

**Melbourne Eastern Metropolitan Region**

**Strengthening Volunteering and Civic Participation:  
Development of a Strategic Plan**

## **Building a Conceptual & Strategic Framework**

**Regional Volunteering Stakeholders Workshop #2**

**Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> September 2007, 10 am – 4 pm**

**Karralyka Centre, Banquet Room, Karralyka Centre,  
Mines Rd, Ringwood East**



**BORDERlands**

*Cooperative Ltd.*

PO Box 3079 Auburn 3123

Ph. 9819 3239

[borders@borderlands.org.au](mailto:borders@borderlands.org.au)

## Acronyms

AMES = Adult and Multicultural Educational Services

CD = Community Development

COs = Community organisations

DPCD = Department of Planning & Community Development

EMR = Eastern Metropolitan Region

ERLS = Eastern Recreation & Leisure Services

FACSA =

LG = Local Government

LGA = Local Government Area

MAV = Municipal Association Victoria

MIC = Migrant Information Centre, Eastern Region

MMIG = Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place

MVRC = Monash Volunteer Resource Centre

NGOs = Non-Government Organisations

NH = Neighbourhood (& Community) Houses & Living & Learning Centres,

SG = State Government

ViM = Volunteering in Manningham

VMP = Volunteer Management Program

VRC = Volunteer Resource Centres (Boroondara, Eastern, Monash, Knox Community  
Volunteers & Volunteering in Manningham)

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR) Management Forum commissioned the Borderlands Cooperative – via the City of Knox – to develop a Strategic Plan that will provide recommendations for *strengthening the commitment to volunteering in the EMR*, in ways that will support communities, especially the vulnerable, and strengthen the civic participation and social connectedness of residents in the EMR. This was based on an Outcomes' Framework for Volunteering and Civic Participation that was agreed to by participants at a Regional Volunteering Development Workshop held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2007. The four key elements of this relate to:

1. volunteering growth and diversity
2. enhanced volunteering capacity for more sustainable volunteering outcomes
3. volunteering in the region better linked to other relevant sectors
4. increased profile of volunteering and its contribution to the community.

Borderlands commenced work in February 2007, developing a conceptual platform for the project and devising a sampling strategy to select a number of agencies within each of the seven municipalities, assuring a meaningful spread across the various dimensions of volunteering and civic participation/engagement. We have been guided in this endeavour by an Executive Reference Group and a Project Team, both derived from the several municipalities and the Government Departments linked with the project.

We have meanwhile finalised the collection of information having conducted over 250 interviews across the region and have gathered a great variety of written documents - both conceptual and research-based, and local, Victorian, national and international – which we have attempted to make sense of and share a further developed but still rather indicative set of 'fragments' for in this document.

We have distilled the information gathered from the interviews and documents into seven municipal profiles and one EMR profile; we also have summarised the results of the First Regional Volunteering Stakeholders Workshop, held in June and attended by over seventy participants and all these documents (still in draft form) are now accessible on the Borderlands website (<http://www.borderlands.org.au/EMRVCPP.htm>).

The present document is organised as follows:

1. Strategies, Principles & Implementing Sustainable Practices for Strengthening Volunteering & Civic Participation in the EMR
2. Emerging framework towards a conceptual and strategic framework

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<sup>1</sup> We have re-used and updated the introductory statements of the previous document we sent to all those we interviewed for this project and which we have used in the invitation for the first Workshop. Apologies to those who will gain the (wrong) impression that you've seen it all...!

## **Strategies, Principles & Implementing Sustainable Practices for Strengthening Volunteering & Civic Participation in the EMR**

The following tables broadly indicate the kind of strategies that will need to be developed if the principles that project participants have endorsed are to be enacted.

