Opportunity Spaces

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

Working Paper #4

Project to Partnership – Sustaining Shared School-Community Infrastructure Projects

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24 March 2016

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Key points

This paper analyses fieldwork data on three shared school-community infrastructure projects in Victoria, Australia, through the conceptual lens of educational partnerships.

This perspective looks beyond near horizon issues associated with the planning and construction of school and community infrastructure to examine questions about the sustainability and effectiveness of institutional collaborations associated with shared facilities. The analysis draws on the field research to identify requirements to successfully transition from project to partnership.

Identifying and resourcing the ‘partnership work’ required to optimise and sustain the capital investment in shared school infrastructure was a consistent theme in the interview data across each site.

Educational partnerships take many forms, and negotiating partnership forms and protocols is a vital first step in planning shared infrastructure. Mapping or modelling partnership typologies is a useful planning input that can assist community consultation and management of the ‘practical politics’ of partner engagement.

A growing literature on partnerships in community service provision identifies four areas as key to their effective operation: governance and leadership, communication, resources and philosophical and program alignment.

These four areas provide a framework for analysing our field data at site level, and identifying system-level lessons from the field studies.

Summarising key findings in these four areas:

Formal documentation and agreement making emerged as a key challenge and point of vulnerability for the effective governance of shared school-community facilities. There is a need to ‘close the gap’ between the resources allocated to PPP (public-private partnerships) and non-PPP projects in this area.

The effectiveness of community engagement processes and local support for educational infrastructure projects can be undermined by a lack of clarity in language and communication.

Schools and other local partners benefit from specialist knowledge and dedicated human resources to broker and sustain educational partnerships.

Schools and community institutions may have divergent philosophical and programmatic approaches to issues such as access, risk and rights that require alignment in the operational settings of shared facilities.
1. Introduction

This final paper in the *Opportunity Spaces* Working Paper series analyses the project’s field data and empirical findings through the conceptual lens of educational partnerships.

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. The concept of educational partnerships is neither new in Australia (Seddon and Ferguson 2009), nor is it an exclusive way of framing institutional relationships in the educational sphere. For example, Pounder (1998) prefers collaboration as a unifying concept for inter-agency and intra-school relationships. However, the perceived capacity of partnerships to mobilise policy and achieve a wide range of objectives has seen it become a favoured policy term internationally and in Australia (Robertson et al. 2012).

Lonsdale (2008) argues that the 1989 *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* 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. Infrastructure partnerships are an increasingly important form of educational partnership, but as the quote above illustrates, the area lacks recognition in a field that is focussed more exclusively on learning outcomes.

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). In Victoria, capital investment drivers included whole-of-government regeneration policy, school-based reforms to teaching and learning, and concerns for timely infrastructure provision in new growth areas.

The language of partnerships is widely used in this setting, most overtly through the appearance of public-private partnerships in the field of educational infrastructure. While the terminology has been used to cover broad inter-jurisdictional agreements around infrastructure provision (Council of Australian Governments 2009), our interest here is on how the broad policy thrust is operationalised at particular sites.
This paper contributes to empirical knowledge of educational infrastructure partnerships by drawing on interview data, site observation and policy and project literature associated with three field research sites. In summary, the sites are school infrastructure projects completed within the last five years, situated in diverse spatial, socio-economic, educational and institutional settings. The essential features of these sites are:

- 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, linking with adjacent off-campus recreation facilities owned by the local government authority (Hume)
- 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).

Using a grounded or inductive approach, we gathered interview data to enable analysis of both process and outcomes associated with the developments. This form of 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 and the partnerships offers primary insights in a field where there are few empirical measures capable of linking infrastructure inputs and social and educational outcomes (for similar approaches see Schmachtel 2015, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) 2009, Pope and Lewis 2008).

Our analysis sought to test a claim in the education and social partnership literature that partnership policies “frequently fall behind their ambitions” (Schmachtel 2015:1). While this claim lacks specificity, it provides a benchmark for organising and interpreting our data.

In summary, our analysis does not support this general contention. We conclude that, with some important differences between the three sites, the stakeholders consider the three developments to be successful. Success is most easily measured in terms of construction and utilisation of the built or ‘hard’ infrastructure. However, in the words of a project informant:

“...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.” (Hume official)

The challenge of “partnership work” (Seddon et al. 2004) required to optimise and sustain this investment was a consistent theme in the interview data across each site.

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1 The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development became the Department of Education and Training in December 2014.

2 Interviewees are anonymised in conformity with the RMIT University Human Research Ethics approval for this research.
Recognising and resourcing partnership work, we argue, is vital to locating infrastructure and service provision within the larger frame of an educational partnership.

Each of our field sites addresses the issue of partnership in distinctive and instructive ways. There is no single conception of an educational partnership, and several analysts have sought to map and model empirical applications of the term. This paper chooses one partnership typology that is particularly relevant to this study, and locates our sites within it. While primarily an explanatory tool for this paper, the typology also suggests choices and options available to policy-makers and stakeholders. Thinking about partnership approaches and structures, we argue, is a necessary first planning step for shared school infrastructure.

This paper develops the arguments above by focussing on two levels of analysis:
- site - to reflect the unique spatial, social and educational context of each site, and
- system – to elicit generalizable findings and inform future educational programs involving shared school-community facilities.

The next section of the paper draws on the educational partnerships literature to contest the singular and often rhetorical use of ‘partnership’, contrasting this abstract view with a model that maps diverse partnership types. Locating our field sites within this typology, the paper then turns to empirical analysis, discussing the sites and drawing on the reflections of informants on their partnerships and partnership work. The paper concludes with an overview discussion of system-level lessons that can be drawn from the site-based data and comparative analysis.

2. Educational Partnerships: Rationales and Models

Pope and Lewis (2008) define partnerships as:
- coalitions of public, private or not-for-profit organisations providing services or tackling problems that are of sufficient scope, scale and complexity to require diverse expertise and resources
- which undertake activities or achieve results that are beyond the capacities of individual network members.

Partnership objectives include:
- mobilising local knowledge and local actors in policy making and service provision
- promoting consensus and collaboration
- coordinating expertise and services in ‘joined-up’ service design and delivery.

Steets (2010) adds that ideal-typical partnerships have common, non-hierarchical decision-making procedures, and share risk and responsibilities.

The adaptive capacity of partnerships operating outside bureaucratic hierarchies is seen as a key strength, although some critics argue that the popularity of partnerships has increased their institutionalisation through legislative mandate and policy imperative.
Partnership rhetoric may mask unequal power in collaborative and decision-making arrangements (Cardini 2006, Griffiths 2000), as well as the ongoing challenges associated with the “partnership work” (Seddon et al. 2004) required to optimise the effectiveness, accountability and sustainability of partnerships (Steets 2010). Indeed, revealing and analysing partnership work is an emerging focus of the literature. Ross et al. (2015) conclude from Victorian-based research that establishing and maintaining effective partnerships is the main challenge for integrated service delivery.

Educational partnerships are not seen as unequivocally good. Meunier (2015), for example, argues that an emphasis on school-home partnerships in student learning implicitly favours homes with high levels of human and financial capital. As educational partnerships multiplied and diversified, scholars sought to bring coherence to the field through typological analysis or modelling (for example, Casto et al. 2014, Valli et al. 2014, Barnett et al. 2010, Cardini 2006, Seddon et al. 2004, Moriarty and Gray 2003, Peel et al. 2002). The popularity of partnerships in complex areas of governance and service provision such as education, though, poses problems for their evaluation. Outcomes may take time to revealed, directing attention to assessing how well partnership networks are functioning as a measure of their effectiveness (Pope and Lewis 2008). Specialised partnership assessment tools have been developed for this purpose (Vichealth 2011).

The infrastructure projects serving as Opportunity Space field sites were developed within an educational reform program pursuing a range of objectives, including education-led area regeneration, the promotion of new modes of teaching and learning, investment in early years’ education, the coordination of educational and community services, and timely and cost-effective infrastructure provision.

These objectives have different emphasis and modulation across our three sites. Our argument here is that the three building projects express three different types of educational partnerships. Amongst several theoretical models of educational partnerships in the literature, one developed by Australian scholars working in the field of adult and vocational education (Billett et al. 2005, Seddon et al. 2004) is particularly useful for understanding the characteristics of our field sites. The table below synthesises that work and maps our field sites onto the model.
As the table indicates, the partnership model for each field site is centralised or top-down, rather than a decentralised or bottom-up. The Hume site is an important qualification to this assessment, in that the partnership between the education department and the LGA was set within a bottom-up community partnership known as the Hume Global Learning Village, resulting in a nested approach that is detailed below.

