Opportunity Spaces

Community Engagement in the Planning, Use and Governance of Shared School Facilities

Project Final Report

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Project Introduction

This is the final report and summary of the Australian Research Council Linkage scheme project *Opportunity Spaces - Community Engagement in the Planning, Use and Governance of Shared School Facilities* (LP110200550). The project was undertaken between 2012 and 2015 by researchers based at RMIT University and the University of Canberra, in partnership with the Victorian Department of Education and Training (the Department).

The research was undertaken during a period of significant capital investment in school and community infrastructure, framed by cross-cutting policy interest in the development of schools as community hubs. Policy in this area pursued a range of objectives, including reform of teaching and learning, engagement with community and early childhood services, economic and infrastructure efficiencies, community building, and school-community partnerships. Policy settings also sought to encourage innovation and experimentation through new design concepts, procurement processes and facility management models for schools.

The research project conceptualised school facilities as both physical and digital. In doing this we sought to move beyond a reductive focus on school infrastructure as building and grounds, acknowledging that increased investment in school digital networks and computers called for an exploration of the opportunities and risks of sharing virtual spaces.

The original outcomes specified for the project were:

(1) the identification of optimal levels of community engagement in the planning, use and governance of shared-use facilities and

(2) a removal of conceptual and practical obstacles to innovation in the development of educational and service partnerships and the sustainable management of local education and community service precincts.

Methodologically, the project combined analysis of Australian and international developments in the use of schools as community facilities, with field-based research involving three recently built educational facilities in Melbourne and regional Victoria that operationalised the shared schools concept in different ways.

1.2 Project Settings

The policy environment in which the research was conducted changed significantly over the life of the project, impacting on the framing and findings of the research.

The original project emphasis on 'community buy in' was set during a period of rapid and scaled capital investment in schools, at state and national government level. This
reflected concern that school regeneration projects, and capital investment through the *Building the Education Revolution* scheme, were rolled out in the face of some community opposition, and posed challenges for coordinated planning. As controversy over school regeneration and building projects eased, the initial research emphasis on community support for school renewal projects became less urgent, both as a political and policy issue, and as a driver of research. The question of how local partnerships involving infrastructure projects are developed, managed and sustained beyond the project build has emerged as the more fundamental issue over the course of the research.

**1.3 Key Findings**

In line with this focus on partnerships rather than projects, we drew on recent literature on partnership or network governance to develop an evaluation schema to interpret fieldwork data that form the project core, and frame the key research findings.

Faced with the difficulty of evaluating programs where inputs and outcomes may be widely separated in time, the literature has focussed on partnership effectiveness to identify barriers and challenges for achieving long-term partnership goals. Four partnership effectiveness indicators structure the key findings of the Opportunity Spaces project. This summary focuses on systemic or high-level findings and recommendations. The body of the report and the project working papers provide further discussion of the research data and findings at both site and system levels.

**1.3.1 Governance and Leadership**

- **Recommendation:** Select a partnership model that best fits local circumstances.

Partnership typologies can be broadly divided into centralised or top-down models, and decentralised or bottom-up models. A centralised model may be better suited to a greenfield site, where timely infrastructure provision is paramount and the community is imagined rather than pre-existing. A decentralised model is oriented towards local democracy, capacity building and the development of a shared vision. A hybrid approach, where local and state authority planning processes follow a community planning or visioning exercise, can provide a robust framework that balances local engagement and decision-making and managerial or project management structures. This model is particularly appropriate to development projects in built-up urban areas with established communities and public land use pressures.

- **Recommendation:** Prioritise partnership documentation and formal agreement-making.

Partnerships and service delivery may be vulnerable if working relationships, tacit knowledge and informal agreements are not documented and formalised. The public-private partnership (PPP) we studied demands considerably less ‘partnership work’ from the school staff than is required of the staff in our two non-PPP projects, minimising role and resource conflicts and enabling prioritisation of school leadership.
The research shows a demonstrated need to close the gap between the resources that are committed to the partnership work in PPP and non-PPP projects.

- Recommendation: School principals or leaders should not project manage school regeneration projects.

Our field evidence adds to Department research pointing to the workload burden associated with combined role of educational reform and new capital works projects. The PPP process we examined provided a model where project management and school leadership roles were clearly separated.

- Recommendation: The schools PPP network should be extended or reformatted to encompass a 'shared-schools’ brief.

The schools PPP network established with the first Victorian schools PPP tranche provides a model for the wider development of school-community infrastructure networks that can share information and identify best practice for dealing with operational issues such as risk and programming.

- Recommendation: Review the flexibility of PPP contracts to facilitate new policy responses in dynamic service environments.

The scale, timing and structure of PPP processes may conflict with the decision-making and budgeting processes of local authorities, and make it difficult for community-level organisations to participate in planning and service delivery. PPPs may deliver infrastructure projects more quickly and cost effectively than alternative procurement models, but their timetable may also conflict with the more deliberative and negotiated process of assembling cross-jurisdictional partners in the field of community and educational services. The certainty required for investment in the PPP may be perceived as a form of ‘lock in’ by local authority and community organisations working in dynamic and risk-exposed areas such as children’s services.

1.3.2 Resource Allocation

- Recommendation: Refine methodologies for estimating demand and assessing the long-term operating costs of shared-use facilities and apply them in all shared-use settings.

The Department contract covering the first tranche of the schools PPP includes an allowance for the out-of-hours use of school facilities by the community. This is a welcome and, to our knowledge, novel development. As such, it highlights that many other schools that share facilities with surrounding communities lack full cost accounting and resourcing for this arrangement. It also calls for the new community demand estimates to be monitored over a period of several years and refined or adjusted as required.
Recommendation: Resource and expand the role of infrastructure brokers to include school/community precinct regeneration in established areas.

Officials working as regeneration officers or infrastructure brokers can play a key role in project and partnership consultation and coordination, but this role may be discontinuous or cease with the completion of capital works. Our analysis suggests there would be value in extending and adapting this role, particularly to apply to: a) established school or urban precincts, and b) the post-project or operational phase.

Recommendation: Invest in quality and purpose

Our research suggests that local communities are sensitive to a range of symbolic and functional aspects of infrastructure investment, including the quality of facility design and build. One of the stated benefits of the PPP model is its investment in upfront build quality to yield long-term savings in operational and maintenance costs. Adopting a whole-of-life perspective has been a challenge for local authorities, which are typically under political and financial pressures to economise on capital outlays, compounding the difficulty of funding future asset maintenance. State-level leadership in educational infrastructure partnerships, including consideration of additional special-purpose funding support for local authorities, is needed to encourage investment in quality facilities.

1.3.3 Communications

Recommendation: Clarify the purpose and processes of consultation.

While the public legitimacy of consultation processes is important, more consultation is not always better, particularly if the processes confuse public input and policy determination. Consultation exercises need to be mapped against policy and project aims, informing decision-making that balances private interests and broader conceptions of the public good.

Recommendation: Communicate in plain language.

Experimentation and innovation in the provision of school and community facilities and services should not be couched in language that is pitched to prospective project sponsors, but likely to confuse or alienate community stakeholders. One of our field sites provides an example of how an attempt to enliven the image of the public library with a new title generated confusion that undermined community confidence and required the investment of substantial public relations resources to rectify.

Recommendation: Anticipate and manage strong emotional responses to change

The issue of ‘ownership’ emerged as a key area of contest over school redevelopment and shared school-community facilities. Schools and schooling evoke strong positive and negative emotions. Schools may also be the site of significant community equity, in
the form of financial contributions and voluntary labour. Governance and communication strategies need to build on a framework that treats emotion as a normal and often legitimate response to policy decisions, acknowledging strong feelings of affiliation or passionate commitment but channelling them in effective deliberation processes.

1.3.4 Aligning philosophy and practice

- Recommendation: Involve state government and local government officials in educational planning.

For at least one of our local authority informants, the development process that brought together state-level educational planning, and local-level service and spatial planning, was a unique and refreshing experience. While this may be an established planning methodology in new growth areas, for example through the precinct structure planning process, the exemption of state educational authorities from local planning regulations means this form of collaboration may not be commonplace in established areas.