For their implementation, strategies will require to address *different levels*, involving one or a combination of the following:

- State Government (SG) e.g. Department Planning & Community Development (DPCD)
- Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR)
- Volunteer Resource Centres (VRCs) &/or Local Government (LG)
- Non-Governmental Organisations, Community Organisations & groups
- Philanthropy (a potential source of resources that may need to be sought)

Strategies will require variable emphases in terms of what is required in order to implement and sustain them. The last column in each table below indicates this. One to six of the six elements of the sustainability framework for the Strategic Plan are listed here.<sup>2</sup> In brief, the six elements of sustainability are (they will be elaborated more extensively at the workshop):

1. awareness
2. practices
3. relationships & leadership
4. culture of community etc
5. systems & processes
6. resources (human, material, financial, spatial, time)

In Workshop I, we represented visually a typology of volunteering & civic participation, identified here as:

- Care and support volunteering
- Community development/building work
- Activist, advocacy, governance &/or civic service work

Throughout the duration of the project, we have offered for consideration a set of seven operational ‘principles,’ foundational for all action towards and for working with volunteers and they have met with approval by all we have spoken with in interviews and in workshops. We are using them as ‘operational devices’ to organise the needed strategies as shown in the seven tables below, one for each ‘principle’. The last column in the tables lists the sustainability ‘elements’ to be used in the ‘implementation’ conversations at the workshop.

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<sup>2</sup> We refer project participants to the draft document titled *Building a Conceptual & Strategic Framework for Strengthening Volunteering & Civic Participation in the EMR* that was circulated before the June Workshop (I) and is also available on the Borderlands website. This document outlines the draft principles, sustainability framework and typologies of volunteering and civic participation.

**Principle 1: That the interests & needs of people as volunteers are recognised, valued & supported.**

Levels of action: <b>DPCD</b>	<b>EMR</b>	<b>VRC &amp;/or LG</b>	<b>NGOs &amp; Community Organisations</b>	<b>Implementing &amp; Sustaining Strategies</b>
<p>-Recognises importance of and commits to supporting community &amp; volunteering as part of public service role</p> <p>-Present CD workers in EMR unit each assigned a municipality to work directly with LG/VRC-based CD workers ie as a 'human resource' providing support &amp; facilitation for VRC/LG initiatives eg cultural audit, corporate volunteering, assist with NGO/CO liaison</p>		<p>-Need to audit interests &amp; needs of people/groups re who is &amp; is not supported (ie investigate barriers)</p> <p>-Dedicated CD worker (to support volunteering &amp; civic participation) within each LG</p> <p>-Develop representative &amp; consultative bodies for each VRC/LGA to meet annually eg re audit</p> <p>-Profile people as 'active citizens' in regular LG newspaper (ie across all types of civic participation)</p> <p>-Induction to civic participation within municipality for all/new residents (welcome kit)</p>	<p>-MMIG, MIC, AMES, ERLS etc advise re cultural audit process</p> <p>-Provide information to LG/VRC re people's involvement in civic activity</p>	<p>Awareness</p> <p>Practices</p> <p>Relationships</p> <p>Culture</p> <p>Systems &amp; processes</p> <p>Resources</p>

**Principle 2: That the *diversity* of people’s motivations & interests in volunteering are acknowledged & supported across all types of volunteering & civic participation.**

<b>Levels of action:</b> <b>DPCD</b>	<b>EMR</b>	<b>VRC &amp;/or LG</b>	<b>NGOs &amp; Community Organisations</b>	<b>Implementing &amp; Sustaining Strategies</b>
-Ongoing citizenship campaign re volunteering & civic activity (large scale promotion)		-Broaden identity of VRCs to include needs & interests of all  -Broaden purview of VRCs to include civic participation across all 3 types of volunteering  -Broaden involvement of orgs across all 3 types of volunteering & civic engagement (as in #1 minimally)	-Capitalise on diverse motivations ie civic participation is not ‘just helping’ but extends to co-producing eg businesses assist NGOs & COs pro bono (creative ‘corporate volunteering’)	Awareness  Practices  Relationships  Culture  Systems & processes  Resources

**Principle 3: That inclusiveness of the volunteer pool (to reflect the diversity of residents in the EMR) is actively supported.**