The models have particular implications for managing the “practical politics” (Seddon et al. 2004) of the partnership work. Establishing effective partnerships, argues Ross et al. (2015), requires partner agencies to focus on four critical areas of partnership work: governance and leadership, resource allocation, communication, and alignment of philosophies and practices. This framework provides a useful thematic structure for discussion of the sites and the qualitative field data that follows.

3. Field Site Analysis

3.1 Colac: School Reform and Area Regeneration

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 pre-determined 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” (Schmachtel 2015) 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.

However, 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 the 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 (COS official). The project’s history brings together concerns to address Colac’s status as a relatively disadvantaged region (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015) through a community regeneration process formulated by the Victorian government in the late 1990s (Adams and Wiseman 2003), and more specific concerns over educational provision, including student disengagement and underachievement, a predicted decline in enrolments, and the physical condition of the existing school infrastructure (DEECD official). The Beechy project focused 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, an education 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 (Small 2010). 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. 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 Beechy 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.

3.1.1 Governance and Leadership

Detailed project planning began around 2006, with the establishment of a planning group consisting of representatives of the funding partners and the project architect. Consultation around the school mergers was coordinated by a DEECD official, working part-time in the role of regeneration officer while retaining a substantive role as a school principal in another town. The regeneration officer’s role initially focussed on consultation around the merger of the two high schools, although the role evolved to focus on the “community partnership” (DEECD official). Alongside this, a consultant engaged by COS, following the International Association for Public Participation (IAPP) protocols, undertook project consultation with the Colac community. This strategy followed a standard path for COS, which was consulting on “pretty much everything” (COS official).

Early discussions between COS officials and education staff formulated a vision for a community precinct in association with the new school, attempting to counter a perception of the project, especially the school mergers, as “a loss rather than a gain”. Following in-principle agreement between project stakeholders, COS held a “town hall event” or open workshop, attracting several hundred participants, from which emerged a set of priorities for the precinct. A series of reference groups, associated with each priority, were then set up (COS official).

The formal approval of elected COS officials was required for participation in the project. Controversy over the project built, as detailed below, and support of elected officials wavered. COS administrators, informed by a consultancy study that pointed to the deficiencies of the existing municipal library service, were enthusiastic about the chance to leverage funds for a new library facility by aligning with DEECD.

“We [COS] are struggling…to provide a six million dollar facility like this, we could never do that by ourselves.” (COS official)

Following a briefing by COS officials that secured the agreement of a critical vote in council, project contracts were signed in 2008, only weeks before project opponents were successful in a new council election.

The Beechy precinct’s staged development drove the determination of project partners to ‘build something’ in order to secure project funding for the next stage. While COS participation in the project was decided through formal democratic processes, tensions
between managerial and democratic decision-making, partly associated with the staged nature of the project, continued to place stress on participants in the planning process.

“We were quite open when we ran some meetings, we’d have the architect there, we’d talk about the new facility. My line was always: are decisions being made for this to take place? We had to get something up because we wanted the next stage of funding to happen…we couldn’t afford for things to stagnate.” (DEECD official)

This perspective fed a local view that the state department of education had ‘ownership’ of the project and the site, a point that remains sensitive and provides a filter through which some community members perceive current operational arrangements that are agreed by the partners (for example, the school, rather than CRLC, issues invoices to community groups who use the meeting rooms).

The Challenge of Agreement Making

Formal documentation and agreement making around shared use facilities emerged in our data as a key challenge and point of vulnerability. While the Colac agreement broadly followed a framework developed by the (then) Department of Education and Training (2005), central oversight proved onerous:

“There [were] quite a few versions and they would change probably every two or three days…[The document] was going backwards and forwards between the shire, it was going backwards and forwards to the department. The department had their own unit in Melbourne who’d deal with this and I would constantly be...talking with them about the wording and what it could say and what it couldn’t say…” (DEECD official)

“My understanding is [the agreement process was] very very frustrating for both organisations and took a lot longer than it should have...but joint use agreements, the development of those for many years have been quite difficult” (COS official)

“We put a lot of work into the rights of the Council and the community for this facility and the length of time for those rights…We also did a lot of work on who pays for what in maintenance, not only in upfront costs and - we worked very hard to get a very good deal for the community on that and to make sure the rights of the community were paramount and could not be just changed by the Education Department.” (COS official)

The protracted process produced a work-around solution, in the form of a simple heads of agreement with an annexure that could be more easily changed. The difficulty of this area of partnership work is underscored by the Colac example, which had the benefit of a knowledgeable project official guiding the process.

The project’s extended timeframe placed a significant burden on the school principal to exercise an oversight role of the construction while developing the educational functions and ethos of a new school. Whereas the consultation phase of the project started off with officials dedicated to leading the two consultation phases (school-based and community-based), there was no separate project manager for the capital works phase.
“Q: One of the issues in the literature, and we’ve heard at interview, is the burden that’s placed on particularly principals, but senior staff involved in regeneration of...schools. Is that something that’s familiar to you?”

“Oh, very much so….we were trying to maintain running, in the initial stages, two separate schools on two separate sites, at the same time as trying to deal with all of the merger, the building, everything. It was a huge workload, yes. And that continued for a number of years, because when we moved to this site, we were still in the building program. So our principal...had to run the building program as well as the school. A massive, massive task.” (school official)

3.1.2 Communication

While assessments of the extent and effectiveness of project consultation vary, a number of informants who participated in the consultation and planning processes put the view that the structure and objective of consultation, and the lines of communication, were not clear.

“There was substantial and ongoing community consultation...a terrific example actually of community consultation, engagement and partnership with government to create something of very, very high value.” (former COS official)

“[The reference groups] didn’t know what their role was really, they weren’t clear on that and they didn’t know what their jurisdiction was and they didn’t know what power they had, and that was a real source of frustration for a lot of people. It was probably some politics in there, and so they went on for a good twelve months without ever actually doing anything…” (COS official)

“I sat on the - I can’t remember - there were different names to the levels of governance, which was often pretty complicated.” (community representative)

“In hindsight...there wasn’t enough community consultation across a broad range of people...there [were] a lot of old people...to get old people to change you don’t hit them over the head with a mallet. (COS councillor)

“A lot of the stuff the Neighbourhood Renewal was about was saying, you know, the people pretty much have their own answers to things...it just seemed like most of the meetings were an argy-bargy between what education wanted and what local government wanted, and it didn’t really matter what community were doing sitting there. (community representative)

The confusion and alienation reported by some participants in the consultation process were exacerbated by a decision at local authority level to adopt the project architect’s concept of the library as a “global connector” as its formal name. This made early consultations opaque and provided a lightning rod for protest, and the library reference group “ended up being a free for all” (DEECD official). The origins and meaning of the name were obscure to some of the key participants:
“Out of almost nowhere...someone decided that instead of calling it a library, let’s call it a Global Connector…” (COS official)

Q. “Do you know where the name came from?”

“No idea, someone with a bottle of wine...I was pretty in touch with everything in the community at the time when we got this invite to go and find out about a Global Connector. And we were...what does it even mean?” (community representative).

There were precedents for the name. Similar terminology has been adopted in other new library and cultural facility developments, particularly in disadvantaged regions. The Global Arts Link, Ipswich (1999) and the Hume Global Learning Centre, Broadmeadows (2003) are two well-known Australian examples. In each instance, the name suggested expanding educational horizons and the presence of new media technologies (Trotter 2001). This, too, was the logic at Colac.

“The global was about opening up to the world...that everyone who came into the centre could have access to books, literature, multi-media...there was a view that most people...left Colac once they got to say 18...I think the view was that would be in their best interest to have something that was quite out there... “ (DEECD official).

However, the lack of an obvious functional or service reference in the term “global connector” became problematic.

“...there were a whole range of people missed out on that initial concept idea in the first place, because they called it a Global Connector...so where people started to feel like they hadn’t been consulted from the very start, it was because of that terminology” (community representative).

Communication beyond the partnership, as well as within, was a major challenge for project partners. The role of the local newspaper as an opinion former was seen as significant by several interviewees.

“...bear in mind that the Colac Herald’s got to publish three editions a week...controversy sells newspapers” (COS official).

Grounds for objection to the new library were that the project would increase council debt, the school would ‘own’ the facility, the site was too far from the town centre and, most controversially, co-use posed a risk to students. Following a Colac Herald report that COS was planning to use the existing library building as office accommodation, opposition to the shared library plan swung into high gear, led by a group called Friends of Colac Library (FOCL).

