Bringing in the Public:
Community Facilities and Social Value

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Abstract

This thesis examines the social value of local government community facilities, and its optimisation in policy and strategic management. The thesis focuses on the local government sector in Victoria, Australia, with the City of Moonee Valley, an inner-Melbourne municipality serving as a case study.

The central argument of the thesis is that, despite statutory requirements for Victorian local authorities to balance financial, environmental and social goals in decision-making, a policy emphasis on economic efficiency and local authority discipline dominates recent planning and management frameworks of community facilities. The policy shows limited understanding of the concept of social value, understood as non-economic value, worth or significance, or ways that it can be evaluated and operationalised. The policy provides limited defence of the long-term social outcomes of facilities, such as well-being, social cohesion and civic engagement, in the face of aggressive local government asset and financial management.

The thesis uses historical and sociological methods to gather evidence and frame arguments for a re-balancing of the policy setting in which community facilities are funded and managed. The thesis locates current local infrastructure policy within the reforming project of new public management to contextualise its reliance on the concept of service. Three community facilities – a municipal swimming pool, a community arts complex, and public open space – are examined to identify the rationales for their provision, and the complex policy interventions that shape their history. Interview data from a sample of Moonee Valley residents on facility use and value indicate broadly consistent views on the social value of community facilities and their contribution to the public realm. The data show broad opposition to the disposal of public assets, especially public

open space. This presents a significant challenge to local authorities faced with declining physical infrastructure, changing service needs and fiscal pressures. In this light, the thesis argues that Mark H Moore's (1995) concept of a public value strategic triangle has particular application to the local government environment, in identifying the strategic and operational requirements for optimising the social outcomes of community facilities. The thesis concludes by arguing for three key policy actions that link physical asset management with new interests in community building, local governance and sustainability:

- recognising and understanding earlier forms of community contribution to facilities and the local public realm
- re-positioning community facilities to emphasise their range of public good outcomes, especially their contribution to minimising expenditure on more expensive policy interventions in areas such as health and justice, and
- re-conceptualising the concept of an 'asset' to encompass both physical objects and social networks, thus emphasising the physical and social components of a civic ecology.

Acknowledgements

Declaration

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of another degree at a university or other educational institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person or persons, except where due reference has been made.

Ian McShane

Table of Contents

Appendices

Illustrations

Reader's Note

This thesis cites an extensive range of primary and secondary sources, including structured interviews and informal conversations, archival material, local government files, reports and meeting papers, and published sources.

Published sources have been cited in the text using Harvard style citation and are fully reference in the bibliography. Unpublished sources such as archival material, reports and council meeting papers are footnoted. Where there is any doubt over the bibliographic identity of a source, which is often the case with government documents, a footnoted reference is preferred to Harvard citation.

Interviews or discussions with public officials are footnoted, identifying the name position of the informant, and meeting date. A number of informal or 'off the record' conversations with public officials contributed to this study. These are cited with a numbered identifier (On) to preserve anonymity. Interviews with Moonee Valley residents were conducted with assurances of anonymity, and interviewees cited are given a numbered identifier (Rn).

Parts of this thesis have been published in the following journal articles:

"Community Facilities, Community Building and Local Government – An Australian Perspective" *Facilities (UK) – Special Edition on Community Facility Management,* 24(7,8), 2006, pp.269-279.

"Social Value and the Management of Community Infrastructure", *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 65 (4), 2006, pp.82-96.

Acronyms

ABCD	Asset Based Community Development
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AHC	Australian Heritage Commission
ALGA	Australian Local Government Association
AVSFC	Ascot Vale Sports and Fitness Centre
CBA	Cost benefit Analysis
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CV	Contingent Valuation
DLS	Department of Lands and Surveys
DVC	Department for Victorian Communities
EASC	Essendon Amateur Swimming Club
ECAT	Essendon Community Amateur Theatre
ECC	Essendon City Council
EFC	Essendon Football Club
EIA/SIA	Environmental Impact Assessment/Social Impact Assessment
ESD	Environmentally Sustainable Development
ETC	Essendon Theatre Company
FINA	Federation Internationale de Natation
FQPP	Friends of Queen's Park Pool
FRC	Facing the Renewal Challenge
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HBC	Historic Buildings Council
HBPC	Historic Buildings Preservation Council
IAC	Incinerator Arts Complex
ICOMOS	International Committee on Monuments and Sites
ILAP	Integrated Local Area Planning
MAV	Municipal Association of Victoria
MMBW	Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works
MRA	Manningham Recreation Association
MRO	Municipal Recreation Officers
MSD	Melbourne Statistical Division
MVCC	Moonee Valley City Council
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Commemoration
NEGP	National Estate Grants Programme
NEPA	National Environment Policy Act
NPM	New Public Management
NSW	New South Wales
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PPP	Public Private Partnerships

PROV	Public Records Office of Victoria
RIECO	Reverberatory Incinerator and Engineering Company
RNE	Register of the National Estate
ROS	Recreation Opportunity Spectrum
SAFA	Students Action for Aborigines
SOE	State of the Environment
SQPP	Save Queen's Park Pool
TBL	Triple Bottom Line
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VASA	Victorian Amateur Swimming Association
VCIP	Victorian Community Indicators Project
VLGI	Victorian Local Government Indicators
WTP	Willingness to Pay
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YSR	(Department of) Youth, Sport and Recreation

1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of Thesis

This thesis examines the social value, or non-economic value, worth or significance, of community facilities, and its optimisation in policy and strategic management. Broadly described, community facilities are cultural, educational, recreational, health and civic structures or places administered by local government authorities and available to the public. The association of community and facility is longstanding in policy, and the term is used throughout this thesis for that reason, although the substantive and normative connections between these two terms are critically examined. The focus of the thesis is on the local government sector in Victoria, Australia, with the City of Moonee Valley, an inner-Melbourne municipality with a population of approximately 112,000 spread across 13 suburbs, serving as a principal case study.

The central argument of the thesis is that, despite statutory requirements for Victorian local authorities to balance financial, environmental and social goals in decision-making, a policy emphasis on economic efficiency and local authority fiscal discipline dominates recent planning and management frameworks of community facilities. This policy shows limited understanding of the concept of social value or ways that it can be evaluated and operationalised, and provides little defence of the social outcomes of facilities in the face of aggressive local government asset and financial management. This thesis argues for a new emphasis on the contribution of community facilities to well-being, social cohesion and civic participation – constituent elements of social value. In this light, the thesis argues that community facility management models need to look beyond a physical and service focus that is central to the current management paradigm, to reconceptualise local government 'assets' as both social and physical, and foster and enrich the connections between the two.

This study is undertaken during a period of significant policy attention to the rationalisation and renewal of public physical infrastructure, on the one hand, and revival of community as a policy instrument on the other, but the connections between these two domains are poorly understood. Physically, much of the community infrastructure built in the years of rapid population growth and suburban expansion following World War 2 is reaching the end of its useful life and failing service or regulatory standards. Many local authorities are experiencing the compounding effects of low growth in local revenues (especially from property rates), downward cost-shifting caused by regulatory burdens and service withdrawal of higher governments, aversion to debt financing (the conventional means of funding infrastructure), widening service demands, and increasing per capita infrastructure costs. The sustainability gap (or the gap between municipal funds currently allocated to infrastructure management and the funds required to maintain future service levels) has become a powerful phrase in Australian public management lexicon. State governments, which in Australia have statutory responsibility for local authorities, have mandated asset management regimes to restore local authorities to financial sustainability and respond to concerns over declining service standards, and council property managers have developed a more strategic and aggressive posture towards asset rationalisation. The proportion of local authority budgets spent on physical infrastructure is the highest of all levels of government in Australia, and the traditional nexus between property ownership and service provision has come under strain as property portfolios age and new theories of public entrepreneurship influence policy settings.

1.2 Local Government as a Failing Operation

During the last few years the funding and management of public infrastructure has emerged as a significant public policy concern at all levels of government in Australia. Public expenditure on infrastructure has fallen over the past four

decades from, on one estimate, 8% of gross domestic product to 2% (Cardew 2003:125), placing Australia in the lowest three OECD countries on this measure, despite Australia's relatively high infrastructure costs resulting from distance and demographic patterns (Institution of Engineers and GHD Pty Ltd 1999:4). The completion of major national infrastructure projects in the transport and energy fields during this period places this figure in a wider analytical context, pointing to the cyclical character of infrastructure investment. However, the impact of more than two decades of public sector reform, during which public policy has been geared towards reducing public outlays, minimising taxation burdens, and de-concentrating and marketizing public services, has shifted policy emphasis from nation-building to service provision, from public works to public choice. Rationales for investment in public enterprise, argue Collyer et al (2001:3), have for most of Australia's history rested on pragmatic assessments of socio-economic need rather than ideology. Only in the recent period has this changed, and when it did, Australia was second only to Britain in the value of privatisations in the period 1990-1997, and in relative size of the economy, second only to New Zealand.

Despite evidence of long term disinvestment in public infrastructure in Australia across government jurisdictions (Neutze 1997, Institution of Engineers, Australia 1999, Allen Consulting Group 2003, Cardew 2003), recent research and policy on local government infrastructure develops the theme of *failure* of local level management. Two forms of failure are identified. The first is the failure of existing technical and administrative systems to inventory infrastructure assets, calculate their service lives, and develop a long-term plan for the effective renewal of assets and maintenance of service standards (AMQ International, Skilmar Systems Pty Ltd et al. 1998). A second aspect targets the failure of local democracy, evidenced, it is alleged, by the indiscriminate acquisition of community facilities. The report of a recent Commonwealth Parliamentary committee inquiring into the impact of downward cost-shifting on local government (referred to in the text as the Hawker inquiry, after its chairman)

provides a noteworthy example of this charge.The report focuses on municipal swimming pools as exemplars of what it considered to be the failure of the democratic political process as a mechanism for allocating infrastructure funding. Local government councillors, the report suggested, have placed electoral populism ahead of wider strategic considerations in acquiring infrastructure assets. In an otherwise consistently empirical document, the Hawker committee lapsed into anecdote to remind the reader that:

> [t]he Committee recognises that there have been instances of unwise investment in infrastructure in order to meet community preferences which have put a council's future at a financial disadvantage. For example, a council must make a decision on whether to build and maintain up to six swimming pools within easy driving distance from its constituents, or to maintain other essential infrastructure such as roads. (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics 2003:54)

Criticism by the Victorian Government suggested the source of the problem was also found in the receptiveness of councillors and administrators to donations and asset transfers: "…*many* infrastructure assets were granted or donated by others and transferred to local government, together with their ongoing share of costs to be met" (Department for Victorian Communities 2003a:6, emphasis added). Had councils been responsible for funding all of their infrastructure, argued a study into Victorian municipal infrastructure, it is highly likely they would have acquired less (AMQ International, Skilmar Systems Pty Ltd et al. 1998:7). Policy responses to the perceived mismanagement of local infrastructure, such as the threat of financial sanctions and mandated introduction of asset management systems (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics 2003:57; Department for Victorian Communities 2003a), reflect the subordinate position of local authorities as statutory creations of state governments. This supports arguments about the disciplinary uses of the concept of government failure (Rose and Miller 1992; Malpas and Wickham 1995; Higgins 2004). In the Victorian case, Van Gramberg and Teicher (2000) contrast the rhetoric of the Kennett Liberal government (1992-1999) advocating greater local

entrepreneurship and managerialism with intensified state government control and scrutiny over municipal activities.

The failure of infrastructure networks in Australasia (for example, major disruptions in 1998 to electricity supply in central Auckland, drinking water in Sydney, and gas in Victoria) brought attention to questions of maintenance, capital investment, risk and the security of essential services not hitherto faced when governments were the supply authorities. Victorian rail commuters have been squeezed by the effects of public disinvestment in and transfer of rail networks from public to private monopoly, exposing the inconsistencies of competition as a new operating logic for essential services. Major infrastructure failures elsewhere, such as the collapse of a bridge over the Mississippi River in Minneapolis, USA, in August 2007, resonate throughout the Western world and send governments scrambling to inspect similar assets. Neo-liberal reform is seen alternatively as a cause of and solution to public disinvestment in infrastructure. Instances of public infrastructure failure have been attributed to an excessive faith by government in market mechanisms, an absence of current and standardised information on infrastructure assets, a lack of regional and national planning, and obsession with government debt reduction (Institution of Engineers and GHD Pty Ltd 1999; Allen Consulting Group 2003). Conversely, infrastructure capacity is highlighted as one of the last barriers to assured economic growth (Business Council of Australia 2005), and specialist investment houses have sought new markets in public-private infrastructure partnerships.

In Victoria, the willingness of state governments to auspice major projects such as Melbourne's City Link toll road through legislation and favourable contract terms (for example, the minimisation of network risk from surrounding public roads), and invest in major events such as the Formula 1 Grand Prix and the 2006 Commonwealth Games contrasted with the decline of stand-alone state-owned facilities, especially public schools, and the closure of local community facilities. Anger at state government infrastructure investment policies can be

detected in the surprise defeat of the Kennett Liberal government in the 1999 state election, following its failure to heed the influence of voter anger at facility closures on the 1996 state election and subsequent by-elections (Costar and Economou 1999:199). Community facilities, and wider local infrastructure issues, have considerable political and electoral potency (MacManus 2004; Mooney and Fyfe 2006). In 2007 the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA), the sector's peak organisation, began compiling a Community Infrastructure Ideas Register, listing facilities that local authorities consider to be in urgent need of upgrade, as a lobbying tool to draw funding promises from the major political parties in the Federal election campaign of that year. ALGA was campaigning for funding of $1 billion over four years to, as it said, "assist councils to renew aged and failing community infrastructure such as swimming pools, community halls [and] libraries". Within a few months the register had over 1,000 entries [1]. On 12 November 2007 Australian Prime Minister John Howard, launching the campaign for re-election of his Liberal government, included a commitment of $500 million over three years, on a cost sharing basis with state and local governments for the regeneration of what Howard referred to as "common-use community infrastructure associated with new developments and urban consolidation" [2].

Policy responses to concerns over infrastructure decline, rationalisation and renewal developed by national and state governments have focused on infrastructure financing (particularly on the potential of public-private development arrangements) and the enhanced management of infrastructure assets, or the depreciable components of facilities or infrastructure networks. As local government authorities have responsibility for approximately 80% of public infrastructure in Australia, there has been considerable, if less publicised, policy attention to this sector. New infrastructure asset management policies have been developed in the past few years by the Commonwealth and state governments,

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[1] See http://www.alga.asn.au/communityInfrastructure/ last accessed 25 July 2007.

[2] John Howard, Liberal Campaign Launch, Brisbane 12 Nov 07
http://www.liberal.org.au/info/news/detail/20071112_CoalitionCampaignAddress.php) , last accessed 14 Nov 07.

and all state jurisdictions have instructed local authorities to revise and upgrade municipal asset management strategies.

The underlying concern of legislators, public officials and infrastructure analysts is that poor local authority management practices and the limited horizons of strategic planning and political decision-making have failed to provide for infrastructure renewal necessary to maintain current levels of economic productivity, service provision and quality of life. Particular criticism in this area has been directed at the local government sector. Whereas local authorities were criticised by the Commonwealth Bureau of Transport Economics for overspending on road building during the 1970s (cited in Jones 1981:164), by 2004 local government infrastructure management was said to be in "crisis" (Troy 1999; Montgomery 2004). The decline in local government asset renewal coincides with increasing municipal provision of social welfare services over the past several decades (Worthington 2000) and a wider pattern of downward 'cost-shifting' between levels of government (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics 2003). The resulting pressure on municipal budgets may have increased the temptation to defer provision for long-term financial liabilities such as asset maintenance and superannuation. However, the generally poor state of knowledge about the condition, performance and costs of local government infrastructure assets casts doubt on whether many local government decision-makers have been in a position to make considered judgements in this area (AMQ International, Skilmar Systems Pty Ltd et al. 1998).

Local Infrastructure and Community

The developing concern over local authority physical asset portfolios coincides with policy interest by all levels of government in community (Edgar 2001). A staple of sociology and urban studies (Bauman 2001; Delanty 2003), divergent

explanations account for the (re)mobilisation of community in public policy. Adams and Hess (2001) suggest that renewed interest in community responds to dissatisfaction with the individualism of market-based policy settings and the limits of state provision, its common use signalling a wider re-alignment of relationships between markets, the state and civil society. Rose (1996) argues for the governmentalised character of community as a feature of advanced or neo-liberalism. Beyond dispute is the re-association of community with local government in Australia, following a period of sweeping local government reform aimed at achieving structural efficiency and economies of scale through local authority amalgamations. The Victorian state government, an Australian leader in its response to local infrastructure policy, adopted community as an overarching administrative logic for local government through the establishment in 2002 of the Department for Victorian Communities (hereafter DVC), with portfolio responsibility for local authorities. In 2004, the President of ALGA identified community cohesion as a prime responsibility for local authorities (Montgomery 2004). In a submission to the Hawker inquiry a group of Melbourne local government mayors reworked the theory of subsidiarity in public administration to argue that the Australian national government is responsible for nation building, state governments for capacity building, and local government for community building (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics 2003:74).

To what extent, though, can community function without capacity, in the sense of physical infrastructure? The rhetorical emphasis on community building invites scrutiny of the role that community facilities as physical structures play in shaping community identity, supporting social networks and contributing to the public realm; that is, in their value that lies beyond formal service provision. Alternatively, if community facilities can be convincingly demonstrated to have a public good component – benefits that extend beyond both individual consumption and municipal boundaries - how are they to be financed in an era when local authorities are characteristically described as experiencing fiscal stress (Perry 1995:105; Dollery, Crase et al. 2006:25)?

The interest of public authorities in normative and empirical aspects of community finds a parallel in its attractiveness as a commodity in private markets. This forms a significant point of connection between public and private provision of social infrastructure. Victoria's major housing estate developer, Delfin, markets 'community' as a central element of its greenfield housing sub-divisions, providing community meeting places and leveraging early provision of other social and commercial facilities, sponsoring clubs and festive occasions, and employing community development workers in its larger estates [3]. Delfin's role in this area is exemplified by the 5,000 lot Caroline Springs estate on the western outskirts of Melbourne, where the company's office rather than the local authority often serves as a first point of contact for residents with queries or complaints about local services [4]. While partnerships between estate developers and state governments, such as the Delfin-Department for Victorian Communities partnership at Caroline Springs, aim at ensuring early provision of social infrastructure – overcoming a widespread problem of post-World War 2 suburban development – an uncertain legacy awaits when the local authority assumes funding and management responsibility for the shared use areas of private developments.

Such initiatives can be located within van Vliet et al's (2005:37) wider concept of the "de-municipalisation" of local infrastructure, and call attention to the connections between the provision, management and use of stand-alone facilities and networked infrastructure within the wider political logic of neo-liberalism. To this point, critical analysis has focused on networked infrastructure, especially the consequences of the "unbundling" of networks and consumers, once connected through state provision, in new infrastructure markets (Graham and Marvin 2001). The new alignment between government, markets and civic groups, which is seen in leveraging arrangements with estate developers, raises questions

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[3] www.delfinlendlease.com.au
[4] Pers comm, Michael Tudball, Director, Caroline Springs Partnership, 2 June 05

about access, equity and ownership of community facilities, that is, political questions, that have yet to be fully examined in Australia. Do such arrangements, though, differ from earlier forms of co-provision (such as partnerships between governments and civic groups) that shaped the civic landscape? Gifts and co-funding projects that bequeathed land and buildings to local authorities have left a legacy of financial costs, but is this the dominant perspective through which inter-jurisdictional or local government-civic relationships should be viewed?

These questions find limited acknowledgement in Victorian state government policy on public infrastructure. The result is a fragmented policy environment that requires coherence to resolve two major policy demands currently made on local authorities in the infrastructure field. The first is that local governments discipline their political and administrative processes to better manage ageing and failing facilities, respond to changing resident needs and new compliance and risk factors, and ensure their financial sustainability. The second demand is that local governments re-invest in community facilities as sites for promoting social cohesion, active citizenship, and cultural and economic vitality, and respond to more localised concerns over amenity. These claims, alternatively for greater administrative and economic efficiency, and for 'more community', can be located within a democratic discourse that seeks to balance local preferences and wider systemic needs or efficiencies (Dearlove 1979; Aulich 1999). More subtly, state-level infrastructure policy can also be seen as part of a wider project to re-responsibilise individuals and marketise local authorities, re-orienting allocative decisions from a vertical axis of top-down government to a horizontal axis of governance (Beeson and Firth 1998), involving the participation of informed citizen/consumers (Beeson and Firth 1998; Clarke, Newman et al. 2007).

Policy Without Memory

Imagined as competing policy claims, efficiency and community follow the morphology of local government administration. In this interpretation, the

dominance of physical and financial factors in current community facility management (Heywood et al 2003) can be explained by the traditionally dominant role of engineers and accountants in local authorities (Jones 1981), augmented by recent attention to managerialist theories and techniques of service provision (Davis and Weller 2001). Communitarianism, as a body of political theory and set of policy objectives, has largely been associated with newer and relatively 'weaker' social policy and community service areas. While a binary framing of these emphases risks overlooking institutional diversity at local government level (a salient factor in this large and diverse jurisdiction), at a deeper level it may also overlook the similarities between these two policy approaches, as they are described by this thesis. They share a historical blind spot in their failure to engage with earlier and, this thesis argues, enduring rationales for the funding and acquisition of community facilities, and the central role that such places played in the construction of local identity and the local public realm in Australia. The fashionable term 'community building' has a deeper truth generally unrealised in its current rhetorical use. The blind spot extends, in some instances, to neglect of the terms of ownership of real property, raising ethical and political problems in asset rationalisation projects. The omnipresence and sometimes poor condition of community facilities, and the contrast between the Victorian and Edwardian "beautilities" (Freestone 2007) and later modernist constructions, blinds many to their significance and instrumentality.

