one example of the way in which a global event had come to shape one's identity. A celebratory event, global in its scope, had come to be a major element in the life of this interviewee's experience of community, a means of connecting with other people and other experiences around the globe. This was perhaps particularly important to this interviewee, because she was a mother with young children.

This was not an isolated example. Gender identity was a strong theme throughout the interviews with women. This is perhaps a good example of the power of what Castells refers to as project identities; the awareness and articulation of forms of feminist identity—even if the term 'feminism' was not used. Indeed, in some cases there was a celebration of stereotypical notions of femininity. Asked whether she viewed shopping as a social occasion as opposed to a chore, for example, an interviewee from Hamilton exclaimed 'What female would admit that it isn't [a social occasion]?' This was a point of celebration, something that women did and enjoyed.

Another comment, this time from an interviewee in St Kilda, illustrates how gender affected one's sense of belonging in community. Asked how hard it would be to leave her community, the interviewee said 'It would be terrible'. She mentioned the mobility that she had enjoyed when she was younger and could have again given that her children had grown up, but she noted: 'I also feel safe in the community, because I live next door to the police station. We have security. And I live on the sixth floor. So as a female living by herself, it's good to know that you feel safe. It's good to know that someone can't climb in the window.'

While in many respects not remarkable, the sense of physical location and its impact on one's personal safety did not emerge in any of the male interviewees. Other women who took part in the project spoke about their roles as mothers and how this, through their children, had given them a sense of belonging to community. As an interviewee from St Kilda responded when asked whether she felt like she was a member of a community or not, 'Yes, I do … as

a mother and as a resident. I'm a single mum, and I run a boys club as well. All the single mums network very well.' Similarly, a respondent from Daylesford spoke about the role of creative activities in the development of gender identity. She had a nine-year old son who she was concerned that he did not have a male role model. She spoke about connecting him into activities with other children to afford him the opportunity to develop a sense of gender identity. She saw team sports as important to the development of his identity as a male, but equally saw a great role for creative work in helping him to develop a sense of identity. Contrasting the arts with sports and physical activity, this participant said 'there is so much possibility, infinite flowing options'.

Ways of Working with Place Identities

The four local communities in which this research has been conducted have very different experiences in relation to the way that the local history is used internally and in the external projection of place identities.

St Kilda is an iconic Melbourne locale, often linked with fun and recreation. Strong post-World War II immigration created a more multicultural community with a cosmopolitan sense of itself and the cosmopolitan ambience has been used to attract visitors in recent decades. At the same time, stately old guest-houses became rooming houses for people with 'special needs' and a visitor-driven sex industry continued to thrive. While many locals speak with pride of the area's unique identity, many local businesses try to preserve an image of place that has been successful in attracting visitors and gentrification is creating pressure to rid the area of 'dangerous' people and practices. While many buildings in the area reflect past dreams of seaside grandeur they have been crowded by other dreams carried by other arrivals. An old 'corroboree tree', adjacent to a busy road, clings rather precariously to its ancient past and a Holocaust Museum reminds visitors that St Kilda is the 'spiritual home' of Melbourne Jewish community. Yet stories from the past are almost too numerous and diverse to absorb.

By contrast, Broadmeadows is widely seen as a place with little or no local history that predates the establishment of broad-acre housing estates in the 1950s and 1960s. A shared sense of identity is most commonly linked to 'survival stories' of low-income families that came to live in the newly-established estates, creating a much-vaunted 'Broady spirit' said to thrive in adversity. As mentioned in earlier chapters, waves of international migration, starting with the arrival of Vietnamese 'boat people' in the late 1970s, have made Broadmeadows one of the most ethnically diverse communities in Victoria and recent attempts to create a sense of community have concentrated on ways of building respect for cultural diversity while, at the same time, emphasizing what it means to live in same locale.

As discussed in earlier chapters, the Hamilton region has recently experienced a generalized economic downturn, leading to economic 'restructure'. Earlier attempts to open up land for smallholder farms—starting in the middle of the nineteenth century and going through to the 'soldier settlement' farms that followed World War I—mostly ended in failure and the growing dominance of 'wealthy graziers' led to sustained political conservatism. A long period of open conflict between the early European settlers and the local Gunditj Mara people is hard to ignore and the Gunditj Mara have reasserted their presence in the contemporary regional community. Once a key regional centre for a wide area of western Victoria, Hamilton as a town has lost ground, and the complacency and conservatism that grew out of the long boom are being questioned. Both Hamilton as a centre and the region in which it is located face significant challenges in building a resilient local economy and this underpins concerns about the region's sense of its own identity.

In all four of the communities included in this study, the story of conflict between the indigenous people and early European settlers is largely seen as being too remote to be of contemporary relevance although this perception has come under sustained challenge by the Gunditj Mara in the Hamilton region. Questions arise about the selective use of stories from the past to promote tourism, especially in Daylesford, while local authorities in Broadmeadows

are attempting to demonstrate that the area's rich local history is a vastly underused asset. Any community that knows little of its local history will have a shallow sense of belonging locally but local history centres, run by history 'buffs', have rarely had the capacity to generate rich and interesting narratives. Martha Nussbaum's call for greater 'narrative imagination' to extend people's sense of responsibility for others beyond friends and kin can, as Inga Clendinnen suggests, extend to the way in which local historical narratives are used (or neglected).

As Tom Griffiths argued, the 'public history' used to promote tourism can become static and uninteresting to local residents and there is certainly a danger of this in the way that local business interests want to safeguard a commercially successful images for both St Kilda and Daylesford. In all local communities there is, of course, an endless store of local stories that could be used to refresh a tired image or broaden an image that is not very inclusive of that community's diversity and the unused stories might focus on the contribution of women and others not often seen as the shapers of an area's history and identity. The case studies and stories selected for this study will look at ways in which local stories are used and they will also examine the impacts of increasing mobility and the fragmentation of formerly unified local identities.

With national debates about history and identity being polarized by the unresolved 'history wars' it is interesting to consider how local stories might be used—across the four Victorian communities -- to create a common sense of identity without trying to dissolve difference and diversity.

St Kilda

As discussed in earlier chapters, the big and ambitious *Memories, Margins and Markers* project, sponsored by Port Phillip City Council, sought to highlight some unknown local stories in order to celebrate the area's colourful past and social diversity. There is the story of 'Tommy' who regularly left his 'street clothes' on the seawall at Middle Park to swim to work in the Melbourne docks. Shiels points to the interest generated by Tommy's story to say that a knowledge of neglected stories can help contemporary local residents feel a deeper sense of belonging. Shiels argued that St Kilda as a community benefits from the overt presence—in public spaces—of local characters and groups of people who might otherwise be hidden from view and the *Memories, Margins and Markers* project aimed to convince the local community that efforts should be made to preserve the area's social diversity against the impacts of gentrification.

In a similar vein, the Sex and Drugs Historical Tours, initiated by Robyn Szechman, were initially aimed at helping local residents to feel less threatened by people involved in sex work and drug-taking in the area. Using street theatre in a series of appropriate locations to place the sex industry of the area in its historical context, dating back more than 100 years, the tours gave residents a rare glimpse of the area's past and, at the same time, they showed that concerns about the dangers posed by the presence of the sex workers have been ever-present in the community. While the theatrical performances have avoided any romanticization of an industry based on overt exploitation they also try to humanize the experiences of those who are enmeshed in it, either by choice or dint of difficult circumstances. As one of the actors put it, theatre can give people a 'look at living history rather than books or publications that sit on the shelf of the local library'. After participating in the tour one resident, Meg Selman, said that she now feels more comfortable walking around the neighbourhood and that she now has a 'richer understanding of what I see, moving along those streets'.

St Kilda is certainly a place where there is evidence of the many 'true stories' that Inga Clendinnen spoke of in her Boyer Lectures (1999). However, some are privileged over others. A community arts activist who moved to the area from Fitzroy, Anna Macarthur, talked of the many cultural 'gatekeepers' in the area, persons who are rather suspicious of newcomers with new ideas for creative projects. In particular, she said that the local cafes and other traders

want the area to have a 'creative vibe' but they want to control it. Macarthur felt there was less 'vibrant diversity' in St Kilda than she experienced in Fitzroy and she suggested that some long-term residents live in the memory of a 'golden era'. Perhaps the 'old world'—the European— ambience that helps to attract visitors to Acland street has been preserved in a form that does not encourage cultural renewal. The recent demise of the St Kilda Festival probably demonstrates the tension between projecting creativity and allowing it to project itself in possibly unexpected ways.

Broadmeadows

As mentioned in previous chapters the Weaving Lands project, sponsored by Hume City Council, was one attempt to reclaim stories for the area's past that could give residents a deeper sense of belonging. Although an 'outside' artist, Wendy Golden, was employed to bring the work of the various weavers into a single artistic concept—and she came up with the idea of creating a woven tree—it was the respected local Aboriginal elder Norm Hunter who was invited by project co-ordinator Anne Kershaw to then name the tree. Hunter chose the name Galgignarrack Yirranboi Tree, which translates as 'backbone of our country' and the emphasis on 'our country' confirmed the message that Broadmeadows was not an 'empty space' before the construction of the housing estates in the 1950s and 1960s. The Aboriginal population in the Broadmeadows area includes both descendents of the local clan of the Wurundjeri people and others who have moved into the area for allocated housing or because of the special 'koori education' school at Glenroy. Until recently the local story of the Wurundjeri Kurnung-Willumballuk clan was known only to a few and was marked only by graves at two different sites. However, Hume City Council has tried to rectify this neglect with the formation of an Aboriginal advisory committee, and the Batman-Kangan TAFE College has established a beautiful Koori education centre at its Broadmeadows campus and a Koori education program. The Weaving Lands project was an interesting and successful attempt to reconcile the story of the Wurundjeri Kurnung-Willumballuk people with those of the many migrants that now call the area home.

The Multicultural Planting Festival also celebrates the story of the area's neglected natural beauty and it aims to contribute to a broader project to restore that natural beauty and biodiversity. As mentioned in an earlier chapter it helps to give migrants, who get their hands into the soil during the planting part of the day, to feel a stronger sense of connection to the place in which they now reside. However, the festival focuses more on creating dialogue between existing local communities than on examining stories from the past.

Hume City Council brings together two very disparate 'centres' in Broadmeadows and Sunbury. The latter has long had a strong interest in its post-settlement history and it has an active historical society. By contrast, the Broadmeadows historical society includes a small number of dedicated individuals and the recently constructed museum is rarely open. The museum reflects an interest in the area's old mansions, some colourful characters from post-settlement times and developments in the area since World War II. When Hume City Council sponsored a project to collect the stories of some 'Heroes of Hume' from both the recent and more distant past they had many more nominations from the Sunbury area than from Broadmeadows and so they decided to keep the project alive to continue collecting more such stories to be preserved in archives and circulated in a range of ways. Apart from the Koori studies centre at the TAFE college, there is little in the built environment of the booming Broadmeadows CBD that reflects stories from the past. When it was put to one of the planners at Hume City Council that the new shopping centre has nothing to distinguish itself from shopping centres all over Australia he said that the developers were asked to include some 'references' to the old shopping area and that they had included a display of historical photos. However, the references to the earlier shopping centre are too oblique to be noticed and the historical photos are displayed along a narrow corridor leading to the public toilets.

Community arts projects sponsored by Hume City Council and other community-based

organisations in the Broadmeadows area reflect an emphasis on building tolerance and respect between ethnically diverse local communities. Perhaps this maintains an emphasis on where people have come from rather than the multitude of 'true stories' that have emerged within the area during different waves of settlement. And as Inga Clendinnen has said, it is important to go beyond feel-good stories that confirm a dominant story of settlement to embrace some painful stories from the past that have created simmering resentments that we also need to confront. Much more needs to be done to circulate a wide range of true stories from the area's past and the Weaving Lands project demonstrated that works of art can help bring such stories to the attention of a wide audience. The fact that the Galgignarrack Yirranboi Tree was put on display at Melbourne Immigration Museum suggests that the neglected stories of Broadmeadows will be of interest to an audience outside the area. At the same time, the contemporary community in the Broadmeadows area is also forging new stories that deserve to be circulated more widely. One of these is the fact that the large and diverse Muslim community has developed what organizers claim is an internationally unique way to celebrate Eid at the end of the month of Ramadan (as discussed in earlier chapters).

Daylesford

As discussed in earlier chapters, the Hepburn Springs/Daylesford community has been very successful in reviving the neglected story of the Swiss-Italian migrants who settled in the area in the 1860s and this has not only given the area a unique identity in an Australian context, it has also led to some meaningful links back to the areas from which those migrants came. It has given the many people with Italian surnames, passed down through several generations, greater pride in their family backgrounds and it has created greater appreciation for the Italianate buildings that those settlers constructed in their 'new world'. As demonstrated by the project that had Daylesford Secondary College students making authentic 'bullboar' sausages according to recipes handed down from the Swiss-Italian migrants, the 'discovery' of this heritage has made local history seem more relevant to the broader community. The annual Swiss-Italian Festa has become a major highlight on the area's rich cultural calendar and the creative use of the Swiss-Italian story must surely rank among the best uses of stories from local history in Australia.