“...a smallish group of people, then, started being really upset about the loss of their service. In parallel with that...some people in the community got frightened about the idea that the new joint school-community library would be...an opportunity for paedophiles to approach children, and the two things combined and went like wildfire.” (COS official)

Officials were frustrated, instancing the successful operation of the shared aquatic centre in the Beechy precinct, and the accessibility of community libraries, to highlight the “irrational” opposition (COS official). Strategies for dealing with negative publicity
ranged from COS issuing regular press releases, to deflection of requests for interviews with the newspaper:

“...it’s very hard… once you’re on the back foot, to get cut through messages. So all of the media releases and things that we issued started to appear as three lines down the bottom of a very long article with a sensational headline...it was very hard from that point on to get our message across.” (COS official)

“[The Colac Herald] did ring a couple of times to interview me but I never spoke to them. I recommended that they contact either the shire or work through the school...it was always front page...it was always emotional. The people from Friends of the Library were always able to get good press. We didn’t want to go into that because I had just felt it was going to be a negative environment.” (DEECD official)

FOCL was an active media producer in its own right, using social media platforms, particularly YouTube, to build opposition to the project (Friends of Colac Library 2009). While FOCL claimed to have gathered 4,500 signatures for a petition opposing the library development, several informants suggested that anti-library sentiment was confined to a handful of Colac residents, and did not reflect on the overall project. As a DEECD informant said “I never saw one placard against the Beechy project”.

While the Beechy precinct consultation process was focussed on a new development, it was also implicitly about Colac’s changing educational environment. The merger of the schools had educational and industrial implications, but also had implications regarding the community connection with the former educational sites. The fate of the former Colac High School site, a 6.8 hectare site fronting the main road through Colac and currently unoccupied, was raised by several informants:

“So they were going to amalgamate two schools which caused a lot of angst anyhow in the community, because they were closing a high school, which had been donated to the education department, it has got a heritage overlay...and it had been going for one hundred years, so that also fed into this debate about the joint use library.” (COS councillor)

“I think change management is a real challenge for local government generally. Because you are so close to the community, working with the community...No matter how good an idea is, some people might find that idea challenging or threatening...I think that [for] local government to be successful as a sector, we’ve got to be almost the world’s best at community engagement and change management.” (COS official)

### 3.1.3 Resourcing

The library controversy created difficulties in building partnerships with business and civic groups, which were seen by a library service executive as “organisations who you would expect to provide some funding for new libraries” (CRLC official). While the traditional role of service clubs in contributing to civic infrastructure has declined in Colac (COS official), they remain important conduits for in-kind and financial support. This support was seen as particularly important at the post-occupancy stage, as the
library service struggled to find resources to properly fit out sections of the building (CRLC official).

While the advent of the meeting rooms was nominated by a library corporation executive as one of the biggest positive changes associated with the library project, the library corporation was disappointed at the fitout and operational resources allocated to the new service. Room hire fees have subsequently paid for whiteboards, projectors and a television, but supervision of the rooms has imposed a burden on the existing staff. Funding wear and tear on the library furniture and fittings is another zone of uncertainty for the partnership.

The build of the new Beechy project structures was completed with the opening of the school’s performing arts centre in 2014. While the centre has impressive back-of-house spaces for music tuition (and adjacent kitchens), the front-of-house space has been criticised as not meeting either the school’s or the community’s requirements:

Q: [T]he intention was to have a smaller theatre to compliment the arts centre in town. Has that worked out OK?

A: No. It should have been bigger...Because it’s limited to one hundred [seats] it’s just really not big enough for a lot of community use...I think it was budget constraints. I think it was intended to be bigger and I think it just...kept shrinking. Which is a shame. Even from the school point of view, to only have one hundred students in there, it’s limiting. So we’re limited to a year level at a time.” (school staff)

This assessment of the performing arts centre contrasts with broad satisfaction with the library spaces, and it seems ironic that one of the main criticisms of the old Colac library - lack of space - is now levelled at the new performing arts centre. Detailed examination of this facility was not within the scope of this research. However, concern with the inadequate size of the Colac facility is not an isolated case in the project’s field research. All three of our field sites evidence the difficulty of balancing space planning, funding, and design detail. The Victorian education department has a standard approach to dealing with the impact of population dynamics in new growth areas, in building new schools to 80% of projected maximum, and utilising temporary classroom structures to manage student loads above that figure (DEECD official). Ancillary or non-classroom facilities, and those where community use is envisaged, seem less amenable to such a metric.

3.1.4 Aligning Philosophy and Practice

The siting, design, fitout and operation of the library were issues of major concern for project partners. One of FOCL’s most strenuous objections to the project was the charge that relocating the library to the school site transferred control over the library from the local community to the state department. Responses to these concerns included retitling the facility as a library, de-emphasising the entrance to the school’s administration area within the library, and giving greater prominence to the display of bookstock, which reduced space for and emphasis on the digital library components. A council decision to stock the library with 50,000 books may have reassured library traditionalists, but has constrained library operations. On the other hand, merger of the libraries has enabled public access to bookstock in school curriculum areas, such as art, that were not a CRLC strength.
The library’s operating arrangements divide the operating costs of the facility evenly between the school and COS. Back-of-house, though, the partnership work involved blending three distinct library operating systems (2 x school libraries, 1 x public library) and developing arrangements for both school and corporation librarians to work side-by-side. While the corporation’s branch librarian runs the library, in practice the work is divided into two separate “streams” (public library/school education):

“[there was a fair bit of knocking this around before we moved in as to how it would work...it’s a really easy divide actually.” (CLRC corporation staff)

Notwithstanding plans to eventually employ all staff through one organisation, a CRLC official noted being “still somewhat stunned at the level of power the school principal has...joint-use libraries live or die according to the goodwill of the principal...a change of principal can undo a good pre-existing relationship”.

In the planning phase, the intermingling of adults and school students was also a major point of debate.

“...from the school’s point of view there was a lot of concern initially that our kids would be mixing with anyone from the public, and that caused a lot of anxiety amongst a lot of people, but in fact it’s not an issue at all.” (school official)

Design responses to these concerns included the zoning of the library space, with students using the rear of the library and a separate entrance to the school campus. However, following the library’s opening, school and library staff found that informal rules around access operated effectively, to the extent that an electronic barrier (swipe card access) between the school and the library has not been activated (school official).

However, the students’ conditional access to the library is disconcerting for public library staff

“...if there’s no teacher available, the library is closed to the school children...This to me is our big difference. We’re trying to drag people in all the time and the school, ‘well, if we haven’t got staff then you’re out’...it was very funny the first year we were here, the school students would all rush round at 3.30 and walk in the front door, which was nice because they wanted to come in the library as public people.” (CRLC official)

The development of community hubs or precincts that include schools brings together liberal and disciplinary regimes of governance that may be in tension. Recreation or civic facilities generally encourage free access by citizens, whereas schools may seek to impose sanctions around such access. This situation has arisen at the Beechy precinct, with regard to library access. Expectations of the school that suspended students should not be permitted library access during school hours are not supported by the library service. Speaking of a specific episode concerning suspension of a student, a library corporation staff member said:
“I mean for someone who is knocking about the street...the library is a good place for you to go...that’s our attitude...the school certainly weren’t going to let him in, and yet he was comfortable being in the library, he’d made friends with the library staff...[the school] were quite strong about that so he wasn’t allowed anywhere near this building because it’s on school grounds”.

Digital Networks

The Colac library provides a good example of the limitations of collapsing the physical and digital together under the broader term of shared school-community infrastructure. While all library users share a single physical space, public library users and school students have separate digital ‘spaces’ while in the library – with CSC and CRLC maintaining separate digital communication networks. CSC students have iPads (7-10) and notebooks (10-12) with which to access the school’s wi-fi network, while in the library and there is also a room of computer terminals, known as the “IT hub” that operates on the school’s wired network. The public library provides wi-fi and a small number of wired computer terminals through which its patrons can access the internet.

An attempt was made during the infrastructure planning stage to collaborate on network provision but the distinct internet access protocols maintained by the school and library could not be reconciled. The Colac library’s network is not filtered, with staff undertaking visual surveillance to ensure users comply with access rules. Victorian public schools deploy a technological solution to content-access compliance with an internet filter blocking students from accessing a range of content deemed inappropriate. As a school official explained:

“We looked at can we filter, can we draw a line in the sand...and it was just far easier to go with two networks in the end. Our kids aren’t allowed to use the public computers during the school hours. If they want to use them, because they don’t have the network restrictions that we have, they have to go in after hours and be a public library member to use them”.