- Recommendation: Consider the possibility that devolved decision-making may undermine consistent policy and practice.

While the research evidence indicates that local authorities are supportive of shared infrastructure, the lead times of local authority planning and investment, and the long-lived characteristics of infrastructure, generates a strong desire for policy consistency in this area. Our data suggest that local officials are wary that renewed emphasis on school-based decision-making may mean ‘the fences will go back up’ and earlier understandings and commitments will be rescinded or not acted on.

- Recommendation: Build into planning the expectation that schools and community institutions may have significantly different philosophical and programmatic approaches to issues such as access, risk and rights that require articulation and adjustment in operational settings.

The research highlights concerns over heightened risks associated with shared facilities, both physical and digital. While our research shows that some of these concerns may be overstated, there are uncertainties over jurisdictional issues in this area, and underlying tensions between the promotion of community engagement and duty of care standards for students and children. Shared child-care/community centres raise particular concerns in this area.

- Recommendation: Adapt shared use policy to the differences between physical and digital resources.

School digital resources are included in the rubric of shared school assets. However, opening up school networks may be in conflict with current risk settings guiding the use of ICTs in schools, and current solutions favour deployment of separate networks. A
change in approach to the governance of school networks and personal computers and devices would be needed to fully implement the policy aspiration.

- Recommendation: Clarify the status of students as members of a community or public in shared school/community settings.

Increasing development of shared school and community spaces brings into view the fluid identity and entitlements of students. This is most apparent in shared school/community libraries, where school views on student entitlements to library services may be in conflict with the philosophy of public librarianship.

- Recommendation: Give attention in architectural and program design to child protection measures and ‘buffer zones’, amongst other issues, in the development of effective shared childcare/community facilities.

While acknowledging the limitations of our field research in this area, the design and program challenges of a combined community centre and large early childhood education and care (ECEC) facility appear particularly significant. The different risk and access profiles of childcare and community-based programs, and the tendency for large ECEC programs to dominate site functionality, raise questions about the successful alignment of these two areas.

- Recommendation: Set partnership objectives to achieve collaborative outcomes and benefits.

Recent literature argues that a success marker of educational partnerships is the collaborative effect they achieve, or the opportunities or programs that emerge from the new institutional alignment. Educational partnerships should aspire to do something new together, not simply operate standard programs side-by-side.
2. Introduction

2.1 Background

The project emerged from discussions between Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD)\(^1\) officials and researchers then based at Swinburne University of Technology working in the fields of local governance, education policy, community infrastructure and digital ICTs.

The research proposal was framed by rapid state and Commonwealth government investment in school facilities to meet a range policy objectives including educational reform, quality improvement in early childhood care, neighbourhood renewal, community building, coordinated planning and service provision, economic and infrastructure efficiencies, and economic stimulus. A theme unifying these policies, spread across portfolios and jurisdictions, was the repositioning of schools as community hubs, making better use of school infrastructure and generating community engagement with local schools.

DEECD specific concern was to secure “community buy in” for new/regenerated school projects, in an environment of rapid project roll-out and educational change. Policymakers had little Australian-focused research to guide thinking in this area, and neither existing policy nor research addressed school digital resources as shared infrastructure.

The research project was developed as an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage scheme application. The application listed three project objectives:

1. an assessment of Australian and international developments in shared or extended use school facilities, both physical and digital
2. a series of in-depth interviews with key informants on the issues of community engagement in design, development, use and governance of shared-use facilities, implemented at three sites of investigation
3. the development of conceptual models and procedural tools, including on-line tools, to optimise community engagement in shared facility development, use and governance.

Expected outcomes of the project as listed in the ARC application were:

1. the identification of optimal levels of community engagement in the planning, use and governance of shared-use facilities, and
2. a removal of conceptual and practical obstacles to innovation in the development of educational and service partnerships and the sustainable management of local education and community service precincts.

\(^1\) The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development was retitled the Department of Education and Training in 2014.
The original ARC bid of $376,103 (consisting $286,103 of ARC funding and $90,000 of DEECD funding) included funding for a full-time post-doctoral fellow. The ARC awarded the project $90,000, which, along with DEECD’s cash contribution, meant an actual budget of $180,000. The post-doctoral fellow was not funded. The actual project budget meant a scaling back of project ambitions, with the project focussing on site-based field research.

2.2 The Research Context

The original research questions that were posed for the project were influenced by the school reform and building projects initiated by the Victorian Schools Plan (DET 2006) and the Commonwealth Government’s Building the Education Revolution (BER) scheme (Australian Government 2009).

Australia experienced an intense phase of investment in school infrastructure during the last decade. Driven by a combination of Australian and state government programs, school capital investment in Australia grew by 14% annually between 2005/06 and 2008/09 (ACARA 2009). The scale of the reform program - which in Victoria involved up to nine schools in single regeneration projects - together with coordination challenges posed by BER’s concurrent implementation, brought concerns over community acceptance of the changes in train. Evidence to support the existence of community concern was found in protests by several school councils and principals over BER plans (prompting a directive by the Victorian Department of Education Secretary on media commentary), and local-level protest over the plans for a shared school-community library at Colac (one of our field sites).

DEECD’s rhetorical framing of these concerns, expressed in terms of ‘community buy-in’, pointed to a sensitivity that the reform and rebuilding projects were ‘top-down’ or centrally driven, and that at least some communities felt the projects were ‘done to’ rather than ‘done with’ them. Given that policy settings guiding new capital investment were geared towards shared use of the facilities by schools and local communities, the Department sought to learn whether planning and governance processes were optimised to encourage community engagement and support, and to understand more about the appropriate mix of educational and community facilities.

The school reform and regeneration program, most concisely articulated by the Victorian Schools Plan, was influenced by wider policy interests in building human and social capital. This was an underpinning narrative of government in Victoria during the early 2000s, creating new rationales, governance structures and programs focussed on place-based investment. Reform in five major policy areas contributed to this emerging narrative:

- spatial: area-based regeneration and neighbourhood renewal
- educational: school reform encompassing school closures and mergers, redesign of learning spaces, new teaching practices, introduction of digital technologies, and partnership with parents and local communities
● social and labour market: a focus on ‘best start’ family support and the quality of long-day child care, with attendant discussion of labour market productivity through increased female participation

● infrastructural: focusing on economic and service efficiencies of coordinated infrastructure provision, particularly in new suburbs

● governance: embrace of ‘joined up’ or partnership governance to tackle complex social problems and ‘silo’ responses of bureaucratic government.

Consistent with the literature on the dynamics of recent educational policy and politics (Labaree 2010, Ball 2008), the policy environment with which this project engaged changed over the life of the project, impacting on the framing and findings of the research. Changes included

● educational policy change from centrally driven capital investment based around a regeneration theme to a policy emphasis on devolution and educational partnerships

● technological change from fixed line digital infrastructure and central provision of educational network (Ultranet), to a wireless, mobile and bring-your-own-device (BYOD) environment, with school-based communication networks

● demographic changes in Melbourne, placing continued pressure on infrastructure provision in outer urban areas and bringing renewed focus on educational and community service provision in inner/middle metropolitan areas

● increased use of public-private partnerships (PPP) for capital construction and maintenance of schools and community infrastructure.

As a consequence, the initial research focus on 'community buy in' for shared use facilities became less urgent, both as a political and policy issue and as a driver of research. The question of how local partnerships involving infrastructure projects are developed, managed and sustained beyond the project build, has emerged in the course of the research as the more fundamental issue.

2.2.1 Recent policy frameworks

This section moves from a general discussion of policy influences above, to examine the specific trajectory of policy in Victoria between the years 2003 and 2015.

The relationship between schools, parents and communities has been a central concern of Victorian education policy since the establishment of the public education system in 1872, although that concern has on occasion sought to discourage close ties between school and community (McShane et al. 2013).

The Victorian Schools Plan, an Australian Labor Party platform paper, was developed as a key policy document after the 2006 election. It focuses on the online environment as the locus of parental engagement, with the new Ultranet platform forecast to “[e]nable parents to become full partners in their child’s education” (Australian Labor Party 2006:2).