However, other efforts to make use of 'true stories' from the past have been less successful. The evidence of landscape-shaping gold-mining has largely been hidden from view and although an old mine entrance has been preserved in a park on Cornish Hill, a nearby sign that told the story of the Cornish tin-miners who came to make their fortunes on the Victorian goldfields was not replaced after it was destroyed by vandals. And although local historians have tried to piece together the story of the Dja Dja Wurrung people, there is little to acknowledge their present in the landscape, even at Franklinford where there was a noted, but failed, attempt to introduce Aboriginal families to European farming techniques. There is only an oblique reference, in the planting of some unmarked trees, to the Chinese market gardens that once thrived where Lake Daylesford now stands.

The local history museum is in a prominent position (beside Daylesford's visitor information centre) and it boasts a good collection but it does not attract a large number of visitors and some local people with an interest in local history say that it is too tightly controlled by a small number of people with their own ideas about what should be highlighted. As discussed in earlier chapters, the area has gone through major economic 'restructuring' that has seen the demise of traditional rural industries—including forestry—yet there is little to suggest that those stories will be kept alive in any public way. The emphasis has shifted to the 'new economy' resting heavily on tourism and its need for an attractive image of the area that can be widely marketed.

In her community theatre work, Rebecca Lister picked out 'true stories'—sometimes fictionalized—that seemed to reflect some of the dilemmas for a community going through periods of profound change. She selected stories that reflected painful experiences for people

in the community—the isolation of single mothers, the anguish felt by parents when their children leave town, the tensions felt between old and new residents—but a number of people told the researchers that it was a relief for many that such true stories could be made more visible in a form that was non-confrontational. Perhaps Lister's most ambitious attempt to work with historical stories was for the play *Through the Mist* that focused on Trentham's rather 'colourful' woman GP Dr Gwynneth Wisewlold, but soon after completing that project she left town and it remains to be seen if others will pick up where she left off with this kind of work.

Hamilton Region

Dunkeld's 150th anniversary in 2004 was an ambitious attempt to celebrate the area's complex history, moving beyond the obvious legacy of early settlers. Talks on different aspects of the local history were scheduled throughout the day and former residents and people with family links back to the district were encouraged to come along and swap their personal stories. A neglected old cemetery was rehabilitated for the occasion and information on some of the people buried there was compiled to better inform visitors. An accomplished photographer with a known interest in neglected local stories of Victoria's western district, Richard Crawly, was commissioned to complete a photographic account of the contemporary community. Crawly spent a full year in the community to complete his assignment and his final product was very well received by the community.

In presenting the history of the town, Warne said it was important to demonstrate that life was really tough for many of the settlers, living in bark huts in cold weather. At the same time, he said he would like to see more emphasis on the beauty of the landscape—the huge and ancient red gums, the rocks—and he hoped that the success of the celebration could lead to further community art projects to established landscape walks with appropriate installations. Even without 'man-made art', he said, people could learn to see nature as art and just enjoy the quality of what exists 'around this town here'. Some of the outside visitors who attended the anniversary celebration reminded locals of the great beauty that they often take for granted.

The committee planning Dunkeld's anniversary celebration carried out research on the pre-settlement history of the area and contacted some of the Aboriginal people in nearby towns. They concluded that clans from different tribal groupings had overlapped in the area of Dunkeld and it was hard to get a clear picture. In the end, they did not even 'disclose' much of what came out of this research at the anniversary celebrations because they had been warned that it could be detrimental to tell stories that may not be true. However, the local historical museum has been able to increase its collection of Aboriginal artefacts found in the area and it intends to continue building that collection and find out more about the story of the local clans.

Alan MacGregor's effort discussed earlier to make the story of the Gunditj Mara people more visible to a wider range of residents in the Hamilton region is worth revisiting in the context of questions of identity. He supported the development of by the local indigenous community of a huge mural that consisted of several giant panels illustrating the key events and activities of the Gunditj Mara people. The mural was mounted in the garden of the Hamilton Education Centre until that centre closed to become a restaurant but it has been in storage ever since. The festival that spawned this activity was discontinued when MacGregor left the region in 1998.

In making a successful claim for national heritage status for the Lake Condah area, with its ancient eel farming infrastructure and the abandoned mission, the Gunditj Mara people—through their Winda Mara Co-operative—have brought their stories to the attention of many more local residents and beyond that to a national and international audience. There is clearly a lot of potential in bringing in visitors to see how Gunditj Mara people 'farmed' the migrating eels coming into the Lake Condah wetlands over many thousands of years, but the Co-operative is proceeding cautiously to make sure that they retain control over the way the

story is communicated.

The small town of Tarrington—called Hochkirk by its German founders—has recently revived the old German tradition of a laternfest to celebrate St Martin's Day in November and this has become a regional attraction. The name of the town was changed from Hochkirk to Tarrington, by external authorities, when anti-German sentiment was high in Australia as a result of World War I but now it is 'safe' to celebrate a German heritage, just as it is safe to celebrate the Italian heritage in the Daylesford area so long after World War II. The small town of Macarthur in the Hamilton region has also turned to history to challenge negative perceptions of a more recent origin by organizing its Red Letter Day to bury the tag it was given in 1984 of being Victoria's 'most boring' town. A ceremony to bury offensive newspaper stories about the town in a purpose-built coffin accompanied the launch of a book of oral history highlighting the stories of some of the area's more colourful residents from the past; a case of true stories being used to counter the bad legacy of an insensitive joke.

As well as Dunkeld, Tarrington and Macarthur other small towns in the Hamilton region—such as Coleraine, Casterton, Balmoral and Penshurst—have diverse and interesting local histories. For example, an article about Coleraine's horse-racing track and a local horse that beat the raging favourites Bonecrusher and Vo Rogue to win at Flemington featured in the *Good Weekend* in October 1999. However, with the demise of the regional Southern Grampians Festival (which had, in turn, grown out of the Hamilton Festivals established by Alan MacGregor in 1990), there are fewer opportunities to explore such stories through performances and works of art. The exception to this is Balmoral, where the Chameleon Arts Collective organized a successful Feast of the Five Senses Festival in 2005 which included the performance of a new one-man play about the life and work of Adam Lindsay Gordon who had an association with the town.

A story from the region that ought to be better known locally is the story of the Aboriginal cricket team that toured England in 1867–68. Although most of the cricketers came from the Wimmera District to the north of the Hamilton region, they played an early match in Hamilton in 1866 and gathered in the town at the start of a long journey to Warrnambool and Geelong (taking eight days) before boarding the boat for England. This is a story that seems to beg for artistic interpretation as a play or even an opera. But it continues to be neglected just as the cricketers were after they returned to the district on their return from England in 1868.

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Participation, Engagement and Agency

Art has been seen as a valuable tool for social policy since the establishment of the Australia Council for the Arts in 1975.[17] The Australia Council was established with the twin aims of supporting excellence in artistic production in Australia and ensuring that all Australians would have opportunities to engage with the arts in order to enjoy a rich cultural life. Over the following thirty years the council has directed most of its effort towards supporting professional artists and arts organizations but, according to Deborah Mills, debate has raged inside and outside the council about what is really involved in nurturing greater public engagement with the arts. On one hand, many people involved with the arts have argued that the 'high arts' have a 'civilizing influence' that can increase a sense of citizenship and nationhood and they interpret 'engagement' as the opportunity to be exposed to elite art practices. Others have argued, however, that the role of the council should be to encourage Australians to engage *critically* with their cultural heritage and to *participate* in forms of art production that can encourage deeper reflection on the nature of Australian life. The former see 'engagement' as 'audience development', while the latter put their efforts into the development of the community-arts sector. The more passive form of engagement favoured by those who emphasize access to elite arts practices can be seen as a form of social policy pitched at rather abstract, national, social goals, while those who favour a more active form of engagement are more often concerned with questions of social justice or social equity at a more local level.

The debate over what is meant by engagement with the arts has created the semblance of a sharp division between those involved with elite arts and those involved with community arts, with the latter being widely seen as inferior in its quality of arts practice. Yet many practicing artists in Australia enjoy opportunities to move between their own professional practice and a range of community projects and there is a growing perception that community arts can often tackle important social issues in ways that professional artists cannot.[18]

In 1994, the Keating Labor government made what has probably been the most ambitious attempt in Australian history to introduce a national 'cultural policy' that would go beyond support for the arts.[19] The policy document, titled *Creative Nation*, suggested a need for an increased national investment in cultural projects that might help Australians to explore the 'ideas, values, sentiments and traditions' that we share as a nation. It predicted that new communications technologies would enable more people to engage in creative practices and it suggested that a new investment in the 'cultural industry' would create incentives for applied creativity that would also invigorate sectors of the economy. Like so many of the Keating

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17   According to Deborah Mills in 'Valuing Culture: Value of Community Cultural Development to a National Cultural Policy'. In *Making Meaning, Making Money*, edited by Lisa Andersen, Cambridge Scholars Press, Cambridge UK 2007 (in press).

18   As reported by the convenor of The Australia Council's Scoping study Reference Group on Cultural Development in Communities, in a consultation with community arts practitioners held in Melbourne in March 2005.

19   Discussion of the Keating government's Creative Nation policy is based on the account provided by David Thorsby in 'Does Australia Need a Cultural Policy?' *Platform Papers* Number 7, January 2006, Currency House, Melbourne.

government's initiatives, *Creative Nation* was abandoned by the incoming Howard government in 1996. The writer John Birmingham has expressed the view, no doubt shared by many other practicing artists, that it is better to keep governments in general and the Howard government in particular out of the field of cultural policy.[20] However, the respected arts commentator David Throsby has argued that the Howard government has a *de facto* cultural policy—based on the conservative values shared by the prime minister and his closest allies—and that this manifests itself in our foreign policy, arts policies and policies related to the governance of the Australian Broadcasting Commission (Throsby 2006). It would be far better, he argues, to have an open debate about the ways in which support for cultural practices can help us explore the values that will promote social harmony in a period of risk and uncertainty. Yet, even in his argument for a broadly defined cultural policy, Throsby does not discuss the merits of the community arts field and its emphasis on collective participation in cultural practices that can foster dialogue about the nature of contemporary Australian life.

According to the community arts practitioner Anne Dunn, the Australia Council was subjected to an unprecedented howl of protest when it announced the abolition of its Community Cultural Development Board in 2004.[21] It quickly moved to set up a scoping study for a new Community Partnerships program with Dunn appointed as the convenor of the scoping study reference group. Dunn has said that she was surprised and delighted by the quality of submissions made to her as she travelled the country for the scoping study and the arts consultant Deborah Mills, who conducted her own independent research for the study, began her report by saying that 'My research reveals a diverse, articulate, critically aware, passionate and entrepreneurial field'. (Mills 2006)

More research is needed on the precise reasons for the growth and development of the community arts field over the last twenty years or so, but as Mills has pointed out the field includes a diversity of practices ranging from an 'instrumental' use of the arts to achieve some tightly defined social outcomes to projects aimed at supporting cultural diversity by giving diverse groups of people the opportunity to express themselves. Mills cites examples of community art projects that have been intended to achieve very particular outcomes, such as reduction in graffiti or prevention of substance abuse, and she argues that the use of art as an instrument of government policy is a violation of key principles of engagement. The arts can have a 'transformative' effect on the people involved, Mills argues, and this can be used for policy development provided the emphasis is on the negotiation of 'shared understandings' (Mills 2007). As mentioned in an earlier chapter, John Hawkes—the Melbourne-based community arts practitioner who popularized the notion that the cultural vitality of local communities can be seen as the 'fourth pillar' of their sustainability—shares the concern expressed by Mills about the instrumental use of the arts. He has argued that 'authentic' community arts practices should emphasize participation, collective meaning-making, and a commitment to the fact that authentic art gives people and groups the chance to express things that are important to them, no matter how bleak the outcomes might seem to others (Hawkes 2004). While this warning about the potential misuse of the arts for predetermined outcomes is probably timely, it may also undermine the potential use of the arts by local authorities, including government agencies, in finding creative ways to communicate with their constituents about matters of legitimate social concern. Hawkes' concern about respecting the agency of those who are often ignored is valid but it needs to be matched by an acknowledgement of the agency of those charged with the implementation of agreed social policy. There is probably an important balance to be struck between acknowledging the arts as a form of dissent—sometimes challenging policies and practices that are not fair in their impacts—and acknowledging the arts as a mode of communication that can foster dialogue

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20   John Birmingham expressed these views when he participated in a forum on the topic at a seminar organized by Regional Arts NSW and held in Byron Bay on the eve of the Byron Bay Writers Festival in August 2005.

21   As reported in a consultation with community arts practitioners held in Melbourne in March 2006.

and negotiation between different sectors of a community.