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. Library corporation staff note that school network filters on the IT hub computers limit the possibility of using this facility for community education:

“...it’s essentially a school space. We have run some training sessions with the seniors computer course there, it was quite difficult for us to do that because the school has quite severe blocking of their internet, whereas we wanted to show people how to get into Yahoo or email or Hotmail or Gmail. I think that’s a strong area of difference” (CRLC official).

Ironically, the library corporation found it easier to conduct the training at the Library annex, or a part of the former Colac library that has remained open as a concession to opponents of the new development.
Additionally, the school’s ability to curtail student access to the library’s unrestricted wireless network is based on the CRLC’s current policy of requiring library users to obtain an access password. 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 since they have become more ubiquitous (McShane et al. 2014). If the library was to move to an open-access system the school’s technology-based content-access compliance would be compromised.

The proliferation of smartphone devices that provide unfettered internet access using 3G/4G telecommunication networks (ACMA 2014 reports 12 million+ smartphones in use in Australia), combined with the ability of some students to ‘hack’ around existing school network-filtering technologies, suggests that the technology-based response of schools to appropriate internet use is becoming redundant. An educational response (combined with existing student behaviour surveillance) might provide a more appropriate alternative to restricting network access and filtering online content. 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.

3.1.5 Conclusion

In a 2007 report to COS, an Australian authority on joint-use libraries, Dr Alan Bundy, indicated that broad community support was a key criterion for the success of such institutions. While this advice was seized on by FOCL as evidence the project should not proceed, COS officials viewed their role more autonomously, viewing the report, along with the community consultation, as an input to a decision that rested firmly with public officials. Striking a partnership with the state government would, in COS view, assist it to achieve broader strategic goals and financial capability around its social infrastructure provision

“...people won’t relocate to a rural area because they’ve got good roads. They’ll come because they’ve got a good leisure centre, a good performing arts centre, good schools and a good hospital.” (COS official)

COS officials also looked to the town’s history for guidance. Protest that the ‘new’ public library was too far from the town centre had surfaced when it was relocated from the town square in 1949. Controversy had also surrounded the closure of the outdoor swimming pool that made way for the Blue Water aquatic centre in the Beechy precinct. The issue at hand for the partnership, then, is not simply about the Beechy precinct, it is about addressing the political, practical and affective or emotional dimensions of change in a small town.

The major partners in the Beechy precinct development looked to deliberative processes and rational argument as a basis for planning and decision-making. The unwillingness of project opponents to engage in these processes facilitated dismissal of their views as ‘irrational’. Verhoeven and Duyvendak (2015) argue against this categorisation, asserting that emotions are part and parcel of policy-making. The words and metaphors through which emotions are expressed in policy processes, they argue, provide insight to underlying views that may be widely held, and should be substantively addressed. In the Colac project, ownership was an emotive issue for project supporters and opponents
alike. The design of the library, and the transfer of operational matters from the school to the library service (for example, booking the meeting rooms) has sought to minimise a sense of school ‘ownership’ of the site. The overall policy intervention at Colac, though, is a multi-site one, and the ownership question remains in play with the uncertain future of the unoccupied Colac High School campus.

As controversy over the new library fades, whatever strength it may have had, mounting qualitative and quantitative evidence of the library’s success invites attention to ways that the partnership can be consolidated and sustained.

First, to the successes. CRLC’s annual reports indicate a significant rise in library utilisation, particularly by new user cohorts (reported as young parents, and adults with school-age children (CRLC official), and an increase in the borrowing of library materials. Additional library floor space has facilitated successful infant language development and story time programs, supported through promotion by the community health service. Co-location with the school has produced unexpected synergies. A school drama group further enliven these programs by dramatising stories. This in turn is “great PR for the school” (school official). The zoning of the library spaces for community and school use appears seamless and effective, with the inclusion of a separate entrance for school students a practical way of minimising any sense that the school dominates the facility.

However, this separateness also underscores tensions over students’ status as a public, and their entitlement to use a public library. This tension is magnified by the reduction of high school provision in Colac from two to one, eliminating an existing capacity to move students between the two schools as a disciplinary strategy or a circuit breaker for students (school official).

COS’ original vision for the Global Connector was expansive and included the following elements:

- various dedicated spaces for telecommunication resources including access to computers and audio-visual equipment
- dedicated meeting spaces with multi-function capacities
- shared library and collection area for community and school access
- ‘shopfront’ for post compulsory education providers in the region offering information regarding availability and opportunities for adult and further education
- seminar and dedicated private study rooms with enhancing equipment and resources
- space and resources specifically to provide access and support for emerging local community businesses
- a lifelong learning hub to encourage learning regardless of age, interests or abilities (COS 2008:45).

While the name brought confusion, the vision it conveyed remains exciting, and the community now has a facility that, with adequate operating funding, is capable of supporting its realization.
3.2 Hume Town Campus: Educational Infrastructure in the Learning Village

The Hume project is a 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.

The Hume story, though, 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 several analysts (Wheeler et al. 2013, Phillips et al. 2005). The discussion below details the influence of HGLV for the Broadmeadows school regeneration project and the construction of HCSC Town Campus. In particular, HGLV, in tandem with the formal local planning process, provided a context for community consultation on the development, and for prioritising competing land use values in the Broadmeadows town centre.

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 (McShane and Wilson 2015).

The argument that we make in this section is that the development of 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.

3.2.1 Introducing Broadmeadows

Broadmeadows is the administrative and commercial centre of the Hume LGA. Hume is 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 (Victorian Government 2002). This vision encourages residential development in the civic and commercial centre, with dwellings and commercial premises replacing the existing expanse 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 (DEECD 2009).

Hume Central Secondary College Town Campus

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.

Town Campus’ architectural design engaged directly with the surrounding urban setting and the community:

[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. (Gregory Burgess Architects 2015)

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 which, in addition to its public swimming and gymnasium programs, makes a basketball court 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 (HGLC official). 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.
3.2.2 Governance and Leadership

The Broadmeadows school regeneration project combined wider educational policy reform initiatives in areas such as curriculum, teacher workforce and educational technology, with local factors associated with educational achievement, school reputation, and choice.

[A]bout one thousand or more kids every day would commute out of Broadmeadows to get an education...the local school were not really providing for those parents...so the regeneration project...was giving them facilities that kids were going to take pride in, upgraded facilities in something that was a state of the art building as well as twenty-first century learning...to change the practices that maybe were entrenched and worked against...the aspirations of the community.” (school official)

The local authority viewed the school regeneration project in the context of Hume’s overall social and economic development.

“[L]earning and education is an important factor in terms of how we address that disadvantage but also how we attract new businesses and residents to the area.” (Hume official)

Hume also sought to address concerns about the quality of the local public sphere, advocating for the schools regeneration project to view schools as “part of the urban fabric” (Hume official). A council officer singled out a resident’s comment made during a community consultation process to illustrate this: “[t]he quality of the place and spaces reflects what Hume thinks of us” (Hume official).

The Hume case study offers our clearest example of the difficulty of formalising or documenting partnership agreements. The stage at which our research engaged with the projects meant that many of the officials involved in project planning were still in their positions, and the networks and tacit knowledge generated by the project had carried through to underpin operations. The lack of formal agreements around the use of the gymnasium and parkland is a key issue of unfinished business and perceived area of vulnerability:

“I’m open, I think, to making the (shared use) concept work, but what if I change, or some of those key stakeholders change that don’t actually understand or were part of this... concept.” (school official, 2013)

“...like all organizations you never find huge amounts of time...(the leisure centre) are also reconstructing...so they’ve got that project, but...this is our fourth year now…” (school official, 2015)

Informants were puzzled about what they considered to be a lack of attention to agreements as the construction moved towards completion phases, contrasting with the focus on project coordination at the start of planning:

“Then once - things shift, priorities shift in terms of the building program and...before our project was finished there was another project somewhere else and they [project staff] got sucked out of ours and placed somewhere else...increasingly it became more difficult for them to keep the threads and finish it, tie it all up. So they vanished, and once
they vanished were all too busy doing the daily things to...pick up on that.” (school official)

3.2.3 Communication

With HGLV’s Learning Together document providing an important strategic and institutional context, planning and consultation for the schools regeneration project was undertaken at school council level by the Department of Education and Training from 2004. The school-based consultation has been documented elsewhere (DEECD 2009). From the council’s perspective, initial wariness of the project was at least partly based on earlier planning failures:

[I]n talking to [school council members] their main concern was that through growing up in Broadmeadows, they’d seen one or two or three similar plans, grand plans, grand visions, and nothing happened. So they could actually see this was progressing very quickly.” (Hume official)

The school regeneration project was unusual for its engagement with the local jurisdiction, at least in the view of Hume officials. The project was directed by a project planning group, chaired by one of the school principals. The inter-jurisdictional composition of the group highlighted existing gaps between spatial and service planning that project partners sought to bridge. As one Hume official commented:

“[It was] really valuable to have Education along with some other government departments sitting at the table…some of them acknowledged that they’d never done that before, they didn’t sit around and plan geographically…..it was a time of enlightenment…We didn’t want to go back to a situation in dealing with individual principals.” (Hume official)

Hume’s community consultation process differed from Colac’s in that the specific proposal to build the Town Campus followed the council’s formal planning and development application process. Underpinning the Town Campus project was a proposal to transfer a parcel of public open space in the Broadmeadows town centre to DEECD.