The funding and management of local government infrastructure assets has been extensively researched in three Australian states (including Victoria), in the context of shaping state government policy (AMQ International, Skilmar Systems Pty Ltd et al. 1998; AMQ International, Jeff Roorda and Associates et al. 2001; Jeff Roorda and Associates 2006). This research has been conducted by a single consortium of economists and engineers, and focuses on financial, service and asset management aspects of infrastructure assets, with a bias towards roads and footpaths. The quality or detail of that research output is not in question – this thesis draws on its data and findings – but it lacks human and institutional

perspectives on infrastructure provision and use. Policymakers and local managers in Victoria and elsewhere in Australia have few detailed studies on the social role of infrastructure assets, especially community facilities, available to inform their work, and no studies of the policies that have framed this field of activity.

A second consequence of this policy without memory, echoing a characteristic of some analytical approaches to social capital (for example see criticism of Robert Putnam's work in McLean, Scunltz et al. 2003), is a desire to adjust public policy settings to re-instate a more self-reliant civic past that never was. An example of this is provided by DVC's advocacy of new community-based governance partnerships:

> Strong communities are built through the combined actions of government, business and communities. Governments can help build and support partnerships and networks in local areas through *relatively simple* actions like supporting volunteering, investing in local leaders, creating safe and vibrant public places, and providing practical opportunities for involvement in sport, recreation and cultural activities. (Department for Victorian Communities 2004b, no page, emphasis added)

In contrast, this thesis shows the intensity of policy interventions in community facilities, the complex inter-sectoral and inter-jurisdictional negotiations that surround this intervention, and the physical legacy that these interventions produced. In this regard, this thesis supports claims by Lowndes (cited in Goss 2001:4) of the complexity and inherent messiness of governance relationships, old and new. There is no suggestion here that DVC's advocacy of civic commitment is misplaced, only that such advocacy requires a stronger historical sensibility to inform the structure and direction of current facility investment programs. In this regard, while noting Graham and Marvin's (2001) argument that the range and complexity of infrastructural policy issues requires a trans-disciplinary approach, historical analysis makes a key contribution to understanding policy arguments for facility provision, notions of value and public

good, and the tension between continuity and change that lies at the heart of the renewal problem. Ironically, while new attention to total asset management as a strategic approach to local government infrastructure, examined in chapter 2, stresses the long-lived consequences of asset decisions – that is, temporal factors are given considerable analytical weight in assessing the maintenance and financing of infrastructure - historically informed analysis of community infrastructure provision is almost entirely absent in the wider policy environment.

Bringing in the Public

Understood in consumerist terms, 'bringing in the public' refers to the requirement for community facilities to achieve satisfactory levels of patronage, demonstrating that they serve local needs and are attractive and viable aspects of the local public realm. This is especially the case in the recreational area, where rival goods may be supplied by a private market. As this thesis demonstrates, the political and financial challenges for local authorities to allocate sufficient capital funds to build or refurbish facilities to a high standard are substantial, and have led to investigation of public-private partnerships to achieve such project ambitions. This new arrangement calls for examination of the widening zone between fully public and fully private goods that was once largely occupied, in the field of community facilities, by civic groups.

Despite the enthusiasm for associating community and local government, local residents – understood here as residents of a municipal district – cannot be aggregated and exclusively identified as a community. Such a move would discount both the extent and limitations of local authority responsibilities. Nor can they be exclusively assigned the subjectivity situated at the opposite end of a self-society continuum – a client or customer of local government. Their popularity notwithstanding, these alternative formulations have limited empirical validity or policy benefit. By contrast, data from a series of depth interviews of residents of the City of Moonee Valley is presented and analysed in this thesis to

suggest a bundle of roles, capacities and attributes. Local residents may be simultaneously rate-payers, service consumers, citizens, neighbours, members of place, identity and interest based communities, and members of a public. Local authority interactions with residents can be similarly multi-layered, and, accordingly, resource intensive (Goss 2001:Chapter 4). Residents appraise the value of community facilities and their management by local authorities from this composite position. The data from interviews with Moonee Valley residents presented in this thesis suggest that local residents are somewhat sceptical of rhetorical appeals to community as a mask for government inaction and a truncated description of their identity and interaction with each other and with local authorities. The term *public* features in the interview data as a more precise description of how Moonee Valley residents perceive themselves as an aggregate and perceive the character of their relationship with the local authority and its physical infrastructure. The consequences for the strategic management of community facilities of this finding are explored in this thesis.

1.3 Managing Crisis

In contrast to detailed technical and financial studies in this field commissioned by state governments (cited above) and private sector interests (Institution of Engineers and GHD Pty Ltd 1999; Allen Consulting Group 2003; Business Council of Australia 2005), there has been very limited scholarly or public discussion of the terms under which the local government infrastructure "crisis" has been framed. While local authorities can now better calculate the economic value and service capabilities of facilities as a result of an intense policy effort in asset management, there has been no comparable effort in Australia to understand the social role and outcomes of community facilities, and the political dynamics which surround local government decision-making in this area. Yet local authorities, particularly in older urban areas (which comprise much of the City of Moonee Valley) are increasingly required to moderate the tension between "the city being built and the city falling apart", in Perry's (1995:72) resonant phrase, between large scale public works projects and local

disinvestment, between municipality-wide rationalisation and local preferences, between efficiency and social cohesion. Faced with difficult decisions about the retention, renewal or disposal of ageing facilities and other physical assets, local authorities have few conceptual, methodological and policy tools to assist with strategic decision-making about community infrastructure that combine financial, environmental and social perspectives.

Yet despite the political sensitivity of local infrastructure issues, there is evidence that local authorities have struggled to comprehend public interest in these issues and manage them productively. This can be seen at two levels. The first is community concern over facility closure or redevelopment. While case studies examined in this thesis show the fusion in local campaigns of wider concerns over public disinvestment with local, more contingent factors, the studies suggest that greater attention to the cultural and place attributes of facilities, and to levels of trust in local government, can assist in facility renewal projects. This may call for more detailed research into the history of facilities and a more open and consultative approach to complex issues such as facility ownership, use and funding, but in broader terms it challenges the concept of public entrepreneurship that inflects current local authority property management.

Public engagement with infrastructure issues has been structured through their definition as essentially technocratic and beyond public comprehension and competence. The replacement of the broadly based concept of 'public works' with terms such as 'infrastructure' and 'assets', with their emphases on technical performance and financial strategy, widened the gap in the late twentieth century between local communities, place and facilities (Konvitz cited in Perry 1995:6-7). Concern with service levels and standards developed in response to questions of allocation, risk and sustainability further distanced local residents from facilities, as the connection was perceived increasingly in terms of consumption and public safety rather than citizenship. However, suggestions that infrastructural matters are beyond the interest and comprehension of local residents (thus providing a largely unchallenged domain for experts) are undercut by the regular use of

technical language to elicit the support and sympathy of residents for infrastructure failure. Media description of "load shedding" to explain the widespread failure of electricity supplies in Victoria in early 2007 is but one example. Furthermore, as data from the Moonee Valley resident interviews discussed in this thesis show, the knowledge by some local residents of local facilities has on some occasions proved superior to that held by local authorities, especially those experiencing high staff turnover, and, in such situations, is an underutilised resource.

Current infrastructure policy focuses largely on the physical and financial aspects of community facilities. This is seen in the dominant concern to instal new accountabilities such as asset management and the search for new forms of finance in place of public debt. In contrast to policy reliance on equilibrium economics and a positioning of local residents as rate-payers and service consumers, is an expansive but scattered literature that emphasises the social and civic outcomes of community facilities. The literature, which this thesis analyses in detail, approaches facilities as places as well as services. In this literature, community facilities are valued as repositories of social memory, places for inter-subjective contact on neutral and usually safe terms, the fostering of social networks, connectedness and wellbeing, and as a focal point of civic engagement. These qualities, it is argued in this thesis, are core components of social value, elements that challenge the separation of the physical and the social, and benefits to be appraised or evaluated in allocative processes.

1.4 The Scope and Approach of the Study

The lack of critical interest in local government facilities can be seen as the outcome of a policy neglect of infrastructure until it fails, sometimes catastrophically (Perry 1995; Graham and Marvin 2001:181), and neglect of local government as a worthy field of research (Dollery, Marshall et al. 2003:1-3). The diverse nature and shifting boundaries of Australian local authorities, one of

Dollery et al's reasons for scholarly neglect of the sector, pose methodological and logistical challenges for this study. These challenges are compounded by the diverse nature of local government facilities. The Victorian government's leadership amongst Australian jurisdictions in the development of local government infrastructure policy, as well as the experience of Victorian local authorities with amalgamation and marketisation (each has important ramifications for community facilities), makes that state a useful focus of research. This thesis concentrates on cultural and recreational assets, two classes of public goods that in large measure draw their political support from assessments of their non-economic benefits and two types of physical assets that pose particular facility management challenges.

This thesis uses a case study methodology (Yin 2003) to obtain and analyse primary data relating to the planning, management and use of community facilities in the City of Moonee Valley, a culturally and economically diverse inner-city local authority. This approach illustrates the central arguments of the thesis and contributes to an understanding of the broader Victorian and Australian picture in two ways. Firstly, the City of Moonee Valley faces a set of infrastructure problems typical of inner-urban municipalities, arising from the nature and age of facilities, widening community needs and demands, pressure for higher-density development, and the increasing impact of major networked infrastructure on local community functioning (Graham and Marvin 2001:121). The establishment of Moonee Valley in 1994 as an amalgamated local authority, comprising parts of four existing municipalities, also serves to highlight the consequences for community facilities of a drive for greater economic and administrative efficiencies through the enlargement of jurisdictional boundaries. Secondly, a focus on a single municipality, combined with interviews of residents within that municipality, provides both a qualitative and empirically rich view of the use and value of local places and spaces to the surrounding community.

The research methods used in preparation of this thesis encompass archival and library research, policy analysis, formal interviews with Moonee Valley residents and informal discussions with a range of local and state-level administrators and elected officials, and field observation at chosen research sites. The research makes use of City of Essendon (1909-1994) [5] and City of Moonee Valley (1994 +) files, selected files of other municipalities, and the files of state agencies. Access was obtained through the Public Records Office of Victoria. Selected current file holdings of the City of Moonee Valley administration were also examined. The primary research encountered similar difficulties to those sketched out above by Dollery et al, including fragmented and, for much of the twentieth century, minimal local authority records, limited staff availability and transience within the City of Moonee Valley, and the difficulty of obtaining a longitudinal picture of individual local authority expenditure patterns (see Appendix A). A range of institutional (risk aversion, busyness) and human factors (lack of senior-level sponsorship) hindered getting 'inside' the organisation for an ethnographic view. Discussions with a range of Moonee Valley staff and close observation of council and public meetings over a period of several years, however, provided insight to the council's 'culture' and operations. The author's own composite subjective position as a resident, rate-payer, facility user and civic-sector volunteer in the municipality provided broad experiential knowledge, but introduced a tension between experience and objectivity akin to Entriken's (1991) theorisation of "betweenness". This tension is resolved, as far as possible, through extensive citation of sources and reliance on qualitative views of a sample of residents, described in detail below.

A series of formal interviews with 33 Moonee Valley residents gathered qualitative data on the use of community facilities, perception of the social value of facilities, and views on policy trends in local government facility and service provision. The sample was recruited via a letter included in a November 2005

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[5] The City of Essendon is effectively the precursor and municipal 'core' of the City of Moonee Valley.

mail-out to members of the City of Moonee Valley's Citizens Panel, a consultative forum established in 2004. Around 320 letters were distributed and 60 persons responded to provide the interview sample. The sample, then, consisted of civically-active individuals, and its bias in this regard should be noted. However, the sample was more diverse than the recruitment pool might suggest, ranging across age, gender, family status, housing tenure, employment status and type, location and length of residence, and cultural background. Interviewees came from all but one suburb (North Melbourne) of the municipality [6]. The format followed in the interviews, consisting principally of open-ended questions, has been characterised by Glaser (2001:175) as "big-ear listening". Questions and discussion points are reproduced at Appendix B. The interviews were recorded, summarised, and coded in the qualitative research tradition of thematic analysis (Ezzy 2002:86 ff).

Thesis Keywords

In the classic study *Keywords*, Raymond Williams (1976) noted his interest in the cultural setting and uses of language rather than its etymology or semantics. This is a useful angle from which to approach several key terms of this thesis that are used so frequently in public policy that the rationales for their use are obscured.

There is no commonly agreed definition of *community facilities*. For the purposes of this study community facilities are defined as physical properties provided by local government authorities for service delivery, recreational pursuits, social amenity and civic purposes, available to the public free or at a cost that would not reasonably entry to anyone. In economic terms, these facilities have public good characteristics (to the extent that they are non-excludable and non-rivalrous) and merit good characteristics (their consumption increases welfare, but their public

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[6] One limitation of the sample is a lack of representation of public housing tenants. However, Hulse, K et al 2004: *Kensington Estate Redevelopment Social Impact Study* (A Report by Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology for Department of Human Services) contains comparative qualitative data on uses of community facilities by residents of public housing which broadly correlate with findings of this study.

good status means they will be under-supplied by a private market). Dollery, Crase et al (2006:62-3) suggest that local government services typically combine these characteristics, and are thus described as mixed goods. Furthermore, recognition of the private benefit that accrues from some local services, in addition to their broader welfare function, and the desire to ration provision within fiscal constraints leads to the imposition of user charges for some facilities. The policy and operational complexities of this field are clearly signalled by this discussion. In service terms, a facility has been described as a conjunction of service and physical place (Brackertz and Kenley 2002). Common examples are local parks, swimming pools or leisure centres, libraries, community halls and neighbourhood houses. Such facilities are also provided by higher levels of government and, with increased permeability between government and private markets, it is arguable that some private facilities may meet the above definition. Indeed, as this study argues, the significance of the distinction between public and private has emerged as an area of policy and operational concern for local government, as well as a wider public interest question.

Terminology signifies policy choices. Is policy shaped by the systems emphasis of the term *infrastructure*, the financial and technical orientation of *asset*, or might it be shaped by other, perhaps wider terms that encompass a human element? Conventional definitions distinguish between economic and social infrastructure: the former includes roads, utilities and telecommunications, and the latter includes hospitals, schools, cultural institutions, leisure facilities and so on. The benefits of economic infrastructure are more readily calculated in narrow economic or financial terms, while the benefits of investment in social infrastructure are less tangible or less easily priced or valued in economic terms (Allen Consulting Group 2003:11). The term "community asset" has been used to describe public assets provided without an expectation of a commercial return and with no prospect of sale - either because no market exists or because political pressure would prevent it (Carnegie 2004:5). The normative flavour of descriptive categories in this field is easily observed. A common distinction is

made between "hard" infrastructure, which includes networked services such as water, sewerage, gas, electricity, telecommunications and transport, and "soft" infrastructure which includes schools, community centres, health facilities, parks, and open space (Ennis 2003:5). "Essential" and "non-essential" infrastructure are used as alternative categories (Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health 1994:vi; Troy). Each of these definitions is restricted to physical capital. Troy's (1993:129) institutional approach offers an alternative that includes human and social capital. In addition to physical infrastructure that provides services and amenity, community infrastructure also consists of institutions created to pursue interests beyond those that can be satisfied by individual households. These include local planning groups, progress associations, heritage societies and so on. The policy possibilities that arise from such an approach have been examined by Kretzmann and McKnight's (2000) and Arefi's (2004) conceptualisation of community assets as consisting of physical assets and social networks.

Perhaps few terms have been used as indiscriminately in local government policy as *value*. Its uses in the Victorian local government sector range from the consumerist emphasis of 'best value' to general references to community, cultural or social value as criteria of policy choice (City of Maribyrnong 2000, City of Wyndham 2002, City of Boroondara 2003, City of Moonee Valley 2003). Arguably, the concept of value is one of the most complex parts of the public policy lexicon. The replacement of generalised descriptions of government as serving the public interest or public good with program-specific, accountable notions of value coincided with a contractionist phase of public finance in Western countries beginning in the late 1970s (Florio 2004; Lynn 2006), and the transition from centrally-directed forms of public administration to more corporatised and managerial concepts of public management (Smith 2004). Subsequent reforms responding to concerns over the capacity of a market-normative policy framework to deal with complex problems of governance, social policy and environmental degradation gave greater prominence to value as a way

of calibrating policy alternatives, structured by the simplifying metaphor of the triple bottom line. However, this thesis argues that, despite the imposition by the Victorian state government of triple bottom line evaluation on local authorities, there are few examples where the social component, as it relates to facility provision and management, has been clearly defined in policy and operational statements. To assist this task, the thesis traces the history of the term social value, as a concept that promotes a diverse social life and the long-term welfare of collectives. The thesis argues that the term can be used to describe and evaluate the uses and benefits of community facilities that lie beyond their financial worth and service capacities. Social value analysis brings together evidence from a range of disciplinary fields and professional practice for the contribution of community facilities to the functioning of cohesive local communities and a vibrant public realm.

The complex subjectivity of local residents that emerges in the Moonee Valley resident interview data suggests that highlighting the social value of community facilities is not of itself sufficient to win consent for the allocation of public resources for this task, or ensure those resources are used in equitable, effective and sustainable ways. The interview data suggest the need for what Smith (1995) calls a "new story" of government that seeks to blend advocacy of its conventional welfare and public good functions with new attention to service efficiencies. In essence, this reflects the expanding sphere and inherent tensions of local authority governance. To provide an overarching policy framework through which to view the provision and management of community facilities, this thesis critically analyses Moore's (1994; 2001) conceptualisation of public value: the distinctive roles and goals of the public sector that must be authorised by citizens and managed sustainably by governments. This thesis argues that optimising the social value of community facilities requires more than modelling or measuring its components within an evaluative schema. It requires attention to framing and telling a narrative about the role of facilities in the local public realm, and seeking recognition and endorsement of this narrative through the allocative

functions of democratic politics. In short, optimising social value requires attention to argument as well as measurement.

1.5 Structure of the Study

Following this introduction, the second chapter is a detailed analysis of the concern over the deterioration and renewal of public infrastructure in Australia, with particular reference to Victoria, and the development of infrastructure asset management as the principal policy response. It is argued that the infrastructure 'crisis' is both understood, and its responses framed, within a discourse of economic and public sector management reform that has operated over the past two decades or so. It is important not to portray reform initiatives as monolithic or necessarily negative in their impact. However, key elements of this discourse, such as deregulation and privatisation, accountability, and strategic management have strongly influenced perceptions and operations of local government in Australia. Growing political aversion to debt financing, the conventional finance vehicle for community facility capital works, brought interest in public-private construction ventures. The focus on service provision encouraged local government authorities to re-define citizens as consumers or clients, and subjected public sector agencies to market rationalities and disciplines. Private sector corporate real estate strategies influenced views on the property portfolios of councils, and together with changes to financial reporting requirements, brought a new focus on their financial value, and new questions on whether public funds should be capitalised in bricks and mortar or used more flexibly to meet service demands. Widening demand and risk awareness also began to shape the design and use of facilities, in ways that attempted to formalise both the status and behaviour of facility patrons. This chapter argues that the influences of new public management theories and state level political priorities underpinned the Victorian government's local infrastructure asset management policy with its emphasis on financial sustainability and service capability.

Where the second chapter points to the financial and service biases that inform current policy settings for community facilities, the third chapter looks at ways in which the social value of community facilities can be understood and assessed. The chapter begins with a conceptual history of social value, noting its introduction in Australia in the field of heritage studies, and its later application in cultural policy and public management. I argue that the resurgent influence of neo-classical economics in late twentieth century public policy provoked new and wider interest in the concept, particularly in fields such as arts and culture that sought new funding arguments in response to a declining acceptance by decision-makers of general notions of public interest, and to counter the expressed preference of voters for expenditure on utilitarian goods. The chapter examines in detail new arguments and evidence for the contribution of community facilities in enhancing personal well-being, community strength and resilience, creativity and citizenship, focusing on research conducted in the areas of social epidemiology, identity, social and cultural capital, cultural vitality and governance. This material is synthesised as a set of social value domains that provide a heuristic model that structures the primary research presented in chapters five to eight. This chapter concludes by observing burgeoning interest in public value in scholarly and policy literature. While the meaning of this term is unsettled, this section argues for its application as an operational tool, rather than an alternative description of the substantive content of social value.

The fourth chapter offers a history of the Moonee Valley region, re-working ground conventionally covered by local histories to obtain a clearer view of the role played by facilities in shaping conduct and regulating public space. The chapter shows the complex interplay between private, civic and public provision of local facilities, suggesting that campaigns for local facilities, though never free from sectional interest, were significant exercises in articulating community needs and values and in defining and promoting 'active' citizenship. It is argued in this chapter that what might now be readily criticised as ad-hoc or politically motivated facility provision was likely to be viewed at the time as innovative and

pragmatic solutions to community and infrastructural needs, particularly in the post-World War 2 period. A new appreciation of the ongoing costs of facilities may prompt overly-harsh judgements of earlier procurement decisions and obscure understanding of rationales that forged connections between infrastructure and community functioning, and associated views on the benefit of co-provision or cost-sharing. The chapter provides an account of the dynamic administrative and political environment that the City of Moonee Valley, and all Victorian local governments, encountered in the 1990s, with their exposure to public choice theory, compulsory amalgamation and suspension of representative democracy. This period had a dramatic impact on the perception and operation of community facilities, but one that was not entirely negative. The period of direct administration saw the development of community consultation and strategic planning, a combination of trust and consent-building and managerialism characteristic of new public management that sought to engage local residents in a program of facility rationalisation. The chapter concludes with an analysis of a recent inventory of Moonee Valley's community facilities to give a clear empirical view of the extent and nature of the 'renewal challenge' in this area.

Chapter five is the first of three fieldwork chapters that examine the history, policy rationales and social value of particular community facilities. Each of these chapters is a story within a larger story. Chapter five focuses on municipal aquatic facilities – variously portrayed as suburban cultural icons, electoral trophies, and asset 'problems'. Swimming pools have generated significant public debate in Moonee Valley and elsewhere, as the deterioration of many municipal pools coincides with changing recreation and health demands, regulatory conditions and rising land values. The chapter examines why aquatic facilities have been at the centre of municipal political controversy, and what light this can shed on wider questions of community facility management. The chapter focuses on two aquatic facilities in Moonee Valley. The first is an outdoor swimming pool which was the site of a successful public protest against the council's

unwillingness to continue subsidising the pool's operation and its plans for closure. The second facility is an indoor leisure centre including an aquatic facility, where initial plans for a community centre in a relatively disadvantaged area gave way to a profit-making sports-oriented facility.