<b>Levels of action:</b> <b>DPCD</b>	<b>EMR</b>	<b>VRC &amp;/or LG</b>	<b>NGOs &amp; Community Organisations</b>	<b>Implementing &amp; Sustaining Strategies</b>
<p>-Included in DPCD guidelines on: inclusive policies &amp; practices, equity &amp; access</p> <p>-Translation/presentation of information &amp; training material into languages/pictures for VRCs/LG to distribute</p> <p>-CD worker to provide support to VRC/LG CD initiatives</p>		<p>-Inform community about community demographics</p> <p>-Maintain &amp; build links with MMIGP, MIC, AMES, ethno-specific communities, disability groups, ERLS etc</p> <p>-Provide cultural awareness training &amp; resources</p> <p>-Develop (or assist others) to create new opportunities for civic engagement eg creation of social support groups for specific populations (eg MVRC’s elderly Chinese support group)</p> <p>-Present public image of organisation as inclusive eg pictures/signs are unambiguous &amp; clear, ‘welcome’ signs in languages of community etc</p>	<p>-Development of inclusive practices &amp; attitudes</p> <p>-Recognise as an equity &amp; access issue</p> <p>-Undertake targeted recruitment strategies</p> <p>-Establish links with other organisations where access into communities of people not represented within their own organisation can be nurtured</p>	<p>Awareness</p> <p>Practices</p> <p>Relationships</p> <p>Culture</p> <p>Systems &amp; processes</p> <p>Resources</p>

**Principle 4: That building reciprocity & relationships between people is an essential component of civic participation & volunteering.**

Levels of action: <b>DPCD</b>	<b>EMR</b>	<b>VRC &amp;/or LG</b>	<b>NGOs &amp; Community Organisations</b>	<b>Implementing &amp; Sustaining Strategies</b>
<p>-Supplies guidelines for funding etc in 'plain English' &amp; in consultation with MAV</p> <p>-Key role of CD worker in each municipality is to support VRC/LG in building relationships &amp; maintaining networks eg re co-production/corporate volunteering</p> <p>-DPCD to engage in community education of for-profit sector about ways of helping communities by offering services pro bono (corporate volunteering/co-production)</p>		<p>-Conducts volunteering fairs/expos, meetings, parties etc.</p> <p>-Support development of buddy/mentor volunteering with clear description of target population</p> <p>-LGs assist VRCs with development of co-production &amp; corporate volunteering opportunities that COs, NGOs &amp; VRCs need (eg VRCs need linkage with economic development section of LGs?)</p>	<p>-Participate in fairs/expos, meetings, parties etc.</p> <p>-Develop buddy/mentor systems</p> <p>-Develop co-production opportunities eg sharing volunteers</p> <p>-Indicate need for specific skills to VRC/LG (that might be fulfilled via corporate volunteering eg help with marketing or financial advise)</p>	<p>Awareness</p> <p>Practices</p> <p>Relationships</p> <p>Culture</p> <p>Systems &amp; processes</p> <p>Resources</p>

**Principle 5: That the interests & needs of community organisations and groups are recognised, valued & supported.**

<b>Levels of action:</b> <b>DPCD</b>	<b>EMR</b>	<b>VRC &amp;/or LG</b>	<b>NGOs &amp; Community Organisations</b>	<b>Implementing &amp; Sustaining Strategies</b>
-SG to explore personal accident coverage for volunteers in organisations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Invite to regular workshops eg host 'good practice forums'</li> <li>-Produce newsletters or have regular sections in the LG newspaper</li> <li>-Develops a representative body in the LGA re volunteering &amp; civic participation</li> <li>-LG undertakes coordinating role in exploring personal accident coverage for volunteers in organisations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Develop participatory structure of organisation</li> <li>-Encourage use of position descriptions for volunteer positions, where appropriate, &amp; identification of specific skills required (see #4)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness</li> <li>Practices</li> <li>Relationships</li> <li>Culture</li> <li>Systems &amp; processes</li> <li>Resources</li> </ul>

**Principle 6: That cooperation, resource & information sharing and coordination between organisations, groups, VRCs, local and state government is encouraged.**