“The big decision for council and what we needed to put to our community was that it was a decision between open space and learning…Even though when Education normally develops an education site they’re exempt from the planning scheme requirements…this was our land and we said ‘we’re going to run it through a pseudo planning process’ because there was so much interest from both the council and the community…in terms of consultation, in terms of not just being a telling exercise but a real engagement and a real focus on capacity building, it’s probably one of the best processes I’ve ever seen…” (Hume official)

According to the council, the planning approval process attracted around 800 submissions. The Hume story indicates that development models involving extensive community engagement are compatible with providing certainty around project timeframes.
“It was a relatively tight process...we did the whole thing in under six months, but it was a fair process and open to community input...on balance we had a support for the development.” (Hume official)

3.2.4 Resourcing

While the idea of educational partnerships is positively received, there is a wariness that shared use may act as a cover for underinvestment. Expressing frustration about the limited size of Town Campus’ performing arts space, a school official suggested that shared use plans may be

“...penny pinching strategies that in many ways you don’t need a gym and there’s a community basis and a philosophy that’s really strong and great, but then you don’t have a gym and you don’t have a theatrette and you don’t have a whole lot of other things.” (school official).

From the council side, there is a similar wariness that economic efficiency is a major driver of shared use, involving a cost shift to the local government sector:

“They’re saying councils build the library, councils build the sport and recreational gym centre, it’s almost like the school is just becoming classroom based.” (Hume official)

The key issue here is not simply resources, but resource agreements that are developed at the initial planning stage. As the council argues, different design and upkeep standards for school and council ovals limit the use of those grounds for non-school use, particularly for competition standard sport.

“[the Department of] Education want to see those grounds utilised but we’ve got multiple sites across Hume where ovals are three-quarters the size of a competition oval and it’s of no use to Council...We’d spend substantially more [than Education] maintaining a site for competition purposes...if it’s built to meet those requirements we can work with the school.” (Hume official)

The current resourcing arrangements by which the school uses the leisure centre is not clear to all stakeholders. The Town Campus construction budget included a lump sum to fund the school’s use of the leisure centre courts, but it is unclear what follow-on financial arrangement will sustain this.

Financial sustainability is a significant issue for Hume, as many other LGAs in Australia. The social justice compact that underpins Hume’s policy and operations influences the leisure centre’s pricing model, but places cost pressures on the facility.

“Council here definitely makes things very accessible for people in terms of cost, particularly in [the Broadmeadows] area. Even our members, we’re probably talking 50% to 60% are on discounted memberships, just because of the demographics of the area.” (Leisure centre official)

“[the leisure centre] been staffed by Council, however in these times now I think that’s all under review, so at some point obviously the reason why they get these management companies in is they could run
it for a lot less. Maybe it’s something we have to look at in the future...” (Leisure centre official)

These cost pressures have heightened awareness of the limitations of current, largely informal agreements. Hume informants echoed Colac’s in seeking greater capability to develop and implement a joint use agreement. Time and expertise were seen as the key resources required to develop and implement agreements. Without dedicated resources, agreement-making was “everyone’s business and no-one’s business...while we argue about responsibility, there is a safety risk that needs fixing now” (school official).

How risk is perceived and negotiated is a major concern for the school. Shared use of the Town Park, and out-of-school hours community use of the basketball court inside the school boundaries, raises questions about the school’s jurisdiction and duty of care.

“...there’s other tricky things that I prefer not to think about and I hope I won’t have to...we use the oval [park] but we’re not responsible for the maintenance, so there’s major cracks, so if a kid rolled his ankle or hurt himself, even though we’ve said don’t play rugby there. We’ve told them be safe and make sure there is no glass, but technically if you don’t maintain your oval, you shouldn’t allow kids to play on it because it could be potentially hazardous.” (school official)

3.2.5 Aligning Philosophies and Practices

The most striking features of the Town Campus for the first time visitor are its porous boundaries and the open address of the building. Managing the perceived and real risks associated with this openness was a major post-opening concern. School and council officials had different views on how this played out:

“I think the public gathering in close proximity to the school ...has been something that [school staff] have been concerned about...as time has gone by I think [school staff have] probably got more used to this school in an urbanised environment... [t]he success of a civic or green space is the incidental gathering.” (Hume official)

“[A] school without a fence is pretty scary for teachers, but also for kids and the parents...it’s all open here...open[ing] the whole school was quite difficult.” (school official)

As with Colac, the early post-occupancy period involved processes of adjustment and familiarisation that established new routines and norms:

“...initially because it was new it wasn’t owned by the community, it was no-one’s school really...the first year or so, we even had a couple of young people run through, like, in a hostile way...they came in screaming...[now] there’s more clarity in the community that it’s a school rather than a TAFE college or ‘what the hell is it?’ which initially we had.” (school official)

A visible teacher presence, demarcating school and non-school boundaries, assisted with this settling-in period. However, the ‘multiversity’ concept involving extensive community use of the building’s ground floor spaces, as articulated by the architect, and endorsed by the council, has, at least in the council’s view, been slow to emerge. Where
council officials discuss flexible space and schools as destinations, not just schools, the school’s perspective highlights resource constraints:

“...at the moment we’ve got 500 kids...according to the education department 800 can fit here, now that’s ridiculous, there’ll be no place for lockers...if you have 800 you’ll have one kid on top of another to fit in the space, there’s no flexibility because you’ve got to stay where you’re put.” (school official)

However, there was a perception within the LGA that schools within established residential parts of the municipality were “islands and closed off to the community” (Hume official).

[I]n the growth areas there’s been more attempts to do shared use of facilities and grounds but largely here in Broadmeadows they were isolated; they were islands and there wasn’t much community engagement.” (Hume official)

This issue of integration was a particular concern in the established parts of the municipality:

[W]e recognise that the community infrastructure, both our infrastructure and the infrastructure that primarily belongs to the state government schools, neighbourhood houses [and so on] was quite tight across Broadmeadows.” (Hume official)

The council is concerned to introduce consistency in operationalising broad policy agreement on the shared use of educational land.

“Education’s approach in terms of wanting to open up the schools, changing the learning paradigm, making the grounds accessible and the facilities accessible after hours was pretty consistent in terms of our planning. But at the time when this started in the early 2000s, up till then we had to deal with individual principals, and they could change. You might get a principal that said “yep, let’s bring down the fences’ and the next principal says ‘let’s put the fences up.” (Hume official)

3.2.6 Conclusion

Town Campus staff work in a complex educational environment, resisting Broadmeadows’ stigmatisation while acknowledging the structural features that have negatively influenced educational attainment:

[t]he literature says your postcode is not your destination, but often it is unfortunately, for a whole range of reasons...I think the biggest issue for me is to do the main job well...to educate the kids, to support the kids to achieve their best result and that means knowing where they’re at [is] a starting point rather than the end result.” (school official).

Hume informants share a view that the learning village network and the regeneration partnership has produced significant change in the formal and informal education landscape. The opening of the Hume Global Learning Centre meant, for one Hume official, that “we’re not working from a deficit model anymore”. From the school side, outcomes attributed to the overall school regeneration program include improved
attendance and transfer to post-compulsory education (school staff). This has occurred in an environment where 72% of the school’s students are ranked in the lowest ICSEA (Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage) quartile and, as reported by the school, one third of the 2013 year 12 cohort had been in Australia less than three years, and the school partners with Foundation House to support school families that have experienced torture and trauma (ACARA 2015a).