The formation in 2007 of DEECD reflected an international trend towards more intensive policy engagement with early childhood education and care (ECEC), but, as this report details, created new policy, planning and funding challenges for the department in an area where it had not had strong jurisdiction. DEECD and the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) combined to release a guide to shared facility partnerships, suggesting better utilisation of existing school facilities brought social and economic benefits (DEECD 2007). The Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development summarised the convergent trajectory of policy thus:

> We will promote schools and other children’s centres as community hubs, through co-location and integration of services and increased community use of schools. (DEECD 2008a:31)

In 2011 the Minister for Education in the Baillieu Liberal government (2010–2013) released a policy statement identifying school-community integration and local decision-making as core policy principles, and committed the Department to brokering local partnerships (DEECD 2011).

This emphasis on devolution was confirmed in a subsequent “compact” between the Department and schools, which also introduced the prospect of sharing digital as well as physical infrastructure by indicating that the Department would “[s]eek opportunities to share sites, facilities and ICT systems with early childhood providers, community learning organisations, local government and other schools” (DEECD 2012:7).

Clarifying this policy trajectory also enables us to identify gaps in policy associated with shared schools. The implications of ‘throwing open the school gates’ are not addressed, for example, in policy work on school design (DEECD 2008b) or on school safety (DEECD 2010). As this report discusses below, there is also some apprehension in the local government sector that a devolutionist trend may re-introduce inconsistency in the application of shared schools policy, and work against the integration of spatial, community service and educational planning seen as a positive outcome of the school-community interface.

The emphasis on community hubs is also weighted towards the early years/primary school interface, reflecting both the orientation of recent educational and social policy, and the numerical dominance of primary schools in the public education system. However, a Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (2009) inquiry into shared use facilities noted that Victorian secondary school facilities were more heavily used for non-school purposes than their primary counterparts. Secondary schools are
more likely to have purpose-built facilities, and more likely to share facilities with other government and non-government schools.

2.3 Identifying the research gap

The topic of schools as shared use spaces has been little researched in Australia. The most substantial existing body of research in this broad field relates to the extended use of schools for recreation, learning and social services in United States cities (Filardo et al. 2010). While this work has some resonance with Australian interests in schools as points of engagement with youth and social services (Black et al. 2010), the US focus on addressing structural issues of race-based disadvantage limits its relevance in the Australian context (McShane 2015).

Although many Australian schools have extended or shared use arrangements in place, there has been almost no published analysis of these, and hence little in the way of methodological frameworks, empirical data or debates with which to engage. Additionally, the limited existing literature that exists has conceptualised school infrastructure in physical terms, and we sought to extend this construct by exploring the potential for community use of schools’ digital infrastructure.

The project sought to address the research gap in this field through empirically-focused field research of three new developments (the number reflecting available research funds) in the broad area of shared or co-located educational facilities. Our initial methodology was planned to facilitate comparative analysis by researching community engagement with similar shared-school types across diverse spatial, socio-economic and broadband connectivity characteristics, modelled as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>SEIFA</th>
<th>Broadband Connectivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Inner metro</td>
<td>Household income above Melbourne statistical division</td>
<td>High broadband availability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Outer urban</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Melbourne average for household broadband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Below average household broadband connections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the diverse typology of the ‘shared school’ construct limited our capacity to undertake this analysis. Following an initial environmental scan, it became clear that the design and institutional characteristics of the facilities themselves was a significant variable requiring analysis. Lack of evidence that Victorian schools made their digital infrastructure available for community use also discounted broadband connectivity as a useful variable. Further, the coincident timing of the Victorian government’s first tranche
of schools constructed through a PPP arrangement with the research project presented an opportunity to compare PPP and non-PPP capital developments. In consultation with DEECD, the following sites were selected:

- a shared on-campus secondary school-community library in a rural town, with the state education authority and the local government authority (LGA) as major development partners (Colac)

- a new senior secondary school campus in a major metropolitan town centre, with the school campus envisaged as a ‘multiversity’ available for community use, and the school linked with adjacent off-campus recreation facilities owned by the local government authority (Broadmeadows)

- a co-located primary school and early childhood education and care (ECEC) and community centre in a new estate, developed through a public-private partnership involving the state education authority, the local government authority, private companies, and a not-for-profit organisation (Derrimut).

In summary, the field sites are school capital works projects completed within the last five years, situated in diverse spatial, socio-economic, educational and institutional settings, but each engaging with the policy imperative for shared or extended use or co-location of facilities and services.

2.4 Methodology

The project methodology combined desk-based review of national and international policy, practice and academic literature in the broad field of shared or extended use school facilities, and field-based case studies involving site observation, review of policy and project documents associated with three field sites, and interviews with key project stakeholders.

The research tracked developments at the three sites during the period 2012-2015. Using a grounded or inductive approach, we gathered interview data to enable analysis of both process and - as far as we were able - outcomes associated with the developments. Qualitative data, observes Argyrous (2012), does not rank highly in evidence-based policy, easily dismissed as lacking sufficient rigour for effective policy design. We take a different view. Our methodology gives voice to project stakeholders and participants, and we argue that their situated knowledge of the infrastructure projects offers primary insights in a field where there are few empirical measures capable of linking infrastructure inputs and social and educational outcomes (for a similar approach see Schmachtel 2015, DEECD 2009, Pope and Lewis 2008).

2.5 Ethics

The project received approval for the research component involving human subjects as follows:
2.6 (Re)framing the Research: From Project to Partnership

During the course of the research, one of our interviewees, who had been involved in a school and urban regeneration project, made the following remark:

“...I think a large risk with these projects is the focus on the physical and once the physical is done, that’s it. We’ve learnt from our own experience...that it’s the network that sits underneath that’s really important.” (council official)

Each of our field sites involves a development partnership, and this observation presented a case for viewing the sites through a partnership lens, rather than perceiving them as infrastructure or facilities. Indeed, the necessity to shift from project thinking to partnership thinking not only steered the course of the research, it is a key finding of the research.

The challenge of recognising and resourcing the “partnership work” (Seddon and Ferguson 2009) required to optimise and sustain the capital and other investments in a shared school-community facility was a consistent theme in the interview data across each site.

These inductive findings from the fieldwork chime with a substantial literature on partnership or network governance in educational and other social policy fields.

Partnership or network governance is increasingly popular in policy and service areas that are inherently complex, that require diverse expertise and resources, and that aspire to achieve results that are beyond the capacities of individual agencies (Pope and Lewis 2008).

As we observed in a project working paper, partnerships have become an increasingly important mode of governance and service provision at local community level, seen as offering innovative approaches to community service provision and solutions to complex social problems through cross-agency and cross-sectoral arrangements. The use of partnerships to boost the effectiveness of educational provision is a major concern of educational policy, and the focus of an expanding educational research literature (McShane & Wilson 2015).


2 Interviewees are anonymised in compliance with RMIT University Human Research Ethics requirements.
revived policy discussion of school-community partnerships by urging schools to develop as learning communities where teachers, students and their families work in partnership with business, industry and the wider community.

While educational partnerships are now a policy norm, though, there are few studies of how they work in practice (Schmachtel 2015). This knowledge gap is especially evident in the field of partnerships focussed on educational infrastructure. As the quote above illustrates, infrastructure lacks recognition in a field that is focussed more exclusively on learning outcomes.

Approaching the research through the lens of educational partnerships has two specific benefits:

- it brings a coherent analytical framework to diverse configurations and labels in this field, including shared use, co-location, extended schools, full service schools, community hubs and so on (Bottrell et al. 2011, Filardo 2010, Black et al. 2010)
- it widens options for evaluation, as outlined below.

2.7 Evaluating the Data

The time-constrained nature of this research, combined with the indirect and sometimes distant links between inputs and outcomes in the field of educational infrastructure investment, pose challenges for evaluation of the individual sites against the policy objectives of investment in shared or co-located school-community infrastructure.