As mentioned in an earlier chapter the Blair government in the UK introduced the term 'social inclusion' to replace the term 'social equity' because it argued that the new term put the emphasis on giving people agency to change the conditions in which they are living. In her commentary on the UK experience, Ruth Lister has said that the new policy was sometimes used to blame the victims of structural social injustice for their own plight but she said it has also been helpful to focus on the multiple, sometimes subtle, causes of 'exclusion' rather than talk in broad and abstract ways about 'poverty' or 'disadvantage' (Lister 2000). As well as a tendency to 'blame the victims', Lister said a danger in the new approach was also to focus too narrowly on getting people into paid employment—perhaps to join the 'working poor' -- when the causes of exclusion can be more wide ranging than the lack of a steady income. The causes of exclusion 'need to be addressed at both the material and the symbolic level across a range of dimensions of inequality' (Lister 2000). Only when the various barriers to inclusion are properly understood—by the excluded people as well as those trying to help them—can the possibilities for agency be explored. Furthermore, individuals can be overwhelmed by the task of overcome multiple barriers to exclusion (sometimes referred to as 'compound disadvantage') and community arts project can offer opportunities for collective exploration of both the barriers and the possibilities for increased agency.

The philosopher Jess Malpas has argued that reflections on the 'complex unity of places' can enhance agency because 'The unity and identity of places is only worked out in relation to the human subject as actively involved with its objective surroundings and within an intersubjective context' (Malpas 1999, p. 185). This is similar to the argument made by Doreen Massey—as reviewed in the last chapter—which suggested that an emphasis on the sharing of common space makes us confront 'coexisting multiplicity' and the everlasting potential for new local narratives based on the negotiation of difference and shared identities. In a similar vein, Kevin McDonald has adopted a version of Alain Touraine's 'sociology of action' in looking at the ways in which young people living in a 'disadvantaged' community in Melbourne's western suburbs see their own future (McDonald 1999). He found that the young people concerned have learnt to think of insecurity and change as a 'given' but they can achieve a degree of agency by developing a sense of selfhood and identity that is premised on insecurity.

In interviewing a wide range of people involved with community arts projects across the four Victorian communities in which this study has been conducted it has become apparent that community development practices and community arts practices commonly overlap and nurture each other. At its best, this overlap can ensure that community arts practices are more socially relevant and more socially influential. However, it also needs to be remembered that community arts are a large and vibrant sector of the wider 'arts industry' in Australia and the divide between community arts and professional arts has been exaggerated to harmful effect. The time has come to better acknowledge the creative achievements of those involved in so many community arts activities because, as Mills found in here study for the Australia Council Scoping study on community partnerships:

> The people who work in this sector are often pioneering arts and cultural activities with institutions who may be skeptical of the relevance of these processes to their organizations or unsympathetic to the importance of the arts and culture more generally in civil life. The day-to-day reality of working in this way is challenging and people who work in this sector are frustrated by the lack of recognition and support ... (Mills 2006, p. 10)

Participation, Agency and Social Health

UK epidemiologist Michael Marmot argues that status is the key to health. Marmot's argument is that beyond a certain level of wealth and material wellbeing, health and wellbeing show little sign of improvement. While he does not discount the importance of wealth to health and wellbeing, his argument is that its effects are limited. Material wellbeing is, in other words, not the whole story as far as health and wellbeing are concerned. Simply amassing more and more 'stuff' does not lead to better health; in some cases it can actually lead to the emergence of new forms of disease and sickness as people increasingly succumb to sicknesses related to affluence and the lifestyle changes that accompany it—sedentary lifestyles associated with non-manual labour, labour-saving devices and passive forms of entertainment, combined with cheap, abundant forms of high-calorie foods.

Marmot drew his conclusions from a series of studies he conducted of the English civil service which have come to be known as the 'Whitehall studies'. The rationale behind studying the health and wellbeing of civil service employees is that, although there are certainly differences in wealth between those at the top and those at the bottom, the inequalities are not so great as to adversely affect people's health. As such, income is unlikely to play a significant factor in understanding differences in the health and wellbeing of civil service employees.

Marmot's explanation for the differences that do exist is 'status' which refers to one's standing in a social hierarchy. Since people tend to compare themselves to those closest to them their relative position within a pecking order is a guide to their health and wellbeing. If asked to think about their wealth or job, a civil servant would be most likely to compare their own situation to that of the person in the cubicle next to them or the office on the floor above, as opposed to, say, a Papuan New Guinean tribesman or, at the end of the other end of the cultural and economic spectrum, a multi-billionaire like Bill Gates. Marmot argues that people who have more control over how they spend their days, relative to those around them enjoy the best health and score the best when it comes to longevity—irrespective of their absolute position within the spectrum of wealth and power.

In seeking to explain this, Marmot turns to Putnam's work on social capital. He argues that people who have a higher standing in the social hierarchy are more likely to live in places with higher social capital, whereas

> the chances of living in an area with low social capital is greater the lower you are in the hierarchy. Just as individual social status is related to richness of social networks, so an extra hazard of being low social status is living in an area characterized by low social capital …

> Societies that are characterized by social cohesion, whether rich like Japan, poor like Kerala, or somewhere in between like Costa Rica have better health than others with the same wealth but less social cohesion. (Marmot 2004, 189).

As an explanation, however, this does not do justice to what Marmot's intriguing studies describe. The notion of 'status' only captures part of what the Whitehall studies show, namely one's position in a pecking order. The Whitehall studies are open to another interpretation, one that goes further than Marmot's concern with status conceals, and takes status to be more of an indicator for something else: namely the degree of autonomy that one enjoys. While status and autonomy are certainly related, autonomy seems to be the operative factor when it comes to assessing health and wellbeing. As Marmot makes clear: 'Autonomy—how much control you have your life—and the opportunities you have for full social engagement and participation are crucial for health, well-being and longevity' (Marmot 2004, 3). The problem with the term 'autonomy', however, and one reason why Marmot possibly did not use it in preference to 'status', is that it often has strong connotations with individuality, and thus underplays the emphasis that Marmot gives to the role of social bonds in his interpretation. As such, a possible alternative that captures something of autonomy, but gives greater social context is 'agency'. While a certain degree of autonomy is central to agency, it is necessarily a

social attribute.

In opting for the term 'agency', then, we seek, first, to shift the emphasis of Marmot's interpretation so that the emphasis is less on one's relative position in a hierarchy, but about what that relative position means to social agents; what the consequence of that social position is for social agents' ability to direct and control their lives. This is not disagree with Marmot, but rather to alter the emphasis in his interpretation to foreground what is the key finding of the Whitehall studies. Second, our intention in using the term 'agency' over autonomy is to emphasize the irretrievably social character of such activity. Agents are always bound into social relationships mores and commitments which both enable and constrain action.

However, it can be argued that there is much about contemporary social life which works against agency. Specifically, the focus on rationalizing and centralizing services and resources can undermine people's sense of agency.

Perceptions on Taking Action

A concern with centralization was well illustrated through the research, and was perhaps most marked in discussions with people from rural communities. One interviewee from Hamilton, for example, photographed an open window at in the room where the workshop on the photonarrative research took place. In itself, the photo is wholly unremarkable: an open window in an anonymous teaching room. Its significance, however, lay in the fact that the room's heating was centrally controlled from the university's city campus—a four-hour drive away. While opening a window to let some fresh air in might seem a trivial gesture, it was symbolic of an effort to re-assert control over the most basic aspects of one's environment. For the local people, it was also symptomatic of how little trust the university had in local people: that they were not even to be trusted with the heating of a building.

The photo also pointed to a more general pattern in which people from the Hamilton area felt they had lost control over their communities and their lives to centralized organizations. Another picture taken by the same person illustrated the same process in a more significant way. The photo depicted rows of empty shelves taken at the archive of a local state government institute. The interviewee took the photo—'not with the blessing of the staff I might add'—to illustrate how the local needs of the community and its destiny were being directed from Melbourne. According to the interviewee, the books were to be archived rather than catalogued into some coherent order. While local staff could browse and request books via the internet, they would no longer be able to physically browse the shelves. She regarded this centralization as a threat to the community's capacity to govern itself and direct its future. Moreover, it had the effect of disempowering many of the local staff:

> Local staff have no capacity to make comment. They're too afraid to make comment about it. I've been on the ethics committee for that organization and I'm probably the only person who isn't made vulnerable making comment about it. All that can happen to me is that I'll be sacked from the committee. Any of the staff are frightened of making comment because it may jeopardize their positions and certainly not relating to this particular incidence, another incidence a few years ago, a staff member made comment and they were threatened with really unpleasant outcomes. It's to be noted on your records, and it will influence any further decisions relating to your promotional employment so it's a very threatening thing. It's happening all around the state.

The theme of centralized control was repeated in other interviews. Another interviewee from Hamilton, for example, exclaimed 'people in Melbourne, they have no idea of what happens out here and they don't care'. At the same time, the respondent expressed a great deal of confidence in her ability to create change in her community.

> I can do anything I set my mind to. I go where I have to. Where I need to go, like where ... you need to understand like you can talk to them [local politicians] on

the street, because I know them all here and I just go bowling into their office and speak to them.

Although undoubtedly an exaggeration to say that she could do anything, this person had been able to use her ability to enter a TAFE training course. Moreover, she said that she had to 'play all the system to my advantage'. This is not to suggest that had done anything wrong or illegal, rather that she sought to leverage resources from wherever she could to make the most of the opportunities available to her.

The respondent who took photos of the empty archive shelves, by contrast, was much less optimistic about her capacity to enact change in her community. This was not just a matter of resources or of centralized control, although this was part of the reason. It also had to do with the lack of stability and the high rate of turnover in the town and in employment, which disrupted the communication of local knowledge. In her own words:

> We can certainly influence some things and those things are really worthwhile. But I don't think so … in communities of this size, sometimes it can be really hard to have an ongoing flow of knowledge, of local knowledge amongst people who are employed either by government or big organizations because it's, in some ways it's … a stepping stone place. You have someone who's really keen and enthusiastic, terrific, they'll come here but they know they'll only be here for three years, five years, and they're really wanting to make every vote a winner to put on their CV and that is sometimes, not always, sometimes at the expense of actually looking around and saying, 'Yes, this is what's been done before, these people might be able to help us or may not'. It's not very nice. I think that often people have been involved with things for many years, and perhaps talking about environmental things, you find you're dealing with a new person and they're ambitious and full of enthusiasm, and they want to do everything this way, and it's already been invented once before, and often it's reinventing the wheel. It's not a criticism of anyone or anything; it's just the way things are. So, yeah, I don't think we have the capacity to influence some things but in other areas we certainly do.

The feelings of lack of agency expressed by this interviewee was interesting since compared with the other interviewee, she had more resources in terms of education and 'cultural capital' in the community. It might therefore come as a surprise that she should be pessimistic about the prospects for effecting change in the community. The reason for the difference can be explained by the different objectives that each had in mind. The more optimistic interviewee was concerned with accessing particular services, such as education and training. The less optimistic interviewee, in contrast, was involved in a range of environmental projects which required a stronger collective response, for which there was little infrastructure and little agreement about the best way of proceeding. Her own agency was thus intimately tied to the broader circulation of knowledge and webs of communication within the town. Such resources were less tangible than more established services, such as those for education and training, where the aims and means were reasonably clear about how to proceed.

These views were echoed among other interviewees who lived in regional and rural centres. Asked whether he felt he was able to effect change in his community, for example, an interviewee from Daylesford replied:

> No. Those sort of things are decided by bureaucrats. A large number of our community did stand up [over local water management issues], but they weren't listened to. They say now 'What's the use of even trying?' And that is kind of how it feels with the water issue.

At the same time, this same interviewee plays an active in his community and had done much to encourage others to 'stand up'. Art had been central to his ability to his practice. Specifically, he had been dealing with depression after a road accident and had been active in

attending and running a local men's group called the 'Men's Shed' said that his involvement with the shed 'gets me out of bed'. '

> If it wasn't for the men's shed, I don't think I would be here today. It gives me the will to get out of bed. It involves my kids and my whole family. The men are now a part of my family, knocking on the door.

This interviewee had become active in the lives of the other men who came to the shed and played an organizing and co-ordination role. Recovering from a serious road accident, attending the shed had become a large part of this man's process of adjusting to his new life, one in which he was an active participant rather than a spectator of his own life.

In making these comments about art and agency, we should not be taken to be romanticizing engagement in community or of overstating its ability solve problems. The arts are by no means a substitute or a magic bullet to solve problems of centralization, and problems created by the withdrawal or reduction of services to rural and regional communities—indeed, they may divert energies and attention that would be better used to counteracting the removal of such services and the maintenance of infrastructure. As this same interviewee who had been active in the men's shed noted, there are contradictions inherent in setting up community cultural events while the community physically falls apart.

> Our shire is Daylesford, but I find our community isn't ringing the bells enough. We have a lot of cycle races and stuff like that, but you only have to drive around to see that a lot of the corners are full with gravel. The council workers are just patching, not repairing the roads. I haven't seen any road construction since I've been here. They just put a few shovels of gravel over a hole and a bit of wet mix on top of it. And yet they expect our community to grow and flourish.

Another interviewee from Daylesford reinforced the same point, arguing that if he could change anything about his community it would be to keep building the services of the town.