Chapter six analyses the re-development of a historically significant former municipal incinerator, designed by notable USAmerican architect Walter Burley Griffin, as a community arts venue. This site provides an opportunity to explore questions about the redundancy of municipal built assets and adaptive re-use, as well as wider debates around value and the arts. In this case, the concept of public value has itself been adapted by cultural policy analysts seeking to move beyond what are considered to be the limitations of body of literature that argues for funding on the basis of the 'impact' of arts programs. This chapter also highlights an aspect of downward cost-shifting that has to this point received no specific recognition in the critical and policy literature – the costs borne by local authorities from the listing of historic municipal buildings on state-level heritage registers. The chapter analyses the benefits of preserving and re-using the site as a community arts venue, and explores questions of cost apportionment and local-level commitment to the continued operation of the facility.

Chapter seven examines the provision, use and social value of public open space. Superficially, public open space – with its surface appearance as undeveloped land - appears to have little in common with the built structures analysed in chapters four and five. However, this chapter argues that public open space is the site of diverse and long-standing policy interventions to guide and regulate personal conduct and civic participation, and a prime site of contact between the private market and public entrepreneurship. This chapter examines the history of Queen's Park, Moonee Valley's oldest and most historically significant recreation reserve, to illustrate this claim. The park has a history of change and controversy over its use, appearance and upkeep, and this chapter examines the policy and operational issues associated with managing the

complex and competing values of such places. Interview data indicate the high social value that residents place on public open space and corresponding degree of political sensitivity towards the uses of public land. However, the interview data also call into question accepted distinctions between public open space, networked infrastructure and built facilities in emphasising the significance of streets and footpaths for recreation and socialising, findings that have significant implications for the definition and management of community facilities.

Primary research in the Moonee Valley region analysed in chapters four to eight suggests a more complex aetiology to the current state of community facilities than the disciplinary approach of existing Victorian state policy concedes. The research also supplements the service and financial emphases of current policy with discussion of how the social value of facilities can be construed. In chapter 8 the thesis turns to strategic questions by looking at how social value can be integrated within a holistic and sustainable approach to facility planning and management. This is done by returning to Moore's concept of the production of public value as the principal objective of public sector activity. Assessing the optimisation of social value as a substantive goal of local authority facility management, the chapter applies two other aspects of Moore's public value 'strategic triangle' – authorisation and funding, and organisational capacity – to the task of sustainable facility management. The chapter analyses the Moonee Valley resident interview data on the views of residents, as authorisers, on local authority performance. The chapter examines the funding consequences that a new emphasis on the social value of facilities entails, concluding that higher-level governments should bear greater responsibility for the public good elements of these places. The question of institutional capacity is approached by describing community facilities as typically hybrid places. Hybridity theory helps explain the history, indeed survival, of many community facilities, managed and sustained by diverse coalitions of government, civic organisations and local-scale commercial enterprise. However, managing community facilities as hybrid organisations, which explicitly recognises and encourages forms of co-provision, requires a re-

framing of current community facility management concerns to encompass social assets (understood as social networks, civic commitment and local identity) as well as physical ones. This requires the development of skills in consultation and change management and greater formalisation of informal 'social' contracts that underpinned earlier facility provision and management.

2. The Return of Scarcity

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the background to developing concern over local authority infrastructure assets, with particular reference to Victoria, and the influence of these concerns on the recent planning and management of community facilities. The central argument of this chapter is that, despite some acknowledgement of the wider political and inter-jurisdictional dynamics that have surrounded the provision of community facilities, the policy response has sought to inculcate what Caulfield (2003:14) refers to as a clientalist relationship between local authority and resident, which positions local authorities as service providers and residents as consumers. The response urges a more entrepreneurial outlook by local authorities towards property holdings, attempting to break a long-held nexus between property acquisition and service provision in favour of market-based solutions. The re-description of citizens as service consumers permits greater resort by local authorities to user-pays mechanisms to manage demand and supplement central budget funding. Emphasis on community consultation over asset futures attempts to strengthen local-level accountability in a field traditionally dominated by technocratic approaches, but the structured engagement of local authority managers and residents through consultation over service levels can be seen as an attempt to close off the possibility that an emphasis on economic efficiency may be resisted by local values and wishes. Local officials and residents are given joint responsibility to manage a future characterised as a return of scarcity, in which new political and consumer disciplines are urged to ensure the financial sustainability of local authorities.

The above argument is contextualised in section **2.2** which draws on analyses of government as a strategic activity, characterised by a rhetorical shift from public administration to public management, to explain changing approaches to the

perception and management of community facilities. This section argues that the convergence of ideas and programs favouring reduced public outlays and private sector emulation that are broadly described as new public management have had a particular impact on Australian local authorities, especially in terms of their infrastructure provision. Section **2.3** looks at emerging concerns over infrastructure renewal in Australia and the responses of higher governments to what was described in the introduction as the failure of local governance. This section introduces the techniques of asset management and accounting as important influences on the problematisation of local government decision-making and administration. These techniques are both diagnostic and programmatic, used to emphasise the shortcomings of local administrations and assist state authorities to govern local authorities at a distance (Rose and Miller 1992) through the installation of new forms of expertise and the establishment of a new local authority-resident dialogue around financial sustainability and service demands. Section **2.4** focuses on Victoria, and discusses a key consultant's report on local authority infrastructure assets, and the subsequent development by the Victorian state government of local authority asset management policy.

2.2 What is New about New Public Management?

The term 'new public management' (NPM) was coined by Christopher Hood (1989) to analyse what he saw as concurrent trends in public sector reform in Australasia, the United Kingdom and North America that emphasised performance outputs, flexible service delivery and tendering-out, de-regulation, cost-cutting, and delegation. The literature on NPM is large, but not unanimous on either the uniform character of NPM across nations or, indeed, whether it is something wholly 'new' (McLaughlin, Osborne et al. 2002). Lynn's (2006) historical analysis of public management recalls earlier waves of public sector reform that anticipate elements of NPM, suggesting it is can be viewed as an adaptation of earlier reform initiatives to new circumstances. At local government level, Lynn argues, some NPM emblems such as accountability and evaluation

are long-standing responses to concerns over inefficiencies and undemocratic practices. This is a more complex story than the totalising concept of NPM allows, argues Lynn, with modulations across countries influenced by different traditions of law-making and public administration. Lynn also questions assumptions of NPM reform as a centrally organised project, pointing to the reform of municipal government in the United Kingdom and the United States in the early twentieth century. Influences such as Taylorist scientific management and its European antecedents, Fabian municipal activism, and the concern of American democratic reformers to replace town hall boss rule with rational fact-based government converged to focus accountability measures at the level of local governance (Lynn, pp 47, 81-4; also see Schiesl 1977). However the broad agreement amongst analysts on the components and overall goals of NPM has favoured summary descriptions, such as that of Toonen's, which serves as a useful introduction to this section:

- A business-oriented approach to government
- A quality and performance approach to public management
- An emphasis on improved public service delivery and functional responsiveness
- An institutional separation of public demand functions and public service production functions
- A linkage of public demand, provision, and supply units by transactional devices (performance management, internal contract management, corporatization, intergovernmental covenanting and contracting, contracting out)
- Where ever possible, the retreat of bureaucratic government institutions in favour of an intelligent use of markets and commercial market enterprises (deregulation, privatization, commercialization and marketization) or virtual markets (internal competition, benchmarking, competitive tendering). (cited in Lynn 2006:107)

Public Management and Australian Local Government

Despite a rallying visit in 1899 by the Fabians Sydney and Beatrice Webb (Austin 1965) and the advocacy of Joseph Chamberlain's concept of municipal science by Sydney councillor J D Fitzgerald (Larcombe 1961), there was no coherent

local government reform movement in Australia comparable to municipal activism in the United Kingdom or Progressive-era reform in the United States. In Victoria this has been explained by several factors: political instability in the first half of the twentieth century, the relatively limited responsibilities of Australian local authorities, a restricted franchise, the absence of party organisation at local level, and a tendency to focus on matters of local concern (Bowman and Halligan 1985). The relative quiescence of Victorian local government since the municipalisation of the state in the 1870s is indicated by Halligan's calculation that in the 1970s almost half the councillors in the state attained office without election (Halligan 1980). On the other hand, Bowman and Halligan argue that the provision of school education and utilities by state authorities saw Victorian councils expand their provision of human services, to develop a unique service model in Australia (Bowman and Halligan 1985:92-4). Evidence of the significant rise over the past few decades in the expenditure by Victorian local authorities in areas that conventional public finance theory holds should be funded from taxation revenue goes some way to explaining local level fiscal stress (Musgrave and Musgrave 1989; see sector-wide expenditure figures in Worthington 2000; also see Appendix A for figures relating to the Cities of Essendon and Moonee Valley).

While heritage, environment and transport concerns provided focal points for resident protest and action in the 1970s, Victorian local government reform in the second half of the twentieth century was effected through a series of state government inquiries, which brought incremental changes to the statutory framework (for example, substituting permissive powers with a power of general competence), the vesting of planning powers with local authorities, and the development of co-operative state-local service delivery programs (Bowman and Halligan 1985; Eccles and Bryant 1991). Concern over downward cost-shifting was voiced in Victoria as early as 1972 by the Board of Inquiry into Local Government Finance (Purdie 1976:3). Its effects were alleviated somewhat by the provision of direct Commonwealth grants to local authorities by the Whitlam

Federal Labor government beginning in 1974-5 and later 'tied' road funding schemes, but the policy and scholarly consensus around the continued and compounding effect of cost-shifting is strong (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics Finance and Public Administration 2003; Johnson 2003).

Incremental reform in Victoria was punctuated by the occasional sacking of local authorities by state governments, reinforcing the conditional nature of local democracy. A pattern of resistance to structural change combined with a capacity for adaptation discerned by Bowman and Halligan (1985:91) was disrupted by the Kennett Liberal government's (1992-1999) replacement of all elected local governments with administrators in 1994 and the subsequent re-drawing of municipal boundaries. This reduced the number of local authorities from 210 to 78, giving Victoria the numerically largest local authorities in Australia and the highest ratio of residents to elected local representatives. Public choice theory – that part of the loose coalition of ideas described above as new public management that seeks to enhance the power and choice of citizens as consumers of public services (Stretton and Orchard 1994) – was a central idea behind the Kennett reforms. The emphasis on strategic management of resources, service quality and financial efficiency that inflects public choice, combined with the physical nature of many local authority services, brought a new focus on local government infrastructure. The context and consequences of this are examined below.

2.3 Infrastructure Assets and Local Government

The philosophy of new public management and the epistemology of networked infrastructure coalesced as an analytical framework for local government performance in the 1980s. Concern about the management of local-level infrastructure had emerged several decades earlier within the wider policy context of inner-city degeneration and renewal, particularly in American cities. In

Australia, the policy emphasis is characterised by its reliance on economic and technical frames of reference rather than a sociological one. The financial and infrastructural concept of asset management is a key term. This term appears to have been first used in Australia in conjunction with new business theories on strategic management (for an extended discussion on corporate real estate management in Australia see Heywood 2007). Asset management deals with the planning, management, maintenance and renewal of a corporate physical asset portfolio. Assets are commonly described as renewable parts of a larger infrastructure network. Whereas property or facility management has a short-term, operational or tactical focus, asset management deals with long-term strategic issues (Vanier 2001). The concepts and methodologies of asset management trace back to management processes developed for networked infrastructure such as railways and utilities (Walker, Clarke et al. 2000:130). This raises questions about their application to the diverse physical forms and cultural settings of community facilities. A lack of consistency in asset management nomenclature indicates the presence of a range of conceptual and managerial approaches (Heywood, Missingham et al. 2003; Heywood 2007), a feature that recent asset management policy and practice in Australia has sought to standardise (INGENIUM-Institute of Public Works Engineers Australia 2002). A consistent theme in the different conceptual approaches to asset management, though, is an acceptance that infrastructure underpins community functioning.

The total value of local government infrastructure assets in Victoria has been estimated at more than $23 billion, at current replacement cost (Department for Victorian Communities 2003a:6). Putting this in a local context, the City of Moonee Valley has around $600 million in infrastructure assets. Averaged across Victoria, local roads make up around half of the asset worth, although their proportion of an asset portfolio can be significantly higher in rural shires. The technical orientation, political sensitivity and sheer cost of roads and road maintenance have played a major role in shaping asset management debates and practices in Australia. Indeed, it is possible to argue that the attention given

to roads has come at the cost of effectively managing other assets. The Municipal Association of Victoria found that while 80% of LGAs had asset management systems for sealed roads, very few had adequate systems for other assets (cited in Department for Victorian Communities 2003a:7).

Transport and utility networks, the management of which has been shared between state and local authorities have generally had access to special funding mechanisms (such as the Commonwealth Government's Roads to Renewal program) or are capable of attracting user charges (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2006:6). Community facilities have traditionally not had such funding access, nor attracted the interests of lobbyists such as national and state motoring and transport associations, private infrastructure investors and developers [7], and crusading broadcasters [8]. The local scale and particularised nature of community facilities provides a fundamental rationale for their existence, but limits organised advocacy and new forms of investment. The large proportion of physical assets controlled by local authorities, comparative to other levels of government in Australia, has created particular problems for council budgets, such as exposure to a construction cost inflator rather than the lesser increases in recent years of the consumer price index (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2006:60).

Asset management policy in Australia has a 'baby-boomer' inflection found in many other areas of Australian public policy. On one estimate two-thirds of local government infrastructure was acquired after World War 2 (AMQ International, Jeff Roorda and Associates et al. 2001:69), much of it with state and federal funding assistance, and requires renewal in the next few decades (also see

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[7] For example Infrastructure Partnerships Australia (www.infrastructure.org.au) is the peak Australian lobby group for public-private partnerships and the privatisation of infrastructure delivery. Macquarie Infrastructure Group (www.macquarie.com.au/ifg), part of Australia's largest majority Australian-owned investment bank Macquarie Bank, is an international financier of toll roads and the majority owner of Sydney's international airport.

[8] Influential Sydney radio and television broadcaster Alan Jones has campaigned for several years for the upgrade of timber bridges on behalf of "bush parents", observing on Channel Nine's *Today Show* that he has written to New South Wales roads ministers "many times" to argue that "local government simply does not have the money for these sorts of projects". *Australian Local Government Association News*, 8 September 2006.

Barlow 1991; AMQ International, Skilmar Systems Pty Ltd et al. 1998). Cyclical renewal demands have also coincided with predictions of a declining local government revenue base and increased expenditure on community and health services required by an ageing population (Castles 2000; Australian Local Government Association 2004; Productivity Commission 2005). This concern is compounded by the complexity and cost of renewing networked infrastructure such as drainage in built-up urban areas, in contrast to its initial provision into greenfield sites. Changes to macro-economic settings in recent decades in Australia have also added to renewal costs. Stretton (1993:xxxii) argues that the financing of suburban infrastructure during the post-World War 2 growth years was assisted by regulation of the Australian financial system, which kept real interest rates at relatively low levels and restricted the purposes for which financial institutions could lend money (see Appendix A for evidence of the interest payment trends of the Essendon City Council). The deregulatory trends of the 1980s pushed up the cost of interest rates, and thus the cost of debt-financed infrastructure projects, and rewarded speculative investment ahead of investment in fixed assets.

The policy environment surrounding infrastructure management is shaped by concerns to return local authorities to a medium-term position of sustainable expenditure on assets through a combination of demand management strategies and reform to council decision-making and operations. However, discussion of demand management through price mechanisms is undercut by criticism of the lack of coordinated planning at local government level and wasteful expenditure of maintenance funding (AMQ International, Skilmar Systems Pty Ltd et al. 1998:60). Similarly, the substantive content of policy arguments for a return of scarcity is challenged by a history of sudden policy changes in this field. The work of McLoughlin (1992), Troy (1996) and Lewis (1999) on urban consolidation suggests the speed with which the conventional wisdom on infrastructure use can change. Lewis (p.125) points to concerns outlined in the Victorian government's 1987 document *Shaping Melbourne's Future* about the under-

utilisation of infrastructure due to a falling inner urban population. In 1990 a senior Commonwealth Treasury official dismissed a "renewal problem" in a speech at a national infrastructure conference (cited in Lang 1991:6). Within half a decade, the dominant infrastructural policy concern focussed on stresses caused by overuse, capacity constraints and declining service levels, despite Melbourne's urban population changing little during that time.

A structural factor in Victoria that heightened what might be termed asset consciousness was the round of local government amalgamations initiated in 1994 by the Kennett Victorian government, introduced above. Reduction of the number of local authorities from 210 to 78 brought new pressures for the rationalisation of assets, particularly where newly amalgamated municipalities or shires had matching sets of civic or community facilities. New councils or shires, some of which comprised several distinct regional and metropolitan communities with no single strongly identifiable civic hub, were presented with the complex task of coordinating municipality-wide asset rationalisation and neighbourhood or township level planning. In his analysis of the local government amalgamations initiated by all Australian state governments in the 1980s and 1990s, Aulich (1999) discusses the tensions of democratic governance in reconciling local preferences and wider structural efficiencies to model the state government approaches. A local democracy model favoured by some states, argues Aulich, emphasises local voice, place-related values and diversity of outcomes. A structural efficiency model, of which in his view Victoria is an exemplar, construes local government in terms of efficient service provision, with the desire for uniformity and technocratic reform overriding local social and political concerns. While, as Aulich notes, the tension between these models is largely one of emphasis, the scale of aggregation of local authorities in Victoria set a new Australian standard in structural efficiency as measured, at least, by local authority size and democratic representation.

Infrastructure and Risk

Although evidence of infrastructure deterioration has been gathered for many years (for example, on the failure of timber bridges in Victoria), concern has been heightened by the apprehension of new risk factors. Dramatic events such as those described on page 5 have been catalysts for action. The revelation that the source of infection of Sydney's drinking water with cryptosporidium and giardia protozoa in 1998 was a privately-owned filtration plant whose operators were not contracted to treat water for the infecting bacteria (Spearritt 1999:268; also see Walker, Clarke et al. 2000:154) raises the further concern about regulatory standards and the public-private interface in an environment where infrastructure provision is increasingly undertaken by private companies. Conversely, free market economists point to the capacity of new technologies in areas such as water and energy supplies to overcome market-failure tendencies that underpinned a century of public infrastructure provision, and to respond to concerns over the vulnerability of centrally operated infrastructure networks to terrorist attacks or catastrophic failure (Foldvary and Klein 2003).

A major change in the risk climate for the local government sector occurred with the abolition in 2001 by the High Court of Australia of the long-held immunity of road authorities against successful legal action arising from the failure to adequately maintain a road [9]. The new duty of care standard that was effectively established by this decision is of greatest concern to rural shires with large road networks and relatively low revenue bases, but affects all Australian local governments. In the wake of this decision, Victorian councils scrambled to develop road management plans whilst given temporary statutory protection by the state government.

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[9] Brodie v Singleton Shire Council and Ghantous v Hawkesbury City Council (2001 HCA 29)

Asset Management and Audit Culture

The character of the new asset consciousness at state and local government level was shaped by broader public sector reforms over the past two decades or so. During the 1990s all states introduced new corporate management requirements for local authorities, which included performance indicators for service outputs and community consultation provisions. The introduction of enterprise bargaining and compulsory competitive tendering – two central pillars of public sector management under the Kennett government – required local governments to benchmark the costs of asset provision and maintenance. So too did moves to introduce greater transparency and private-sector equivalence into public sector transactions within the broader sphere of national micro-economic reform policy (Saggers, Carter et al. 2003).

In Victoria relatively few local authorities prepared corporate plans until required to do so as part of wider changes to the local government regulatory environment introduced by the Kennett government (Kloot 2001). Currently, Victorian councils are held to an asset management regime that involves annual, four yearly, and twenty yearly reporting, which is in turn linked to wider corporate strategic and operational plans, annual budget plans, Best Value reporting and annual community satisfaction surveys, all within the discipline of continuous improvement. This level of reporting activity conforms to what has been referred to as "audit culture" (Strathern 2000). Equipped with principles of transparency and accountability that are impossible to criticise in principle, says Strathern, audit has broken loose from its moorings in finance and accounting to become a central element of corporate management (Strathern 2000:2, see also Carnegie 2004:12,17). At the same time, the logic and metrics of accounting have extended their influence across administrative areas, a process described as accountingisation (Power and Laughlin 1992) or financialisation (Carter and Mueller 2006) that combines financial discipline with shareholder-style accountability. The volume of audit to which local governments are subjected,

and its alliance with Best Value style consultation, suggests a strategy of governing at a distance by state level authorities in the guise of strengthening local democracy.

The conventional focus on financial indicators in local government accountability, reflecting long-held views on the corruptibility of the sector (Jones 1977:63,141), qualifies this interpretation somewhat. However, during the 1980s dissatisfaction grew with the lack of strategic information provided by local government accounting methods, particularly in the area of forward commitments. Reforms to public sector financial reporting, notably the introduction of accrual accounting, were an early and major component of local government reform, and exerted a particular influence on asset management. In 1987 a South Australian parliamentary committee report, discussed in detail below, recommended that local governments adopt an accrual accounting methodology [10] to assist with asset management (Asset Management and Replacement Task Force 1987:Appendix 2; also see Walker, Clarke et al. 2000). This call was formalised nationally in the 1990s with release of Australian Accounting Standard 27 *Accounting for Local Governments* (Public Sector Accounting Standards Board 1995). The impact of the new reporting format was dramatic, resulting in a significant increase in the book value of local government asset holdings (Howard 2004:1-2). The applicability of private-sector style accounting methods to public sector activities has been extensively debated (Bishop 1997; Pallot 1997; Guthrie 1999; Walker, Clarke et al. 1999; Walker, Clarke et al. 2000; Carnegie 2004). It is not proposed to extend that discussion here other than to observe that the new valuation requirements emphasised the financial worth of community facilities – especially the land component in inner urban areas - as well as their financial cost. Encouraged by a wider policy environment favourable to public entrepreneurship, local authorities began to consider whether their capital might be used more effectively by purchasing services rather than holding

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[10] Accrual accounting, unlike cash accounting, includes the total cost of service provision, including annual consumption or depreciation costs.

real estate. One influential New Zealand writer in the local government field has observed that the underfunding of infrastructure may have come about through the failure of local authorities to obtain a market return on capital thus invested, and asked whether local governments might more prudently invest in financial assets rather than focus on infrastructure provision, which might be better left to private providers (McKinlay 1999). Deakin (1999) refers to this posture as dynamic or strategic property management; the term 'public property entrepreneurship' might here be coined to usefully merge the outlooks of new public management and property management.