Victorian government policy documents and statements frame policy objectives in this area as a statement of the benefits of shared and co-located infrastructure, rather than a set of policy aims or goals (DEECD 2009, DEECD-DPCD 2007, DET 2005). An indicative set of claimed benefits follows:

- new and creative work environments for students
- access for teachers to more diverse information sources and expertise
- better access for communities and schools to state-of-the-art facilities
- financial savings
- stronger social networks between schools and communities
- improved availability of sports, arts and other facilities in local communities
- more positive perceptions of local schools and communities
- greater community involvement in school activities and children's learning
- improved school security and reduced vandalism (adapted from DET 2005; similar statements are made in DEECD-DPCD 2007 and DEECD 2009).

The schools PPP scheme involving the Victorian government and Axiom Education (which includes the Derrimut site) has refashioned some of these points into a more detailed and specific set of program objectives, relating to building quality, maintenance, adaptability, learning environments and outcomes, value for money, user
satisfaction, ecological sustainability, and community partnerships (DEECD & DTF 2009:4-5).

Our research project does not offer a wider evaluation of the impact or benefits of shared or co-located facilities against the policy aims set out above. Our specific focus on optimising community engagement in shared-use facilities, and analysing conditions for the sustainability of shared facility partnerships, drew on two analytical models:

1) a model of educational partnerships, which provides insights on optimum development approaches for shared infrastructure capital works projects; and

2) a model for assessing partnership effectiveness, which focusses on the sustainability of school-community partnerships involving shared infrastructure.

Each of these models is reviewed below, to frame subsequent discussion of the research findings and recommendations.

2.7.1 Modelling Educational Partnerships

Project working paper #4, Project to Partnership: Sustaining School-Community Infrastructure Projects, discusses partnership models in detail (McShane & Wilson 2015). The paper's key points are:

- educational partnerships aim to undertake activities or achieve results that are beyond the capacities of individual partners
- educational partnerships take many forms, and negotiating partnership forms and protocols is a vital first step in planning shared infrastructure.
- an appropriate partnership model will assist community input to educational regeneration or new capital works, and assist management of the ‘practical politics’ of partner engagement.

The significant volume of literature on educational partnerships contains limited discussion of partnership models. For our purposes, useful work on educational partnership typologies has been done by a group of Australian researchers (Billett et al. 2005, Seddon et al. 2004). The following table situates our field sites on a model developed by these researchers:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Field Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Community partnership | - originates in the community and regionally focussed or addresses specific local concerns  
                           - combines locally-connected educational, industry, government groups  
                           - may work with external agencies to secure funding  
                           - ‘bottom-up’ in conception and establishment | Hume       |
| Directed partnership | - established or sponsored by government to achieve specific goals  
                           - strong central control and direction  
                           - coupled to direct policy, funding and accountability arrangements | Derrimut   |
| Enacted partnership  | - Developed by external agencies with goals relevant to local communities  
                           - Often aligned with local decision-making | Colac      |
| Negotiated partnership | - Formed between partners with common interests and agenda  
                           - Shared goal in service provision or support | Hume       |

(Adapted from Billett et al. 2005, Seddon et al. 2004).

As we discussed in Working Paper #4, the table indicates that the partnership models for the Opportunity Spaces field sites were centralised or top-down, rather than decentralised or bottom-up. Each variant prioritised policy implementation rather than formation, and provided a framework for project decision-making and management.

The Hume site is an important qualification to this assessment, in that the partnership between the Department and the local government authority (LGA) was set within a bottom-up community partnership known as the Hume Global Learning Village (HGLV). HGLV produced a community development plan around life-long learning, enabling subsequent educational developments to be nested within a process and vision that had strong legitimacy and stakeholder support (Wheeler et al. 2013). This hybrid and nested approach is detailed in the Hume case study in this report’s Appendix.

2.7.2 Modelling Partnership Effectiveness

Given the evaluation challenges outlined at the start of this section (indirect causal links, time gap between inputs and outcomes), analysts in the field of partnership governance have used the proxy measure of partnership effectiveness to identify barriers and challenges for achieving long-term partnership goals. Four areas of ‘partnership work’ have been identified as key indicators of partnership effectiveness:

- governance and leadership
- resource allocation
- communication
- alignment of philosophies and practices (Ross et al. 2015, McQuaid 2010).
This framework aligns well with the data gathered at our field sites and provides a coherent way of structuring and analysing our findings, which are presented in the following section.
3. Research Findings

3.0 Findings

This section expands on the project's main findings and recommendations that are set out in the report's executive summary. The section focusses on comparative and system-level findings, structured by the partnership effectiveness framework. Detailed discussion of the research field sites set out in Section 5 – Case Study Summary and in project working paper #4.

3.1.1 Governance and Leadership

- Recommendation: Select a partnership model that best fits local circumstances.

Partnership typologies can be broadly divided into centralised or top-down models, and decentralised or bottom-up models. A centralised model may be better suited to a greenfield site, where timely infrastructure provision is paramount and the community is imagined rather than pre-existing. A decentralised model is oriented towards local democracy, capacity building and the development of a shared vision. A hybrid approach, where local and state authority planning processes are connected to a wider community planning or visioning exercise, can effectively combine community deliberation and the decision-making structures of infrastructure project management. This model is particularly appropriate to development projects in built-up urban areas with established communities and public land use pressures.

Of the three models that were deployed at the Opportunity Spaces field sites, the hybrid model used at Hume is the most adaptable and robust way of optimising community engagement in planning shared-use facilities. While the Hume development was not universally supported, HGLV provided strategic direction and a social license, and the use of LGA planning processes to formalise decision-making over the allocation of a site for the school, provided democratic legitimacy.

- Recommendation: Prioritise partnership documentation and formal agreement-making.

Partnerships and service delivery may be vulnerable if working relationships, tacit knowledge and informal agreements are not documented and formalised. The public-private partnership (PPP) we studied demands considerably less ‘partnership work’ from the school staff than is required of the staff in our two non-PPP projects, minimising role and resource conflict and enabling prioritisation of school leadership.

Our research shows a demonstrated need to close the gap between the resources that are committed to the partnership work in PPP and non-PPP projects. Commercial logic and application of the 'best value' test required an intense focus on role description, service provision, cost and measurable outcomes prior to commissioning the capital works. This level of specification and documentation sets a benchmark for all shared school projects.
● Recommendation: School principals or leaders should not project manage school regeneration projects.

Evidence from the Opportunity Spaces fieldwork adds to Department research (DEECD 2009) that points to the workload burden associated with the combined role of overseeing educational reform and a new capital works project. The PPP process we examined provided a model where project management and school leadership roles were more distinctly separated again highlighted the contrast between the PPP and non-PPP approach.

● Recommendation: The schools PPP network should be extended or reformatted to encompass a ‘shared-schools’ brief.

The schools PPP network established with the first Victorian schools PPP tranche provides a model for the wider development of school-community infrastructure networks that can share information and identify best practice for dealing with operational issues such as risk and programming.

The establishment in 2009 of a joint departmental secretary’s working party on shared infrastructure demonstrated a high-level commitment to policy development and coordination in this field. We argue there is a role for greater sharing of operational-level knowledge in this area, across and between jurisdictions and sectors (government, not-for-profit, private business).

• Recommendation: Review the flexibility of PPP contracts to facilitate new policy responses in dynamic service environments.

The scale, timing and structure of PPP processes may conflict with the decision-making and budgeting processes of local authorities, and make it difficult for community-level organisations to participate in planning and service delivery. PPPs may deliver infrastructure projects more quickly and cost effectively than alternative procurement models, but their timetable may also conflict with the more deliberative and negotiated process of assembling cross-jurisdictional partners in the field of community and educational services. The certainty required for investment in the PPP may be perceived as a form of ‘lock in’ by local authority and community organisations, particularly those working in dynamic and sensitive areas such as children’s services.

The co-location of school and early childhood facilities is an established feature of the Victorian educational landscape, but a new dimension of PPP procurement. The first tranche of Victorian school PPPs was undertaken at a time of national policy change in the ECEC field, which exposed the YMCA - the PPP partner with responsibility for early childhood and community services - to significant regulatory and related commercial risk. With the implementation of Council of Australian Government reforms in ECEC, risk may be less of a factor in the second tranche of the school PPPs, in which the YMCA is also participating. However, this example raises the question of whether risk in human service delivery settings can be assessed in similar ways to the commercial
risk of facility construction and management, and, if so, whether this is adequately calibrated in PPP arrangements.