<b>Levels of action:</b> <b>DPCD</b>	<b>EMR</b>	<b>VRC &amp;/or LG</b>	<b>NGOs &amp; Community Organisations</b>	<b>Implementing &amp; Sustaining Strategies</b>
<p>-DPCD responsible for establishing an operational link with regional SG managers so there is a joint process within the EMR</p> <p>-Explores establishment of region-wide training calendar and website</p> <p>-VRCs funded by SG/LG to be inclusive of all civic activity</p> <p>-DPCD to advocate that ViM be recognised as VRC &amp; network member</p> <p>-DPCD to advocate to FaCSIA that all VRCs should be eligible for VMP funding</p>	<p>-Regular meetings with VRCs &amp; LGs to reflect, exchange information &amp; strategies on volunteering &amp; civic participation, and share resources</p>	<p>-Attend annual meeting to ensure resource sharing, information exchange, cooperation and have transparency</p> <p>-Establish (if not already) municipal-based consultative group to act as conduit of information etc &amp; means by which short-term, issues-based working groups can be formed as necessary</p> <p>-make available standard resources on governance (LGs?)</p> <p>-VRCs continue to strengthen role as clearing house re volunteering &amp; civic participation</p>	<p>-Inform VRCs/LGs re research project findings eg CHAOS Volunteers in Community Houses, MMIG's volunteering program, MKM/OECIA Volunteer Project, EMR HACC CALD volunteering project</p> <p>-Share resources between organisations (co-production) eg large with small, share volunteers in 'like-minded' organisations</p>	<p>Awareness</p> <p>Practices</p> <p>Relationships</p> <p>Culture</p> <p>Systems &amp; processes</p> <p>Resources</p>

**Principle 7: That localism is encouraged.**

<b>Levels of action:</b>  <b>DPCD</b>	<b>EMR</b>	<b>VRC &amp;/or LG</b>	<b>NGOs &amp; Community Organisations</b>	<b>Implementing &amp; Sustaining Strategies</b>
-Place-based policy & programs (eg NH renewal as place-based) where appropriate		-Each LGA has a VRC or an established CD worker for supporting volunteering & civic participation  -Responding to existing diversity & local areas & respective needs, interests etc		Awareness  Practices  Relationships  Culture  Systems & processes  Resources

## Emerging Conceptual Framework

Trying to bring together two concepts which have not traditionally been thought to be in an obvious relationship – *volunteering* and *civic participation* – and linking them with additional notions of *community strengthening* and with the potential *roles of governments* at all levels is not a simple exercise. Practitioners (workers), program coordinators, funding bodies, governments and, not least, those who offer their energies and time themselves - whatever name we give them, e.g. volunteers, activists, ‘members’, carers... – will have very different perspectives on and expectations of all these concepts. Dialogue – if it happens – is often marked by misunderstandings and seemingly incompatible expectations. Whilst the project was not resourced to survey volunteers or those engaged/participating in civic ‘matters’, those we did interview were – in their specific ways – ‘expert witnesses’ to what is meant with - and practiced as - volunteering and civic participation. The obvious practical as well as conceptual interest shown by all those who participated has been very encouraging.

We were also encouraged by the *strategic ‘conclusions’* from the ‘*Tracking what works: Voluntary activity, community strengthening and local government*’ project (2006, Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights, Deakin University and Municipal Association of Victoria). Addressed at Local Councils and, therefore, eminently applicable to our present project, the authors suggest the following elements as parts of a strategic program:

- Build a *conceptual* and *strategic* framework for approaching voluntary activity (and civic participation - BL)
- Articulate a *working definition* of voluntary activity (and civic participation - BL)
- Develop a *working definition* of community and community strengthening
- Investigate the *specific changes* and *challenges* that affect voluntary activity (and civic participation - BL) in local communities
- Explore *new thinking* on voluntary activity (and civic participation - BL)
- Draw upon *existing knowledge*, experience and resources
- *Avoid one-size-fits-all approaches*
- Share ideas and strategies through *networks*.