2.4 Facing the Renewal Challenge – Local Infrastructure Policy in Victoria

The case for a reconceptualisation of public works – once symbols of civic progress and the material role of the public sector - as assets to be strategically managed appears to have been first systematically articulated in Australia in a 1987 study of state-level assets commissioned by the South Australian Parliamentary Accounts Committee (Asset Management and Replacement Task Force 1987). This report deserves wider exposure for its introduction of asset renewal as a complex public policy issue and its emphasis on asset management as a public sector management technique.

The report pointed to the long-range consequences of the post-World War 2 construction boom and suggested a range of management strategies that have become central elements of infrastructure policy: improved technical assessment and asset management, asset rationalisation, modelling of standards/cost trade-offs, demand management through pricing and urban consolidation (in effect, more people use a fixed level of services), and new consideration of the public/private relationship. While emphasising the need for enhanced technical and financial aspects of asset management, the South Australian report cautioned against a technocratic approach, recommending wider, structured

discussion of inter-generational equity and the possibility of reduced service levels:

> The size of the asset replacement task is ultimately a community problem which will not be solved economically unless the community is made aware of the problem and its implications. The impact of not educating the public will be that the community will be unable to understand the reasons for initiatives such as changes to service standards and asset standards and for reducing the Government's asset stock, will resist these changes and will ultimately pay a significant cost penalty. (p.v)

The significance of this report is its problematisation of public asset provision by direct appeal to "the community" to recognise that these assets had been provided on false assumptions of unlimited and unsustainable growth, supported by a public works culture that promoted technical excellence for its own sake, and sustained by the "emotional power of statements by professional associations and unions about declining standards" (pp.41-2). A key aspect of governmentalising asset provision involved the enrolment of citizens in demand management strategies; that is, citizens needed to be convinced of the benefits of demanding less of government or the requirement to pay more for existing service levels. Government agencies, for their part, had to escape from the producer interests of the engineers and public works officials and "improve their understanding and application of the marketing and public involvement strategies that need to be used in the downgrading or removal of assets" (p.43).

Growing Victorian government interest in the strategic management of local authority assets is signalled in a 1992 consultancy report prepared for the Victorian rural City of Wangaratta with support from the Victorian Office of Local Government (Russell and MacMillan 1992). The report was principally concerned with achieving financial sustainability through optimal pricing policies, dividing assets into those associated with three "activity types" of local government: core activities (which the report described as public goods, funded from central revenue), expected activities (merit goods, funded through user charges) and

private goods (which councils may supply on a commercial basis) (p.10). The report signalled changes to public sector accounting rules, especially in the area of asset valuation and the more systematic application of managerialist principles to local authorities. Councils are depicted as businesses and communities as shareholders, the report holding up state government corporatisation of statutory authorities as a policy model (p.13). The City of Wangaratta's hope that the report "would break new ground in local government" (p.1) is fulfilled by the extensive application of economic modelling to asset and facility management policies.

The technical development of asset management was given a considerable boost and local government application by the production of an Australasian 'how to' guide that quickly became an international reference (INGENIUM-Institute of Public Works Engineers Australia 2002, first published 1994). In 1995 the Victorian government released a modest asset management guide that focussed on state-level public infrastructure assets (Accounting and Financial Reporting Division Department of Treasury and Finance 1995), but the round of local authority amalgamations in 1994 prioritised questions of local-level asset rationalisation and financial management. It was in this light that the *Facing the Renewal Challenge* (hereafter FRC) study was commissioned by the Victorian government (AMQ International, Skilmar Systems Pty Ltd et al. 1998). FRC and a subsequent study conducted in South Australia titled *A Wealth of Opportunity* (AMQ International, Jeff Roorda and Associates et al. 2001) are key documents for this thesis and an analysis of them follows.

The engagement in 1997 by the Victorian Department of Infrastructure of a consortium of economists (specialising in asset management), engineers and financial analysts to undertake a study of local government infrastructure management was consistent with the state government's prevailing emphasis on economic efficiency and local government reform, and philosophical orientation towards public choice theory, seen in the report's emphasis on service. Framing

the analysis in political terms, FRC's introductory summary pointed to the changing nature of inter-jurisdictional relationships and impact of downward cost-shifting on local authority infrastructure:

> Councils all over Australia are now facing the problem of ageing assets in need of renewal. Many of these assets were never funded by the Councils in the first place but came by way of grant (from State or Commonwealth), from developer contributions or from a shift of responsibilities for previously State owned assets to local government. (p.7)

This promised a richly contextualised study, but the report focussed on technical analysis, advocating improved asset and financial management of infrastructure, thus – and this is a key point - assigning the burden of response to the local government sector. Assets and service, as defined by Australian Accounting Standards, are the report's keywords:

> Asset: a store of future service potential controlled by the entity as a result of a past transaction or other past events…Infrastructure is a subset of asset…(p.3)

> Service Delivery – the purpose for which an asset is held, measured in terms of service outputs or outcomes, eg road access, travel time, hours of library access, etc.(p.4)

FRC's findings on the financial requirements for local-level asset renewal were startling. By the year 2012, the authors argued, total Victorian local authority expenditure on asset renewal would need to double to maintain existing service standards (p.10.) However, careful reading of FRC and later reports by the consortium (also see Jeff Roorda and Associates 2006) suggest that conceptualisation and calibration of the renewal challenge is heavily influenced by road maintenance: an area of particular expertise for consortium members. FRC argued that local roads would consume an ever-greater share of local authority resources, and the "sustainability gap" (the difference between current outlays and future expenditure required to maintain service levels, or road quality in this instance) would rise from 60% to 73% (p.10). The consortium's 2001

South Australian study *A Wealth of Opportunities* nominated roads as the first of "four big ticket items" of infrastructure expenditure – roads, footpaths, stormwater drainage and buildings (p.iii). This analysis seemed to undercut the report's theme that councils had a predisposition to creating assets as symbols of development and progress without regard for future costs (p.ii) - surely the first three 'big ticket' items, at least, could be described as essential services. However, the gross financial analysis was compelling – councils were allocating an average of only two-thirds of required renewal expenditure, or, put another way, ratepayers were paying less than their full asset usage (AMQ International, Skilmar Systems Pty Ltd et al. 1998:31).

In addition to better technical processes, whole-of-organisation asset consciousness and more efficient practices, both the Victorian and South Australian reports urged local authorities to adopt private-sector service models that focussed on asset divestment in favour of more flexible service provision and consumer empowerment (AMQ International, Jeff Roorda and Associates et al. 2001:i). In place of assumed links between asset acquisition and service provision, the reports argue that greater use of customer surveys and community consultation will establish "what ratepayers value most highly" (AMQ International, Skilmar Systems Pty Ltd et al. 1998:30):

> Re-assessing what services, and especially what level of service their communities require, and seeking alternatives to council service provision, can seriously reduce the renewal funding problems councils are facing. (AMQ International, Jeff Roorda and Associates et al. 2001:iii)

The emphasis of these reports conforms to what Deakin (1999:9), writing in the UK context, saw as the response of local-level property managers to the injunctions of new public management to cut public spending, reform public services to empower consumers, and strengthen democracy through the re-engagement of local citizenship. The consortium's reports endorse Deakin's (p.19) advocacy of moving from a transaction base to a more dynamic market-

based strategy, accompanied by an emphasis on communicative structures. All councils "…have in common the need to rethink what the community really values, what is affordable, and how best to manage the large renewal expenditures that are looming" (AMQ International, Jeff Roorda and Associates et al. 2001:Part 1,p.9). However, despite the emphasis on local resident values, both of the consortium's reports struggle to reconcile the relationship between consumers and citizens, relying on a priori assumptions that residents value service provision most highly. This assumption simplifies the asset management task: local authorities can on this basis educate their communities about the service level/cost link, and establish "real demand" for services through user pays provisions (AMQ International, Skilmar Systems Pty Ltd et al. 1998:90). It also shifts and simplifies the terms of engagement with citizens, from political debate over allocative priorities to assessments of service demand and satisfaction.

With the release of two more critical reports on the state of local government asset management (Municipal Association of Victoria 2001; Auditor General 2002), the ground was prepared for the Victorian government to argue in a 2003 local government asset management policy statement that asset management should become central to local government decision-making, and that elected councillors as well as administrators should undertake asset management training provided by the Municipal Association of Victoria (Department for Victorian Communities 2003a:6). This is indicative of the new policy profile of asset management and the consistency of outlook between and within councils sought by the Victorian government.

At Your Service

The observation made in chapter 1 that infrastructure assets, including community facilities, are sites of intense policy interest is supported by recent Victorian government policy output in this area. In addition to its 2003 release of a new policy framework for the management of local government infrastructure

cited above, the Victorian government released guidelines on asset accounting methods and the preparation of asset management strategies (Department for Victorian Communities 2003b; Department for Victorian Communities 2004a). The target of these policies is disputed. The chief executive of one Melbourne metropolitan council suggested the policies were more relevant to smaller councils or shires without the expertise or resources in asset management of their larger counterparts [11], although the enrolment in MAV's asset management program points to almost universal take-up, and the comparative analysis of asset renewal expenditure of Victorian local authorities, examined below, suggests the problem is not confined to smaller municipalities. Regardless of sectoral modulations, the policy promoted asset management as a new accountability framework to impose discipline on council infrastructure decisions. The policy characterises local authorities as service delivery agencies, and shifts the focus away from the perceived short-term populism of community preference to a longer-term management regime informed by service and financial planning [12]. The concept of service in the policy is closely tied to the actuarial concept of the useful life or future economic benefit of an asset. As used in the policy and guidelines, the notion of service can be interpreted to refer to both the technical function of individual assets, and the overall objective of a facility or council program which is supported by physical infrastructure. Whether the policy collapses some of the less tangible roles that local government infrastructure has played over a century and a half – for example the establishment of democratic public space, the meliorative effect of recreation, contribution to community identity and sense of place, loci of volunteer effort and social networking – into the utilitarian notion of service, or whether it ignores these altogether is not clear. Assets are acquired, says the policy, for their service delivery potential "…and service delivery needs should form the basis of all asset management practices and decisions" (Department for Victorian Communities 2003a:10).

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[11] Pers comm, Andrew Newton, CEO, Glen Eira City Council, 22 November 2005.
[12] For example see CT Management Group: *Manningham Infrastructure Asset Refurbishment /Replacement Strategy 1999-2099* (Doncaster, Vic; City of Manningham, 1999)

A key aspect of public sector reform over the past two decades has involved reshaping the identity of the recipients of public services. This provides an additional perspective on current Victorian government local infrastructure policy, and assists the task of articulating the modulations of the Kennett Liberal and Bracks Labor (1999-2007) governments. Public choice theory, especially its Thatcherite variant, introduced the identity of the public service consumer. Central to Blair UK government (1997-2007) public sector reforms was a challenge to the Thatcherite active consumer/passive citizen binary invoked in public choice theory, replaced with the "demanding, sceptical citizen-consumer", exercising both choice and voice in the "marketplace democracy" (Clarke, Newman et al. 2007:28, 1). Public value analysis deploys a variant of the Blairite figure in its "citizen-authoriser", who has an eye to service quality, local authority efficiency and questions of equity and public interest (Goss 2001:7). Clarke et al's study cited above critiques a simple binary categorisation, arguing that it may miss the multiplicity and mobility with which people understand their relationship with governments, public services and each other. The consumerist emphasis is especially criticised:

> The term consumer has failed to capture popular and organisational imaginations… [it] is largely a figure against which people construct their desired relationships…[i]ts commercial and impersonal character provide[s] a discursive foundation from which people elaborated a model of how public services might be both personal and public.

Additionally, Clarke et al (p.141) identified strong attachment to the "local", arguing for the complex way that this concept is itself understood – place of living, social network, site of service provision. This discussion points to the limits of the current emphasis of Victorian infrastructure policy on the engagement of residents around the management of demand. This discussion is taken up again in chapter 8, where the resident-local authority interface is analysed through the Moonee Valley resident interview data.

The reliance of the Victorian local government asset management policy on notions of service raises two important questions. The first is whether the concept of service provision adequately describes the role of local government. The second is whether the concepts of service delivery and the catch-all of amenity adequately describe the role that local government infrastructure plays in local communities. Some local governments are looking beyond what can be described as the narrow service-based model of asset management that has been articulated by the Victorian government to identify broader social benefits of public infrastructure, thus connecting asset management with new policy interests in community building and social capital (see for example Besnard 2002). Local government managers have expressed their dissatisfaction with a contractual relationship of council and client/resident (the term "customers/communities" is favoured by the Department for Victorian Communities 2003a:5) in search of a more active, partnership-style governance arrangement with communities (Shire of Yarra Ranges 2000:5; Black 2002), adding their own voice to a wider literature on this topic (for example see Sproats 1997; Kiss 2002). While the basis of concern over asset management is widely acknowledged, the Victorian government's policy solution makes only a limited response to this new context of local governance. Despite an assertion that accounting standards should not dictate asset management outcomes (Department for Victorian Communities 2003a:3), financial accountability is at the core of the policy.

Several analysts have criticised the lack of a "human" dimension in local government property and asset management (Brackertz and Kenley 2002; Heywood, Missingham et al. 2003) and the planning and management of facilities in the private sector (Inhalan and Finch 2004). Heywood et al (2003:2) critique the current dominance of physical, service and financial factors in facility management. The new emphasis on service, particularly at the macro-level of government, can be seen as a response to a limited focus on the physical performance of facilities. "A better service, not a better asset, is a key indication

of successful asset management" states the policy paper (Department for Victorian Communities 2003a:5). Similarly, an emphasis on the delivery of *human* services reflects a change from the conventional perception of local government as a provider of services to property. Yet, it seems clear from debates over the closure of community facilities that a service orientation only partially reflects the social and civic roles of community infrastructure. There appear, though, to be few alternative models for managing public assets that do not focus solely on their formal service functions, and in turn lead back to considerations of economic efficiency (McKinlay 1999:90).

While there can be few arguments raised against the proposition that community assets should be sustainably managed, the current emphasis on financial sustainability of local authorities risks, ironically, neglecting the financial resources invested by local communities and all levels of government in community facilities, that reflects a wider appreciation of the public good aspect of these structures. The assignment of responsibility to local authorities for community facilities is justified in policy by reliance on two classical theories of public finance and administration: subsidiarity theory, which advocates the accomplishment of tasks at the lowest effective level of an institutional hierarchy, and correspondence theory, which argues that the jurisdiction supplying the public good should be that which is comprised of the set of individuals who will consume the good (Oates 1972:34; for a recent Australian discussion see Dollery, Crase et al. 2006:43-6). Both principles support rhetoric that local authorities are close to the people and highly accountable – contentious assertions that are rarely supported with evidence. As later chapters of this thesis demonstrate, the patchwork funding of community facilities and the level of higher government policy intervention in their design, establishment and operation suggests that current local government infrastructure policy settings are effectively a process for downward cost-shifting, a process that the Hawker 'cost-shifting' inquiry, for all its merits, has unwittingly supported.

The Perils of Urban Consolidation

A further weakness in the return of scarcity argument, which suggests that local authorities have lived beyond their means and residents must either accept a lower level of service or pay more for existing service levels, is its failure to mesh with other aspects of Victorian government policy promoting urban consolidation. FRC and subsequent asset management policy make no overt reference to the lowering of service levels that urban consolidation effectively entails, regardless of the charge on residents. On the basis of existing infrastructure provision in Melbourne, McLoughlin (cited in Lewis 1999:117) calculated that an additional one million residents would require 10,000 ha of land for educational, civic and small-scale commercial infrastructure, and an additional 23,000 ha for major infrastructure such as highways or major parks. Land use in inner-urban areas is relatively 'settled' once suburbs are built. As Lewis (1999:118) argues:

> …because doubling densities on residential land does not normally involve doubling the amount of roads, parks, schools and public facilities the standard of amenity and service provision are lowered. You may be able, at great expense, to add extra storeys to schools, but you cannot do so for parks. In other words, there is less park per person, and less of most other fixed public resources.

For Troy (1999) and Lewis, this encapsulates the perils of urban consolidation – it reduces standards on all land uses, and does so without either strong evidence of the benefits of such a reduction (such as environmental benefits, for example), or with the informed consent of affected residents. Lewis (p.118) continues:

> The question is never put to the public: should we scrap the liveability and increase the density, or should we keep the status quo? It is never explained to the public that increasing the density involves overstraining or devaluing all other urban parameters.

A second way of understanding consolidation in the context of this thesis is the aggregation of stand-alone community facilities to larger, multi-purpose units,

matching the efficiency logic of local authority amalgamation. Policy support for co-location points to its asset and service efficiency. The lack of detailed critical attention to community facilities in current policy discussion of community strengthening has the effect of aligning efficiency arguments (favouring facility rationalisation and fewer, larger, multi-use facilities) with community-strengthening arguments. For example, negative characterisation of 'single-use' facilities emphasises their limited service dimension and high financial cost, but no research or policy discussion has considered the benefits of such facilities, or, indeed, whether community facilities, with their complex mix of utilitarian and instrumental outcomes, can be truly regarded as 'single use'. Similarly, claims in favour of multi-use facilities and service co-location, such as operational and cost efficiencies, peer support of staff, and social capital created through shared use, are yet to be supported by critical evaluation. Furthermore, no studies appear to have been produced that examine the environmental costs of co-location, such as increased use of private vehicles, or the social and civic impact of closing a neighbourhood-level public facility.

Policy focus on asset management has drawn attention to current and future local government financial liabilities, service and maintenance standards, and safety and risk issues. It has encouraged discussion of the consequences of public sector disinvestment, and provided an avenue to consolidate local government corporate and strategic planning. However, the Victorian government has relied on conventional views of local government as a supply authority in framing its policy approach to local government infrastructure. Conflating the service potential of infrastructure assets with the service orientation of local government in an attempt to diffuse the influence of local politics on asset decisions restricts understanding of the wider social, cultural and political dimensions of community infrastructure. It constructs local government as a corporate entity and local residents as clients or consumers, a view that has been criticised inside and outside local government in recent years. The policy emphasis seems inconsistent with new interests in community building and local

governance, although the latter have been vigorously advanced by the same department issuing asset management policy (Considine 2004; Department for Victorian Communities 2004b). A benign interpretation of this disjuncture is that the Victorian government considers infrastructure as *capacity*, a foundation for higher level activities such as community building, and sees urgency in establishing a baseline for local government asset management in view of the infrastructure renewal task ahead that lies ahead. A more provocative view is that local communities can be given only a limited remit to oversee the technical complexities and financial risks associated with infrastructure assets.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the context in which concern over community facilities developed and the terms in which a policy response has been framed, especially in Victoria.The twin emphasis on the financial value and service capacity of assets has positive and negative outcomes. On the positive side, it has facilitated identification of the real cost of major capital items and brought this into policy calculations. The life-cycle costs of major facilities are generally greater than their initial capital cost. Governments at all levels may be willing to find capital funding for public facilities but more reluctant to allocate sustainable recurrent funding. As Neutze (1997:11) observed, no minister of state was ever presented with a plaque for initiating a spending program on deferred maintenance. A clearer view of ongoing asset costs assists scrutiny of one-off infrastructure funding grants from higher level governments. The calculation of the useful life of an asset – that period of time when it is economical to maintain the asset for the purpose for which it is intended – is a powerful tool for identifying the effectiveness of maintenance expenditure. Agreement on technical standards for infrastructure is increasingly important in an environment of hybrid public-private provision. The concept of service delivery also has a broader integrating function within local government: service planning is an established method for coordinating the delivery of community services at local government

level. However, the development of a service relationship as a central feature of asset management policy emphasises transactions over long-term social outcomes. This emphasis highlights a neglect or lack of theoretical and methodological tools to identify the uses and value of community facilities that lie beyond formal service provision and to evaluate these in the wider context of local government planning and budgeting. This problem is analysed in the chapters that follow.

3. Social Value and Community Facilities

3.1 Introduction

The popularity of evaluation and value-optimising management in academic inquiry and public administration in recent years has done little to dispel perceptions of ambiguity and controversy that surround this area. While economic and environmental values, choices or goals seem concrete and comprehensible, local authorities frame social policy goals in more abstract terms such as social value, community value, cultural value and public value (see for example City of Boroondara 2003, City of Maribyrnong 2000, City of Moonee Valley 2003, City of Wyndham 2002:43, Shire of Yarra Ranges 2004:16). The focus of this chapter is on how the social value or outcomes of community facilities can be more precisely conceptualised and evaluated.

The chapter outlines the complex genealogy of social value and its plural uses in policy to contextualise the current uncertainty with which the concept is applied at local government level. The chapter argues that the optimisation of social value is now frequently cited as a policy objective of local authorities, but the tension between social value as a bottom-up expression of local preference and its top-down imposition by government is unresolved. Tension exists, too, between the desire of local authority managers for indicators or measures by which social value can be assessed, especially in regard to services and physical places, and the room that a more generalised construction of social value leaves room for the exercise (and defense) of subjective judgement by public officials.