3.1.2 Resource Allocation

- Recommendation: Refine methodologies for estimating demand and assessing the long-term operating costs of shared-use facilities and apply them in all shared-use settings.

The Victorian Department of Education contract covering the first tranche of the schools PPP includes an allowance for the out-of-hours use of school facilities by the community. While this is a welcome development, it highlights disparities in this area, including the assessment of peak demand for new educational facilities, and the lack of full cost accounting and resourcing at all shared-school sites.

It is not clear how the calculation of demand for and resourcing of out-of-hours or community use of school facilities accords with Department resource formulations, particularly with the current departmental approach to building school facilities to 80% of projected peak demand. We acknowledge the necessity to balance capital and operational costs across the demand cycle. However, the community use of school facilities may be less amenable to a formula that is calculated on the more defined activities of school education.

A refined approach to understanding of the economic value of these facilities is important when arguing for the option value of flexible space or space that is not specifically linked to a program or service. As our field research suggests, space is enabling, and can tap latent service demand in areas - notably early childhood - with a well-documented social return on investment.

- Recommendation: Resource and expand the role of infrastructure brokers to include school/community precinct regeneration in established areas.

Officials working as regeneration officers or infrastructure brokers can play a key role in project and partnership consultation and coordination, but this role may be discontinuous or cease with the completion of capital works. Our analysis suggests there would be value in extending and adapting this role, particularly to apply to: a) established school or urban precincts, and b) the post-project or operational phase.

Commercial approaches to investment risk meant a much higher level of specification and documentation of roles and responsibilities in the PPP project than the conventional public revenue-financed approaches of Hume and Colac. This degree of attention demonstrated the specialised nature of this documentation, and indicated the level of attention it should be given in all partnerships. Schools may require specialist expertise and resources to develop and monitor partnership agreements, not simply joint-use agreement templates. Widening the availability of partnership brokers may also help to modify a perception we encountered in the field that policy and resourcing in the shared infrastructure area has been concentrated on outer growth areas.
• Recommendation: Invest in quality and purpose

Our research suggests that local communities are sensitive to the symbolic and functional aspects of infrastructure investment. This sentiment is revealed in a comment made at one of our field sites: ‘The quality of the places and spaces reflect what [they] think of us’. One of the stated benefits of the PPP model is its investment in upfront build quality to yield long-term savings in operational and maintenance costs. Adopting this whole-of-life perspective has been a challenge for local authorities, which are typically under political and financial pressures to economise on capital outlays.

Each of our field sites has an example of new facilities that are considered too small for their intended purpose. The reasons for this vary across sites, encompassing project timing, resourcing and design issues. For example, the Colac project was constructed in three stages, with the final stage - a performing arts space - suffering an apparent resource shortfall. The main school building at Hume appears to have been built to the standard departmental capital investment formula, but is overlaid with expectations that the building will be available for community use that appear beyond current practical and resource limits. The gymnasium at Derrimut is not heavily utilised at the weekends due to the school’s ‘good neighbour’ policy: the gymnasium has a lightweight construction and sited on a residential boundary.

The larger point here is that our field data show that shared use policy may be perceived as ‘penny-pinching’ at school and local authority level. Infrastructure-led educational partnerships need to build confidence amongst practitioners and the community that something more, not something less, is being delivered - an outcome only achievable through attentive planning, communication, resourcing and programming.

3.1.3 Communications

• Recommendation: Clarify the purpose and processes of consultation.

While the public legitimacy of consultation processes is important, more consultation is not always better, particularly if the processes confuse public input and policy determination. Consultation exercises need to be mapped against policy and project aims, informing decision-making that balances private interests and broader conceptions of the public good.

While there is ample availability of tools and techniques for community consultation, some specialists in this field argue for more flexible and adaptive processes for public input, as opposed to choosing a rung on the well-known ladder of consultation at which public input is deemed appropriate (Brackertz and Meredyth 2009, Bishop and Davis 2002, Kane and Bishop 2002). Such an approach, argue these commentators, assumes that the issue or project on which consultation is focussed is a single or fixed entity. Our research, particularly focussed on the Colac example, suggests that different project stages, changes to project plans, or opposition to projects with a demonstrated community benefit, may call for a revision of community engagement
processes. The Colac example also demonstrates that issues lying outside the immediate project focus - in this case, the fate of a former high school site on which the community had strong views - may need to be addressed in order to satisfactorily progress with the planned project.

- Recommendation: Communicate in plain language.

Experimentation and innovation in the provision of school and community facilities and services should not be couched in language that is pitched to prospective project sponsors but likely to confuse or alienate community stakeholders. The Colac project provides an example of how an attempt to enliven the image of the public library through a new title, unrelated to a library, generated confusion that undermined community confidence and required the investment of substantial public relations resources to rectify.

In the Colac case, the desire to promote a new educational vision, through engagement with the online world, clashed with community resistance to change. The public library is one of the most recognised and trusted public institutions across the world (Zickhur et al. 2013), and in hindsight it may have been wider to pitch the innovation at program-level (what was happening in the library), rather than institutional-level. The resulting settlement between the council and the community, which steered away from a digital library to a more book-oriented one, had a substantial impact on the configuration of the library and its capacity to blend print and online resources.

- Recommendation: Anticipate and manage strong emotional responses to change

The issue of ‘ownership’ emerged as a key area of contest over school redevelopment and shared school-community facilities, reminding us about affect or emotion as a component of community development. Schools and schooling evoke strong positive and negative emotions. Schools may also be the site of significant community equity, in the form of financial contributions and voluntary labour. Governance and communication strategies need to build on a framework that treats emotion as a normal and often legitimate response to policy decisions, acknowledging strong feelings of affiliation or passionate commitment but channelling them in effective deliberation processes.

3.1.3 Aligning philosophy and practice

- Recommendation: Involve state government and local government officials in educational planning

For at least one of our local authority informants, combining state-level educational and local-level spatial planning was a unique and refreshing experience. While this may be an established planning methodology in new growth areas, for example through the precinct structure planning process, the exemption of state educational authorities from
local planning regulatory frameworks means this form of collaboration may not be commonplace in established areas.

The Hume example highlights that state educational sites are currently not subject to local planning provisions, which was a point of aggravation for some during the BER roll-out. The premise of shared school-community facilities suggests that state and local authorities should be integrated in a formal way in local planning processes. The precinct structure planning process, initially applied to Melbourne's growth areas, may provide a suitable model for the strategic and physical planning of educational precinct in all areas, particularly in the context of intensified development in Melbourne.

- Recommendation: Consider the possibility that devolved decision-making may undermine consistent policy and practice.

While the research evidence indicates that local authorities are supportive of shared infrastructure, the lead times of local authority infrastructure planning and investment generates a strong desire for policy consistency in this area. Our data suggest that local officials are wary that renewed emphasis on school-based decision-making may mean ‘the fences will go back up’ and earlier understandings and commitments will be rescinded or not acted on.

This finding points to a continued role for a partnership broker, in ensuring that not only that project and partnerships agreements are in place, but that meetings and information exchanges are occurring that consolidate partnership relationships and commitment.

- Recommendation: Build into planning the expectation that schools and community institutions may have significantly different philosophical and programmatic approaches to issues such as access, risk and rights that require articulation and adjustment in operational settings.

The research highlights concerns over heightened risks associated with shared facilities, both physical and digital. While our research suggests that some of these concerns have been overstated, there are uncertainties over jurisdictional issues in this area, and underlying tensions between the promotion of community engagement and duty of care standards for students and children.

Shared child-care/community centres raise particular concerns in this area, especially on compact sites such as Derrimut where greater spatial separation cannot be accommodated in the facility. For example, the use of community spaces in the facility to conduct the out-of-school-hours care program requires a level of vigilance that would not ordinarily be required in a community-only space. There is no published literature on this specific subject, and current operations and future planning would benefit from further research here.