The arts and cultural events do have a role to play in building community, though. If these interviewees tell us anything, it is that the cultural and tangible infrastructure of community are intimately related. A community with a more vibrant and lively cultural life is more likely to produce the kinds of people and the opportunities where change is possible. Where such life is undeveloped, the infrastructure of a place is likely to suffer. The interviewee who had been involved in the car accident and had subsequently become active in the men's shed, for example, had himself become active through the arts, by doing two paintings and becoming active in the cultural life of his community. Something of the power of art to motivate and enrich people's lives came out in his own practice:

> I've only ever done two paintings, and they were the two hardest paintings of my life. One of them was me dad. He died of cancer. That took me months to paint. When people look at it, they often say 'well, it doesn't really look like him' but it was how I remembered him when we were younger, and it shows the essence of him. He was a big strapping guy, but he was honest, and he had this rough look about him. It was the essence of him. A lot of people don't realize that Creswick has got Bra Art. I consider myself as typical of most people around Creswick, but I do like going out with my wife, and we are very spur of the moment people. Just yesterday we decided to go for a drive in the park around Ballarat. It's just getting back to life, so we'll go for a bit of a walk. Not long ago, there was an exhibition of bras. The Cancer Council had people making these bras. Some women got together and decided to make an art exhibition about bras. They wanted to make it real art, not just a few bits and pieces of paper glued together to make a bra; it had to be involved art. The work was just incredible. I took a couple of photos of some of the bra art, and interviewed the lady. Each piece is a bit of the person's spirit. Something they wanted to say.

The arts, arguably, offer a non-competitive, non-threatening arena in which people can practice and develop skills of agency; a means of developing meanings and narratives that enable people to go on with their lives, in spite of adversity or in the absence of more or less stable points of reference that might guide them. An interviewee from Port Phillip gave some insight into this in talking about a local street kid who had developed an interest in photography and had become good enough to sell some of his photos. The young photographer had raised money to help African children living with HIV. Citing this example, she elaborated:

> I think that sometimes that community arts can give people more help who may need it, and don't have their own resources. It can tap into sides of these people they don't know they have, or which may have been overlooked. They may have been missed, because they've had so much trouble growing up, that they may have overlooked their creative side. A lot of them are very very talented. I think it's a fantastic medium for expression. I think you have to be quite skilful to survive in the street. So they've got the talents, and if it can be expressed creatively, it's a bonus—for us as a viewer, and them as a participant.

For other participants in arts and cultural activities, the benefits were more indirect, but no less important in terms of their ability to take part in community. An interviewee in Port Phillip, for example, told of the sense of safety she had developed through organizing community cultural celebrations.

> I think I do feel safer now. I do, but maybe it's because I've done the door-knocking, and now I know I could fly into any of these houses, and know who is going to be around at anytime, and who's got a car. If anything occurred, I know where to go and who to ask. … But there is such a concoction of people in this street. They are just gorgeous. I love them to bits and pieces. It's such a pleasure to be here now.

For other interviewees, the effects of participating in community arts and cultural activities on one's sense of agency was more indirect, and had more with just being involved in some form of communal activity and the recognition that this conferred. As the interviewee who took the picture of the open window in the room of the university campus in Hamilton put it:

> Sometimes recognition's a really difficult thing. People are striving for that and they're very anxious when they're not getting it. I think just the doing, the doing … the connection with the future and perhaps it's the recognition that they're really thinking. They're doing something, and you do hear people say sometimes 'I'm so lucky because people did before me', and [they have] a sense of obligation.

This sense of practice—of being engaged and having obligations to others and having others obligated to themselves—helps to explain the role of arts and cultural activities in connecting with health and wellbeing. This is particularly the case for people who have experienced adversity or are forced to take a more active role in the constitution of a sense of self that is able to operate within increasingly complex social and cultural environments, where the ways to go on are less and less clear and have been reconstituted and reconfigured by more abstract means.

Using Community Arts to Enhance Participation and Agency

Despite the differences in local contexts and traditions, community arts activities across the four research sites have commonly been designed to address social concerns and/or clear community needs. Many of them have addressed a desire for a stronger sense of identity and belonging in a changing world, at both individual and community levels. Others have been specifically designed to overcome social isolation, potentially made worse by changes such as economic restructuring or gentrification.

By interviewing practitioners and participants in a wide range of projects we sought to gain insights about the circumstances in which the arts can have beneficial social outcomes and

the circumstances in which it may be inappropriate to turn to the arts. We asked experienced practitioners to tell us about their difficulties and frustrations and to tell us about the skills needed to ensure good practice in this area of work. We also asked them how they thought good practice could be better supported. We will discuss what we learnt from interviews with experienced practitioners about the nature of the community art field and ways of supporting good practice in the final chapter of this report. Below we will discuss experiences related to participation and engagement in community arts and celebrations for each of the four research sites and conclude with a brief summary of what the practitioners said in regard to VicHealth's three 'determinants' for mental health and wellbeing.

St Kilda

When Marie Hapke started working in the St Kilda area as a social worker in 1992, the RAG Theatre Troupe had recently been formed by the Recreation Access Group and she was so impressed by how this group helped people with mental illnesses to escape their social isolation that she helped to initiate a range of similar projects, including the Roomers Magazine Outreach Project for people living in rooming houses, the Bipolar Bears musical band for people with bipolar condition, the City of Voices community choir, art classes for people with special needs run by Giz James, and the annual Community Ball for socially isolated people. She also helped SCOPE—formerly known as the Spastic Society—to establish the Rawcus Theatre Company in association with Theatreworks theatre in St Kilda. Several of these programs have won awards, the Roomers group of writers performed at the Melbourne Writers Festival over four consecutive years and the Rawcus Theatre Company performed at the Melbourne International Festival in 2005. Hapke was initially located in the recreation department at St Kilda Council (before amalgamations created the larger Port Phillip City Council in 1996) and the organization subsequently struggled to know how to categorize her work or fit it into its organizational structures. She was moved from recreation into the arts and subsequently into programs related to access and equity and, along the way, a new position was created for an arts officer in council. Following the success of the first public performance by the RAG Theatre Troupe, in Mental Health Week in 1995, expectations rose within council about the quality of performances and artistic output from the groups being funded and Hapke had to insist that the groups needed to work at their own pace to ensure that the art enabled group members to properly reflect on their lived experiences.

Plays developed by the RAG Theatre Troupe tended to have an anti-psychiatry theme because troupe members wanted to communicate the pain they had felt in being hospitalized and put on strong medications. Hapke said that it took 'a very high level of skill and sensitivity' by RAG Director, Steven Smith, to 'shepherd' the process in which troupe members were able to share their emotional pain in such public ways and this created a strong sense of belonging to the group. Even more than art exhibitions, Hapke said, theatre engages the audience at an emotional level and people who see work by groups such as RAG and Rawcus can have an emotional experience of the pain of isolation that goes beyond the messages contained in the script and can rejoice in the resilience of those who have survived such difficult experiences. For Hapke, the people who participate in the groups she helped establish who are then able to share their work publicly can gain a 'new place in the community' because they gain a 'legitimacy as performers, or musicians or artists whose work is recognized'. She suggested that the legitimacy is greater when the projects are supported by local government rather than welfare agencies because this helps to 'affirm people's place in the mainstream community'.

Hapke bemoaned the fact that there had been no serious evaluations of the projects and programs she helped to establish. She said that after a performance there would always be some kind of celebration and often this would be an opportunity for a 'reflective discussion' about what worked and what did not. Audience responses helped to assess the outcome of a project but Hapke thought it was just as important for group leaders to constantly monitor the 'atmospherics' in the group to see if participants are 'energized, invigorated and present with you' or 'detached and disengaged'. She encouraged 'artist facilitators' to use their own

'barometer' to monitor what they felt was happening within a group in regard to both the 'creative process' and the 'group process'. Hapke said that she was 'certain' that groups such as RAG Theatre Troupe and Bipolar Bears had preventative benefits in that participants would have had more mental health admissions and episodes if they had not been in the groups, but it is hard to 'demonstrate' such an outcome and she did not think that 'there is a lot of will in the mental health area to look down the preventative path' because there is a strong perception that 'if it is going to happen it is going to happen'. Hapke was worried that community art had gone 'out of vogue' because of a concern that the art produced is not good enough and she worried that her own council was reducing its investment in this area of work. The artistic outcome, Hapke stressed, depends heavily on the skill of the artists involved but she thought it was more important not to lose sight of the fact that the main aim of community art should be to empower people through participation. Hapke said she agreed with Jon Hawkes in saying that community arts should be primarily concerned with collective meaning making rather than individual practice and about participation more than outcomes because 'I am a community development worker'. However, she did not think it was an either/or situation because she also feels that you can also have 'a very high quality aesthetic in the artwork' and the selection of artists is key. According to Hapke, community art can have its own kind of authenticity because it is about 'lived experience'. She said that she has worked hard to ensure the durability of the projects she helped to initiate and that it is better to have long-term projects wherever possible, but she did not think that one-off projects are a waste of time because a single event can still take people 'outside their daily lives even for a short time and give them inspiration'.

In one sense, Giz James encourages the participants in her art classes to work alone and express themselves individually. However, she feels participation is also a social process in that the classes are a rare opportunity for these people to get out of the special accommodation homes where they spend most of their time and they work together to create an exhibition of the annual Festival of Difference that aims to challenge community perceptions about what people with disabilities can do. More than other practitioners we spoke to James talked about ways in which her community art work influences her own professional practice and she thought that the two fields overlap more than most people imagine.

Julie Shiels' capacity to help people articulate stories that may be of interest to others living in the same local communities and turn some of these into works of art has been discussed in earlier chapters. We have discussed the way in which Maria Starcevic's life was changed for the better when Shiels captured her story of hard times in a rooming house in a public art installation and Starcevic expressed her gratitude to Shiels creating such interest in her story. Shiels sees a danger in thinking that social inclusion means trying to 'drag people in from the margins'. 'I'm really uncomfortable with that,' she said, 'and I call it doing a Geraldine Doogue because although she is very smart and says great things she is always wanting to bring everyone in like, 'how can we fix these people?'. Rather than trying to fix people, Shiels felt that community art should be about 'validating their experiences on the edges … [to] recognize them for what they bring.' As suggested in earlier chapters, Shiels' work can be seen as an argument for the benefits of social diversity at a time when that diversity is under threat from processes such as 'gentrification'. She was rather annoyed that Jon Hawkes had made some rather sweeping criticisms of community art practices and had suggested that participation was more important than anything else. She thought Hawkes was promoting a rather outdated notion of community art practices and that this could undermine the efforts of practitioners working in many ways using many forms of art. 'If you can't respect the producers and the people doing the work in all their forms, well how are you going to expect the community to respect that?' she asked. . She wanted to emphasize that the 'industry' 'relies on the workers at the coalface and they are the artists … Artists need a holiday every now and again. They need rights. They need to be represented and they're not.'

Broadmeadows

With the exception of the two Eid Festivals at the end of the month of Ramadan, the projects we examined in the Broadmeadows district had been initiated by local government, other government authorities or, in the case of the Anti-Racism Action Band, a welfare organization. This undoubtedly reflects the fact that the community that has formed in the district since the establishment of the first housing estates in the 1950s—a community that did not even have a public library until very recently—has had few opportunities to build a tradition in regard to community arts and community celebrations. It also reflects the fact that the community has become increasingly complex with the arrival of waves of migrants from ethnically diverse origins. Of course, the multicultural nature of the contemporary community creates opportunities for sharing and exploring diverse artistic and cultural traditions but projects that can bring together people who might otherwise have little to do with each other require leadership 'from above'.

Both the *Weaving Lands* project and the Multicultural Planting Festivals suggest that many people will welcome the chance to come together to share their cultural differences while, at the same time, exploring a sense of belonging together in a new local context. According to Assyrian community worker Mesko Ayouz the Multicultural Planting Festival is seen as a highlight of the year and discussions about participation and the gift of food and performance begin many months before the event itself. Ayouz and other festival participants said they enjoy the opportunity to participate in the planting activity in the morning of each festival because this helps them feel more connected to their new environment. They also enjoy the opportunity to taste the food brought by other community groups and to enjoy the range of performances. There are many opportunities for people to meet and talk while involved in the planting work or over lunch in the dining area. For many of the groups who participate in the Multicultural Planting Festival the gift of food is very important for building an atmosphere of trust and respect in which meaningful exchanges might take place. In many cultural traditions, the preparation of good quality food is an artform passed down from one generation to the next and women, in particular, often engage in community life through the gift of food. The importance of this for maximizing participation was demonstrated in the experience of the Turkish Women's Voice group that was established to help Turkish women overcome social isolation. Not only did the gift of food create a stronger sense of participation within this group of isolated women, it also enabled them to build relationships with other community groups and organizations by taking up the role of catering. This experience can broaden the conception of community art in communities in which food traditions are important and it might suggest that the preparation of gifts, using artistic processes, can create a basis for reciprocal exchanges that can build a stronger sense of belonging, whether the gifts be in the form of food, performance or other works of art.