The non-market valuation of public goods through techniques such as contingent valuation has an established place within the discipline of economics, although the capacity of neo-classical models to represent the full value of complex entities such as environmental or cultural goods has been questioned by

economists (Power 1996; Throsby 2003) and social theorists (McGuigan 1996; Fine 2001; McCarthy, Ondaatje et al. 2004). The concerns of social theorists have been less with technical aspects of valuation as with the expansion of market-normative concepts within public policy. The following passage usefully summarises the thrust of this criticism:

> The new managerialism in the public sector sets great store by markets and marketing. This was normalised to a remarkable degree in a short space of time, having superseded the domain assumption which preceded it that arts subsidy or library provision, for instance, represent alternative modes to the supply of cultural goods through markets. State-funded cultural goods have become *marketised* to such an extent that their circulation resembles that of the non-state sector, the 'private' market of cultural commodities. Such a development constitutes a strand in the larger process of commodification, whereby all value is ultimately reduced to exchange value. However, 'marketisation', as it is used here, is not strictly speaking to be subsumed under the concept of commodification since the important point is to do with *resemblence* rather than *identity*." (McGuigan 1996:67-8 , emphasis in original)

Fine (2001:15) argues that economics as an epistemology has expanded forcefully to fill the space created by a retreat of the social sciences from the extremes of post-modernism. While Fine's causality may be debatable, public policy formation increasingly relies on real or quasi-markets and price mechanisms to achieve a range of social and, especially, environmental outcomes. It is difficult to resist chancing epistemological closure through the use of terms such as public goods and value - criticism of the dominance of market-rational policy outlooks from within academe and governments has been largely mounted in these terms. Thus, McGuigan, in the above passage, implicitly argues for value to be recognised in other ways than exchange value. The most notable recent attempt from within the government sector to rescue the notion of value from reductionist market-based understandings has come from the UK Minister for Culture, Media and Sport Tessa Jowell (2004), who argues for a broader reckoning of the civic, economic and cultural benefits that flow from funding cultural institutions. Jowell's observation of the multi-dimensional nature

of culture echoes earlier environmentalist views, but her concern to find a new language and political arguments to secure cultural funding on its own terms signals a re-balancing in policy rhetoric of intrinsic and instrumental concerns.

In an insightful study on the development of social indicators (of which more below) Salvaris (1998:39) quotes philosopher Ortega y Gasset: "the world belongs to those who can explain it simply". In 1997 John Elkington popularised the term "triple bottom line" (hereafter referred to as TBL), with its appeal for a re-balancing of economic, environmental and social goals, as a formula for sustainable business success in the twenty-first century (Elkington 1997). The speed and extent with which TBL was adopted by governments suggested it satisfied a desire for a new explanatory narrative of government after two decades of seemingly continuous focus on micro-economic reform. In Victoria, the new matrix was used to distance the Bracks Labor government from both Liberal and Labor predecessors: from the market rationale and privatising impulses of the former and the high tax and spending reputation of the latter. TBL-style accountability was mandated for local authorities by the Local Government (Democratic Reform) Act 2003. Section 3 of the Act directed Victorian local authorities "…to endeavour to achieve the best outcomes for the local community having regards to the long term and cumulative effects of decisions…" by (inter alia) "…promot[ing] the social, economic and environmental viability and sustainability of the municipal district". The Act framed long term social policy objectives around conventional roles and objectives of local authorities: service and facility provision, equity and community consultation, and introduced a normative goal for local citizenship: "…fostering community cohesion and encouraging active participation in civic life".

Imagining and actualizing the task of local government in terms of a balance sheet or scorecard has a long history, especially in the United States where state legislation prohibited local authorities running budget deficits. Transparency and elimination of local corruption, and the garnering of political support by modelling

local authority finances on household income and expenditure patterns have also influenced such budget structures. As evidenced by interview data cited in chapter 8, this model retains its appeal. The popularity of the TBL concept, then, points to the use of policy narratives or metaphors as a common way of 'making sense' of government (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Fischer and Forester 1993; Smith 2004).

The prolific use of 'the social' in policy rhetoric, exemplified by the popularisation of TBL, makes little reference to earlier theoretical and empirical uses of the term, nor its uneasy relationship with 'community'. For most of its working life, something over a hundred years, the concept of social value has been deployed within an expert lexicon to describe phenomena of non-economic worth, collective identity and collective or pro-social preferences. The concept has been most extensively discussed within the discipline of economics. Its regular marshalling as an argument *against* what is perceived as an economically-rational view of the world has obscured this intellectual lineage and an active debate within that discipline on the possibilities and limits of economic analysis. The fields of sociology and psychology can also be considered intellectual homes of social value, although emphasis here has been placed on social norms rather than social choice. At an applied or practitioner level, the domain of cultural policy – especially heritage and arts administration - has made the most significant contribution to understandings of social value, and these are given greatest attention in this chapter.

The elusive or implicitly conceptual nature of social value has troubled theorists, and there is evidence that its current use in policy troubles practitioners. The tension experienced by local administrators when asked to operationalise the vague policy precepts of social value was instanced in a meeting between the author and a busy local authority property manager at the City of Moonee Valley. Interrupting the author's outline of the purpose of the meeting (seeking a property management perspective on social value), the official asked with evident

impatience "well, what's the answer?" (A1). At the time of the discussion, two of the property manager's immediate concerns were a controversial sale of council-owned land to leverage development of a new community centre, and oversight of a compliance audit of the municipality's properties with new building and safety codes. Despite its inclusion in the municipality's asset management policy, the concept of social value appeared both abstract and a lower priority to financial and regulatory concerns. The episode provided a specific illustration of criticisms of the TBL or 'balanced scorecard' policy paradigms – that their components may have a hierarchical rather than an equal and interdependent relationship (Vanclay 2004; Low, Gleeson et al. 2005), and that 'balance' favours trade-offs rather than integration of the perspectives (Crowley and Coffey 2007).

Alternative perspectives offered by other local officials when interviewed suggest a desire to extend current conceptual and operational frameworks surrounding facility management to assess and optimise their contribution to local identity and community networks. Against the backdrop of intense policy interest in social capital and community building, were existing asset and facility management paradigms "missing something", in the words of one official (A2)? Could such an understanding assist with the management of political controversy over facility redevelopment or rationalisation? Could it assist with the planning and management of new facilities? The concept of social value appeared vague but promising to this group of respondents.

In many ways the role of local administrators surveyed in the course of this research conforms to Mintzberg's (1997) description of "managing on the edges". In Mintzberg's analysis, managers – especially 'middle' managers in local or operational settings (Mintzberg's research in this instance focuses on the frontline of park management) – work in the margins between politics and administration and administration and operations, subject to fluctuating internal and external pressures. Local authority policies are characterised by an empirical focus on decision-making criteria, service standards, and performance.

This convention is shaped by the dynamics of the administrator-elected official relationship and the service role of local authorities, and sharpened in response to accountability regimes developed for devolved or partnership forms of service delivery. The search for an 'answer' to new policy demands framed elsewhere - by state governments or senior managers - is understandable, but even a cursory review of available literature, consultancy reports and policy documents reveals a confusing proliferation of indicators, tools and templates that might be adapted for such a purpose. This contrasts with a lack of critical discussion of the terms in which value is conceptualised and expressed in local policy and operational settings. The emphasis on measurement rather than argument might be understood to reflect the operational focus of local government and a new interest in evidence-based policy at state level (Department for Victorian Communities 2004b:forward, np), but it also replicates systemic hierarchisation of quantitative and qualitative assessment in managerialist public policy.

This analysis raises a series of questions about social value that frame this chapter: What is social value and what are its intellectual and policy contexts? Are there meaningful differences between social, community, cultural and public value that advise against their interchangeable and sometimes indiscriminate use by local authorities? Is social value a useful term for conceptualising and evaluating the 'intangible' non-service role of community facilities? If so, how can it assist with policy coherence and practical direction for the renewal of Australia's ageing stock of local facilities?

The first task of the chapter is to make sense of the relationship between value and evaluation. This is undertaken in section **3.2**, through a discussion of the meaning and use of evaluation in public administration. Several classical studies have sought to address questions of value, interest and choice, as philosophical constructs (Perry 1926; Najder 1975) and in political and economic decision-making (Arrow 1951). Following Hechter's (1993:2) observation that the appeal of social value has been its descriptive rather than theoretical possibilities this

section does not deal with epistemological questions in detail. Instead, the section offers a historical account of evaluation, from its development as a tool of Progressive-era government in the United States, contests over the primacy of economic and quantitative evaluation, to theories of interdependency and the ascendancy of the business-like TBL as a policy narrative for newly emerging policy alignments and accountability demands. The section concludes with an analysis of Victorian projects to develop community-level indicators to measure well-being and "progress", to illustrate the tension between bottom-up and top-down understandings of value. Section **3.3** examines how social value is understood and enacted by local authorities, with particular reference to the City of Moonee Valley. This section provides further evidence of the contrast between the notional commitment of the state government and local authorities to local preferences and a current reporting emphasis on financial and service indicators. To re-balance this emphasis, section **3.4** looks at the conceptual and practice literature on social value to develop a model that can assist in identifying the social value of community facilities. This section argues that unifying themes in the varied application of the concept are an emphasis on social networks, identity and place, and a focus on long-term social outcomes rather than individual preferences. This section argues that a reorientation or expansion of dominant policy and operational perspectives from service to place is a key requirement to optimise the social outcomes of facilities. The final section, **3.5**, analyses the relationship between social value and public value. While a rapidly growing academic and policy literature on public value evidences the unsettled nature of the term, this section argues that the original operational emphasis of public value proposed by Moore (1995) provides a useful policy and operational framework for local authorities in the field of community facilities.

3.2 Value and Evaluation

A Brief History

The concept of value evokes notions of worthiness and ethical behaviour, themselves value-laden and subject to ideological and political contest (Colebatch 2006; Pennisi and Scandizzo 2006:77). The distinction between value, as a measure of worth, and values, as a set of ethics and institutional settings that guide choices, is seldom clear in public management. Nor, perhaps, should it be. To paraphrase Colebatch (2006:19), a view of government which isolates policy formation and implementation from the ways of thinking and talking about the world in which those decisions make sense has come under increasing criticism in recent years. Accordingly, a simple definition of value such as that offered by Hechter (1993:3) - "values are criteria for evaluation" - fails to reflect normative and institutional influences on evaluative exercises. For the purposes of this chapter, Schwartz's formulation is more incisive and useful: "[values are] principles, or criteria, for selecting what is good (or better, or best) among objects, actions, ways of life, and social and political structures and institutions" (cited in Ben Avner and Putterman 1998:7). Discussing the relationship between value and evaluation, Pennisi and Scandizzo make a subtle but significant point for the purposes of this discussion:

> In our terminology, valuing is the process of assigning a measure of worth to objects, whereas evaluating is a broader process of assessing the merits and the demerits of an action to provide guidance for decision-making. *Evaluation generally attempts to incorporate valuation, but it may not always succeed.* (p.78, emphasis added)

Bridgman and Davis (2004:Chapter 3) locate evaluation within a sequential and iterative policy cycle that structures the application of ideas and resources that form policy programs. Evaluation, according to these authors, serves three purposes:

- it asks how well a policy, once implemented, meets its objectives
- it holds officials accountable for the implementation of a policy
- it provides important clues for future policy-making. (p.130).

Evaluation is situated at both the end and the next beginning of the cycle, generating data that assist with review of existing 'programs' and new policy learning. Colebatch (2006:15) criticises this formalistic and self-conscious view of policy, adopting a neo-Foucaultean position to argue that policy work can also be seen as a problematising activity, bringing government and non-government actors within selected projects of rule. Despite its associations with 'new' managerialism, evaluation has a long history and has been profoundly shaped by changing political objectives. A brief historical account of evaluation is set out below to support this argument.

The application in the United States of a Weberian concept of bureaucratic expertise and Wilsonian notions of efficiency and the separation of what Wilson termed the technical and symbolic roles of government (Lynn 2006:86), together with concerns about corruption and demagoguery associated with the tradition of elected public officials, created a fertile climate for the development of objective techniques for the allocation of public resources. The progressive era's commitment to centralized and technocratic government chimed with technical advances in evaluation, especially cost-benefit analysis (CBA), assisting its spread as a technique of government. The use of CBA by the US Department of Defense extended throughout the US federal bureaucracy after the Second World War. In the 1960s the US federal government introduced the first of a succession of budgetting systems which applied evaluation across the bureaucracy (Musgrave and Musgrave 1989:131). The pioneering use of evaluation as it related to budget and program management by private firms such as General Motors and Texas Instruments, and evaluation research by the private think-tank Rand Corporation, highlights the similar trajectories of private and public sector management in the late twentieth century, as public sector organisations adopted a corporate management paradigm (Francis 2004).

Dissatisfaction with financial and other quantitative data as the sole or major indices for the evaluation of public policy and programs is long-standing. This has been most notable at the level of national accounting. The initial development of national statistical indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP) was designed to assist macro-economic stability through Keynesian demand management. The coincidence of the widespread use of national accounting and the post-World War 2 'long boom' saw GDP treated as a proxy for economic welfare, a tendency criticised by economists and politicians from at least the early 1960s (Quiggin 1998). The story of the close historical relationship between the development of economic and social welfare indicators is less familiar. Following a founding logic of welfare economics - that economic welfare is but one measure of a wider concept of social welfare (Pigou 1929) – several systems of measuring quality of life were developed in the US during the 1930s and 1940s, the most enduring – the "standard of living" – first reported in 1942. Similar concerns during the 1960s over the capacity of government agencies to respond to rapid and large scale social change led to intensive interdisciplinary research on the development of objective and subjective measures of well-being and quality of life. The contribution of the "social indicators movement" (Sirgy, Michalos et al. 2006) to US public policy, at least at federal level, was significant. In 1969 the US federal government established a panel on social indicators led by economist Mancur Olsen, and federal agencies began publishing reports relating to the performance of their portfolios benchmarked against a range of qualitative indicators. Sirgy et al (p.366-7) argue that more conservative US Federal administrations in the 1980s showed little interest in social indicators as a policy instrument, curtailing research funding and cutting back social reporting. The story follows a more diverse pattern in Europe (Zapf 2000). In the United Kingdom, Self (1975) coined the term "econocrats" to emphasise an increasing reliance of governments on economic evaluation, especially CBA, to determine policy choice. Lynn (2006:123) observes the opposite tendency in Germany and France, where managerial reform pressure was concentrated at the local,

operational level rather than centrally-driven. In these political systems, managerial ideology encountered constitutionally legitimized administrative systems, and legalistic and political reasoning generally prevailed over economic reasoning.

Pennisi and Scandizzo (2006:78) observe that the concept of economic evaluation is itself ambiguous, and it can be concluded from the above discussion that economists have been as critical of the hidden rationality of evaluation as non-economists. Concern over environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity brought interest in the potential of economic theory as a basis for environmental policy, through attempts to clarify and measure unpriced values (Sinden and Worrell 1979). A more profound challenge to accepted understandings of value was presented by environmental philosophy. Value from this perspective consisted of anthropocentric, biocentric and ecocentric components, requiring an evaluative framework that looked beyond not only monetary valuation but a Western epistemology that "concentrate[d] on 'knowing' based on scientific, technical and economic criteria, while assigning less importance to other ways of knowing through humanistic, cultural and spiritual means" (World Commission on Protected Areas 2001 cited in Harmon and Putney 2003:4). Environmental thought, particularly as it focussed on wilderness protection, introduced the concept of non-material or intangible values to the value literature and to the developing sophistication of value frameworks, discussed in detail below.

The passage of the National Environment Policy Act 1969 (NEPA) by the United States Congress, which required a detailed statement on the environmental impact of proposed US Federal legislation or other major Federal actions (S102 [42USC 4332]) signalled the emergence of environmental impact assessment, later expanded to focus on social impact assessment (EIA/SIA), as a new evaluative technique. The legislation's holistic approach to the environment, consisting of bio-physical, cultural and historic components, set the pattern for

EIA/SIA logics, leading one writer to argue that EIA/SIA prefigured TBL as a pathway to sustainability (Vanclay 2004). NEPA was the first legislation of its type in national (and probably sub-national) jurisidictions, and it is sobering to consider that almost half a century has passed since it called for the development of "…methods and procedures…which will insure that presently unquantified environmental amenities and values may be given appropriate consideration in decisionmaking along with economic and technical considerations" (S102). Three decades of EIA/SIA practice, argues Vanclay (2004:35), has given it an established professional base, although one marked by limited consideration of social issues in the face of a typically narrow focus on economic impacts and demographic changes.

NEPA's objectives were framed through language such as harmony, maintenance, preservation, trusteeship and long-term productivity. The concept of restoring the balance, which the act implied had shifted too far in favour of resource exploitation, did not challenge the fundamental premise of economic growth. Building on critiques of such a premise, notably the Club of Rome (Meadows 1972), the World Commission on Environment and Development's 1987 report *Our Common Future* (the 'Brundtland Report') was the first major international policy statement to link environmental sustainability, economic growth and social equity (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). The 1992 United Nations Rio Earth Summit gave further momentum to this outlook, outlining the significance of local-level responses to environmentally sustainable development (Local Agenda 21). A number of Australian local authorities showed interest in Local Agenda 21, although no higher-level Australian governments followed the UK Blair government's example in mandating its adoption at local authority level. The Brundtland report's emphasis also found support from several large-scale surveys of well-being or quality of life in OECD countries that reported well-being increasingly lagging behind GDP. The OECD argued that one implication of survey findings was that diminishing returns from economic growth had already set in, and that greater attention

should be paid to the quality of economic growth and changes to the environmental and social landscape that affect economic growth and social well-being (OECD 2001:73).

In the late twentieth century several factors contributed to a renewed focus on the contribution of political, legal and social institutions on economic development. These included the fall of communism and difficulties in establishing government and market institutions in transitional economies (Woolcock 1998), concern with the persistence of poverty and disadvantage in wealthy countries (Sen 1993), and concern over the decline of social trust and confidence in government (Putnam, Leonardi et al. 1993; Putnam 2000). For some, social capital theory held the promise of identifying the social complement to economic and political institutions, building what Fattore et al (2003:166) refer to as "civic hardware" which governments were too clumsy and markets too ruthless to supply. Over the past decade the conceptual refinement and measurement of social capital has been a major academic and policy initiative internationally and in Australia (Onyx and Bullen 1997; Narayan and Cassidy 2001; Grootaaert and van Bastelaer 2002; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003; Woolcock, Renton et al. 2003). Such has been the political and popular appeal of the concept that in the Australian local government sector social capital has at times been synonymous with the broader concept of the social in policy rhetoric (for example see Bonfield 2001).

The development of new concepts of governance such as deliberative democracy, networks and partnerships has shone a critical light on the relationship between evaluators and evaluated. In this context, the history of evaluation since the 1960s can be construed as a contest between quantitative and objective methods reliant on managerial control, and approaches that acknowledge the subjectivity of those evaluated, focussing on dialogue, inquiry and development rather than measurement (Rowlands cited Pennisi and Scandizzo p.80). This struggle has been most evident at supra-national level, where the application of CBA to development projects sponsored by the OECD

and the World Bank attracted criticism of its incapacity to deal with wealth disparities, institutional failure and the impact of economic policies on community well-being. However, this observation also contextualises the development of interest in local level indicators of well-being and effective governance. This is explored in the Australian setting below.

Evaluation and Accountability in Australia

The history of evaluation as a technique of Australian public management is less well researched. A notable characteristic of the literature on evaluation in the Australian public sector is its focus on national government, referencing an extensive literature on international comparisons of public management reform. Here, states feature incidentally - mostly relating to audit concerns (Walker, Clarke et al. 2000) - and the local government sector hardly at all (Melville 1998; Saggers, Carter et al. 2003). In the conventional account, evaluation as a formal stage of public management is introduced by the Royal Commission on Australian Government Administration, appointed in 1973 by the Whitlam Federal Labor government and chaired by economist H C Coombs (Davis 1988:135-42; Barlow 1991; Guthrie and English 1997; Guthrie and Parker 1999). Coombs drew a distinction between quantitative measurement as a useful aid to policy and management, and the qualitative objectives of government - the health, security and lifestyle of members of a society (Coombs 1990:2). His inquiry sought widespread participation in the development and evaluation of government programs, and Coombs (p.131) later conceded the incapacity of existing structures of government to absorb and organise the "flood of human energy" that was released by this process. The inquiry recommended that "each department or agency should regularly review its programs and that a central agency should oversee this to ensure that these reviews were done using a common methodology [based on] fiscal accountability, efficiency and effectiveness" (cited in Francis 2004). The South Australian government

pioneered program or outcomes-based budgeting in 1979, and the trend was followed by all other Australian jurisdictions (Power 1990).

On one account a lack of methodological tools, the changing political climate, and the growing influence of managerialism saw evaluation as envisaged by Coombs – a way of understanding community needs - give way to more corporatist styles of accountability (Melville 1998). Direct citizen participation in planning and evaluation was generally confined to local-level consultation processes, some highly ambitious in scope, but subject to mounting criticism of their dominance by elites and sectional interests (Munro-Clark 1991). Other writers focus on the impact of public sector reform, arguing that evaluation and accountability became more internally-focussed during the 1980s, concentrating on micro-management issues rather than wider assessments of effectiveness, and incapable of evaluating inter-departmental and, by extension, inter-jurisdictional programs (Guthrie and English 1997). Debate about the differences between evaluation, program evaluation and audit (McLean cited in Guthrie and English 1997:162) suggests an introspective, institutionalised dialogue; the 1992 boast of a Commonwealth Department of Finance official that "Australia leads the world in the quality of performance information at the Commonwealth level" (cited in Guthrie and English 1997:154) points to an emphasis on metrics and international league tables.