- Recommendation: Adapt shared use policy to the differences between to physical and digital resources.
Current protocols for the deployment and use of schools’ digital resources show the limitations of conceptualising both physical and digital infrastructure as equally ‘shareable’. Current risk settings for school networks may effectively preclude community use, due to filtering and access restrictions, and a standard ‘work-around’ in shared spaces (such as school/community libraries) is to operate separate school and public networks.

We have much less practical experience with the sharing of school digital resources, and current settings take a prudential approach with regard to risk. However, technological and pedagogical developments may place pressure for policy reform in this area. This issue is explored in greater detail in this report’s conclusion.

- **Recommendation:** Clarify the status of students as members of a community or public in shared school/community settings.

The increasing development of shared school and community spaces brings into view the uncertain status or identity and related access entitlements of students. This is most apparent in shared school/community libraries, which are one of the most common shared facility types. Schools and public library services may have conflicting views on student entitlements to library services, with public librarians resisting the inclusion of library access within a school’s disciplinary regime. Negotiation over student access entitlements should be a priority issue in the development of shared school-community libraries, but may also be required for other shared developments.

- **Recommendation:** Give attention in architectural and program design to child protection measures and ‘buffer zones’, amongst other issues, in the development of effective shared childcare/community facilities.

While acknowledging the limitations of our field research in this area, the design and program challenges of a combined community centre and large early childhood education and care (ECEC) facility appear particularly challenging. The different risk and access profiles of child care and community-based programs, the transport logistics of ECEC facilities, and, in the case of our field site, the spillover of out-of-school hours care into the ‘community’ areas, raise questions about the successful alignment of these two areas.

Acting on this concern calls for design and resource responses. Our field research suggests that greater buffer zones or separation, and a sense of proportionality, is required in such settings to achieve clearer program separation, to manage risk issues, and to encourage wide community engagement with the community centre. The initial perception in the Derrimut community that use of the community centre was conditional on use of the child-care services may have been overstated, and has certainly receded, but it does say something about the propensity for large child-care operations to dominate shared sites.

- **Recommendation:** Greater benefits accrue from collaborative partnerships.
Recent literature argues that a success marker of educational partnerships is the collaborative effect they achieve, or the opportunities or programs that emerge from the new institutional alignment. Educational partnerships should aspire to do something new together, not simply operate standard programs side-by-side. Our research highlights examples of the ‘collaborative effect’ of partnerships. The synergies created through the early language programs at the Colac library, and the contribution of the physical facility as an enabler of the programs, are detailed in the Colac case study below.
4. Conclusion

In this research project we have conceptualised our field sites as education infrastructure partnerships. Educational partnerships, argues Schmachtel (2015), “frequently fall behind their expectations”. While this claim lacks specificity, it provides a benchmark to measure our research findings.

In summary, our analysis does not support this general contention. We conclude that the stakeholders consider the three developments to be successful in terms of the construction and utilisation of the built or ‘hard’ infrastructure. However, transitioning from a project to a partnership highlights some deficiencies that require remedying to promote partnership sustainability.

When we commenced field research, we puzzled over comparative analysis of the three different sites. The question was quickly resolved in the distinction between PPP and non-PPP sites. It is too soon to appraise the performance of the PPP site, but it sets a clear example in terms of its documentation and partnership networking practices, as well as the greater separation it has achieved between facility management and educational roles.

Partnership thinking brings into view the importance of adopting an appropriate partnership model. In terms of educational infrastructure partnerships, this means choosing an institutional structure that matches community input and commitment with managerial decision-making. We conclude that the Hume approach, which embedded the Hume school regeneration project within the HGLV network, did this successfully, and warrants emulation.

Each of our field sites brought into view a key policy issue in the broad field of shared community facilities that warrants discussion in the context of further policy in this area. Looking to the policy future, we conclude our report by discussing these issues below.

- Should community access to school facilities be equally prioritised across schools?

While the three case studies were successful in terms consistent with the project aims (to build, deliver and use new school infrastructure), the degree to which the shared facility objectives are being realised varies between the sites.

Analysing these differences raises the question of whether high-level policy expectations for community access to educational facilities are appropriate or applicable in all school contexts.

The Hume site, which has been least successful of our three sites in implementing the vision of a shared school-community facility, provides the clearest illustration of a gap between policy and practice. This seems ironic, in light of our endorsement of the
Hume partnership process. However, exploration of this issue also points to why Hume was the least successful.

At Hume, it seems apparent that the educational challenges facing staff are of such magnitude that encouraging community use of the facilities is a second-order concern. This raises the question of whether the aims for shared school-community facilities listed in Evaluating the Data above presuppose a set of capabilities in both communities and schools. In the Hume case, the task of rebuilding educational expectations has taken priority over wider community engagement through facility use. However, the Town Campus building design, predicated on the concept of a “multiversity” prioritised the latter. For Hume, the most relevant educational partnerships are with institutions such as The Smith Family, that provide social supports around education. Significantly, the new school building provides on-campus accommodation of a Smith Family office, highlighting the enabling capacity of flexible school spaces.

Success, then, may be differently calibrated or understood across sites and contexts, and policy rhetoric around partnership, engagement and community acted upon in particular ways. The policy challenge is to accommodate school-level choices with demands for system-level consistency in the application of shared-facility policy in precinct or municipal-level planning and service provision.

- Are the PPP and non-PPP developments on a level playing field?

Our choice of the three field sites was intended to reveal the variability of examples within the shared facilities rubric. However, a divide between the PPP development and the non-PPP development quickly presented as a more significant distinction between the sites. There were significant differences between the delivery of the PPP case study and those delivered through conventional Department school construction.

These differences can be understood and responded to by asking two questions:

- what worked well in the PPP development?
- what does a study of the PPP development reveal about the other sites?

The relatively brief time that the schools PPPs have been in operation limits the extent to which the program can be evaluated. Additionally, our project has focussed solely on the Derrimut site, and has been limited by the project focus and resources, the availability of data, and, in the case of Axiom Education and AMP Capital, non-response to requests for interviews.

From our perspective, the contractual and partnership support arrangements of the Derrimut PPP site set a benchmark for educational partnerships, whether developed through PPP arrangements or by other procurement models. There was a notable difference in the attention school officials were required to give to partnership work, in comparative terms. Engagement by the school with the local community focussed on the school’s educational vision, rather than the infrastructure development, and the
contracted facility management arrangements have, in the words of a school official “freed me to be an instructional leader”. A network of PPP school staff, convened by the Department, provides a forum of exchange and ongoing monitoring of the PPP arrangements. Additionally, the commercial imperative to manage risk by fully documenting and pricing contracted requirements led to a costing of community or out-of-hours use of the school facility.

None of these elements are present in the same degree in the non-PPP developments, which we regard as a gap in the implementation of shared-use policy. Hume, for example, currently relies on one-off funding and an informal agreement to enable students to access the adjacent council leisure centre. Both Colac and Hume have scrambled for post-occupancy resources in contrast to Derrimut. The resourcing of contract documentation and support for the Derrimut and other PPP projects acknowledges the importance of these aspects of partnership work. Current Victorian government PPP policy is “agnostic” on whether infrastructure is acquired through PPP or other procurement models. As a point of policy principle, all procurement forms, imagined as educational partnerships in our case, should be similarly resourced.

Not following this principle risks placing non-PPP developments at a disadvantage in two ways:

- additional burdens fall on senior school staff and local government officials to develop and monitor agreements, and they may have neither time nor expertise to do this adequately

- under current Partnerships Victoria policy, lack of detailed specification and pricing of community use of school facilities renders non-PPP arrangements unable to properly respond to the value-for-money criterion that is a decisive factor in procurement decisions.

Discussion of the Derrimut case study in the report appendix and in working paper #4 details some of the achievements and benefits, as well as perceived deficiencies, of the PPP model. However, consistent with the framework of plural partnership models set out above suggests, there may be strong rationales for choosing alternative models to the directed partnership of the PPP. These include community or local organisational development rationales (for example, building local capacity, or enabling small or emergent organisations to participate in partnerships), and preserving future policy options to deal with long-run uncertainty through institutional pluralism.