Interviews with two of the weavers who participated in the project—a Maori weaver and an Anglo-Australian weaver—revealed that they welcomed the chance to demonstrate their own craft but were interested to see what the others would do and how it might all come together in the one work. According to project manager, Anne Kershaw, the weavers involved in the project varied considerably in their motivation for participating. For Maori weaver Kiri Dewes it represented a chance to demonstrate to her own people the relevance of a tradition from 'home' that might otherwise be lost for the community well settled in Australia. Dewes accepts many invitations to run weaving workshops all over Victoria, and she said that her growing profile has led to increase in the number in the number of Maori youngsters coming to her for language lessons. The Hmong weaver from Laos, by contrast, agreed to contribute skills he had learnt as a child in Laos but he stressed that weaving, for him, was really a functional activity aimed at producing something to carry things from home to the field and Kershaw thought he might see little purpose in sustaining his art in Australia 'when you can get plastic bags from the supermarket'. The Hmong weaver saw little interest in the project as a whole, even though his weaving skills drew a lot of interest from other people. For him

the art seemed irrelevant in his new social context while Dewes saw value in retaining old cultural traditions in the new context. Dewes also stressed that Maori people traditionally treated the flax plant with enormous respect because it 'was the source of life for us' and she uses her weaving workshops to teach people more respect for nature.

When the opportunity presented itself to contribute a work of public art to the refurbishment of the Dallas Shopping Centre in the Broadmeadows area, Anne Kershaw felt that a process for negotiating the cultural diversity of a local community in which more than 50 per cent of residents were born outside Australia would be more important than giving the project to a single artist working alone or in consultation with the community. She managed to recruit twelve artists with meaningful links into the local community who worked with artforms ranging from sculpture to stencil art and waited patiently for them to reach agreement on a common theme for the installation. As a result of the process used the project created considerable interest in the community and the artists managed to reach an agreement that they could all work with. Again this was a top-down initiative but the very complexity of the community ensured that it stimulated dialogue and negotiation.

In contrast to the projects initiated by staff in the Hume City Council, the two Eid Festivals at the end of Ramadan have grown out of existing community practices. However, a key organizer of one of the festivals, Neil Aykam, said that they both take a form that is unique in the international Muslim world because they emphasize participation by families rather than individuals and they invite non-Muslim participation. This reflects the need to reduce tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims living in the area and Aykam thinks that the Eid phase of Ramadan provides a good showcase for Muslim values in that it promotes the paying of respect to older members in the community and urges people to find ways to resolve any unresolved conflicts. With more than 20,000 people attending the two events Eid is the biggest annual community event in the Broadmeadows area and the two events are entirely self-funded. The Eid festivals are well-entrenched fixtures in an annual calendar of cultural activities for the Broadmeadows community that is growing in its scope and diversity.

Daylesford

Rebecca Lister said that a 'Welcome Newcomers' morning tea held at the Neighbourhood House made a big difference to her when she arrived in the community in the early 1990s with young children and no established friends. When the staff at the Neighbourhood House heard that Lister had a background in community theatre in Brisbane they asked her to run theatre classes and this quickly led to other opportunities to use her theatre skills as discussed in earlier chapters. Lister was a little perturbed when people started saying that they saw her as a 'replacement' for the writer Kate Kennedy who had recently left the area but this probably reflects the pool of talent that the community has at its disposal and it will be interesting to see who might 'replace' Lister now that she has left Daylesford after ten years of community theatre work. Perhaps the emphasis will shift from theatre to other art-forms but this community probably has greater prospects for filling vacuums in activity caused by departures than most communities of its size. As well as skilled artists the community has 'newcomers' who are good at organizing events that feature aspects of the arts and a good example of such a person is David Hall who initiated the *Words in Winter* Festivals in 2001 because there seemed to be a dearth of activity in the cold winters. Hall was able to call on established writers living in the community to get this annual event started but he insisted that it should not be a writers' festival but rather a celebration of the joy of working with words in many different and creative ways. The festival includes activities such as giant games of scrabble and performances that combine music and the spoken word.

In coming into a new community with young children, Lister got a glimpse of how isolating this situation could be and much of her theatre work focused on women and children. Anni Coyne had experienced deep isolation as a single mother when she offered her services as a choir leader and her experience enabled her to provide a 'safe' environment for other isolated

women. Coyne encouraged women in her choir to also share good food and a chat outside singing time but she also pointed out that the practice of singing a beautiful melancholic song with others often helped choir members going through difficult personal experiences. In this sense the art could be a cathartic, sharing experience without talking directly about experiences that had brought sorrow or pain. In a similar way, some of the community plays that Lister brought together addressed painful experiences and tensions within the community but they could do so in non-threatening ways that encouraged reflection rather than division.

Lister said it was not easy to get people to take the community theatre productions as seriously as they should. People whinged about having to pay as little as $10 for tickets to the performances because they felt that if their children or 'Johnny from down the road' was performing then the play would be very rough. Of course, people soon learnt to appreciate the quality of work that Lister could evoke from the groups she worked with but she also said she had to insist on having her name listed as a playwright because there was an inclination to credit everyone or no-one and her skills were not sufficiently acknowledged. Katrina Cavanagh worked with Lister on a number of theatre projects and she said 'I guess she has felt invisible in some instances, but I don't think the communities feel that … When you have someone as talented as Rebecca you see aspects of your life pop up in her work, so I think people need to be careful about what they say!'

Lister introduced a particular way of helping participants to 'process' the experience of being in a public performance that may have raised difficult community issues. The first step would be to organize an 'after party' that was simply about enjoying the achievement and sharing that sense of achievement. Some weeks later she would gather the group together again for a more reflective discussion of the experience as a whole and to discuss some future opportunities for people interested in theatre. Given that her projects were funded by one-off grants and/or community donations, Lister needed to avoid raising expectations about future projects but a number of the participants were able perform in several of her plays and some joined the amateur Wild Card Players. For some it had been enough to perform once. Hannah Mancini, who was in several of Lister's plays from the time she was in primary school through to the end of high school, said that people talked about being in the plays for years after they had happened.

> There was always a lot of tension with everyone trying to be in the cool groups in primary school. That just relaxed. Everyone had something to do. There was the dancing group, and the balancing group, as well as the people who had acting roles. Everyone had a part in it. It just brought everyone together … I did see that that changed everyone. And everyone can talk about it now, and have their point of view about it … I thought that brought a lot out of the school.

Mancini said that she was 'pretty sure' that she wanted to pursue a career in the performing arts as a result of her school experiences, but even if she did not do any more theatre she felt she had gained a lot from the experiences and 'it's always really exciting just remembering it.'

The ways in which the Swiss-Italian Festa has made the community learn to appreciate a particular heritage that had been largely forgotten has been discussed in earlier chapters, but it also relevant to the theme of participation and agency. Quite a few of the residents of Hepburn Springs and Daylesford—including some with no Swiss-Italian heritage—have chosen to visit the villages and towns that the pioneer settlers left and the connections back to people living on the other side of the world have been revived. Jon Stevens said he had gained a new appreciation for the impact of the festivals when he travelled to the village that the Milesi family had left to come to the Australian goldfields with James Milesi who knew little his family's ancestry. Although they found that no-one in the village could recall that people had gone to Australia so long ago they were fascinated to hear the story and James was fascinated to see the places from which his ancestors had come. Milesi chose to study history

at university when the focus on the Swiss-Italian heritage of Hepburn Springs made him think more deeply about his own ancestors and after he visited the ancestral village he decided to learn their distinct local language and to do a PhD on their endangered culture. Gary Thomas was able to use the broad local interest in the Swiss-Italian heritage to develop the bullboars project in the Daylesford Secondary College that enabled the students to come second in a prestigious national competition related to food and local histories.

The Remembrance and Resistance evenings held in Hepburn Springs in 2005 and 2006 where designed to let victims of 'coercive psychiatry' tell their own stories. According to one of the organizers of the inaugural event in 2005, David Mithen, stories about mental health are often told in the third person and he was moved that so many people had been prepared to tell their own stories of the pain and humour that mental illness can bring. Mithen said that the event 'reminded me of the heroism with which so many people face their future, however bleak it may sometimes seem, and the capacity of the human spirit to turn disaster into triumph.' According to a report written about the 2005 event it had enabled people with mental illness to 'claim voice and place'.

Hamilton Region

Terrie Nicholson saw a notice for a meeting to discuss plans for celebrating the 150th anniversary of the naming of Dunkeld soon after she came to live in the area with her husband and young children. She attended the meeting and was impressed by the fact that the initiators were keen for people to canvass their own ideas for the event rather than simply endorse a proposal. Even though she was new to the town Warne recognized that she had both the skills and commitment to work effectively in the community and the partnership worked well. Nicholson said that she was given a very valuable opportunity to learn so much about the community and its history and to feel that she could so quickly make a meaningful contribution to the community. As a result of the project she came to play an active role in the community of the primary school that her children were attending and in the Daylesford Historical Museum.

Planning for Dunkeld's celebration was helped enormously by generous donations by local benefactor Alan Myers and this opened up the possibilities enormously. At the same time, Warne realised that many other locals could get the impression that their contribution to the event would not be valued as highly and he was determined to ensure a diverse program of events to cater for a diversity of interests and needs within the community. Funding from Alan Myers made it possible for the celebration organizing committee to employ Terrie Nicholson and Warne stressed that it would have been very difficult for a small community to organize such an event without this support. He doubted that an alternative source of funding could have been located.

Hamilton's Top of the Town fund-raising ball could have been a routine community activity but it was turned into something much more challenging and creative by the intervention of Tony McGilvray. The idea of putting together a very special evening, beyond anyone's expectations, clearly caught the imagination of many people in the district and it drew on the creative potential of people ranging from chefs and interior decorators to event organizers. The project was clearly driven by McGilvray's challenging vision and his organizational abilities but committee members Frances Pekin and Roger Dunn said that it had been a pleasure to work on a committee in which all members contributed with energy and enthusiasm. Perhaps the only problem was that it set a standard that may be difficult to match again and the committee decided to wait until 2007 before setting another ambitious but different challenge for the community. However, McGilvray also pointed out that it would not be difficult to find volunteers for another large event because the first experience had been so positive and many of the successful processes could be repeated.

Macarthur's creative way of dealing with the legacy of having been tagged Victoria's 'most boring town' also caught the imagination of the local community and it also displayed a

combination of creative flair and rural pragmatism. Through the use of humour and ceremony a negative experience was turned into a positive one for the local community. The launch of a book was turned into a community celebration that gave residents a stronger sense of their own history and an appreciation for people—past and present—who had helped to build a sense of community in the area. Since the fall in world prices for wool and other agricultural products in the 1980s fears have been held for the future of small towns such as Macarthur. This event, therefore, became a celebration of the town's survival and its resilience in the face of global change. The small town of Balmoral has also found new ways to celebrate its resilience in events organized by the Chameleon Arts Collective. Initiated as a support network for individual artists living in the Balmoral area, the Collective also provided a creative outlet for isolated women with young children. It was able to get funding from VicHealth for an exhibition by local artists that used the slogan 'Art brings people together' and this was followed by a more ambitious Feast of the Five Senses Festival that was also supported by a VicHealth grant. Members of the Chameleon Arts Collective were able to look at the experience of other small Victorian towns, such as Natimuk, that had managed to establish annual festivals and they were pleased with the local response to their first festival in 2005. The success of the 2005 festival encouraged Chameleon initiator Suiyin Honeywell to push ahead with plans for another festival in 2007 but she suggested that there is far less support for such local initiatives in the Hamilton region than in the region centred on Horsham.

9

Key Findings and Recommendations

In this chapter we present a concise account of the research findings and put forward a number of recommendations of relevance to the community development strategies and activities of Australian government and non-government agencies and to the work of community development and community arts practitioners. The specific aim of this methodologically broad research project has been to examine ways in which community-based cultural activities and events, particularly those drawing on a community arts tradition, can contribute to a health agenda by addressing the 'determinants' of health and wellbeing articulated by VicHealth and recognized by many other organizations .From this perspective, we have been centrally concerned with the social determinants of health. Our focus has not been on health outcomes but rather on better understanding how to influence and help sustain the social factors known to contribute to wellbeing. Given the very broad nature of this concern we have focused attention on the social role and value of arts practice, exploring the contemporary relevance of community arts and celebrations of community at a local level. This approach to social health overlaps with the interests of a very wide range of governmental and non-governmental agencies, many of which appear to agree on a need to create stronger, more inclusive and more resilient local communities through both cultural activities and social economy measures. Thus, while this study was undertaken in collaboration with VicHealth, it has clear relevance for a much wider range of social development agencies and community development practitioners.