The concept of ESD, with its emphasis on environmental and social auditing, presented a challenge to corporatist public program evaluation. Following a recommendation at the Rio Earth Summit, regular 'state of the environment' (SOE) reports were produced by all Australian state governments except Victoria during the 1990s, and by the Commonwealth government from 1996. The earliest examples of these reports appraised social policy outcomes where they were perceived to shed light on the state of the physical environment or the ecological footprint. The first two New South Wales SOE reports (1993 and 1995) included public health, community awareness and heritage as reporting categories. The

first Commonwealth SOE included discussion of neighbourhood amenity and individual well-being (consisting of income and consumption, location, personal health measures) under the category of "human settlements". Agreement of all Australian jurisdictions in 1999 brought greater consistency to SOE reporting frameworks. In this process, environmental indicators were defined as "measures of physical, chemical, biological, social, cultural or economic factors which best represent the key elements of complex ecosystems or environmental issues" (Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability 2005:5).

Notwithstanding strengthening empirical claims, the Brundtland report's argument for ESD initially failed to win broad political and business support. The SOE reporting process was initiated by Commonwealth and State Labor governments (thus explaining Victorian exceptionalism during the Kennett Liberal administration). Few Australian businesses in the 1990s sought to re-align their corporate logics with ESD precepts. The formation of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (note the absence of an environmental reference) in 1995 attracted little interest in Australia. However, the appearance of Elkington's book, combining business rhetoric and social marketing changed this.

The TBL concept was taken up enthusiastically by all levels of Australian government as a way of recognising competing interests, and as a framework in which public sector performance metrics could be developed. The Department of Family and Community Services claimed to have produced the first TBL report in the Commonwealth jurisdiction in 2003 [13], and was soon followed by other Commonwealth agencies [14]. The Bracks Victorian Labor Government adopted the principles of TBL reporting in its 2001 policy statement *Growing Victoria Together* (Department of Premier and Cabinet 2001) [15], following which explicit

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[13] http://www.facs.gov.au/triplebottomline/2003/index.htm , accessed 5 February 2007.
[14] See for example, Department of Environment and Heritage TBL report 2003-04, http://www.environment.gov.au/about/publications/tbl/03-04/index.html , accessed 5 February 2007.
[15] Also see Premier Brack's reference to the TBL framework of Growing Victoria Together at a Business Leader's Forum on Sustainable Development, February 2002,

TBL reporting was adopted by at least two Victorian state government departments [16], advocated by the Victorian Auditor General [17], and used as an evaluative framework for the Commonwealth Games held in Melbourne in 2006. Initiatives such as Local Agenda 21 that garnered significant local support combined with existing local environmental and social planning responsibilities to provide fertile ground for the TBL metaphor to take root and develop at local level. The Maroochy (Queensland) Shire Council introduced TBL reporting in 2001, instituting monthly environmental and social "reporting cards" in 2002 [18]. The City of Melbourne developed a TBL "toolkit" the following year, arguing that environmental imperatives, changing community expectations and the devolution of responsibilities from higher level governments to local authorities demanded a value-oriented, transparent and integrated framework of governance [19].

We Choose for You - Interdependencies and Local Level Indicators

Recent work within the Victorian Government has sought to extend and give broad coherence to policy outlooks framed in terms of investment and sustainability. The accounting metaphor of TBL has been entrenched by policy endorsement of the concept of interdependent capitals – economic, human, social and natural. The terms of this discussion, and the Victorian government's commitment to it, were flagged in the 2001 Victorian Population Health Survey. Key Victorian government policy strategist David Adams argued that

> The challenge for all governments is to simultaneously promote all four capitals and leverage the links between them. While the days of acting on the supremacy of economic policy and compensating the losers (externalities) are over, the new policy mix is still

http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/Newsroom/Speech_item_archive.asp?id=22 , accessed 6 February 2007.

[16] See Department of Sustainability and Environment: *Annual Report,* 2004.

[17] http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/speeches/agspeech_22.html , accessed 6 February 2007.

[18] http://www.maroochy.qld.gov.au/sitePage.cfm?code=tbl_reporting , accessed 5 February 2007.

[19] City of Melbourne and International Council for Local Environment Initiatives 2002: The Business Case for Local Government and Triple Bottom Line http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/rsrc/PDFs/TBL/TBLbusinesscase.pdf , accessed 6 February 2007.

emerging and being expressed in ideas such as public-private partnerships, the triple bottom line, corporate citizenship, sustainability and community building. This is the modern policy turf of both governments and business. (Adams 2002:48)

"Making sense of these interdependencies is going to take some time", argued Adams, but progress was assisted by theoretical and methodological development of the concept of social capital and the identification of international benchmarks and indices of well-being. Adams emphasised the status of the project – and of social capital within the project - by citing Robert Putnam's endorsement of the Victorian government's initiatives in this area (Adams p.48; also see Black and Hughes 2002 for a similar example of the capitalisation of social policy at Commonwealth level). The aggregation of data in the four domains and development of indicative measures where none existed was seen as a central task in the extension and operationalisation of this policy framework.

This goal has directed renewed attention to the development of locally-relevant social indicators, but calls attention to the degree to which deliberative exercises notionally 'owned' by communities can be centrally orchestrated. The history of the social indicators movement in Australia conforms broadly to the international pattern sketched out above. In their useful history of the subject, Armstrong and Francis (2003) identify quality of life and community well-being as foci of the first Australian projects in this area, in the mid 1970s. The Australian Bureau of Statistics began its *Social Indicators* series in 1978, and the first project to assemble social indicators in Victoria was commenced in 1979. This ambitious project mapped descriptive indicators of social conditions in Victorian local authorities, ranked local authorities on a socio-economic index, identified needs-based indicators for service delivery and developed funding formulae for resource allocation to local authorities and Victorian regions. During the 1990s, the re-identification of citizenship, well-being, social capital and community as problems of governance, combined with an emphasis on evidence-based policy, brought new interest in social data and comparative benchmarks. The semantic shift from social indicators to community indicators amounts, in Salvaris et al's

analysis, to a "social movement" that wrests control from experts and passes it to communities:

> Community indicators have proved valuable for local democracy and community building: first, because the process of developing indicators is as important as the indicators themselves, as it aims to be open, inclusive, citizen-based and cross-sectoral; secondly, because democracy and political accountability are themselves important new indicators of community well-being. (Salvaris et al 2000:38)

An alternative view of this shift highlights the instrumental use of community and deliberative process of local democracy to achieve central policy goals. In this quote, the only available outcome of local democratic processes is the advancement of community well-being.

While Salvaris et al suggest that community indicators are by definition chosen by communities, the research has produced a vast set of bespoke measures from which to choose. Research on benchmarks for the progress and well being of Victorians, initiated from the Growing Victoria Together summit of 2000, produced a set of 176 indicators in five domains (Salvaris et al 2000:81-86). Many of the indicators are existing quantitative economic, demographic and environmental measures. That only one of the six measures, all quantitative, dealing with the provision and use of community facilities was considered by the report's authors to have adequate statistical information suggested that qualitative data was not the only, or perhaps even the principal, concern in framing policy in the area of local social infrastructure.

A more modest exercise in measuring "community strength" was launched in 2004 by the Department for Victorian Communities, with 14 indicators in three domains and measurement data developed through telephone surveys (Strategic Policy and Research Division - Department for Victorian Communities 2005). A second, larger research project on community indicators, the Victorian Community Indicators Project (VCIP), was established by the Victorian

government, through Vichealth [20], with local authority and third sector partners in 2005. The project aimed to "transform the learning and experience of many projects, local and overseas, into a new tool of governance…an integrated, long term strategy for local communities to use community indicators to improve wellbeing outcomes" (Victorian Community Indicators Project 2005a:1). This project developed a draft set of 138 indicators in six domains (Victorian Community Indicators Project 2005b:19-36). In fairness to the researchers and officials engaged in the community indicators projects, these exercises are significant initiatives in integrating cross-portfolio policy data, promoting new forms of governance, and evaluating neglected or poorly understood aspects of community life. However, notwithstanding the empirical difficulties associated with projects of this scale, the inconsistency between their commitment to and instrumental use of local democracy is problematic. This point was underscored by respondents in the VCIP community workshops who voiced concern over the number of indicators and the lack of integration or duplication with other policy frameworks and the level of reporting to central authorities demanded of local government (Victorian Community Indicators Project 2005b:18-19).

Health as an Integrating Metaphor

Giving coherence to goal-oriented terms such as strengthening, capacity-building and progress that inflect these projects is the integrating metaphor of health. A new epistemology of health, the social model of health, auspiced the development of social capital measures within the wider policy framework of government. The social model of health shifts the focus of medical intervention from the body and its illnesses to the physical, social, economic and environmental conditions that promote well-being (Marmot and Wilkinson 1999). The model's fusion of conventional local authority roles of physical planning and public health with the new policy emphasis on social inclusion, was perceived by

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[20] Vichealth promotes primary public health initiatives and supports research in this broad field, largely from tobacco and gambling excise.

the Bracks and other state governments as particularly relevant to local government policy. Accordingly, in Victoria the preparation of a municipal public health plan, a triennial council reporting requirement, was reformatted to a framework broadly consistent with the four capitals, in this case rendered as physical/built, economic, social and environmental (Department of Human Services 2001). The shift from an illness-based policy model to one based on well-being and the importance of primary or preventive health care, in which individuals take a principal management role, can be seen in neo-liberal terms as an attempt to reduce state financial outlays in the most costly area of government. This shift has been accompanied by the development of a calculative regime of personal health management focussing on statistical indices of cardio-vascular fitness, activity levels, and weight or body mass, in seeming contradiction to promotion of the more subjectively-determined concept of well-being. Similarly, the emphasis of indicators measuring community strength or well-being has focussed largely on social capital, through measures such as volunteering and trust. The conflation of community and social capital allows for little sense of the role of community facilities or the physical environment generally in the maintenance of networks or social cohesion, and little guidance on how the value of physical facilities can be appraised within this policy context. The following section narrows the discussion to focus on measurement and evaluation at local government level to examine the impact of the recent Victorian government policy direction.

3.3 Value and Local Government

Systematic performance reporting for Victorian local government authorities was first mandated in the Local Government Act 1989. A decade or more of intense activity in the area of local government performance benchmarking and performance measurement followed. This included participation in an exercise to develop a national set of local government performance indicators (Industry Commission 1997) and the development of revised sets of comparative

measures of financial efficiency and service delivery. Attenuated during the period of local government amalgamations in 1994, the activity level was raised by the <u>Local Government (Amendment) Act 1996</u>, which required performance indicators to be included in annual corporate plans. Despite exhortations to adopt a "balanced scorecard" approach to this activity (Industry Commission 1997:118), the emphasis of reporting models was on financial efficiency and service delivery/customer satisfaction (see Industry Commission 1997:125-7). An additional influence on the force and direction of local government performance measurement was the inauguration by the Council of Australian Governments of the National Competition Policy, bringing with it a requirement for benchmark costings of service delivery (National Competition Council 1999).

Implementation of this requirement was patchy. Thuy and Dalrymple (1999) reported that by 1998, 85% of Victorian local authorities had performance measures of some form – a large majority using the state government framework discussed above - but only half of small shire councils had adopted measures. More revealing was the authors' observation of a "lack of enthusiasm" for performance measurement, with most councils viewing it in terms of statutory compliance (sharpened by tying implementation to a lifting of the rate cap imposed by the Kennett government) rather than an enhancement of planning and financial tools (p.8; also see Kloot 2001). Thuy and Dalrymple revealed that time and funding constraints for implementation, measurement difficulties, and lack of resources were major reasons for a wary approach to the putative benefits of 'continuous improvement'.

Value and Best Value

The pursuit of value as a corporate objective of local governments is most obviously flagged by the introduction of Best Value regimes concurrently in the United Kingdom and Victoria. Best Value was designed to break from the Kennett government's laissez-faire strand of neo-liberalism, signalling the Bracks

government's commitment to what Gamble (2006:21-2) describes as a social market strand "…which believes that for the free market to reach its full potential the state has to be active in creating and sustaining the institutions which make that possible". For the Bracks government, public consultation and involvement of the third sector in policy formation and service delivery – the two actions knitted together by frequent rhetorical use of the term community – typified this commitment. UK and Australian critics argue that Best Value differs little from earlier, business-like concepts of value optimisation and – in its universal application – from earlier centrally-directed approaches to budget evaluation (Boyne 2000; Keenan 2000; Baker 2003; Higgins, James et al. 2004; Higgins, James et al. 2005). How, then, did the Victorian government conceptualise value in the Best Value regime? The term is used descriptively in both the enabling legislation (Local Government (Best Value Principles) Act 1999) and subsequent reports of the Best Value Commission, set up to oversee implementation of the regime. The Act elaborates Best Value as a set of principles which aim to enhance the quality of local service delivery by taking into account the following factors:

- the need to review services against the best on offer in both the public and private sectors
- an assessment of value for money in service delivery
- community expectations and values
- the balance of affordability and accessibility of services to the community
- opportunities for local employment growth or retention
- the value of potential partnerships with other councils and State and the Commonwealth governments
- potential environmental advantages for the municipal district. (abridged from S208C)

Best Value legislation focusses on service delivery. Its corporatist flavour is evident in its scope and compliance requirements, the nexus it establishes between consultation and client satisfaction with services, the business models recommended as guides for performance measurement and continuous improvement (LGPro and Department for Victorian Communities 2005), and the

extension of Best Value logic to the wider role of local government (Municipal Association of Victoria 2004) .

Local authority response to best value has been mixed, with sectoral diversity, as ever, an important variable. While the state government suggested that local authorities welcomed the absence of a "top-down" approach to enforcement of the policy (Local Government Best Value Commission 2001:4), complaints of lack of resources for its implementation and a reporting focus on service reviews point to a compliance-based response by some (O'Toole 2003:9; Local Government Best Value Commission 2006:np). Other councils saw Best Value as a framework for strategic development, capable of supporting the wider role of local authorities. For example the Shire of Yarra Ranges, on Melbourne's eastern fringe, stated that:

> Leading Best Value at Yarra Ranges, and so learning to add value, means much more than providing high quality, low cost services. It means extending our definition of value to include the value of:
> - fostering a sense of community
> - providing community leadership
> - recognising diversity
> - meaningful engagement with our communities
> - developing vibrant, thriving communities
> - using the process to stimulate organisational learning
> - recognising that service provision can influence community capacity.
> (Local Government Best Value Commission 2001:21))

The concept of Best Value invites the question 'best for whom?'. Best Value can be understood as a complex and potentially unstable mix of managerialism and public choice, a tension that, in Aucoin's (1990) analysis, is inherent in new public management.

Value and the Moonee Valley City Council

The currency of value in local government administration policy rhetoric is instanced by the inclusion of separate sections titled Value and Best Value in recent issues of MVCC's principal corporate reporting mechanism, the annual report. For MVCC, value provides an overall corporate objective and, cast as Best Value, an accountability framework:

> Moonee Valley strives to achieve value for its citizens in all its programs and projects. The value of program areas are [sic] rigorously tested through the Council's Best Value system, with reports being presented to public council meetings and made available on Council's website. Value is not just an economic test but takes into account social and environmental factors to form a strong triple bottom line approach to program evaluation[21].

Compliance with an imposed performance framework, in the form of Best Value principles and the Victorian Local Government Indicators, provides little opportunity for social and environmental accounting. The Best Value principles focus on cost, quality and satisfaction with service delivery, and community consultation processes mandated by Best Value emphasise the clientalist relationship between local authority and local resident. VLGI consists of three ratings of community satisfaction (the council's overall performance, and its performance in advocacy and community engagement) and eight ratings of financial performance and infrastructure maintenance (see table 4.1).

In 2004 MVCC undertook a community planning process, a municipality-wide exercise involving meetings of the Citizens Panel as well as wider public consultation and events. The process produced a set of strategic priorities, in which were nested the VLGI performance measures, as set out in figure 4.2.

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[21] City of Moonee Valley: *Annual Report* 2005/06, p.31.

Victorian Local Government Indicators
City of Moonee Valley Ratings 2003/04 and 2004/05

Indicator	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
1. Community satisfaction – overall performance	66%	68%	65
2. Community satisfaction – advocacy	64%	67%	60
3. Community satisfaction – community engagement	59%	65%	60
4. All rates	$954	$1,075	$1,117
5. Residential rates	$912	$1,033	$1,058
6. Operating Costs (average per rate assessment)	$1,552	$1,646	$1,686
7. Capital expenditure (average per rate assessment)	$273	$337	$341
8. Infrastructure ('renewal gap')	1.15	0.38	0.70
9. Renewal maintenance gap	1.10	0.62	0.79
10. Debts (average liabilities per rate assessment)	$469	$500	$559
11. Operating result (per assessment)	-$40	$204	$107

Table 4.1 - adapted from City of Moonee Valley *Annual Report* 2005/06, p.33.

City of Moonee Valley Community Planning Process:
Vision, Priority Domains and Indicators

Vision:

[A] place where diversity and creativity exist and are valued; a place that is healthy, safe and sustainable; a place of vitality where people enjoy their chosen lifestyles and a place of community pride.

Priority Issues/Directions/Domains:

Citizenship (energise) – energizing citizens' interest and involvement in their community
Lifestyle (choices) – foster healthy lifestyle choices that improve people's quality of life and our community's vitality
Sustainability (balance) – establish a sustainable community (one that is healthy, vital, resilient, creative and adaptable) by enhancing our cultural , economic, environmental and social systems
Value (deliver) – design programs that provide our citizens with the outcomes they want for their community.

Indicators

1) Community satisfaction with Council's overall performance
2) Community satisfaction with Council's advocacy role, citizen contact and community engagement
3) Community satisfaction with Council's key service areas and responsibilities
4) Council's progress associated with consulting with out Citizen's Panel
5) Council's progress in implementing the Municipal Association of Victoria's STEP [asset management training] program
6) Council's progress in implementing its Best Value program
7) Review of financial indicators relating to
      - affordability and cost of governance
      - sustainability
      - infrastructure
      - financial performance.

Table 4.2 - adapted from The Victorian Community Indicators Project, Local Government Plans, Moonee Valley City Council
http://www.communityindicators.net.au/stocktake/detail.chtml?filename_num=44847
accessed 14 March 2007.

The attention given to infrastructure and community follows the contours of state government policy, but the remarkable aspect of the indicators is the degree to which the outcome of the community consultative process conformed to the state government template, with its emphasis on financial and service measures. Are community, local government and state government interests in such close

harmony, or is this process better understood in terms of government at a distance? While the Moonee Valley administration has undertaken other participatory planning initiatives that move beyond the confines of Best Value consultation (notably the Kensington Action Plan [22]), the overall performance evaluation and reporting framework set out above is centrally-directed and focussed around a connection between service and finance.

The relationship between the development of community indicators, on the one hand, and Best Value and VLGI on the other is, in Adams' terms cited above, clearly still developing. It is evident at this point, though, that the overall emphasis of current evaluative models for Victorian local authorities provides little capacity to appraise the value of community facilities beyond service, financial and physical performance. Alternatively, the coincidence of Moonee Valley community indicators and the state government reporting model sheds little light on whether local residents do indeed focus on cost and service as priorities. The promise of a "strong" TBL-style approach to program evaluation, setting aside reservations about TBL discussed earlier, is not clearly evident in the centrally-imposed framework, nor in operationally-focussed policies such as asset management. As May (2003:97) pithily observed from an analysis of local authority amalgamations in Australia during the 1990s, if local government is just about service provision, then why have it at all?

3.4 Social Value as Theory and Practice

Theorising Social Value

The term social value appears in Australia as early as 1883, used by social chronicler R E N Twopeny in describing the contribution of co-operative building societies to enable the "working man" to purchase a dwelling. "Directly he has

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[22] City of Melbourne and City of Moonee Valley: *Kensington Action Plan*, 2006 http://www.mvcc.vic.gov.au/Files/CC_KensingtonActionPlan.pdf, accessed 24 September 2007.

reached this stage, an improvement is evident in his condition. It is difficult to over-estimate the social value of the work that has been done by building societies " says Twopeny (1976 [1883]:37), alluding to the health and aesthetic benefits of suburban life over inner-city slums and the social stability brought by home purchase. An environmentalist interpretation of social value also emerged within English eugenic thought. Ethel Elderton, a social researcher with the Galton Eugenics Laboratory, invoked the "social value" of fertility control for women in northern English manufacturing towns. "[I]n almost every case a bad social situation is associated with a large family", argued the neo-Malthusian Elderton (cited in Soloway 1995:15). Despite their opposing views on social agency – bottom-up co-operative activity and top-down science – Twopeny and Elderton's common reference to social value can be located within the broader development of sociological interests in urbanisation, community and social stability in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Similarly, the social anthropologist A R Radcliffe-Browne (1881-1955) – a founding figure in the structural-functionalist strand of that discipline - used the term social value to explain the significance of ritual and exchange for stability in Australian Indigenous social systems (cited in Teague 2004:82, for a detailed account see Stanner 1985).

While the term social value is used regularly and descriptively in twentieth century sociological and public policy literature (for example see Leigh 1950:19,41,49 on the social value of library services), economic theory related to valuation and decision-making has had most influence on both its current understandings and the frequency of its use. The concept had its strongest adherents in the field of institutional economics (Tool 1986:34-7). Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) used the term to critique the classical economic theory of self-interest as the principal motive of economic behaviour (Hodgson 2001). The heterodox views of Veblen and later institutionalists such as Gunnar Myrdal (1898-1987) were eclipsed by the elevation within economic theory of rational choice assumptions that individual decisions in the marketplace optimised social

outcomes. The rival theory of social choice, which predicated that individuals were not consistently egoistic or utility-seeking in their preferences but combined socially-oriented and subjective choices, gradually chipped away at the market-rational edifice (Sen 1977). Developments in environmental economics and natural resource management drew on the concept of social value to describe the significance and worth of natural assets or systems to current and future generations, emphasising time-scale in its conceptual framework. Social value provided a useful vocabulary to enable evaluative choices between competing use perspectives on natural assets (Heal 2000). But who chooses? If social value is more than the aggregate of individual preferences, mechanisms must be established for collective decision-making. In a democratic polity, this is organised through political institutions.