- Are current policy distinctions between access to physical and digital space viable?

Our research on the Colac shared school-community library revealed current constraints on conceptualising physical and digital infrastructure as shared ‘spaces’. The principal constraint lies in different perceptions and management of risk by schools and non-school organisations such as libraries or local government authorities. In the Colac case, and in several similar sites in Tasmania, the response has been to operate separate school and public library networks. There is some evidence that the
deployment of two separate digital networks has reduced the public benefit that might accrue from the shared school-community infrastructure investment. We also question whether such arrangements are practically viable or responsive to emerging trends in network access and digital ICT pedagogy.

All Colac library users share a single physical space. However, public library users and school students access separate digital networks during school hours. This is facilitated by the Colac Regional Library Corporation’s (CRLC) policy of requiring library users to obtain an access password, which is not given to students during school hours. While the CRLC has not flagged a change to this policy, it should be noted that the use of passwords to control access seems to be diminishing as a feature of free public wi-fi networks in Australia and abroad, particularly as they have become more ubiquitous (McShane et al. 2014).

The current arrangement limits the capacity of CRLC staff to use the library’s IT hub, which is essentially a ‘school space’ and subject to school network restrictions, for community education. Limitations on students, though, are effectively lifted when the school day ends, and students (who then become members of the library public) are free to access all library facilities.

The proliferation of mobile phones amongst the secondary student population that provide unfettered internet access using 3G/4G cellular networks (ACMA 2015 reports 67% of 12-13 year olds have a mobile phone with the rate increasing to 87% for 14-15 year olds and 94% for 16-17 year olds), combined with the ability of some students to find technical ways to bypass existing school network-filtering technologies, suggests that the technology-based response of schools to appropriate internet use is becoming redundant. Indeed, a recent study by Monash University revealed that nearly 60% of Victorian secondary students have used mechanisms to bypass internet filters when accessing the internet at school (Jacks 2015). The methods identified in the survey of 1200 students include stealing teacher passwords, changing access rights, using proxy servers and virtual private networks, identifying filtering loopholes, and hacking around the filtering software. The study found that students most commonly avoid the filtering system by using their own phones. As one respondent pointed out “everyone has 3G so nobody cares about using school Wi-Fi”.

An educational response (combined with an existing regime of student behaviour surveillance exercised in the physical and digital spaces of schools) might provide a more effective alternative to restricting network access and filtering online content. There are various models of such approaches in international educational jurisdictions such as Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands, as well as local examples from the independent school sector that policy makers could draw upon (Moyle 2012). Altering existing systems that have been deployed on the grounds of risk-reduction is a complex political and policy activity, but the benefits in this case may extend beyond improving the risk-management regime to enhancing the educational experience and reducing barriers to sharing the digital facilities of schools with the community. If such an approach was adopted, the public benefit of shared school-community facilities might be more fully realised in the digital as well as physical arena.
5. Case Study Summary

Colac Secondary College and Colac Library & Learning Centre

- Joint-use school and public library
- Colac Secondary College Regeneration Project (merger Colac High School & Colac College)
- Beechey learning and recreation precinct

The focus of our study was a shared on-campus secondary school-community library in Colac, a town of approximately 10,000 people 150 kilometres south-west of Melbourne. The Colac project demonstrates the complexities of linking educational reform and area regeneration. The capital works project was both the longest build of our three sites, and the most contested at a local level. We conceptualise Colac as an enacted partnership, where the major partner (the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) as it was titled between 2006 and 2014) brought a predetermined goal (the merger of two high schools into a new greenfields campus) to the table, and Colac Otway Shire (COS) assessed that collaboration would produce a significant community benefit, in the form of a shared school-community library, and upgrade of other recreational facilities.

Colac is the main town in the Colac Otway Shire, an unusually configured rural municipality that combines inland pastoral agriculture, a hinterland forest region, and small coastal settlements that swell with holiday visitors. Around one third of the municipality yields no local taxation due to its state park designation, adding to the challenges of providing municipal services. The $6.2 million library construction enlarged and modernised the existing Colac public library (built in 1949), adding a suite of meeting rooms and additional ICT facilities and networks, creating space for new programs and boosting library usage, particularly by attracting new users. The “collaborative effect” or synergy achieved through this partnership is significant in terms of optimising capital investment, enhancing use of the public library, building social networks and service partnerships, and creating a new shared civic-educational space.
The project had to overcome major challenges in the planning and construction phase, particularly in engaging local support, and service and partnership arrangements have required adjustment at the post-occupancy stage. None of this is unexpected in a project of this scale. However, the case study has important lessons for managing change in small communities in both the educational and civic domains.

The shared library project was part of the development of an educational and recreational precinct known as the Beechy precinct, which consisted of existing facilities and a greenfield development site. In addition to the two major institutional stakeholders, DEECD and COS, the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD, which was in charge of a Neighbourhood Renewal scheme), the Corangamite Regional Library Corporation (CRLC), and the Gordon Institute of Technical and Further Education were institutional stakeholders.

While the Beechy development was new, COS officials linked it to a 35 year relationship with DEECD through shared use of a leisure centre within the precinct.

The project’s history brings together concerns to address Colac’s status as a relatively disadvantaged region through a community regeneration process formulated by the Victorian government in the late 1990s, and more specific concerns over educational provision, including school disengagement and underachievement, a predicted decline in enrolments, and the physical condition of the existing school infrastructure. The Beechy project focussed on a proposal by DEECD to merge Colac’s two existing high schools as Colac Secondary College (CSC). CSC was built on a greenfield site, a Department property abutting the former Colac Technical School and adjacent to a recreation centre and oval. The new school also offered an opportunity for reforming teaching and learning practices, particularly through the introduction of open plan and shared teaching spaces and new educational technologies.

COS also shared concerns over the region’s educational attainment, and saw the new development as an opportunity to address poor or degraded community facilities (specifically the library, and sport and recreation facilities), and boost limited trade training opportunities. While themes of human and social capital gave the project coherence, it was a complex and diverse development, with several funding sources and three construction phases over six years. The project was also dogged by political protest, particularly over the plan for a shared library on school grounds. Of our three sites, the issue of community ‘buy-in’ was most problematic at Colac, and contributed to the difficulties of partnership work in the formative stages of the project. The planned move of the existing public library to the new school site also involved a name change of the institution, with the new title of the Global Connector intended to reflect a digital orientation, and a sense that Colac was connected to a world of knowledge and opportunity. The lack of any reference to a library in the new title was confusing to residents, even some who participated in project consultation, and acted as a lightning rod for objectors.

The overall Beechy development was less controversial. The precinct was named after a railway that once ran to the site, bringing timber from Beech Forest, 45 kilometres from Colac. The disused railway is now a popular cycling track, accessible from Colac’s western town boundary. This choice of name both evoked Colac’s history and reflected early project thinking to provide public access through the site. As the project developed, the proposal for physical access through the site was not progressed as
school and non-school areas became clearly defined. However, the wider issue of ‘ownership’ and access rights to the community areas emerged as a point of controversy that has yet to be fully reconciled.

**Derrimut Primary School and Derrimut Community Centre**

- Co-located primary school and community centre opened in 2010/11
- YMCA Child Services; Multipurpose rooms
- Public-Private-Partnership: State Govt, Axiom Education, YMCA

The Derrimut Primary School and co-located ECEC facility and community centre is a pioneering public-private partnership in the Victorian educational field. Derrimut is one of five new developments in Melbourne’s western and northern regions that were contracted by the Victorian education department to a PPP consortium in 2008, following a state government directive that its PPP policy is applied to all government investment in public infrastructure. This arrangement also trialled a build, operate and transfer model that has emerged as a preferred development process for new schools.