We begin by moving directly to the key point that has informed this study and which has been confirmed by its outcomes, There is presently, as has long been the case, much talk about the death of community, particularly communities of place. This talk often obscures reality. Communities—both of place and social network—are everywhere, and everywhere they remain viable, lived and sometimes vibrant; everywhere there is social participation and inclusion. Messianic assumptions about the complete eclipse of community life and social connectedness simply obscure the dynamics of the societies in which we live and with which individuals, social groups, and government and non-government institutions must deal. However, having recognized this, there is no room for complacency. The issue we face in relation to community is not one of existence, but it certainly is one of purposeful, vibrant sustainability. In the contemporary world the sustainability of communities has to be constantly worked at on a range of levels and by a range of individuals and agencies, particularly given that certain forms of community are now under great pressure and are transforming in ways that are potentially undesirable for all. In a world of rapid social, technological and economic change, confronting issues of community sustainability becomes as crucial as confronting environmental concerns. This is not least the case because, as a mountain of indisputable evidence now indicates, a sense of community belonging is crucial to the maintenance of individual health and wellbeing and, we would add, to the ability of individuals to deal with change itself. Community—however vague and ill-defined such a concept may be—is thus a crucial starting point for the work of a whole range of agencies and, as we suggest in this report, for community arts practitioners as well. Indeed, in this chapter we directly address these two constituencies together. On the one hand, we offer general recommendations to agencies—health bodies, councils, government departments, philanthropic bodies and so on—

involved in funding and supporting community development, particularly through cultural activities. On the other hand, we directly address arts practitioners and their organizations, suggesting ways in which they might develop a deeper understanding of what constitutes good practice in this field of work.

.Before moving towards specific recommendations we want to reiterate the argument, made at some length in Chapters 2 and 4, that people involved in community development work need a more sophisticated understanding of the nature of contemporary community life. As we noted previously, the term 'community' tends to be used loosely and ambiguously by many of those concerned with community-building. The usage of terms such as 'social inclusion' is equally vague and, as discussed in Chapter 5, there is a need for a much better understanding of the possibilities and limitations of a social inclusion approach in relation to local communities. However, right throughout this concluding chapter, we will combine a discussion of these broad definitional and conceptual considerations with a central focus on arts practice and policy alternatives.

By definition, community arts have always been interested in social outcomes, yet the growing interest in the social 'benefits' of the arts more broadly, which has gathered momentum over the last decade, has raised expectations as to what those benefits might be. Earlier studies on the social benefits of community arts practice have far too often been self-referential, gathering 'evidence' to essentially support the starting assumptions of practitioners or project managers. Our aim in this study has thus been to look more critically at the claims of practitioners while at the same time recognizing that much can be learnt from their experiences. We thus include here a summary discussion of the strengths and limitations of the arts in addressing issues of wellbeing, and we comment on the complex task of evaluating their contribution. Hence we move between a consideration of the broad evidence regarding the social impacts of community arts and celebrations and a more focused discussion of what might constitute good practice in the field—and how a range of agencies might support that practice.

In the discussion below we have chosen to highlight thirteen specific recommendations that range from suggestions for developing conceptual clarity to suggestions for supporting good practice. It should be noted, however, that the extraction of select findings and recommendations from such a wide-ranging study cannot do justice to overall outcomes of this inquiry. The study was based on an innovative and wide-ranging methodology that was linked to a framework for analyzing the resultant data, and that methodology can only be understood by looking at the way the report as a whole has been presented. Chapters 3-8 include detailed and nuanced discussion of what we learnt from our study of four different communities and an array of projects and events that occurred within them. Chapters 4-8 relate this to broad and pressing 'social themes' and there is much in each of those chapters that cannot be picked up in a concise summary of findings and recommendations. Chapter 3 presents a summary of the outcomes of two surveys—one random and one targeted at participants in community events—that will contain useful information for a range of people with different interests. Apart from what we can highlight in a concise account of findings and recommendations, we are confident that this study has other important implications for a wide range of individuals and organizations and we suggest that people who take the time to read other sections of this report will be rewarded for their effort.

Contextualizing Community Art, Celebrations and Cultural Events

Our sense of community has long been connected with both physical place (such as town or neighbourhood) and with less tangible networks of relationships (such as friendship and kinship networks). Communities of place obviously remain important, but their continued vibrancy has been the subject of much recent critical concern. Many things mitigate against a local sense of 'emplaced' local community in the contemporary world—processes such as increased mobility, intensified ideas of individuality, new technologies, and new possibilities for participating in extended (non-local) communities. However, our research suggests that

people still tend to value a local, emplaced sense of community even if they do not actively participate in many identified 'community activities'. Even if it is hard to define what a local community of place might be, community itself is experienced phenomenologically—and, for respondents to our survey, local communities of place clearly rate more highly than work communities as sources of meaning.

However, in a changing and insecure world we need a more dynamic understanding of what a local, emplaced community is, simply because all grounded communities are in a constant process of being made and remade through the interaction of local and broader social processes. We need to understand that people now face increased choices regarding the local and non-local and the emplaced and networked communities in which they might participate. We need moreover to grasp the fact that community participation itself is a matter of constant negotiation. Clearly, some people choose to participate more actively in local communities at particular times in their own life (for example when they have young children). Overall, however, our survey strongly suggested that when people do participate in community events they are motivated more by a desire to 'give something to the community' than by any simple wish to enjoy inexpensive entertainment. This indicates that the *desire* to belong to local communities remains strong.

Local communities of place have not disappeared, as some might have predicted, but they are no longer a 'given' and there is a growing role for community 'facilitators' who can work to make such communities vibrant and responsive to local needs and possibilities. Community development must be aimed at helping local communities become more self-aware and strategically adaptive. While the word 'resilient' is probably being over-used at present, it does help to convey a sense of strength that is also adaptive. Social and economic changes that continue to sweep the world bring threats and opportunities to people living in local communities and successful adaptation will include resistance to changes that can reduce the quality of local life. A 'resilient community' is self-aware and capable of responding strategically to threats and opportunities. A resilient local community will foster, rather than discourage, broad dialogue about important local issues (as we were able to observe in Daylesford, for example). Resilient communities are vibrant communities and there is a clear role for the arts in fostering local vibrancy. In recognizing this, however, it should also be emphasized that community facilitators of all kinds must avoid simplistic and static notions of contemporary community life. This entails a focus on the quality of participation in community life rather than simply the extent of that participation. Although, as we will indicate below, there are certainly instances where a broad degree of momentary public participation in community events and activities is beneficial.

Inclusion and Avowal

Given that there is an established link between social isolation and health disorders it is not surprising that a range of agencies (including VicHealth) have adopted 'social inclusion' and 'social connectedness' as determinants of mental health and wellbeing at a community level. This study has explored in detail these issues of inclusion and connectedness.

In relation to people with 'special needs' and/or those who feel socially isolated, for example, we have examined a range of innovative projects undertaken in St Kilda, Daylesford and Broadmeadows. A variety of participants in such projects and programs told us how important the activities had been in reducing their sense of isolation. Unfortunately, the success of such programs might be judged purely on the basis of the number of people participating when it may be more important to consider how profoundly they have helped a relatively small number of isolated people. Of course, socially isolated people can also benefit from the opportunity to participate in free or low-cost community events, and some individuals who were attending such events told the researchers that they welcomed this opportunity. However, our survey of residents suggested very clearly that isolated people are unlikely to attend events and this puts the emphasis back on projects and programs that are specifically

targeted at such people.

A number of agencies, including VicHealth, have also argued for a focus on reducing discrimination and violence within communities in order to reduce stress and marginalization. Once again, drawing on data from our four communities, we have been able to explore this issue. In relation to Broadmeadows, for example, community development workers face significant challenges. Broadmeadows is an area where there is a constant risk of inter-ethnic conflict and many of the community art projects and celebrations that we examined in this area aimed at fostering intercultural tolerance and dialogue. The Multicultural Planting Festival, for instance, brings together people who would not normally meet each other in an atmosphere of celebration, and the large Eid festivals that come at the end of the month of Ramadan attract considerable public interest and support. Similarly, projects such as the Anti-Racism Action Band and Turkish Women's Voice have helped some victims of discrimination to find a positive voice. The emphasis on reducing discrimination demonstrates that social inclusion is not only about reaching individuals who are isolated; it is also about creating a culture that reduces the fear of 'otherness' and fosters a genuine respect for cultural diversity. Community facilitators in the Broadmeadows area have successfully promoted the idea that respect for cultural diversity is not a matter of charity but rather an opportunity to bring new forms of vibrancy into community life.

Of course, genuine cultural diversity cannot be sustained in any local community unless ethnic groupings are allowed to carry out activities that are aimed at cultural maintenance rather than multicultural fusion. In responding to this challenge, the Broadmeadows-based Weaving Lands project was, as we have seen in a previous chapter, able to strike a good balance between cultural maintenance and multicultural fusion, but it was necessary to have both aims in mind. Obviously, some cultural maintenance activities—for example, traditional weaving classes for Maori youth—cannot be open to the public. Similarly, projects and programs targeted at people with 'special needs' will have restricted participation. Thus inclusion in community activities must be assessed in terms of effective targeting and the quality of participation, rather than simple accessibility. At the same time, it is important to have public events that bring diverse groupings into a common space and create the broadest possible sense of inclusion.

Results from the photonarrative work undertaken as part of this study, especially in St Kilda, suggest that people who have experienced isolation have a clear wish to exercise control over the forms and extent of their engagements with particular communities. This suggests that a focus on inclusion for its own sake should be rejected and any attempt at forced inclusion could be counter-productive. Indeed, rather than imposing an agenda of inclusion, it is more important to give isolated people opportunities to strengthen their own self-narratives, and artistic activities—such as writing, painting, photography—can facilitate this. In many respects our research supports Richard Sennett's contention that in the face of contextual uncertainty people seek to build a sense of 'narrative movement' in their own lives and that this can give them a sense of 'narrative agency' in making sense of their experiences (see Sennett 2006, pp. 183–8). It is important, then, to understand inclusion in terms of agency and the capacity of isolated people to negotiate the terms and forms of their community participation. Once again the arts and cultural activities more broadly are important in helping people to create self-narratives and for providing opportunities for creative forms of engagement with other people.

We have emphasized above the importance of achieving a high quality rather than simply a broad level of participation within cultural activities and events specifically designed to address social exclusion. This should not however be taken as devaluing broad participation in certain contexts. While it is important to emphasize the difference between participation in and consumption of the arts within communities even a fairly passive form of participation in community celebrations can help to nurture a sense of community beyond the imperative of solely achieving social inclusion. Traditionally, community arts practitioners have put a

strong emphasis on active participation over a more passive involvement. Clearly, a person who participates actively in a whole set of classes or in the full life-cycle of a performance or exhibition will have a more profound experience than a person who simply attends a single class, an event, or a performance. However, our research suggests that popular local 'cultural events' also serve an important purpose of *avowal*—that is, a positive 'statement' to the effect that the community concerned is existent or present, vibrant and interesting. Avowal of community also relates to an opportunity to experience community rather than talk about it in the abstract. As we noted in a previous chapter, the success of the 'Top of the Town Ball' in Hamilton, for example, suggested that people are indeed prepared to pay for and devote considerable energy to moments where they experience community as a visible presence.

The phenomenon of community avowal should thus be valued as much as that of active participation, a recognition that might reduce the frustration of community facilitators who are frequently disappointed at levels of participation in community events and programs. A diversity of activities, in other words, can cater for the combined benefits of active participation in community and an avowal of it, although all activities need to be roundly promoted. Our research suggested that many residents know little about their local community events and happenings, but nevertheless *valued* the fact that their community was 'doing things'. This suggests that an increased knowledge that there is a diverse program of such events and activities could bolster the avowal effect and this, in turn, can create a more supportive environment for such activities.

It should be noted that not all local events are locally 'owned' and, as we have observed previously, places like St Kilda and Daylesford attract high numbers of regular and more intermittent visitors who also have a sense of 'owning' these iconic places. This presents a conundrum. An emphasis on local ownership of community events could become a form of parochialism that may not help the local community deal effectively with the world at large. At the same time a loss of any sense of local ownership may lead to local resentment about the intrusion of 'outsiders'. The problem of intrusion may be partly related to the scale of an event and the number of weekend visitors, as was evidenced in responses from residents of both St Kilda and Daylesford. This suggests a need to manage the impacts of external intrusions and a need to keep open at least some popular local spaces that have not yet lost their local character and content.

On the basis of all that has been said above, it is clear that it is better to have a diversity of projects, programs and events in a local community—from classes to carnivals—rather than rely heavily on a small number of events, even if they are well-resourced. The community centred on Daylesford, for example, is quite small yet it supports a diverse and interesting annual calendar of events that mutually reinforce each other. In any local community some projects and programs will have a limited lifespan and new and fresh activities might emerge to replace stale activities that have probably reached their use-by date. As a number of practitioners told us, successful artistic practices and cultural events should not be institutionalized and they must be given opportunities for regeneration or reinvention. A diversity of events can be promoted as a rich calendar of activities and this approach to promotion may be more effective than individual, potentially competitive, promotional work.