While the focus of our research has been on the Town Campus development, it is clear that continued development of the town centre will have an important bearing on the school’s relationship with the suite of surrounding community facilities, and with the community use of the school campus. The completion of a new 50 metre indoor swimming pool at the leisure centre will create opportunities to develop programs from learn-to-swim to competition-level swimming catering for all school stages. However, increased operating costs involved in expanding the ‘wet’ facilities may place further pressure on the centre’s financial and management models, and possibly its arrangement with the school.

School staff are also watching with keen interest the planned refurbishment of the former Broadmeadows Town Hall, situated in the town centre, as it is likely to provide a new and larger venue for school performances and assemblies. This will, of course, require partnership work and resources. From the school’s perspective, it struggles to prioritise partnership work in the educational environment of Broadmeadows. For the council, while the formalisation of individual agreements around infrastructure and services is important, partnership work also consists of securing state-level policy commitment and funding for shared resources:

“It’s one of the key challenges and you’d hear this wherever you go...great plan, lucky that it went over a couple of terms of government but then government changes and so the planning changes and the focus changes…” (Hume official).

Realising the planners’ vision of community use of the Town Campus building itself, though, appears to be some way off. The focus of school staff on pedagogy and social support of students, the school’s resource constraints, and concerns over the central design feature of the building - its campus-style openness - weigh against this. Council officials express hope that the school building itself will be fully integrated in the multiversity concept demonstrated at Hume Global Learning Centre. The school is more cautious

“...it’s a project that’s still in the making” (school official).

3.3 Derrimut: Pioneering Educational Public-Private Partnerships in Victoria

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 (Partnerships Victoria 2000). This arrangement also trialled a build, operate and transfer model that has emerged as a preferred development process for new schools (Premier of Victoria 2015).
We characterise the Derrimut project 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 means “[principals] are not taken away for days trying to follow things up (school official).” The contract also contains 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 attention to be given to engaging a new community with a range of culturally-based expectations of schools and schooling.

The co-location of the primary school and ECEC/community centre has also assisted the development of a shared educational vision across early years/compulsory schooling, and coordination of practical issues such as transition. The cluster of infrastructure and services on the Derrimut site has created other synergies and linkages, detailed below, and 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, the dominance of the ECEC functions in the community centre, and transport limitations. These issues are discussed below.

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 in Australia.

Understanding the nature of the partnership work at Derrimut requires contextual background on the PPP concept, and its particular application by the Victorian department of education.

3.3.1 Public Private Partnerships in Australian Education

There is a growing international literature on public private partnerships in education (Robertson et al. 2012; Education International 2009). However, although the model has been in use in New South Wales since the mid-2000s, there is very little Australian-focused literature in this field. There appears to be only one published analysis of educational PPPs that has been written by an educational practitioner (Poole 2010).

PPPs can be defined in precise terms as the acquisition of services of a desired quantity and quality at an agreed price for a specific period (Robertson et al. 2012:6), or more loosely, as cooperative institutional arrangements between public and private actors (Hodge and Greve 2010). Australian usage of the term generally conforms to a public/private binary that does not wholly reflect the PPP typology. This is the case with the Derrimut example, which, with the presence of the not-for-profit organisation YMCA providing ECEC and community recreation services for the PPP consortium, may be better described as a multi-stakeholder partnership (Education International
2009). However, in contractual terms, the Victorian education department is partnered with a single corporate entity comprised of a financier, builder, facility manager and the YMCA. This PPP vehicle has been mobile since its establishment, with the original company formed to contract with the department, Axiom Education, selling its interest in the project to AMP Capital, which is building a portfolio of PPP-style infrastructure assets (AMP Capital 2015).

The Victorian government’s PPP policy sets out a range of objectives for infrastructure and service standards, the optimisation of social and economic returns, employment and industry development, and innovation. While whole-of-government policy is agnostic on whether the public or private sector can deliver projects more efficiently or effectively, DEECD saw the PPP process as an opportunity to expedite school construction, particularly in Melbourne’s outer growth areas. DEECD also sought to introduce design innovation through the process, instead of working from a standard prescriptive schedule of facilities (DEECD official).

3.3.2 Derrimut – Place, People, Infrastructure

The particular configuration of the Derrimut complex reflected DEECD’s widening portfolio interests (encompassing early years learning and compulsory schooling), the dominance of young families in Derrimut’s demography, and the lack of community facilities in the greenfields suburb. The co-location of ECEC and school facilities is not new in Australia. For example, Meadowbank (now Meadows) Primary School, in Broadmeadows, has hosted an early learning centre since 1978 (Warr 2007). The reorganisation of the Victorian education portfolio in 2006 to include early years learning, backed by growing international evidence of the effectiveness of investment in this area, gave further impetus to such projects.

Derrimut is twenty-five kilometres west of Melbourne’s CBD and located within the City of Brimbank, one of Australia’s largest LGA’s. 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 (Forecast.id 2006). 70% of Derrimut primary school students have a language background other than English, with China, Vietnam, Indian, Sri Lanka, the Phillipines and east Africa the dominant source countries (ACARA 2015b).

The above description typifies demographic and settlement patterns in Melbourne’s outer growth areas. Settlement pressures have influenced state-level policy changes to bring forward infrastructure and service provision, which has typically lagged housing provision in greenfield areas. Changes include coordinated planning through the precinct structure planning process, and experimentation with new partnerships with estate developers. A strategy of co-location or shared use of community facilities in new growth areas has sought to optimise economic, service and social benefits of
investment. Evaluations of community infrastructure master planning strategies, while limited in number, have generally been positive (Pope 2010).

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 and both primary schools, and coordinated planning between the two primary school principals and the director of the community centre, means that Derrimut is more usefully 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 (MCH) also operates on site. The Derrimut PPP arrangement is a build, operate and transfer arrangement with a contract life of twenty-six years.

3.3.3 Governance and Leadership

Consistent with the PPP structure, significant aspects of the partnership work, notably the head consortium contract and the ongoing support of the schools PPP network, are organised centrally. Partnership work is not foregrounded in the school conversation as problematic. Indeed, the view is clearly put that the PPP arrangement has “freed me to become an instructional leader” (school official). School-based partnership work associated with the PPP arrangement involves participation in the school PPP network, broad oversight of departmental policy covering building-related matters (eg. occupational health and safety) at the school, and liaison with the on-site facilities manager contracted through the PPP.

In our first conversation, in 2013, a school official discussed being “de-skilled” in the area of building management and maintenance. By 2015, the official’s assessment was phrased in terms of re-skilling:

“If anything, I think I’m a little more aware of how to work through different organizations. I think that’s actually been an interesting part. So, working more closely with the state and how they view facilities…and then how does a company that’s not been part of education view that?” (school official)

For Brimbank, though, the PPP arrangement has required significant work to put appropriate governance arrangements in place. Joining up with the PPP arrangement between Axiom and DEECD, which included YMCA as the provider of ECEC services, required Brimbank to strike a separate agreement with YMCA.
“We...had to put someone on specifically to manage that project because of the complexities...and the different arrangements between the different parties to the agreement. We spent a lot of money on...legal advice...it was [a] pretty unique arrangement. I don’t think any other council out here has...the same model. (Brimbank official)

3.3.4 Communication

The PPP arrangement and Derrimut’s demography also influenced consultation and communication processes with local residents. The task for the school leaders was not to build a school but a school community:

“...we letterboxed the whole community to say that we were coming, that there was going to be a public meeting. That we were going to talk about what we wanted for our children in this community. I didn’t think very many people would turn up...anyway we had a huge number of people turn up... people came from so many places, they had definite ideas of what school should be and what it should look like.” (school official)

The public-private partnership terminology caused some uncertainty in the Derrimut community about the educational message. While teachers were keen to build enrolments and engage students, parents and the surrounding community in the development of the school’s philosophy and pedagogy, they encountered a stumbling block in confusion about the school’s status. This is reported to have been created by the on-site display of a project sign, and the contrast between the condition of the existing schools attended by students moving to Derrimut and the newness of the Derrimut buildings:

“They worry that we’re a private school and the fees. I’ve said, no, no we’re a public school. We’re a government school.” (school official)

The message is repeated on the MySchool school profile (ACARA 2015b) and reinforced in a DEECD slide presentation on the Partnerships Victoria School Project:

“The Government owns the school, it is not a private school.”