Derrimut is twenty-five kilometres west of Melbourne’s CBD and located within the City of Brimbank, one of Australia’s largest LGAs. Derrimut is a greenfield suburb, surrounded by residential and industrial areas, but poorly articulated with existing public transport and services. At time of writing it had a bus service only and no local stores. Western Melbourne is one of Australia’s fastest growing regions, and Derrimut’s population grew from around 1,600 in 2006 to over 6,000 in 2011, and is predicted to peak at around 8,500 (around 2,500 dwellings) in 2016. Migration is a major influence on Derrimut’s population dynamics. As a relatively volatile component of population change, migration presents challenges to service planning. The largest household group in Derrimut are couples with dependents, and the suburb’s age profile is consistent with high demand on ECEC, health, and school education services. 70% of Derrimut primary school students have a language background other than English, with China, Vietnam, Indian, Sri Lanka, Phillipines and east Africa the dominant source countries.
The Derrimut complex is located on education department land, with the school oval abutting a council recreation ground providing a large expanse of green open space in the centre of the suburb. The school and the ECEC/community centre share a boundary and a catholic primary school is sited a block from the complex. This proximity, as well as connections between ECEC/OSHC programs with both primary schools, and coordinated planning between the two primary school principals and the director of the community centre, means that Derrimut can be regarded as an education precinct rather than a single site development.

The scope of the Victorian government’s PPP policy encompasses built infrastructure, maintenance and ancillary building services, and information technology. The application of this policy at Derrimut meant that the school’s digital infrastructure (wired and wi-fi networks) was included as part of the building work, but not the provision of computers or mobile devices (in the school’s case, iPads). The PPP scope precludes service provision, meaning the PPP consortium constructed the ECEC/community centre building, but the provision of ECEC, out-of-school hours care (OSHC) and community services is contracted by the City of Brimbank to the YMCA. The City of Brimbank’s Maternal and Child Health Service (MACH) also operates on site. The Derrimut PPP arrangement is a build, operate and transfer arrangement with a contract life of twenty six years.

The Derrimut project is characterised as a directed partnership, featuring strong central control and direction driven by specific policy, funding and accountability arrangements. The institutional resources allocated to Derrimut’s partnership work, discussed below, contrast significantly with Colac and Broadmeadows. The detailed contractual arrangements around the use and maintenance of the school site mean “[principals] are not taken away for days trying to follow things up” (school official). The contract is also trialling an innovative formula for calculating and funding community use of the school site. The institutional support provided through a PPP schools network involving senior school and departmental staff also sets Derrimut apart from our other two sites. The PPP arrangement clearly placed less burden on the school principal during project development and post-occupancy phases with regard to the physical facility, enabling prioritisation of engaging a new community with a range of culturally-based expectations of schools and schooling.

However, the nature of the partnership work and the operational management associated with the combined ECEC/community centre differ from those of the school. The ECEC/community centre sits both within and outside the PPP, in that the building was constructed as part of the PPP, but the Brimbank LGA contracts the YMCA to provide ECEC and community services on the site. This part of the project has a degree of complexity that can be attributed to the multi-purpose nature of the facility, as well as the dynamics of early childhood policy and funding structures in Australia.

The co-location of the primary school and ECEC/community centre has also assisted the development of a shared educational vision across the early years/compulsory schooling, and coordination of practical issues such as transition. The cluster of infrastructure and services on the Derrimut site has provided a locus of community activity in a suburb with no other community facility. Constraints to community use of the precinct include the physical build and location of the school’s gymnasium,
dominance of the ECEC functions in the community centre, and transport limitations.

Hume Central Secondary College & Broadmeadows Central Activities Area

- HCSC est. 2007 as part of Regeneration Plan (Hillcrest, Broadmeadows Erinbank).
- Shared-facility design
- Hume Global Learning Village (HGLV): network strategy
- Hume Global Learning Centre (Library +)
- Broadmeadows Activities Area Structure Plan

The Hume project is a hybrid community/negotiated partnership between the school and the local authority, which facilitated a land transfer for the new Hume Central Secondary College senior secondary Town Campus, and provides adjacent recreation facilities that are used by the college, in lieu of duplicating the facilities on campus.

The Hume story is contextualised by the development of an innovative educational partnership and governance network called the Hume Global Learning Village (HGLV). HGLV is a community partnership in our schema, a locally-generated network of around forty institutions involved in or supporting formal and informal learning. The story of building a “learning community” in an area of educational disadvantage and a declining traditional employment base has been discussed by a number of analysts. For our purposes, HGLV, in tandem with the formal local planning process, provided a context for community consultation on the development, and for the prioritisation of competing land use values in the Broadmeadows town centre.

Broadmeadows is the administrative and commercial centre of the Hume LGA. Hume ranks as the twenty-first most disadvantaged region in Victoria on the SEIFA, and, like Colac, was identified as an area for state-level investment in urban renewal and community capacity (Department of Human Services 2011). Concerns over the educational engagement and attainment of school students in the Hume LGA, as well as engagement with informal education in the wider community, echoed those of COS. The similarities end there, however. Hume is Australia’s fifteenth largest municipality (167,497 in the 2011 census) as well as one of its most culturally diverse. Broadmeadows is a transport hub for northern Melbourne, facilitating travel to
schooling and employment outside the municipality. While Colac has had a public library service for a century, the Hume region was notoriously underprovided, and Broadmeadows had no central public library until the Hume Global Learning Centre opened in 2003. Similarly, one school official described a pattern of low expectations and achievement in formal education as a “Broadmeadows education”.

The Broadmeadows town centre has been the focus of several planning iterations, most recently to encourage its reinvigoration within a transport-oriented development (TOD) framework articulated in metropolitan planning documents. This vision encourages a residential population in the civic and commercial centre, with dwellings and commercial premises replacing the extensive areas of car-parking and activating street frontages. Parallel social planning initiatives focussed on a post-manufacturing future for Hume, particularly through investment in human capital. The Broadmeadows school reform plan, involving mergers of primary and secondary schools and new school construction, was a major element of this strategy.

HGLV greatly assisted community buy-in to the Broadmeadows educational reforms, and the planning and consultation over the construction of the Town Campus. However, while this meta-partnership generated goodwill for school regeneration, at community and institutional level, the Town Campus project demonstrates the difficulty of extending attention and resources to the post-occupancy phase of capital projects. At the heart of this is the challenge of translating informal relationships and tacit knowledge into formal agreements.

HCSC was established in 2007, following the merger of three existing secondary colleges. It consists of three campuses (2 x years 7-9 and 1 x years 10-12) located in Broadmeadows. The Town Campus, catering for years 10-12, opened in 2011.

The location and design of the Town Campus, we have argued, is a prototypical “urban school”, distinguished from larger greenfield school campuses that have relied on a pedagogy of separateness from surrounding social and spatial environments. Town Campus is integrated with the surrounding urban fabric and easily accessed by the school and wider community. We have argued that school campus developments in dense or densifying urban environments are likely to follow this model, and analysis of the Town Campus’ physical, service and institutional settings are instructive in this light.

Town Campus’ architectural design engaged directly with the surrounding urban setting and the community. The project architect describes the site thus:

[The campus] is positioned and shaped to enliven the adjacent park as well as respond to the civic aspects of the nearby town centre. Internally the university-style spaces include open learning commons and specialist spaces such as laboratories and performance rooms, with the use of external spaces as educational settings.

Dominated by a single building, the site is positioned between a multi-purpose leisure centre and basketball stadium, a vocational and further education provider, and the remaining space of the Town Park, which are all separated from the town centre’s commercial and civic centre. The campus has limited outdoor space, with students using
the town park for outdoor recreation during class breaks. Similarly, the basketball courts located inside the Town Campus boundary to the park are publicly available out of school hours. The school building has a small library and performing arts space, and currently accommodates an office of The Smith Family, which provides social support for students and families, acting as a partnership broker linking the school with business and public sector organisations.

The school’s major external service partnership is with the council-run Broadmeadows Aquatic and Leisure Centre that, in addition to its public swimming and gymnasium programs, makes basketball courts available exclusively to students throughout the day. Students also make use of the Hume Global Learning Centre through informal, teacher-led visits, and for other activities such as art exhibitions. Library staff report a high number of Hume Central students attending the library-run after-school homework club. The senior campus has a range of other partnerships with business and community organisations that are integral to the learning and social support programs, but lie outside our focus here on shared infrastructure and space.
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