Recommendations

- *Recommendation 1: Government and non-government health and community-development agencies in Australia should significantly increase support programs that are specifically targeted at those who experience social exclusion, and such programs should be judged on the quality of engagement not on numbers of participants.*

- *Recommendation 2: Government and non-government health and community-development agencies in Australia should maintain an increased emphasis on reducing discrimination and violence within local communities and on strategic funding of projects that foster intercultural understanding and the maintenance of cultural distinctiveness.*

- *Recommendation 3: Government and non-government health and community-development agencies in Australia should continue to emphasize 'social inclusion' and 'social connectedness' as determinants of mental health and wellbeing at a community level, but need to more carefully conceptualize inclusiveness and connectedness as involving people in different forms and levels of community engagement across a spectrum from deep participation to momentary involvement.*

- *Recommendation 4: An emphasis on active participation in community art projects and in community celebrations and cultural events needs to be balanced by government and non-government health and community-development agencies in Australia with a stronger appreciation for the function of avowal that successful community events achieve.*

- *Recommendation 5: The capacity of community art projects, celebrations and cultural events to help individuals and groups of people develop narratives of meaning in a changing world should become an important criterion for assessing applications for funding submitted to government and non-government health and community development funding bodies in Australia.*

- **Recommendation 6:** *Support for individual projects by government and non-government health and community-development agencies in Australia should take into account the extent to which they can add to the diversity of cultural activities taking place within a community. From the point of view of long-term social outcomes, diversity should be rated more highly than the visibility of the projects concerned.*

Strengths and Limitations of the Arts

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, there is a growing concern that the turn to the arts for specific social outcomes, that began in the 1990s, has led to a heavy emphasis on 'instrumental' outcomes rather than what McCarthy *et al.* (2004) have called the 'intrinsic' social benefits of the arts. Our study was based on the understanding that it is futile to look for direct, or single-pathway causal linkages between inputs and outcomes when 'investing' in the arts for social benefit. Certainly, in terms of addressing the social determinants of health our research suggests that there are many measurable, instrumental outcomes of an investment in the arts and creative community events. Such projects and activities can, for example, reduce social isolation and give participants a host of new skills in regard to self-expression and communication. They can give people definable skills in learning how to work effectively in teams and in working to achieve goals and outcomes within a specified timeframe. However, the social value of arts and cultural activities simply cannot be reduced to instrumental, measurable, benefits. Our research confirms that there are many less tangible and difficult-to-quantify benefits of cultural action for both individuals and communities. Sometimes, as we have noted above in the case of social inclusion activities, the depth of impact is more important that the breadth of impact in assessing the enduring outcomes of projects and events, yet breadth is much easier to quantify that depth.

On the basis of the projects and activities that we examined, and the outcomes from our photonarrative research, we can make some impressive claims regarding the deep and diverse outcomes of 'authentic' art practices and community celebrations. We can say that such practices can:

- Be constructive in helping people to process their emotional responses to lived experiences and in helping them see that there are different ways of interpreting particular experiences.

- Provide cathartic experiences for people by sharing difficulties or painful experiences that might otherwise increase social isolation for some.

- Address unresolved social tensions in relatively non-threatening ways, such as through the use of humour, and foster dialogue rather than conflict.

- Lift the mood of a group of people or even a whole community and create new optimism about what the community can achieve.

- Give visibility and voice to those who are rarely heard, leading to a more empathetic understanding of the complex causes of isolation in the contemporary world.

- Help both individuals and groups of people to create new narratives of meaning in a changing world.

- Provide people with a stronger sense of purpose and agency so that they can better negotiate the forms and levels of their engagement with other people and groups of people (that is, overcoming social isolation to the extent that the person concerned might want).

- Help people and groups make connections with other people and other groups on the basis of shared interests.

- Increase curiosity about cultural differences in place of a more fearful response to 'otherness'.

- Help culturally diverse groups make linkages with other such groups in order to share some common ground and forge a humanitarian ethos.

- Make the argument that social diversity is good for a whole community, not just those who are threatened with exclusion, because it can generate cultural vibrancy.

- Help to capture and retain stories from the past and animate them in ways that foster a greater sense of belonging.

- Help local communities to better understand the innate beauty of their local environment and the need to treat it with more respect.

What is common to all of these practices is that they can generate a deeper sense of place that contextualizes a local sense of community. This fact was evident in all of the communities in which we undertook research. It was clearly demonstrated in all four communities that the most effective local events and activities took account of the specificities of place and of the importance of a sense of place for effective community arts practice. In some cases, locally relevant projects are also able to address broader social concerns beyond local belonging or identity, such as the integration of migrants, impacts of gentrification, the restructuring of rural economies, or a fear of constant change and insecurity. As Doreen Massey has argued (1999), local communities are much more complex and diverse than might at first be thought and an open-minded exploration of 'coexisting multiplicity' can enable such communities to respond to global changes in interesting and adaptive ways. Similarly, artistic practices can capture a wide range of stories from the past and present in ways that can be widely seen and understood as both relevant to a community and the nation. As argued in Chapter 8, there is a pressing need for a more decentralized debate on our national history and its relevance to the future, not least because the 'official' single historical narrative submerges the 'many true stories' that relate the local to the national and the past to the future in ways that stimulate reflection and dialogue rather than division and/or apathy.

Our research, then, suggests that the arts and other forms of creativity can have diffuse and quite profound social outcomes in the contemporary world. While some of these outcomes may be difficult or impossible to measure they can be described in accessible language. At the same time, we need to acknowledge that the word 'art' can be used to describe self-indulgent activities that might even reinforce prejudice and social division. Even if the intent of the art is benign it may reinforce elitism by reminding many people that they lack artistic talent or even the education to adequately interpret works of art. In the past, sharp distinctions have been drawn between elite art and community art with the latter being seen as being relatively low in its quality of artistic expression. As we have seen, some of the practitioners interviewed for this research have argued that community art can sometimes be more fresh and challenging than elite art, and it is clear that the different fields of art are more inter-related than has been previously thought. Many art practitioners appear to move between individual practice and involvement in community art projects.

There is something critical about the nature of *artistic* processes that must be kept in mind in assessing the social outcomes of artistic and creative local projects and activities. All the community art practitioners who were interviewed for this research agreed that it is important to emphasize *both* the quality of participation in community art projects *and* the quality of artistic outcomes so that impacts on participants and observers alike can be more profound and more enduring. However, the word 'art' has its own cultural baggage and serious limitations for understanding some of the more 'organic' creative activities that emerge within the process of constantly creating and regenerating local communities—as seen, for example, in Hamilton's Top of the Town Ball. It is critical to understand the importance of creative affirmations of what it means to be community in a changing world and some such celebrations lie beyond the conceptual constraints of community art.

Recommendations

- *Recommendation 7:* Government and non-government health, arts and community development bodies in Australia should work with a clear understanding of the strengths and limitations of community arts in achieving social outcomes, and with a firmer knowledge of when it may and may not be appropriate to turn to the arts as a tool of social policy.

- *Recommendation 8:* Government and non-government health, arts and community development bodies in Australia should not solely or even predominantly support community arts and cultural projects and events that aim for narrow, instrumental and predetermined social outcomes, but should strengthen a conceptualization of outcomes as both measurable and intangible, both immediate and longer-term.

Assessing Outcomes, Determining Values and Supporting Good Practice

In following on from the above discussion of community arts it will perhaps be beneficial to explore the concepts of value and outcome in a little more detail. As we have noted, there is a clear problem with the manner in which the social value and social outcomes of the arts have been discussed over the last decade or so. On the one hand, instrumental language—much of it taken from the study of economics—has placed undue emphasis on more tangible and measurable outcomes and values. On the other hand, some artists and art advocates tend towards what McQueen-Thompson, James and Ziguras (2004) have called 'art mysticism' in promoting the intrinsic value of the arts.

Attempts to distinguish between 'instrumental' and 'intrinsic' social benefits of the arts (McCarthy *et al.* 2004) are understandable, but the term 'intrinsic' has little explanatory power. Furthermore, a conceptual separation of the 'instrumental' and the 'intrinsic' distorts the fact that measurable and less tangible social benefits and outcomes overlap and interact with each other. McCarthy *et al.* suggest a two-dimensional matrix of social benefits when a three-dimensional model may be more appropriate. Rather than continue with efforts to produce a typology of values and benefits it is probably more useful to conclude that there are a host of overlapping benefits and outcomes that can be described in accessible language even if the deeper and more enduring benefits of community arts practice are not amenable to precise measurement. Investments in community arts and celebrations should, as we have argued above, be based on a deep understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the arts and creative celebrations in delivering a host of sometimes tangible but often diffuse outcomes. The diversity and unpredictability of the outcomes should be seen as a possible strength rather than a weakness. It may indeed be inappropriate in many cases to turn to the arts to achieve predetermined social outcomes.

Even commonly used words such as 'indicators' and 'determinants' need to be used with due caution and constraint in assessing the social outcomes of community arts and celebrations. As most community art practitioners would acknowledge, the articulation of 'key performance indicators' (KPIs) can stimulate deeper reflection on how to design projects that will maximize social benefits. KPIs can also prompt reflection on what the real and diverse outcomes have been, especially when they allow for a mix of quantitative and qualitative assessment of those

outcomes. Semi-structured interviews with community arts practitioners and community facilitators that were conducted for this research went through cycles of reflection about how those practitioners had learnt to identify the impacts of their work. Interestingly, the practitioners had little trouble relating their work to issues of social inclusion and reduction in discrimination and violence. Yet, while many of them made claims in regard to the ways in which their work could increase participants' access to economic resources they were much less comfortable in addressing this perceived determinant of health and wellbeing. Ironically, there can be a sense of failure amongst practitioners in not being able to address all perceived determinants of wellbeing with equal effect and this can disguise success in being able to respond to just one or two determinants well.

Of course, the importance of giving people greater access to economic resources should not be underestimated because there is a clear link between poverty and poor health. However, the problems of unemployment, under-employment and low incomes can only be addressed effectively at the level of structural economic changes or changes in regard to welfare provision. The argument has already been made that the arts are good for economic development in a broad sense (see, for example, Throsby 2001). However, it is an example of misplaced instrumentalism to expect that community arts should be able to deliver sustainable benefits in regard to giving individual people better access to economic resources.

While concepts such as 'indicators' and 'determinants' can be used in productive ways, it is important to remember that they suggest a linear, causal relationship between inputs and outcomes in assessing the social impact of the arts, when that relationship is much more complex, unpredictable and diffuse. Our research suggests that an iceberg metaphor is probably the most useful way of understanding the social benefits of community arts and celebrations—with some benefits remaining visible and even measurable, and many others remaining hidden. Within a number of interviews we were told by practitioners and participants alike that some benefits of participation in the arts are so deeply embedded that the person concerned may not be able to articulate that outcome until some years later. Clearly, more research needs to be conducted on the longer-term impacts of community arts activities and more needs to be done to pool the reflections and insights of long-term practitioners. While there are some networks of community arts practitioners in Australia, and on a state level, the field is not widely seen as an area of professional practice and much more could be done to articulate and share knowledge gained on what constitutes agreed good practice.

A broad range of practitioners facilitated the projects and programs that we examined in this study. Some projects were initiated by artists who wanted to extend their practice through a more intense engagement with social life; some by people with a strong background in a particular art-form and a commitment to the community in which they live; some by community development practitioners or local government officers who have developed good skills in working with artists and artistic processes; and some by well-connected community activists. A number of the projects would have been impossible without more than one practitioner involved and some well-funded projects relied on a clear division of labor between organizers and artists. But many projects are run by individual practitioners taking on many responsibilities and roles.

No matter what the size of the project or the number of people working on it, good practitioners in the field need a sophisticated set of skills. These skills include: listening to people and communicating ideas in ways that can motivate; getting people with very diverse skills to work together; understanding the dynamics of the particular local community and groupings within it; organizing events, performances, exhibitions; giving participants realistic advice about how they might pursue their interest in the arts; giving people advice on how they might sustain useful engagements with others in the local community. Further, practitioners need to be alert to times when people in a group are struggling with unspoken concerns or feelings and be able to address such tension; knowing when it is appropriate to refer people to relevant professionals or services. Some practitioners we interviewed have

honed their skills over many years and across numerous projects but they have minimal security of employment. Similarly, community development workers who have developed skills and interest in working with the arts and artists have very few opportunities to turn this interest into a sustainable area of career development.

Skills development and career paths for community arts practitioners are thus very limited. Most of them work on project-by-project basis and have limited access to paid leave or superannuation benefits. Some can achieve a degree of job security by working for local government authorities or other agencies. However, very few organizations regard community arts as 'core business' At one level we conclude, in light of this, that it may be better to invest in the development of individual community arts practitioners rather than the organizations that might employ them, not least because those practitioners can then carry their skills into new projects. Of course, organizations can learn from successful experiences and retain their ability to employ the right people for future projects. However, there needs to be a pool of good practitioners for them to draw from and their skills and experiences need to be properly acknowledged. At present it is difficult for a practitioner in this field to develop a portable reputation for good practice. Indeed, there is no sector-wide agreement about what constitutes good practice in combining arts practice with community development aims against which performance can be recognized. Furthermore, a competitive funding environment makes it difficult for practitioners to work together and share their skills and knowledge.