It is difficult to gauge the initial strength of this feeling, but the issue dissipated with the removal of project signage, as the school settled into the social and physical landscape. However, as with the re-badging of Colac’s library, there is a lesson here that the political imperatives to craft new language and symbology around recognised institutions may result in confusion and resistance.

The proximity of the two primary schools and the ECEC program has facilitated communication and exchange between the institutions on educational philosophy and programs such as transition to school, and assisted staff to work cooperatively on precinct issues such as traffic management and safety.

“It’s taken us a long time to grow the sites and find points of connection...there’s been some projects that [YMCA] are doing that overlapped with us and we could’ve combined together. We’ve noticed that we’ve missed some opportunities...but even just noticing that
we’ve lost opportunities means that it’s actually moving towards a different place as well.”  (school official)

3.3.5 Resourcing

The bundling of five new school construction projects scaled the PPP project sufficiently to bring the capacity of a major construction company (a ‘tier 1’ builder) to the project. The scale and ‘whole-of-life’ perspective of the project resulted in an investment in build quality to achieve savings in maintenance costs over the term of the PPP contract (DEECD official).

This whole-of-life view contrasted with Brimbank’s conventional funding and asset management processes. As with much of the Australian local government sector, the City of Brimbank has only recently adopted a strategic outlook on infrastructure planning.

“We were born poor...Brimbank has gone through some pretty lean times and that’s partly why...you can explain the deficit in terms of the building quality and maintenance...Now we’re playing catch up. There’s a lot of catch up.” (Brimbank official)

Brimbank has traditionally relied on partnership funding and developer contributions to leverage and offset internal funds for community infrastructure. The Derrimut community centre began life with funding from a developer contribution, with $1.4 million allocated for a “much smaller” community centre than the final construction, and an understanding that a primary school would be built in the precinct “at some stage down the track”. With the 2009 announcement of the PPP “our conversation changed overnight”. The separate projects were combined, and funding from three levels of government pooled to produce a “…much, much better outcome for the community” (Brimbank official).

The business model of the partnership has been challenged by the regulatory and service dynamics of ECEC. Council of Australian Government-led statutory changes to the ratio of carers and children, and to carers’ qualification requirements dramatically altered YMCA’s operating assumptions:

Highly regulated so higher risk, I think that’s what we found at first and probably moving into this greenfield sites area…you’re challenged by your business case rationale without having a lot of expertise in that area within the organisation, so we had to bring in expertise.

The change in the regulations came in post our decision to sign…and then regulations that came in last year [2012], any organisation that opened a facility post-May 2009 was bound by those regulations so we were paying [for a] higher ratio of staff...We had a challenging business model, mission base really strong, but we had a really challenging business model...getting into that space, building a site up from scratch to being financially sustainable. (YMCA official)

The rapid growth of the suburb, and its relative isolation, impacted on the centre’s first years of operation. Demand for the on-site MCH service was high, and the child-care facilities filled quickly. By 2013 the building was perceived by YMCA staff as too small, and some of its design (for example, the kitchen servicing the long-day child care
area) proved inadequate. Lack of transport options also hampered the take-up of some activities (YMCA officials).

On our first visit to the centre (2013), a local YMCA official articulated an aspiration for the centre to open 7 days to 10pm. By 2015, the community centre side of the facility had built up through energetic programming and experimentation, but limited operating resources meant the centre remains closed on the weekends.

### 3.3.6 Aligning Philosophy and Practice

Partnership alignment has proved somewhat fraught in the Derrimut PPP, highlighting a lack of congruence between DEECD’s widened portfolio interest in early childhood, and established jurisdictional roles in this area:

“The difficulty for the department is that we don’t really have direct involvement in early childhood infrastructure…it is primarily a local government delivered service with funding from the Commonwealth…we are a bit limited in the sense that because we don’t receive funding from the state government for that infrastructure, we don’t hold the strings as it were.” (DEECD official)

The speed of the development – a claimed benefit of the PPP process - highlighted a mismatch between the decision-making and budgeting cycles of the state and local jurisdictions:

“Extra time would be a benefit for us to be able to lock in community partnerships with groups like local government. We had spoken to local government, obviously…saying “[Y]our community centre is here, are you interested in being part of the project formally?...Do you want to put your ELC as part of the PPP project” and because of the timeframes they just weren’t able to commit to that. They were on a different budget cycle and those sorts of things so it was negotiations post contract close that resulted in those local governments getting on board…more time up front could allow us to get them involved in the PPP from the very start rather than coming in after the fact. That would probably be the biggest lesson learnt from the community centre side of things.” (DEECD official)

While “a lot of work had to be done to just build the legal framework” (Brimbank official), a larger issue for Brimbank was the ‘lock in’ of the service provider through the PPP process. A feature of the PPP arrangement for DEECD - the bundling of physical infrastructure and services - was problematic for Brimbank. YMCA was extending its scope to include ECEC services, but Brimbank was in the process of bringing contracted-out youth and MCH services back in house, emulating a move in some other local government authorities.

“I suppose our motivation is that’s a key entry point service for a community like Brimbank. We felt we probably needed to be delivering that service and it has so many flow on effects in terms of pathways for families and children. We weren’t necessarily happy with the quality of service we were getting in there.” (Brimbank official)
ECEC services were a new area for YMCA in Victoria, and the rationale for involvement in this area was put thus:

“[W]e’ve been involved in children’s services for a long time but more through the programming whether it’s...Outside School Hours Care...swimming lessons, gymnastics and that but we’d never really done early learning in this state. Some of our other associations...had history in that space so...we saw it as an opportunity to deliver on mission... Also in terms of a business model it was a little bit different, we were fairly focussed around that time on local government recreation. We were fairly bound by short term contracts and competitive tendering so [a] long term lease to have a service out in the growth corridors of the West was very attractive. (YMCA official)

YMCA had been operating in the PPP consortium’s first two sites (Point Cook and Taylor’s Hill) in adjoining LGAs, but in the early stages the Brimbank council “didn’t necessarily have a good feel” (Brimbank official) about the proposed partnership.

This view changed, as YMCA brought expertise in ECEC into its organisation

“But we’re moving into a whole new area for them, with early years provision and there’s a lot of concerns about whether they were the right agency to do it...But...they’ve invested a lot in the last eighteen months into the early years area in terms of training and getting the quality of their services up.” (Brimbank official)

**Partnership Alignment at the School**

While the multi-site build is perceived to have delivered a “corporate” feel that required post-occupancy personalisation by school staff, those officials were impressed with the engagement of the PPP entities with the educational mission. From the school side, apprehensions that that the project would drift into “the twilight zone of builders” (school official) and impact on teaching dissipated. The PPP contract includes the provision and maintenance of landscaping, but school staff also followed a long tradition in Australian schooling in using the grounds as a text for teaching and community engagement. A five year plan for the grounds developed by the school council included a project to boost the site’s biodiversity, and initiated an annual tree planting day, in which the Axiom consortium has participated. Development of the grounds involved engagement with Greening Australia, Landcare and the University of Melbourne.

The school’s internal spaces are not set up for extensive out-of-hours use by the community, with the open design offering limited opportunity for zoning. The school is also sensitive to its residential setting, and use of the gymnasium, which is sited on a school-residential boundary and a lightweight construction, is restricted at the weekend.

Consistent with Hume Town Campus, Derrimut school staff have remarked on the low level of vandalism or misuse of the site. The new construction created a community perception described by a teacher in ways that echoed the appraisal at Hume:

“There is that sense that ‘I’m valued’. That my school is beautiful, that we look after this space, and it...does make a difference to self esteem and feelings of well-being.” (school official).
However, this sensibility is encouraged by monitoring and active engagement with visitors:

“...we’ve got people that visit all the time during the weekends and after school. If we’re here, one of us will always go down and say ‘oh, it’s great to see you here. Thanks for looking after the place.’” (school official)

**Aligning community recreation and childcare**

Another challenging alignment in this project is presented by the physical combination of the community centre and child-care facility. Multi-use facilities, of course, commonly combine community recreation and child-care functions, to enable parents and carers to participate in recreation activities. However, in most cases, the recreation function is the main focus of the facility, and structural features such as physical design and human resources reflect this weighting. At Derrimut, the ECEC function dominates, in terms of the physical layout of the building, the programming, and the staffing. This balance raises some interesting questions around access, security and user perceptions of the centre.

The Derrimut centre is divided into a front ‘open’ area for the general community, and a rear restricted area for childcare services, with the latter physically segregated and accessed through an electronic code. MCH allied health staff use rooms on the community side, and the OSHC program is also conducted in the ‘open’ part of the centre. A centrally located administration desk provides a monitoring point for centre entry and exit.