In a similar spirit and quite agreeing with the general tendency of the above suggestions, we offered a pictorial scheme which attempted to conceptualise volunteering and civic participation and which can also be accessed on the Borderlands’ website. This conceptual scheme has then been critically examined in the course of the first workshop and we have incorporated participants’ reactions and feedback in our *Stakeholders June 2007 Workshop Summary* (pp. 4 – 8). Finally, early on in the project, we produced a conceptual paper which included several historical and conceptual references to the various dimensions this project intends to integrate and strategically utilise to *strengthen volunteering in the EMR*. Parts thereof have been shared with participants during the first workshop and we intend to also make an updated version accessible on the website after the second workshop.

For those of you who are interested in *joining or following the more conceptual debates* linked with this project, the last six pages of this document briefly summarise some historical changes in the ways in which ‘volunteering,’ ‘community development/building’ and ‘citizenship/civic engagement’ have been dealt with in Victoria and beyond over the last few decades. Many of you, readers, will doubtlessly recall some of the events associated with those changes and we think them important to be ‘re-called’ as they have shown the conceptual, strategic and practical vagaries associated with a project like this one. The last pages re-visit some of the more foundational ideas and their origins as they relate to the themes central to this project.

Rather than run down definitions of the several conceptual domains, it may be more useful to reflect on the changing historical contexts in which they emerged and finally obtained the various meanings in which they are used today. We refer to issue **4 (3) of the *New Community Quarterly*** for further elaborations on these concepts and will restrict ourselves here to some brief notes (we will bring some copies (at \$5) to the workshop for those of you interested; several contributions and more extensive footnotes elaborate on the historical evolution of some of the concepts mentioned here).

### ***Volunteering***

1. Starting with the first of the two concepts central to the EMR project, *volunteering* derives from the Latin *voluntarius* (pertaining to (free) will (*voluntas*, from the verb *velle*, to will/want), its meaning extends to notions of deliberate, intentional, wanted action and – much more recently – action/behaviour engaged in *out of ‘choice’*. It is often juxtaposed to notions of action to which one is ‘forced to’, or which one ‘has to’ engage in. As it is used now in a general environment of – quasi obligatory - waged labour, on the one hand, and of having to account – to a degree – of what one does with one’s (private) possessions (i.e. paying taxes and other ‘obligatory’ transactions), it refers to what you do unencumbered by these obligations – even sometimes in spite of them.

2. ‘*Voluntary action*’ started its conceptual ‘career’ in a social-historical environment where most people – as individuals - really did not even think of ‘wanting’ to have any choice about their social obligations and commitments to (and dependency on) the *commons*. Increasingly, in certain (socio-political) environments (aristocracies, emerging urban settings), the *tensions* between (social) obligation and (individual) ‘voluntary’ pursuits became possible and morally/emotionally experienced as such. The loss of the ‘commons’ (around the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in England – see the ‘Enclosure Laws’) together with the emergence of the industrial ‘revolution’ represented the beginning of what the early social scientists and latter-day social philosophers witnessed and interpreted as profound changes in social commitment and solidarity, as the creation of *anomie* (Durkheim) and as the shift from ‘*Gemeinschaft*’ (lit. *being and doing in common*, often rather wrongly translated as ‘community’) to ‘*Gesellschaft*’ (lit. *being and doing as ‘associates’*, emphasising the personally ‘deliberate’ nature of belonging to a social ‘construct’ and often very wrongly translated as ‘society’, sometimes better as ‘association’).

This shift was described by others (Mauss, Simmel) as the erosion of the ‘*gift relationship*’, of relationships based on reciprocity, (lasting) duration and shared place and sacrifice of the ‘personal’ towards the maintenance of the collective. Early (social) psychologists often would describe it – with Karl Marx - in terms of *alienation*, with the early psychoanalysts about evenly split between those who saw the human predicaments they tried to deal with as ‘individual-internal’ and those who saw them as ‘socially caused’.

3. Meanwhile, the emergent influence of a *capitalist economy* and of *nation states*, the power relationships and processes which conditioned the ‘shape’ they adopted and the roles they assumed and the increasing need to regulate local and – indeed – personal lives and relationships through them (and we won’t bore you with another load of Foucault or some such analyst) led to the historical emergence of what we have come to call systems of *secondary sociality* (relations of the market & the state i.e. institutionally defined in terms of status & roles). Suffice it to say that, in order to replace and modify certain functions traditionally associated with the survival needs of systems of *primary sociality* (relations within family – extended and ‘nuclear’ -, kin, neighbours, friends, communities), major institutional arrangements have emerged which are now expected to ‘*take care*’ of these functions, thus ‘freeing up’ human (labour) energy to spend in the new emerging forms of assuring our survival as individuals and (increasingly ‘nuclearising’) primary units.