The economist Marc R Tool, who has written extensively on the topic of social value, provides an example of the sometimes impenetrable language of this field, defining social value as actions or choices that "…provide for the continuity of human life and non-invidious re-creation of community through the instrumental use of knowledge" (Tool 1986:10). In simpler terms, social value has two distinct but related elements. *Social* refers to human aggregates such as communities, networks or neighbourhoods, and *value* is a criterion of choice or relative worth. Value is thus used in a normative sense (an emphasis on social outcomes) and a relative sense (the comparative worth of social outcomes against, say, financial ones or those made through individual choice).

Psychology's interest in social value has been directed towards its normative rather than evaluative aspect. Definitions in this literature are less tortuous than that cited above, but run in a similar direction. Mueller and Wornhoff, for example, contrast social value with personal values, defining it as "values applied to other persons' behaviour and to goals one holds for society" (Mueller and Wornhoff 1990). The psychology literature inflects the concept with descriptors such as pro-social, non-egoistic, co-operative and integrative (Platow and Shave 1995;

Van Lange 1999). Economic theory, though, underpins the increasing use of evaluative systems in public policy, its integrating nature (or in Fine's analysis cited earlier, its reductive epistemology) providing a seemingly ready-made toolkit for decision-making that involves outcomes with complex ecological and social consequences (Daily, Sondequist et al. 2000).

Social Value as Practice – Heritage Conservation

The first use of social value as an evaluative criterion of the physical environment has been attributed to the Scottish planner and urban theorist Patrick Geddes (1854-1932), in arguments for the preservation of buildings as ways of documenting social change (Mercer 1997; Teague 2004:81-2). This association of social value and conservation planning underpinned Australian heritage policy and statute law with the passage of the Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975 (Cth). The framing of the act was strongly influenced by development in the United States of a natural and cultural resource management regime that sought to reconcile competing developmental and use pressures on built and natural heritage sites, especially wilderness areas. The act also borrowed from the political rhetoric of US President Kennedy in using the term "national estate" to describe officially recognised heritage [23]. Section 4 of the Act set out four criteria of significance or value for inclusion of sites on the Register of the National Estate (RNE): aesthetic, historic, scientific and social. The concept of social value was given practical direction in 1979 by the adoption of the Burra Charter, a code of conservation practice by Australia ICOMOS [24]. An amendment to the Act in 1990 sought to further define social value, as denoting a "…strong or

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[23] The term "national estate" appears to have been coined in 1943 by Welsh architect, environmentalist and national parks campaigner Clough William-Ellis. Ironically, William-Ellis is best known for the development of Portmeirion, a faux-heritage village on his private estate.
[24] Australia ICOMOS is the Australian branch of the International Council on Monuments and Sites. The Burra Charter is an adaptation of ICOMOS' Venice Charter (1964) to the Australian context. That the Venice charter makes little reference to the concept of social value points to the significance of developments in Australia. A copy of the Burra Charter, since revised, can be found in Pearson, M. and S. Sullivan (1995). Looking After Heritage Places: The Basics of Heritage Planning for Managers, Landowners and Administrators. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press. p320).

special association with a particular community or cultural group" (S4.1A.e). The second reading speech for the amendment explained the social value of a site as "[i]mportance as a place highly valued by a community for reasons of religious, spiritual, symbolic, cultural, educational, or social associations" (cited in Teague, p.68).

While the definition of social value was mobile and at times self-referential, the significance of its use lay in the acknowledgement by the Commonwealth government's heritage agency that sites which held a special place in the social memory of place, interest and identity communities contributed to the broader tapestry of national heritage. In 1975 Victoria was the only other Australian jurisdiction with heritage legislation, and, supported by the unifying concept of the national estate, the centralising implications of the Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) Act were relatively uncontroversial. During the 1980s and 1990s all states and territories passed heritage legislation and directed local authorities to apply heritage controls in planning schema. The upward shift of oversight of local sites implied in the AHC Act (symbolic in its effect as the Act only had power over Commonwealth-owned properties) ran counter to wider patterns of devolution and subsidiarity, and contributed not only to the AHC's demise as an organisation, but to re-worked understandings of social value, stripped of national meaning and application. This point is taken further in chapter 6.

Conceptually the development of Australian heritage practice during the 1980s and 1990s in Australia can also be linked to the rise of cultural geography and its theorisation of the connections between place, identity and social relations (see Teague 2004 for a useful summary of the field). The appearance of the National Trust of Victoria-commissioned *What is Social Value?* (Johnston 1992) and AHC publications associated with the development of regional forest agreements in the mid-1990s (Blair 1994; Australian Heritage Commission 1996) sought to give further clarity and practical guidance to identifying the social value of places. In

1995 the AHC commissioned consultants to review the listings of non-Anglo-Celtic physical heritage on the RNE, especially those places that held significance for the experiences and social memory of migrants who arrived in the post-World War 2 era. In practical terms, identifying social values involved engagement with local communities in the conservation planning process, largely through practitioner-led workshops and cultural mapping projects. A 1999 revision of the Burra Charter delineated social value into components of use, association and meaning, emphasising the importance of community involvement in heritage issues. Teague's assessment (pp. 94-5) is that the revisions shifted emphasis from the conservation of fabric to the conservation of cultural significance. She summarises the state of thinking thus:

> Social value is therefore a complex idea, encompassing a range of intangible concepts, with definable characteristics. It is a dynamic, living, contemporary value that is collective, shared, experiential, emotional and subjective. (Teague, p. 68).

However, the coherence of community and social value assumed in the Australian practice literature raises significant questions about the definition of community and the reconciliation of conflicting views. Teague's argument that "[w]hen people show concern over the future of a place, their feelings of connection are an expression of social value" (p. 69) leaves aside consideration of competing interests, the tactical alignment of groups, and the more intractable issue of whether a social value resides at group level or is an aggregation of individual values. The discursive process for identifying social value was also in tension with the physical and operational focus of local authorities and the position of local heritage protection within planning law. Despite the attempts of heritage practitioners to develop thematic approaches to the assessment of the value of local places, many local authorities focus on aesthetic and historical criteria to be applied to individual sites or precincts for inclusion in planning overlays. Johnston (p.51) and Teague (p.65) concur in their assessment that aesthetic and historical values dominated consideration of social values in heritage assessments.

Social Value as Practice - the Arts

A second practice literature that has made extensive but somewhat different use of the concept of social value is found in the field of the arts and culture. During the 1980s, the cultural bureaucracy began to lose policy traction in its reliance on notions of public good or public interest, and sought to develop its own economic and non-economic measures of the benefits of funding cultural activities (Thompson, Throsby et al. 1983; Department of Arts 1989). An important argument in this literature was a contention that the short planning timeframes of performance evaluation, tied to budget and electoral cycles, were inadequate for assessing the long-term social benefits of investment in culture and education. Scott's (2002) analysis of the social value of museums, a characteristically descriptive approach to the topic, provides a useful entry point to an extensive literature that attempts to reconcile the intrinsic and instrumental benefits of culture. Scott fuses economic and social value by arguing that museums are often called upon to play broadly-construed economic functions as part of urban redevelopment or revitalisation projects, both validating local culture and giving precincts or regions a distinctive marketing edge. However, realising the investment in cultural resources requires an extension of standard evaluative cycles and measures, from short-term/quantitative to long-term qualitative ones. Scott turns to the field of community arts to identify viable models for long-term qualitative outcomes, citing two studies that have become central references in the literature. These are discussed below.

Deirdre Williams' (1997) study of the benefits of participation in community arts in South Australia was based on an analysis of a sample of programs funded by the Australia Council for the Arts. Draft indicators of long-term benefits of the programs were developed and tested on a sample of 232 people who had participated in community arts projects in Australia. Williams identified a range of

outcomes under four headings – social benefits, educational benefits, artisitic benefits and economic benefits. The social benefits were:

- established networks of ongoing value
- developed community identity
- raised public awareness of an issue
- lessened social isolation
- improved understanding of different cultures and lifestyles
- improved recreational outcomes
- inspired action on a social justice issue
- increased appreciation of the value of community arts projects. (cited in Scott, p.45)

The title of this study, *Creating Social Capital,* is somewhat misleading, perhaps settled on for opportunistic funding reasons (although providing a further instance of the tendency to conflate social value and social capital). It remains, though, the most expansive empirically-based advocacy of what Yudice (2003:8) calls "culture as a resource" published in Australia. A significant point that emerges from the study, although not one stressed by Williams or Scott, is the interdependency of the benefits. Causal chains can be established across Williams' four headings: networks (social benefit) lead to the communication of ideas and information (educational benefit), which lead to the development of creative talents and more work of artistic merit (artistic benefits) which lead to local enterprise (economic benefits).

A second study cited by Scott, Francois Matarasso's (1997) UK study of the "social impact" of arts participation, combined interview and questionnaire methods with a sample of over 500 people. As Scott (p.46) notes, it contrasts with Williams' inductive methodology (testing indicators on the sample) by using a deductive approach to generate indicators. The study produced an expansive set of indicators under six headings – personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment, local image and identity, imagination and vision and health and well-being.

The focus of these two studies on arts participation should not distract attention from their relevance to this thesis. Community arts may be open to criticism for its bureaucratization and governmentalizing character (Yudice 2003:300), but it exemplifies a socially-oriented program that is dependent on the use of community facilities or public places. This is an important conclusion that neither study mentioned above explored, and serves as a focal point of this thesis.

Social Value and Social Capital

The rapid rise of academic and policy interest in social capital during the 1990s further expanded the conceptualisation of social value beyond its strong but confined association with heritage conservation and the arts. This shift roughly coincided with the rejection by the Australian national government of the existing heritage policy framework outlined above, effectively 'downshifting' the concept of social value from a national conservation criterion to local government level, in favour of a more restrictive and hierarchically-ordered concept of national heritage. This move is analysed in chapter 6, but here it is important to note this new alignment at 'local' level of social networks and community identity.

The Australian economist C D Throsby, a leading figure in the development of theories of non-economic value of cultural goods, specifies this new alignment. He locates social value within a broader concept of cultural value, which consists of:
- aesthetic value - beauty and harmony
- spiritual value – understanding, enlightenment, insight
- social value – connection with others, a sense of identity
- historical value – connection with the past
- symbolic value – objects or sites as repositories or conveyors of meaning
- authenticity value – integrity, uniqueness (adapted from Throsby 2000:11).

Using the historic environment as an example, Throsby elaborates on his definition of social value thus:

> [T]he interpretation of culture as shared values and beliefs that bind groups together suggests that the social value of the heritage site might be reflected in the way in which its existence may contribute towards social stability and cohesion in the community. The site may impinge upon or interact with the way of living in the community, helping to identify the group values that make the community a desirable place in which to live and work. (p.15)

Echoing earlier critiques of the depletion of environmental capital (Schumacher 1973), Throsby argues that the concept of cultural capital invites consideration of its long-term maintenance.

> Cultural capital exists as a source of cultural goods and services that provide benefits both now and in the future. As individuals or as a society, we can allow cultural capital to deteriorate over time, we can maintain it, or we can augment it. In short, we can manage it in a way that suits our individual purpose. (p.13)

The argument that social networks, identity and place are major elements of social value is given further weight by the work of the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) on the intangible values associated with such areas (Putney 2000). WCPA formed a task-force to bring coherence to the proliferation of typologies and terms developed to describe protected areas from such viewpoints as leisure, recreation, tourism and conservation. The typology can thus be considered the most extensive of its kind. It exemplifies the complex mixture of utilitarian and intrinsic values associated with physical environments. Detailed analysis of this typology moves the discussion beyond its focus on community facilities, but Putney usefully categorises the values into three groups that further underscore the connection of social value with the associational functions of public places:

- Personal values – include such things as the psychological or therapeutic benefits of visiting protected areas

- Cultural values – include those that link people together, such as spiritual values

- Societal values – those that bring cultures together, such as are featured in peace parks, or parks that serve as intercultural spaces that help link modern and traditional cultures. (adapted from Putney 2000:7)

Putting Social Value in its Place

It is clear from the above discussion that the concept of social value is addressed by a heterogeneous and at times abstract literature which, with the exception of the field of heritage conservation, appears to have little direct connection with local government policy and operations. In its most concrete manifestation, social value is invoked in local policy as a proxy for a majority or strongly held view of ratepayers. At its most ethereal, social value refers to the shared identity and social memory that constitutes a community of place or interest.

As Teague's work (cited earlier) indicates, social value in Australia has for several decades served as a criterion for evaluating everyday structures or the recent past, assisting with the preservation of places with special meaning for communities of place or identity. Increasingly, the application of subsidiarity principles to heritage conservation has shifted this responsibility down to local authority level, giving further reason for critical attention to the consistent use of the term in local jurisdictions. Correspondingly, the rise of interest in social capital has expanded the conceptual range of social value to include the value of social networks. However, while heritage conservation practices tended to reify community identity in the built environment, social capital theory has largely sought to explain the existence of social networks without reference to the physical environments in which social life is conducted. How, then, can social

value be emplaced to assist its mobilisation within policy as a criterion for resource allocation?

There is now a considerable literature on the role of so-called 'third places' (neither home nor work, see Oldenburg 1989; 2001) in the development of social networks. The American historian Robert Archibald writes eloquently on the contribution of public infrastructure to a sense of place and what he terms the habits of community (Archibald 1999; Archibald 2004). Studies within a social model of health framework provide strong evidence of the positive impact of social connectedness on well-being, on the impact of physical environments on quality of life, and on the health benefits gained from the use of recreation facilities and public open space for exercise and psychological replenishment (Marmot and Wilkinson 1999; Leydon 2003). Local facilities and precincts have been identified as sites where the cynicism and disenchantment of higher level politics can be remedied, and citizens can renew their civic commitment and benefit from the instrumental and developmental outcomes of civic participation (Stoker 1998; Considine 2004). Commitment to local community and civic life has been alternatively praised as the core of national public life by political philosophers such as Edmund Burke and J S Mill, and derided for its parochialism. Galligan and Roberts (2005) summarise the strength, forms and ideals of civic life in Australia, making a compelling case for the contribution of a distinctive Australian civic culture to the understanding and functioning of Australian citizenship. One of the features of Galligan and Roberts' summary is the material focus of civic commitment and volunteerism, (the "substance of civic-mindedness", p.144), found especially where demographic, political or economic factors have constrained state action. Galligan and Roberts conceptualise this commitment not in sociological terms of community building, but the political ideal of fraternity. The authors link fraternity with liberty (the freedom to speak one's mind, especially in traditional public settings such as streets, parks and public meetings) and equality (in terms of legal rights, especially through fair treatment in local courts, and access to public revenue garnered by higher governments

through fiscal redistribution). This schema represents both a useful summary of the ideals and institutions of Australian public life and the physical settings in which it is enacted. The importance of public facilities and the public realm as neutral territory in urban societies increasingly segregated by personal wealth and the privatization of space is asserted by a number of social theorists, calling on a longer critical literature in urban studies (Zukin 1995; Frug 1999; Kohn 2004). Public facilities such as parks, swimming pools and libraries are valued as safe, free or low-cost, non-commercial social places, particularly by and for marginalised population sectors. Cultural facilities such as museums and libraries, long charged with instrumental goals of public education and moral formation, are now depicted as a "new town square", places that encourage public conversation (Archibald 2004). The American museum theorist Elaine Gurian asserts the value of cultural institutions as places to promote, in her words, "peaceful congregant behaviour", a place where differences can meet, in a world that may be increasingly fearful of such activity (Gurian 2006). Cox et al's (2000) study of public libraries and social capital in New South Wales gives attention to the physical design of the library in facilitating contact with strangers whilst minimising risks. This insightful study opens a window onto a more extensive literature that considers the institutional design of libraries in terms of their social value and impact, and the interplay between social and human capital (Cox, Swinbourne et al. 2000; Molz and Dain 2001; Putnam, Feldstein et al. 2003; I&J Management Services 2005). The distinctive elements of local culture and heritage, once asserted largely in cultural planning exercises and local heritage assessments, are now prized as indicators of economic success. Public architecture and cultural facilities make a large contribution here (Landry 2000, Florida 2003). While some of this literature may be criticised for its cultural specificity (for example the work of Oldenburg) and an unproblematic approach to social class and consumption (Florida), as an aggregate it produces a powerful set of arguments for optimising the social value of community facilities. These arguments are explored in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Surveying this diverse body of research prompts the conclusion that the concept of social value lacks sufficient precision to be usefully worked into policy arguments for facility strategic planning and resource allocation. Notwithstanding the argument advanced earlier in this chapter that a narrow focus on sociometrics risks neglecting more fundamental arguments about the funding of public goods, policymakers require both conceptual tools and outcome measures to guide evaluative processes. Lack of attention to the development of mechanisms for evaluating policy outcomes invites accusations of special pleading or assumptions that certain areas of policy exist beyond accountability. In a sector of government that has consistently focussed on operational matters and service outcomes, on doing as much as planning, abstractness in policy goals may be a strategic mistake. The association of social value with place also points to the importance of local context, suggesting that the framing of policy objectives in this area requires reference to both broadly based pro-social goals and an understanding of local circumstances. With this in mind, the above discussion on the components of social value is summarised as a heuristic, a model that can assist further inquiry and critical assessment of field-based evidence provided in the following four chapters:

A Social Value Heuristic

- Civic engagement
- Identity and sense of place
- Diversity
- Publicness
- Social networks, connectedness
- Sustainability
- Well-being

3.5   From Social Value to Public Value?

As the introduction to this chapter signalled, the framing of social policy goals in value terms is indiscriminate, expressed in local authority policy documents variously as social, cultural, community and public value. The aim of this chapter has been to analyse the meaning and uses of social value as an underpinning concept that defines a range of facility attributes beyond their formal service functions. However, the growing interest in public value that can be observed in scholarly and policy literature in the past few years warrants clarification of that concept and the terms in which it is used in this thesis.

Since its appearance within the 'reinventing government' literature that influenced the nature of US public sector reform in the late twentieth century, the concept of public value has expanded from a strategic management tool (Moore 1995), to a phrase that in Jowell's (2004) terms expresses a "new language" through which the intrinsic, instrumental and institutional benefits of cultural funding can be argued. Rhodes and Wanna (2007) have criticised the application of public value within Westminster-style political systems, arguing that Moore's descriptions of public managers as "voyagers" or entrepreneurs of public value may be better suited to the plural political culture of the United States than in more hierarchically organised Westminster systems, where the actions of public officials are guided by ministerial authority and established policy. Paradoxically, Rhodes and Wanna point out, the uptake of Moore's ideas appears to be stronger in the UK and Australia than the USA. This line of argument becomes blurred when applied to certain public sector domains, for example creative industries and the digital economy, where innovation and entrepreneurship are policy hallmarks (British Broadcasting Commission 2004). While Rhodes and Wanna's work cautions against the uncritical application of Moore's ideas in Australia, it is important to reinforce the connection of Moore's work with city and municipal management – a field with a strongly service-based and operational emphasis, but few models to guide reflective practice. Public value is applied in

this thesis in its strategic mode that can assist with optimising the substantive goal of social value. The conceptual and practical dimensions of public value are discussed in fuller detail in chapter 8.

3.6 Conclusion

The internally-focussed and disciplinary emphasis of accountability and evaluation, and the linking of evaluative and political cycles over the past two decades or so has not prepared local government well for articulating the social value of community facilities in changing policy regimes. The application of subsidiarity doctrine and emergence of community as a zone of governance has increasingly shifted responsibility for the 'social' down the hierarchy of government, leaving local authorities with an increasingly complex task of sifting together economic, environmental, social and cultural values. The typical approach to this task has been the adoption of a TBL matrix for policy formation and evaluation, but the evidence provided above suggests that the social component is least well understood. This is especially the case with regard to physical infrastructure. Major research projects to develop indicators of well-being and community strength provide little insight to the agency of community facilities in these areas. Similarly, the significant resources invested by local authorities in the audit of physical infrastructure (discussed further in chapter 4) has seldom been matched by, or has been disconnected from, social auditing projects.

In taking a critical approach to both local authority asset management and the instrumental use of community, the emphasis of this thesis is on producing new empirical research to inform and clarify policy and management models for community facilities. This chapter has looked in detail at social value as a policy term, and at the complex and, arguably, transitional forms in which the concept – understood in its broadest sense – has been integrated in evaluative models. The chapter has argued that social value, as a policy choice, needs to be integrated

within a new policy narrative that can recognise changes in the policy and operating environment of public agencies that have occurred over the past two decades, as well as the particular role of local government as a provider of community infrastructure. However the research gap in this area, especially awareness of earlier rationales for the acquisition of community facilities and the interaction of different levels of government around these structures, impedes policy development. The thesis now shifts its focus to field research to assist with filling this gap.

4. Moonee Valley – Place, People, Politics

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the City of Moonee Valley to provide a historical perspective on the development of local-level physical infrastructure and its relationship to civic and political life. The chapter provides evidence for two key arguments set out in the thesis introduction. The first is the close relationship between the ideal of community building and the provision of community facilities. The chapter argues that community facilities did not serve as a passive physical setting or backdrop for civic life in the Moonee Valley region; the planning, construction and management of community facilities featured prominently as a civic project. However, the civic landscape in Moonee Valley attests to social, economic and political change, particularly a decline of third-sector and rise of government provision in the field of social infrastructure. The second argument developed in this chapter is that state and national policy settings have had a substantial, although not necessarily intended or fully considered, impact on the local civic and public realms. This argument broadens the economistic focus of downward cost-shifting in recent public debate by emphasising social policy drivers and impacts of higher level policy change.