The dominance of the child-care program may have impacted negatively on perceptions of broader community ‘ownership’ of the centre in its first years of operation, with centre staff detecting a view that only childcare users were entitled to access the community areas (YMCA official). Aspirations to establish a community-based advisory board were unsuccessful, and development of a viable program of community recreation activities also took several years.

While community engagement with the centre has changed significantly since opening, regulatory and structural features associated with childcare services impose specific demands on centre staff.

“Having shared spaces for before and after school is difficult…there’s a lot of hazards that we’ve identified…what if the Sunday church group brought in a Picnic bar and a child with an allergy picked one up on Monday?” (YMCA official)

A second area where the regulatory regime and social behaviours were in discord was the use of digital ICTs:

“[We] had issues with kids in after-school using their netbooks to take pictures of other kids. [We] had a child last year who took a heap of photos…and made a powerpoint. Parents want to film graduations, kids concerts…and regulations aren’t letting us…it’s unmanageable now.” (YMCA official)
Summarising the overall staff response to the centre, one staff member commented “[i]t’s nice being part of the bigger community rather than just working as part of a childhood centre” (YMCA official). However, staff also voiced concern over the perceived vulnerability of the all-female staff at the centre, describing a ‘lock-down’ episode involving a threatening ex-partner of a child-care user (YMCA official, MCH official). Such an event is not unique to this setting; the basis of staff concern was whether the particular configuration of the centre afforded sufficient institutional resources and restraints.

3.3.7 Conclusion

“[A]fter a slow beginning it’s very successful...there was always demand there. In fact...we probably delivered this project three or four years too late. So it’s much needed when it did happen...all services are well-subscribed...[the school] doesn’t have the capacity to meet the demands. So it’s working well. Also, we built a pavilion on site, on the council land, so that’s utilised a whole bunch of community groups as well as the sporting club, so it’s become a bit of a focal point for the area.” (Brimbank official)

In comparison with the other two field sites, there was appreciably less concern with both the mechanics and the politics of partnership work from the school side. While extra-school use of the facilities has increased steadily, it has not exceeded the block of hours allocated for this purpose in the PPP contract.

However, partnership and service arrangements have been more complex for the council, with contracted service arrangements in the childcare area running counter to council’s strategy. Brimbank’s preferred position on the community centre is to manage it in-house. The council informant’s conclusion is that the model that was followed at Derrimut could not be easily transferred to other sites:

“I’m not sure what the long-term value of the PPP will be to tell you the truth...It was difficult...our plans had to change overnight basically...In the end...what we got out of the project was better than what we would have had from any other process... it worked for us in terms of practical building...I’m not sure whether it was a very easy process for us...with the PPP involved...we had to do a lot of developmental work around governance and legal...that really probably shouldn’t fall on us to do, probably picked up a lot of the workload.” (Brimbank official)

Setting aside public interest questions regarding PPPs, an area of ongoing debate (Hudon 2014), but not covered within the scope of the research, the Derrimut project indicates a PPP arrangement has significant benefits in the educational domain in regard to partnership work as it is construed in this paper. These include:

- capacity to deliver at precinct or community-level scale rather than school-level
- timely delivery
- level of documentation around partner roles and responsibilities
- reduction of school involvement in routine maintenance.
However, this PPP example also has some apparent disbenefits:

- the scoping of the PPP at state level meant the council was involved in post-hoc and, to a degree, remedial planning
- the PPP logic, with its emphasis on scale and efficiency, may discourage participation of community level partners in planning and/or service delivery
- the current funding model does not cover weekend opening of the ECEC/community centre.

4. **Conclusion - system level lessons**

This paper has drawn on qualitative data to analyse three ‘works-in-progress’ in the field of shared school-community infrastructure, reframing them as educational partnerships to

- analyse the achievements and ongoing challenges of the projects, and
- draw system level lessons from the empirical study.

This section tackles the second point.

The paper began by arguing that the shared school-community infrastructure projects were usefully viewed as educational partnerships, or institutional coalitions that brought together expertise or resources to tackle complex problems, or achieve outcomes that were beyond the capacity of individual network members. The advantage of a partnership focus, we argued, was its attention to the sustainability of the objectives identified for the shared infrastructure, and its capacity to provide an assessment framework in a field where there is limited empirical connection between infrastructure inputs and social and educational outcomes.

This paper adopts a plural and adaptive construct of ‘educational partnership’, situating our three field sites on a typology that encompassed both centralised, or ‘top-down’, and decentralised, or ‘bottom-up’ partnership models. We argued that the Hume case study was a hybrid of these models, in which a bureaucratic planning process was used to formalise broad community agreement on education-led regeneration.

The paper interpreted the fieldwork data through an analytical framework drawn from recent studies of the effectiveness of governance partnerships. That framework identified four variables that impacted on partnership effectiveness: governance and leadership, resourcing, communications, and aligning philosophies and programs. Following on from our individual case study analysis, what general conclusions does our study offer in each of these areas?

4.1 **Governance and Leadership**

A key lesson is that partnership models should fit local circumstances. A centralised model may be better suited to a greenfield site, where timely infrastructure provision is paramount and the community is imagined rather than existing. A decentralised model is oriented towards local democracy, capacity building and the development of a shared vision. As the Hume case study showed, a robust community planning process can give effective support to a subsequent managerial or project management approach to undertake major infrastructure projects. This model is particularly appropriate to
development projects in built-up urban areas with established communities and public land use pressures.

The PPP we studied demands considerably less ‘partnership work’ of the school staff than is required of the school staff in our two non-PPP projects, minimising role and resource conflicts and enabling prioritisation of school leadership. However, this finding suggests there is a demonstrated need to close the gap between the resources that are committed to the partnership work in PPP and non-PPP projects.

PPPs may deliver infrastructure projects more quickly and cost effectively than alternative procurement models, but their timetable may conflict with the more deliberative and negotiated process of assembling cross-jurisdictional partners in the field of community and educational services. PPPs may also have a downward cost-shifting effect between government jurisdictions.

### 4.2 Resourcing

With a commercial approach to investment risk, the PPP project gave significant attention to specifying roles, responsibilities and performance measures, relative to the conventional public revenue-financed approaches of Hume and Colac. This degree of attention demonstrated the specialised nature of this documentation, and, in our view, provides a benchmark for all partnerships. Schools may require specialist expertise and resources to develop and monitor partnership agreements. Simple provision of joint-use agreement templates is not sufficient. Evaluation of shared infrastructure projects has pointed to the crucial role of partnership brokers in facilitating such projects (Pope and Lewis 2008). The value of these roles has been recognised by jointly funded (DPCD-local council) appointments attached to local authorities in growth areas. 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.

Informants at each of our field sites were critical that the new infrastructure was already ‘too small’ for its purpose, and several articulated a view that shared facilities policy prioritised economic efficiency. Infrastructure-led educational partnerships need to build, through planning, communication, resourcing and programming, confidence amongst practitioners and the community that something more, not something less, is being delivered. As one school official commented:

“...when we’ve gone out to sell our school in public venues, tradition holds for most families, especially when it’s got to do with your child...we can be liberal with the general notion of community, but when it’s your child’s turn to go to the high school, are you going to pick the school that’s got it’s own wonderful facilities, and actually it’s exposed to the park...and you think who else lurks about in the leisure centre when my son or daughter is at year seven.”

### 4.3 Communications

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 issue of ‘ownership’ emerged as a key area of contest, reminding us that recognizing the significance of affect or emotion in local community development projects. 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 address these factors in policy decision and implementation.

The schools PPP network 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.

4.4 Aligning philosophy and practice

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 always be aspiring to do something new together, not simply operate standard programs side-by-side. Space is enabling: the inclusion of flexible space in new educational infrastructure can tap into latent demand and generate new programs.

In 2013 DEECD released a document setting out the relationship between the department and schools within a policy framework promoting school autonomy, responsiveness to local communities, and accountability (DEECD 2013). The document committed the department to playing an active brokerage role to “support local planning, development, sharing and maintenance of infrastructure and ICT” (p. 7). Different access protocols for school and public digital networks demonstrate the practical limitations of this policy linkage between physical and digital infrastructure.

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 the operational settings of shared facilities. The research highlights concerns over heightened risks associated with shared facilities, both physical and digital. While we suggest 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. There is no published literature on this specific subject, and current operations and future planning would benefit from further research here.
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