4. It also created the ‘in between’ spaces in which welfare states, educational and health systems, etc., came to be established and grow massively, modified under the operative influence (and interests) of professionals (social workers, teachers, doctors...) and within programmatic and ideological frameworks called community development, civic participation, school-parent councils, neighbourhood watch, etc.

*This helps us understand that volunteering and ‘civic participation and engagement’ cannot only be understood in a simplistic political-economic sense as ‘not paid’ human activity, but as undertaken, intended and ‘embodied’ by people who, out of free will, commitment and a sense of responsibility to the ‘commons’, seek to (re-)create, maintain and sustain ties and relationships of primary sociality.*

Much of volunteering/‘civic engagement’ occurs in the ‘*in-between*’ space(s) between (the institutions of) primary and secondary sociality. Relationships in volunteering/civic engagement can be fraught depending on the institutional context in (or ‘against’) which they occur but typically weighted towards secondary sociality (the market and the state). There exists an emerging sense that we need to restore systems and processes of primary sociality if we’re to nurture ‘true’ civic participation and engagement as illustrated in the following point

5. “*Since the mid-1990s, social capital has rapidly become the dominant framework in Australia within which volunteering has been interpreted,*” and the “*increased interest in volunteering*” is said to be linked to growing interest in “*debates surrounding social capital and civil society*”. Our research thus far has revealed that the bulk of ‘*care*’

volunteering (our first ‘type’ of ‘volunteering/civic participation’ as presented in our previous documents now on the web) still very much occurs within a more ‘traditional’ conceptual and pragmatic framework and which is, as such, also reinforced by the volunteering clearing houses and resourcing bodies (see Jennifer Wilkinson’s & Michael Bittman’s 2002 *Volunteering: the Human Face of Democracy* Sydney: SPRC). Whilst the *discussion* and the *intellectual debates* (e.g. Putnam, Cox) have ‘moved on’, it seems that the pragmatic and organisational realisation of ‘traditional’ volunteering still are very clearly located within a societal realm until the mid-nineties severely criticised by the ‘left’ as the ‘*exploitation of free or cheap labour*’ whilst being promoted by the ‘right’ as *benevolence or charity*. Note also that critiques of the notion of ‘*social capital*’ have been furious and fast (Mowbray in NCQ (vol 2 - 3 2004, Barbara Arneil’s 2006 *Diverse Communities: The problem with social capital* UK: CUP) and continue apace.

### ***Citizenship, civic engagement/participation***

*Civic* engagement relates back to the Latin interpretation – *civitas* - of the originally Greek concept of the *polis*, the city, around which the early notions of citizenship and the set of obligations and rights entwined with this ‘state of being’ (which was often contrasted with ‘barbarism’...) evolved. Via the medieval European cities, it evolved into notions of ‘modern’ citizenship of a nation-state, affording certain rights and obligations to ‘citizens’ (however unequally allocated!) in the political as well as ‘private’ domain. The loss of a sense of political participation in the present ‘post-modern’, globalisation and mass-displacement epoch, however, with decisions being made on an ever-larger scale, seemed to question the relevance of the nation-state, its associated citizenship and the actions commensurate with it. Compensating for the loss of participation in the established political and economic spheres, it was thought that a ‘*third sector*’ (and an associated ‘third way’) would open up opportunities for civic engagement, filling in the space ‘between’ the formal or ‘public’ sectors of government and the ‘official’ economy; that third sector is the space in which volunteering also finds its main area of deployment.