More could thus be done at the level of funding arrangements to acknowledge and sustain good practice in the community arts field (broadly defined). The argument can be made that the field has become increasingly important for building stronger local communities in the context of constant change and deserves a better deal in terms of the overall allocations of government funding. At the level of project funding, there should be more emphasis on the pre-implementation creative development phase, recognized as critical for the success of more elite arts projects, and funding agencies should take more responsibility for the evaluation of the projects. There is some evidence to suggest that practitioners are finding ways to design evaluation activities into the implementation of their projects but it requires considerable skill to design and complete a meaningful assessment. Given the importance of meaningful rather than token evaluation, funding agencies should take more responsibility for supporting practitioners to do this work well. It may be more useful to evaluate the work of practitioners and organizations over the course of more than one project and ensure that there is some mechanism for accrediting good practice. As one way of fostering good practice funding agencies should allocate fellowships as well as project funding to build the capacities of practitioners. Fellowships can enable practitioners to work on particular areas of skill development and they can lead to a cross-fertilization of good practice across the sector. Moreover, fellowships can be used to provide opportunities for emerging practitioners.

The comparative experience of Daylesford and the Hamilton region suggests that community arts officers operating across one or two local government areas can make a real difference in nurturing the development of a more diverse and vibrant community arts sector. However, the Hamilton experience also suggested that there is a danger in relying too heavily on an individual person. Local government authorities need to think more strategically about how to develop a pool of effective community arts practitioners in their area. There are some ways to do this that require little in the way of funding allocations. For example, existing activities can be made more visible through the production of an attractive and well distributed calendar of events and such promotion of activities can be an incentive for new projects. Local Government Authorities can support more community celebrations and provide spaces for community-oriented artists to work in, and they can support residencies for visiting community artists.

In many ways the community arts field has come of age in Australia. However, a clear distinction must be made between good or authentic practice and bad or token practice. Good practice needs to be discussed more extensively and valued more highly, even by agencies

that have understood its growing social relevance.

Recommendations

- ***Recommendation 9:*** *Government and non-government health, arts and community-development bodies in Australia should seek to support arts projects that can articulate good practices for encouraging reflective participation and/or engagement on the part of those involved and which are also driven by clear artistic processes and/or visions.*

- ***Recommendation 10:*** *Government and non-government health, arts and community-development agencies in Australia should adopt flexible evaluation criteria, recognizing that community arts activities are best assessed in terms of their ability to increase social inclusion, reduce discrimination and violence, and create a stronger sense of community belonging. It is not relevant to expect community arts to deliver sustainable benefits in regard to giving people better access to economic resources, or to address all determinants of health and wellbeing within particular projects.*

- ***Recommendation 11:*** *Government and non-government health, arts and community-development agencies in Australia should, when supporting community arts projects, include the funding of a creative development phase and a post-project phase that would allow for adequate debriefing, evaluation and future planning.*

- ***Recommendation 12:*** *Government and non-government health, arts and community-development agencies in Australia should, where possible, support the appointment of community and regional arts officers and, at the same time, support strategies to increase the pool of local talent and expertise in community arts across local communities.*

- ***Recommendation 13:*** *Government and non-government health, arts and community-development agencies in Australia should, where possible, give consideration to creating a Fellowships scheme for community arts practitioners, alongside project-based funding. This scheme should include a category for early career practitioners*

Conclusion

The research undertaken for this study has yielded a great deal of textured and nuanced information that is difficult to summarize in such a short concluding chapter. We can only encourage readers to engage more fully with the report as a whole, and particularly with individual chapters of specific interest. Our aim in this conclusion has been to identify key themes emerging from the research and to offer a series of focused recommendations that might be implemented by a range of government and non-government health, arts and community development agencies in Australia, albeit with some budgetary implications.

This study has in no uncertain terms empirically established the wisdom and value of a focus on cultural activities by health and community development bodies as a vehicle for facilitating community and individual wellbeing. In offering evidential support for this focus, we have not privileged instrumental arguments or produced a metrics of social outcomes through community-based cultural activity. Instead, we have drawn on a diverse methodological approach that underscores the complexity of undertaking such research, of assessing the social impact of community-based art, celebrations and cultural events, and of coming to understand the very concepts of community and wellbeing.

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Appendix 1

List of interviewees for case studies and stories

<u>St Kilda</u>
Giz James

Marie Hapke

Kate Sulan

Julie Shiels

Ilka Tampke

Maria Starcevic

Anna Macarthur

<u>Broadmeadows</u>
Neil Aykan

Anne Kershaw

Kiri Dewes

Liz Reed

Natalia Valenzula

Mesko Ayouz

Anna Zsoldos

Gul Erbasi

Diane Cakir

Anne Kershaw

Kate Gillick

<u>Daylesford</u>
Rebecca Lister

Hannah Mancini

Katrina Cavanagh

Anni Coyne

Summer Dew

Fiona Robson

Jon Stephens

Jenny Beacham

Petrus Spronk

Gary Thomas

Fiona Strahan

Hamilton

Alan McGregor

Keith Warne

Terri Nicholson

Joy Clarke

Tony MacGilvray

Roger Dunn

Francis Pekin

Vera Risk

Suyin Honeywell

Amelia Johnston

Appendix 2

The Globalism Institute, Building 37, Level 5, 411 Swanston St Melbourne

GPO Box 2476V Melbourne VIC 3001 Australia

Tel: +61 3 9925 2328 Fax: +61 3 9925 3049

www.rmit.edu.au/globalism

Community Sustainability Questionnaire

This questionnaire has been developed by the Globalism Institute, RMIT University, Australia, for our Community Sustainability Project. This project is being conducted in a number of countries around the world as part of a research project into what makes communities strong and what threatens to break them apart. Your contribution will help in extending our understanding of the world around us.

The questionnaire should take about 10 minutes to fill out. We know that it is difficult to give a simple answer in these kinds of questionnaires. Please take your time to think over the question and answer it as accurately as possible. If you do not wish to answer some questions then please feel free to skip to the next one.

First, we would like to ask you some questions about your neighbourhood. We will then ask you about you how satisfied you feel about certain things and the extent to which you agree or disagree with certain statements. The third set of questions asks you about your involvement in Community Arts activities. Finally, we want to ask some general questions about your life. Your responses will be anonymous, we do not need your name.

1. How long have you lived in your present area or neighbourhood? Please tick one box.

1 less than a year   2 1–5 yrs   3 5–10 yrs   4 10–20 yrs   5 20–50 yrs   6+ 50 yrs

2. How long did you live in your previous area or neighbourhood? Please tick one box.

1 less than a year   2 1–5 yrs   3 5–10 yrs   4 10–20 yrs   5 20–50 yrs   6 + 50 yrs

7 I have lived in the same area/neighbourhood all of my life

3. Do you think about your community or social network as being mostly:

1 In your neighbourhood or particular places like your town or suburb?

2 About a group of people?

3 In your workplace?

4 In your child's school?

5 In clubs or community centres?

6 All of the above

7 None of these

8 I am not sure

Please rank how satisfied or dissatisfied you feel about the following on a scale of 1 to 10.

The coloured guide below tells you what the numbers mean. Please tick only one number for each question.-

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Very satisfied		Satisfied		Neither		Dissatisfied		Very dissatisfied	

4. How satisfied are you with feeling part of your community?

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Very Satisfied Very Dissatisfied

0

No opinion

5. How satisfied are you with your neighbourhood?

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Very Satisfied Very Dissatisfied

0

No opinion

6. How satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Very Satisfied Very Dissatisfied

0

No opinion

7. How satisfied are you with your personal relationships (for example, friends and family)?

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Very Satisfied Very Dissatisfied

0

No opinion

8. How satisfied are you with how safe you feel?

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Very Satisfied Very Dissatisfied

0

No opinion

9. How satisfied are you with the balance between your work and social life (work includes working at home, housework)?

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Very Satisfied Very Dissatisfied22

0

No opinion

Please rank the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 10.

The coloured guide below tells you what the numbers mean. Please tick only one number for each question

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree		Agree		Neither		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	

10. I feel that I can influence those figures of authority who are relevant to my community:

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

0

No opinion

11. I feel that the decisions made about life in my neighbourhood are made in the interests of the whole community:

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

0

No opinion

12. I feel that experts, such as administrators, scientific experts and managers, can be trusted when dealing with local issues:

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

0

No opinion

13. I feel that governments make decisions and laws that are good for the way I live locally:

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

0

No opinion

14. I feel comfortable meeting and talking with people who are different from me:

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

0

No opinion

15. I feel that most people can be trusted:

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

0

No opinion

16. I believe that the history of my country or society influences the way I live:

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

0

No opinion

17. Communication technologies, such as telephones, mobiles and the internet, are important to me in maintaining relationships with friends and family:

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

0

No opinion

18. How often do you use technologies such as telephones, mobiles and the internet to communicate with your friends and family? Please tick one box.

1 Hourly

2 Daily

3 Weekly

4 Monthly

5 Once a year

6 Never

We now want to ask a few questions about public celebrations and community arts

19. How often does your community have public celebrations and rituals—such as street parties or local festivals? Examples include the Broadmeadows Multicultural Planting Day, Daylesford's Swiss Italian Festa, the St Kilda Festival and Hamilton's Promenade of Sacred Music.

1 Daily   5 Once a year

2 Weekly   6 Never

3 Monthly   7 Not sure

4 Every 6 months

If your community does not have public celebrations and rituals please go to question 22

20. I feel that my community benefits from these kinds of public celebrations and rituals:

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

0

No opinion

21. How often do you go along to such events?

1 I go to all the festivals and community arts events that are held in my area

2 I go to some festival and community arts events

3 I go to the occasional festival and community art event that is most relevant to me

22. If you do not participate in community arts events could you please tell us why?

Please tick as many as are relevant:

1 I don't know about them

2 I am too busy

3 I can't afford the meal/drinks cost that go with it

4 I'm not interested in community arts activities

5 I don't have anything in common with the people who go to those kinds of events

6 I don't think I'd get anything out of it

7 No reason

8 Other reason, please state …………………………………………………………………..

23. How often do you participate in other local or community activities, such as visiting community centres or doing volunteer work?

1 Daily

2 Weekly

3 Monthly

4 Every 6 months

5 Once a year

6 Only once in the last 5 years

7 Never

24. Sharing food and drink is important to making my social occasions a success:

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Strongly agree Strongly disagree

0

No opinion

The last few questions are designed to get a sense of who you are, but the answers will not be linked with your name. You do not need to answer any question if you do not know the answer or the question seems inappropriate.

25. Do you live:

1 Alone

2 As a single parent

3 With your partner

4 With your partner and another person (child or adult)

5 With others (not your partner) such as housemates

6 With one or both of your parents and/or siblings

7 With other extended family

26. Financially speaking, would you consider your household to be:

1 Well off   2 Comfortable   3 Struggling

27. Compared to other people in Australia of the same age, do you consider yourself to be in good health or poor health?

1 My health is generally good

2 My health is sometimes good and sometimes poor

3 My health is generally poor

4 I don't know

28. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

1 Primary school

2 Some secondary school

3 Finished secondary school

4 Trade training

5 University (undergraduate)

6 University (postgraduate)

29. Gender: Female 1 Male 2

30. Postcode …………………………………………………......………………......

31. What is your ethnicity? …………………………...…………………….…........

32. What is your age?

16–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60–69	70–79	80–89	90–100
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Thank you for taking part in the Community Sustainability Questionnaire.

We really appreciate your involvement.

1. Why have you come along today? Tick as many as apply

1 Something different to do

2 I come every year

3 Nice weather

4 To meet up with friends and neighbours

5 To meet new people

6 To have some fun

7 To spend time with the family

8 To experience or maintain cultural traditions

9 I'm interested in this event

10 To support my community

11 To get some exercise

12 Chance to get out of the house

13 I had nothing else on today

14 To pick up some new skills

15 Learn about area (local community)

Other………………………………………………………………………...……...

2. What have you got from coming along today?

1 I found things in common with others

2 I learnt of services available in the community

3 I caught up with neighbours and friends

4 I spent time with family

5 I heard about local issues

6 I felt like I belonged to this community

7 I felt a bit on my own

9 I met new people

10 I had some fun

11 I was happier for coming along

12 It was good for my health

13 I didn't feel that involved

14 It did nothing for me

Other………………………………………………………………...………...

3. Do you come to these events much? Thinking over the last 5-10 years, when have you come to events like this? When…

1 I was new to the community

2 I had young children

3 I wanted to make new friends

4 I wanted an affordable day out

5 I wanted to give something to the community

6 Other…………………………………………………………………………...…...

7 My children had left home

8 I was a single parent

9 I had more time (such as retired)

10 I felt isolated

Any other comments? Any surprising outcomes of your attendance? Events that stood out and why?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………

Female 1 Male 2

Age 1 16–19 2 20–29 3 30–39 4 40–49 5 50–59 6 60–69 7 70–79 8 80–89 9 90–100

Do you live?   1 Alone   2 With Family   3 With others

Compared to other people in Australia of the same age, do you consider yourself to be in good health or poor health?

1 My health is generally good

2 My health is sometimes good and sometimes poor

3 My health is generally poor

(Endnotes)

1   Statistical information for Daylesford is taken primarily from the 2001 Census Quickstats prepared by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The factsheets are on 2001 census figures. The data relates specifically to Daylesford, not to Hepburn Springs or the broader research area around Daylesford.