“*One of the notions that seems to have crept up on us in recent times is the concept of citizenship*”, Sue Kenny wrote in 1997 in the *Community Quarterly*. It certainly was conceived of as an antidote to the (perceived) ongoing erosion of rights, the explosive nature of the spread of ‘economic rationalism’ and as intimately linked with the participatory notions inherent in community development. A raft of new initiatives – equally evolving from universities and funded research projects – reconnected with a tradition started forty years earlier, attempting to develop ‘measures’ of citizenship and citizen involvement as a *counterweight* to the narrow focus on ‘economic’ indicators as appropriately ‘measuring’ and thus representing the wealth and health of a society.

As the community ‘concept’ entered the conversations again around 2000, the citizenship and community discourses seemed to partly merge – unwittingly reinforcing the top-down sense associated with the newly implemented programs of community building/strengthening, etc... Nevertheless, the discussion about ‘citizen involvement’ – as it had been used in the 80s and 90s (see, for example, Peter Beresford’s and Suzy Croft’s 1993 *Citizen Involvement: A practical guide for change* Hong Kong: Macmillan)

– had a much more ‘*direct*’ concern with *people’s participation in the decision-making of governments and authorities* and sat much more centrally within the more activist conception of community development as the writings of that period reveal (see also Stuart White’s 2003 *The Civic Minimum*). It seems that the merging of volunteering, social capital and civic engagement also may signify a de-politicisation of all three...

### ***Community (development, building, strengthening, etc)***

Many in Victoria will still remember how ‘*community*’ ‘disappeared’ from the government’s agenda (and funding priorities) during the 90s under the privatisation, economic rationalism and managerialism policies introduced and reinforced during that time. Resistance to the systematic erosion of community was slow in coming, but when it happened it carried names like the “*People Together Project*” and the “*Purple Sage Project*” and as the new Labor Government moved in by 1999/2000, much of the memory of the Community Development tradition from the seventies onwards had gone dormant. The revival of community as ***building/strengthening and capacity building*** with generous sprinklings of ***social capital*** then occurred with Government resources and rhetorical support – but still somehow failed and continues to fail - to reconnect with its more activist previous versions.

Traditionally, many grassroots community-based activities (especially in sports, recreation, churches, environmental ‘maintenance’, and so on) had been often operating ‘outside’ of the purview of these approaches and, again, were dealt with according to the ideological ‘divide’, the *left* condemning them as conservative, reactionary, adaptive, pacifying, etc; the *right* adopting them as ‘*locality development*’ activities (to use a rather old framework introduced by J. Rothman in the early 60s in the US). Again, one has to say that the conceptual development of this approach has been rather minimally ‘consummated,’ because of the gradual disappearance of educational programs from academic institutions, the temporary disappearance of publications about it and, some would say, the ‘top-down’ way in which the nomenclature has been (re-)introduced and its implementation has been micro-managed.

Community *activism* – as it always has – keeps changing its ‘face’, ‘targets’ and modalities; the traditional continua continue to exist; from:

- ‘not-in-my-backyard’ via ‘saving native forests and whales’ to ‘saving the world and its inhabitants from disaster’ signifying the *ecological-community* linkages;
- ‘neighbourhood conflict resolution/restorative practices’ via ‘anti-war demonstrations’ to internet-based international movements for peace;
- ‘sausage-sizzle and bake-sale-based fundraising and self-help/cooperative or membership-based’ and resourced activism via government-granted organising and resourcing to ‘philanthropy-based’ movements and projects (as in *Our Community* approaches)
- ‘place-based’ activism and activities via coordinatory/connectivity creating processes to international community-to-community solidarity...

...they all still have their place, even if it sometimes feels and appears as if the old traditions have somehow disappeared and have become overshadowed by the newer and flashier 'stuff', including those forms of activism and volunteering one does not need to get out of one's favourite and personal lounge-chair for – and which are still referred to as 'world spanning' or 'global', 'collective' and 'out there'... The face of 'community' indeed keeps transforming as we speak and – hopefully – 'do'....

### ***Governance, relationships between local/grassroots/community life and activities and governments***

It would be remiss to not mention the appearance of the concept of *governance* into the debates, discussions and practices as witnessed over the years, if only to indicate the importance of dealing more explicitly and reflectively with the *relationship between the several levels of government and local practice, living and working and the activities included in the purview of this project*. We will certainly have to deal with these matters when discussing *strategies of resourcing* the various programs, activities and projects suggested to cover the core of the present project.

Just to initiate some reflection for further discussion about the development of future relationships between 'local' and 'up-scale' levels of government – or to better understand the relationship between the above briefly presented 'layers' of primary and secondary 'sociality', we introduce ***subsidiarity*** as a concept which has recently been having some airing in policy circles beyond continental Europe, where it has been part of the political framework for several centuries.

The ***Subsidiarity Principle*** “states that higher levels of government should only perform functions that cannot be effectively and efficiently undertaken by lower levels of government... [it] might involve a [constitutional] provision... that, unless amended by a referendum, decision making and administration is to be delegated to the most local practical level.” (Coghill cited in Lowell 2006: 5 *Localising Human Services*, Kew: Australian Scholarly Publishing) *Subsidiarity* - as a principle dividing responsibilities between state and 'civil society' (including churches, NGOs and levels of government) - has a long history in continental Europe, especially since the 1801 'Concordat' between Roman-Catholic Pope Pius VII and French Emperor Napoleon, and which had its legal ramifications in the French Constitution, which – in turn - became the prototype for most continental constitutions. Importantly, it still forms the basis for arrangements around service delivery in welfare, schools, recreational services, support for non-governmental organisations and initiatives across Europe and it posits that 'super-imposed' or 'up-scaled' government bodies or powers should NOT take over the roles and functions sufficiently fulfilled by more localised (the German “*Bürger nah*” or “*close-to-the-citizen*” expresses it well) or by informal, non-governmental or '*primary sociality*' institutions, groups and bodies.

The notion of '*subside*' refers to the '*holding back*' attitude suggested before for central governments, whilst the notion of '*subsidise*' (note that both words derive from the same Latin verb, *subsistere*) brings to the fore the continuing role of central and state

governments and their institutions in *resourcing* the ‘bodies’ who fulfil these functions. Indeed, central governments have the power to raise revenue as well as the role to ***distribute that revenue equitably and justly*** across their territory and the various groups of citizens according to their needs; it stands to reason, however, that this should not necessarily lead to assume that they would be the ‘best’ to deliver whatever is being ‘distributed’. Interesting to note that the UK Government also votes on a ‘*subsidy*’ to be granted to the Royal House for the maintenance of its ‘duties’ and of the infrastructure the latter require.

The 1981 Webster’s Third International Dictionary calls *subsidiarity* a “***theory in sociology: functions which subordinate or local organizations perform effectively belong more properly to them than to a dominant central organisation***” (Vol. III, p. 2279). Importantly also, Lowell points out that “*In a contemporary context, subsidiarity has a higher profile as a ‘new political resource designed to protect local interests within the new internationalization of government’ and features prominently in the European Union legislation*” (ibid. p. 5 and quoting Fletcher 1999: 23 “European Integration in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Federalism and Subsidiarity as the Framework vs Regionalism and Decentralisation at the Margins, Canberra: ANU)

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The above considerations would give additional credence to the notion of a (new?) ***partnership*** between the ‘state’ (or the several layers of government) and the ‘community’ (including – especially - those involved in ‘volunteering’ and ‘civic participation’) as being about ***adequate forms of reciprocity***, whereby the latter are expressions of the democratic will of the people, and the former expressions of the enabling and distributive roles of (democratically elected) governments (see Wilkinson & Bittman).

The great potential of the present project would then consist in moving towards a renewed and vigorous relationship between state and community (and, by implication, local government which is the level of government closest to where people ‘live’ their primary sociality) by

- bringing back notions of ‘public service’ by government to community and the social ties that engender it (rather than imagining that relationship as a ‘customer – provider’ one).
- giving greater credence to ties of primary sociality within organisations & community whilst recognising basic human rights and opening up to a more cooperative federalism rather than the usual coercive model, favouring the centre and – consequently – systems of secondary sociality.
- developing new forms of ‘trust’ (an important ingredient of social capital) between those living and operating (in) institutions of primary sociality and the state/government.