The City of Moonee Valley, consisting of 13 suburbs in inner north-west Melbourne (see plate 1) was created in 1994 [25]. Established as part of a wide-ranging reform of local government boundaries by the Kennett Liberal government, the new city was the fourth stage in a longer process of boundary reform of the City of Essendon, which was absorbed as the major part of the new municipality [26]. Prior to 1994 local government in Victoria was characterised by a

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[25] Government of Victoria Gazette, S97, 15 December 1994.
[26] Strathmore and Strathmore Heights, in the north of the new municipality, were annexed from the City of Broadmeadows in 1979, North Essendon from the City of Keilor in 1992, and parts of Flemington and Kensington, at the southern end, from the City of Melbourne in 1993.
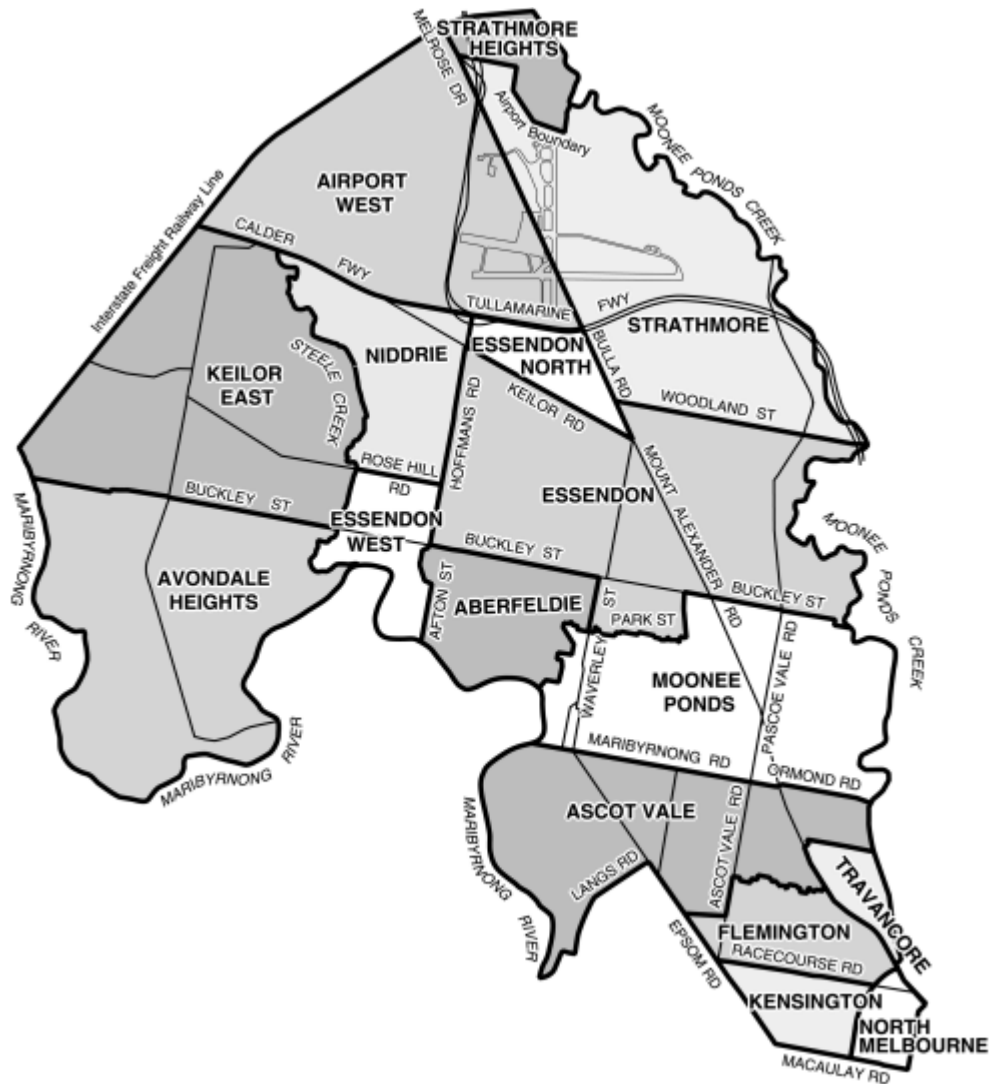
Plate 1: City of Moonee Valley, 2007.

large number of small municipalities, compared to other Australian states. A number of factors contributed to this pattern, including the influence of pastoral squatters in setting limits to rural shires to exclude their incorporation as ratepayers, and the tendency for metropolitan boroughs to fragment under pressures of population growth or parochialism. Indeed, as Barrett's (1979) history of local government in Victoria shows, boundary setting was more dependent on economic and political factors than any sense of a distinct geographical community. The City of Moonee Valley as a jurisdiction indicates

the persistence of this tradition. The academic literature (Dollery 1997; Aulich 1999; Costar and Economou 1999; Dollery, Marshall et al. 2003; Dollery and Crase 2004) and analysis by a Kennett government official (Paice 1999) concur that economic efficiency was the dominant rationale for reform to local boundaries. As resident interviews analysed in subsequent chapters indicate, there is little current sense of a Moonee Valley community, and one of the policy goals of City of Moonee Valley administrations has been to assert such an identity.

The former City of Essendon had been a borough since 1862 and city since 1909. The acquisition of Flemington and parts of Kensington and North Melbourne [27] and, to a lesser extent the acquisition of the north and western suburbs, altered the population demographic in a way that has significant consequences for council policy development. The southern suburbs are characterised by a diverse ethnic mix, widely divergent household incomes, and high rates of rental housing tenure in contrast with the rest of the city. The inclusion of these suburbs in the administrative unit of the city increased the diversity of the population, as measured by standard diversity indices such as ethnicity, age, income, occupational status and household type. More significantly, though, the newly acquired suburbs further increased the *differentiation* of the population structure across the city.

Physical and demographic analysis of the region indicates changing patterns of land-use, industry and employment, and points to the contribution of Commonwealth government migration policy and State government housing policy to a rapidly changing population structure in the second half of the twentieth century. Early political and administrative concerns focussed on the quest for representative local government, the provision of health, transport and civic infrastructure, and the provision of property services such as roads,

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[27] More accurately, the return of Flemington and Kensington, as they were part of the Borough of Essendon until 1882.

drainage and waste collection. The patchwork of churches, meeting halls, social clubs and sporting facilities that form an important part of the physical fabric of the region attests to an active community and civic life. Less apparent in the landscape, but documented in the archival record, is the degree to which governments at all levels partnered private and community interests to provide and sometimes manage local community facilities as a strategy for community building and achieving public economies.

This chapter provides evidence for these arguments and context for subsequent chapters by outlining the geography and demography of the Moonee Valley region respectively in sections **4.2** and **4.3**. Section **4.4** provides a reading of Moonee Valley politics and civic life that emphasises their interplay with the physical public realm. Section **4.5** concludes the chapter with an analysis of the current configuration and condition of Moonee Valley's community facilities.

4.2 Place

The Moonee Valley region is a basalt plain lying between two watercourses. Moonee Ponds Creek, now largely a concreted flood channel which drains into the Yarra River on the Western side of Melbourne's central business district, forms the entire eastern boundary of the municipality. The Maribyrnong River (known until 1906 as the Saltwater River after its tidal characteristics) is formed by the junction of several creeks draining the southern end of the Great Dividing Range, and provides a meandering boundary along the western and part of the southern sides of the municipality. An interstate freight railway line forms the northwest boundary, joining both watercourses. Part of the southern boundary is a major arterial road dividing the suburb of North Melbourne. The land area of the City of Moonee Valley is 44 square kilometres, with approximately 10% of it open space.

The light scrub and open plains of the Moonee Valley district were originally home to the Doutta Galla people. Early colonial observers describe a Doutta Galla camp in the area now known as Queen's Park, Moonee Ponds, where water and game were plentiful. The dispersal of the indigenous inhabitants through processes of forced dispossession, introduced disease and strategic retreat, occurred within a span of about two decades from the first European surveys and settlements in the district in the late 1830s (Broome 2005). As was typical of the Australian frontier, the natural features that supported the Doutta Galla were also attractive to the Europeans. The waterholes that gave Moonee Ponds its name were a popular camping ground and agistment area for settlers or livestock traders making their way further north. The release of land for sale by the colonial government in 1839 brought investors, small-holders and pastoralists to the district. As Barrett (1979:15) argues, the sale rather than the lease of land (or, it might be added, the occupation of Crown land by squatters) was a significant factor in forming the character of civic institutions. In transferring land from one owner (the Crown) to many small owners, the colonial government effectively placed responsibility for civic matters into the hands of property holders, and ensured the early dominance of property interests over other collective interests in local government affairs.

The discovery of gold in the central-western region of Victoria in 1850 transformed the Moonee Valley region. Commercial development along the main track to the Mt Alexander goldfield near Castlemaine (now known as Mt Alexander Road) changed the orientation of the local economy, boosted the population, and brought new concerns over safety and hygiene. In the mid-nineteenth century the urban form of Melbourne and comparable cities was shaped by the necessity for many workers – particularly those with low incomes - to live close to their places of employment (Davison 1978:151). In 1853 the stockyards and abattoirs that had serviced the settlement of Melbourne moved from the northern end of the town to Newmarket (Flemington), and subsidiary industries such as boiling down works, tanneries and candle-makers set up on

the banks of the Saltwater River. Many workers in those industries lived in relatively cheap housing in the nearby suburbs of Flemington and Kensington. The evidence on daily life in this district suggests that two features of nineteenth century inner-urban areas - the face-to-face community (in which personal contacts are predominantly within primary groups), and the walking city persisted well into the twentieth century (Davison 1978:156; Aldous 1979; Barrett 1979:27,65; Breen 1989). Along Mt Alexander Road were distributed a range of groceries, clothing and houseware stores, iron and tin mongeries, saddleries, stock and feed merchants and carriage shops: stores that catered for the local economy as well as supplying those making their way to the goldfields. The road itself provided an opportunity for raising revenue to pay for incipient civic functions. From the 1840s tolls could be imposed with the approval of a majority of borough residents, and became a common feature on major arterial roads. Toll booths were subsequently installed at Flemington Bridge and further north at Pascoe Vale.

The development of railway transport had a significant impact on the human geography of the Moonee Valley, as with other districts that fringed the centre of Melbourne. The district's first railway line connected Melbourne and Essendon in 1860, stopping at Kensington, Newmarket, Ascot Vale and Moonee Ponds. Poor patronage saw the rail service, a private venture, close in 1864. The line was purchased and re-opened by the Victorian government in 1871, and confidence in suburban development was sufficiently high to underwrite duplication of the line in 1884. Railway development, notes Davison (1978:Chapter 7), was one of four speculative elements that drove suburban development in the "boom" decade of the 1880s. It is useful to sketch out this process, as it exerted a formative influence over social, demographic and civic developments in Moonee Valley. The suburban frontier was extended through a combination of push and pull factors. Foremost in the first group was a need for new dwellings to cater for the natural increase of "marriageable" Victorians (aged 20-34 years) and the immigration of new settlers, both of which reached a peak in 1888. A significant

"pull" factor was the sentiment of domesticity, which contrasted the pleasures and ease of the suburban home with the strain of working in the metropolis. Davison's suburban frontier moved outward from the city centre in this way: land speculators subdivided and marketed rural land as suburban allotments, transport engineers forged rail connections with the city (backed by a prevailing political view that development followed railways), gas and other service companies extended utility networks, and property speculators and builders constructed houses. The promotion of new areas such as Essendon for its healthy climate and park-like vistas owed much to prevailing conceptions of disease, urban degeneration and an idealised Victorian landscape aesthetic (Aldous 1979:29). By 1890 Moonee Valley's suburban development was clustered around the five railway stations on the Essendon line, bearing out Davison's (1978:152) observation that Melbourne's growth as a metropolis was achieved through dispersal rather than concentration. The preference for detached housing was in evidence throughout the district, with significant inter-suburban differences in housing standard (Westurb and Footscray Institute of Technology Urban Studies 1988:20). 70% of dwellings in the City of Moonee Valley are located on single dwelling lots (City of Moonee Valley 2006:2).

Commuter rail fares were relatively expensive, and the rail network was better designed to service low-density greenfield suburbs than the more densely-settled inner urban areas. Here tram entrepreneurs replaced horse-drawn omnibuses with cable and later electric trams. A cable tram service operated between the city and Flemington from the 1880s. The impact of the economic downturn of the 1890s slowed tram development and sharpened competition between train and tram operators, (although the service and fares continued to be a point of contention). With the return of economic prosperity at the turn of the century, the Moonee Ponds People's Association commenced lobbying for extension of the service, and, with electrification, the tramway ran to North Essendon (Aldous 1979:54). The relative ease and economy of light rail construction encouraged westward and northward extension of tram services in the mid-twentieth century.

By this time, however, motor transport, and particularly the increasing level of car ownership, was exerting a greater impact on the spatial and infrastructure development of the Moonee Valley region, and on the commuting patterns and leisure activities of Moonee Valley residents. Until the middle of the twentieth century the ribbon-style commercial and residential development that followed the railway was the dominant settlement pattern. Following the Second World War, rapid increase in housing demand joined with the flexibility of motor bus and car transport to encourage housing development away from rail lines. Car ownership facilitated employment in distant locations. Italian and Greek migrant families, who settled in the Moonee Valley region in relatively large numbers, found work for male breadwinners easiest to obtain in low-skill areas such as Ford's Broadmeadows and Holden's Port Melbourne car assembly plants (Di Lorenzo 2001:Chap 4). Local shops near railway stations declined as car-oriented supermarkets and suburban shopping centres flourished.

During the course of the twentieth century industries moved away from the river and the southern part of the region to the north and north-west. The closure in 1985 of the last animal-based industry on the river, the Newmarket stockyards, saw the loss of a major employer and the end of a contested tradition of land use (Vincent 1992). New industrial estates were opened in the north as land values increased in the inner urban area. Entrepreneurship, especially self-employment in Italian and Greek communities and associated markets for foodstuffs and fashion, led to an expansion of small industry in the Essendon area from the 1950s. By 1971 the City of Essendon had 160 manufactories (Lack and Ford 1986:108,111).

The physical and social landscape of Ascot Vale and Flemington underwent significant change from the middle of the twentieth century with the construction of multi-level public housing. Construction of the Ascot Vale cluster of some 750 dwellings began in 1949, one of a number of state government projects in the Melbourne area to meet the acute housing shortage of the immediate post-World

War 2 years. While there was broad support for this project, secured by an active local Australian Labor Party branch and local Labor representatives in the state parliament, the development of high-rise public housing in Flemington by the State Housing Commission from 1964 drew strong opposition. Local residents had for many years lobbied for the Debney Meadows area bordering Mt Alexander Rd to be turned into parkland following the closure of the Debney Tannery, and viewed the transfer of land from the City of Melbourne (at that stage the controlling authority) to the State Housing Commission as a betrayal of an agreement on the area's future (Breen 1989:37). The neo-Corbusian apartment towers subsequently built there seemed a Melbourne planning anachronism in the 1960s. Several decades later state planning strategy for higher-density housing around business districts (Department of Infrastructure 2002) encouraged construction of the first medium-rise apartment blocks in Moonee Ponds, albeit geared to a different socio-economic stratum. The City of Moonee Valley currently has the second highest proportion of residents in public housing of any Victorian municipality, mostly in the form of middle- and high-rise flats without private open space [28].

The sale by the Kennett Victorian government of a concession to build Citylink, a toll road passing through Moonee Valley that joins the freeway servicing the state's major airport and freeways in the south-east suburbs of Melbourne, pointed to the centrality of private motor transport to metropolitan planning rationales. The inner suburbs of large cities serve as transit zones for out-of-area car commuters and typically carry heavy traffic volumes. As the Moonee Valley council pointed out, major transport infrastructure is owned or regulated by other levels of government, leaving councils to advocate on behalf of residents over the negative impact of motor vehicle traffic on local amenity (Moonee Valley City Council 2003:32). However, some Moonee Valley suburbs are also car

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[28] Department of Human Services, Office of Local Housing: *Summary of Housing Assistance Programs* 2005/06, pp. 58-9.
http://hnb.dhs.vic.gov.au/ooh/ne5ninte.nsf/9e58661e880ba9e44a256c640023eb2e/4eca03074053fb1dca2572b8007c086e/$FILE/summary_of_housing_assistance_programs_2005-2006.pdf ,
accessed 12 December 2007.

dependent, whether by necessity or choice. In 2001 65% of all journeys by Moonee Valley residents to work involved a car - roughly equivalent to the figure for Metropolitan Statistical District (MSD [29]). Almost 75% of work journeys from the suburb of Avondale Heights, relatively poorly served by public transport, involved a car [30]. Higher density settlement from in-fill housing development and an increasing per-capita rate of car ownership has consolidated this pattern. Again, however, regionally aggregated data tells only part of the story, and the chapter's theme of differentiation recurs in an analysis of car ownership and use patterns by suburb. In the north-west suburb of East Keilor one in 25 households has no access to a car, contrasting with one in four households in Flemington, Kensington and North Melbourne [31].

The personal mobility offered by the car contributes to the employment and social opportunities of residents in outlying suburbs. However if the advent of railway and tram commuting led to the long decline of the walking city, as Davison observes, the popularity of motor vehicles contributed further to this demise and, through the physical and psychological barriers created by major roads and heavy flows of motor traffic, works against its re-emergence. A clear example of this trend is seen in school transport. Walking to and from Moonee Valley schools declined significantly in the late twentieth century. One analysis found that 68% of primary school students in an Essendon school zone walked in 1974 compared to 8% in 2005, with car transport to school increasing from 25% to 89% over the same period (Peddie and Somerville 2005). Concerns over safety, changing work patterns and distance were cited as major reasons for this travel choice. Attempts by the Moonee Valley council in recent years to initiate 'walking school buses', as part of an active transport strategy, have had limited success. While program evaluation suggests that volunteers, especially parents with

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[29] The MSD is the ABS statistical region covering metropolitan Melbourne, comprising 31 local government areas.

[30] http://www.id.com.au/mooneevalley/atlas/default.asp?id=117&pg=28&bhcp=1 , last accessed 26 September 2007.

[31] http://www.id.com.au/mooneevalley/atlas/default.asp?id=117&pg=34 , last accessed 26 September 2007.

young children and those not in the workforce, see the activity as an opportunity for additional socialisation, time commitment and the assumption of risk by parents for other children are significant negative factors (Ross and Butera 2004). The combination of local traffic, the physical imprint of Citylink, and the increase of through traffic seeking to avoid tolls on public roads in the Moonee Valley region, contributes to a current picture of the region as a series of residential pockets divided by traffic flows.

4.3 People

An analysis of Moonee Valley's demographic data clearly shows the intra-regional differentiation of population characteristics suggested in the chapter introduction. Although it overstates the case to refer to a north/south divide, the southern suburbs of the city have higher concentrations of low income earners, people in public housing, and recently arrived migrants than their northern counterparts. A second, east-west axis can be identified from the data: older residents and migrants who arrived prior to 1986 tend to cluster in the more isolated western suburbs, raising questions about mobility and sociality as the ageing of these suburbs continues. The following section draws largely on ABS data from the 2006 census to provide a snapshot of Moonee Valley residents and evidence for this claim [32].

Population Size and Age

When the districts of Essendon and Flemington-Kensington split into separate boroughs in 1882 the former had a population of around 3,100 and the latter 1,800. Although some decline of population was recorded during the 1890s depression, by 1900 Essendon had around 15,000 residents and Flemington-

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[32] ABS time series data at Local Government Area level and at Census Collector District (suburbs), 2006 census, prepared for the City of Moonee Valley by I D Consulting Pty Ltd, available at http://www.id.com.au/mooneevalley/commprofile/Default.asp?bhcp= , last accessed 26 September 2007.

Kensington 10,600. Essendon's population doubled by 1920 and doubled again to around 60,000 by 1950. After a period of decline in the City of Essendon population in the 1970s and 1980s (Westurb and Footscray Institute of Technology Urban Studies 1988:13), the population of the enlarged municipality stabilised at around 112,000 between 1996 and 2006. The average household size during the past two decades has fallen. A population increase of around 10,000 between 2006 and 2021 is forecast to occur largely within the over-45 age group, with an increased number of persons living alone. Council planning documents note that an ageing population is one of the "key demographic issues" for Moonee Valley, with aged residents typically becoming increasingly reliant on council services (Moonee Valley City Council 2003:5,22). The population age profile corresponds roughly to that of the MSD. More than 40% of Moonee Valley residents aged over 65 were born in non-English speaking countries, a higher concentration than the MSD average. Almost half of these residents report having difficulty communicating in English [33]. A second feature of the age structure of the Moonee Valley population is that outlying suburbs of Avondale Heights, Essendon West and Airport West – those most dependent on car transport - have a higher percentage of residents aged 60 and over than the city average.

Ethnicity and Religion

Until the middle of the twentieth century the population of the Moonee Valley region was largely descended from English, Scottish and Irish settlers. Small populations of Chinese and Italian-born residents were also present in the region. Mass migration from the 1950s changed the face of the region's population within a generation. Italian, Greek, Yugoslav, Ukrainian and Maltese nationals comprised the bulk of overseas-born residents in the region by 1975. Some came to the district from inner suburbs such as Carlton when their financial

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[33] Wositzky, Katherine: Demography and Issues of Older People of CALD Backgrounds in the WMR (Melbourne, Moonee Valley Melbourne Primary Care Partnership), p 11.

position improved after initial settlement, and they tended to settle in the northern suburbs of Moonee Valley (Scott 1976:6). More recent arrivals from Turkey, Indo-China, East Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea), India and Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Malaysia and the Phillipines are concentrated in public housing in the southern suburbs. In 2001 almost 28% of Moonee Valley residents were born overseas, similar to the MSD average, but the population has generally lower concentrations of national or ethnic groups than MSD averages. Only the Italian-born (7% of the Moonee Valley population) and Vietnamese-born (2.7%) are higher than MSD averages.[34]

The data, then, show a division in the overseas-born population residing in the Moonee Valley region between older, established migrant groups living mostly in private dwellings in the middle, northern and western parts of the city, and newer migrant groups living in public housing or rental accommodation in the southern part of the city. 78.9% of Avondale Heights residents born overseas arrived in Australia prior to 1986, whereas 34.4% of Flemington/Travancore residents born overseas arrived prior to 1986. The data also suggest a significant difference in the migration experiences of older and newer residents. Many of the latter group arrived under humanitarian and refugee categories. These immigrants are likely to have significant health and well-being needs due to the often traumatic nature of their experiences (Allotey 2003).

Around 70% of the Moonee Valley population identified as Christian. The percentage of residents who nominated Catholic faith (43.8% in 2001) is well above the MSD average (29.4% in 1991), reflecting in part high rates of Irish and Italian settlement in the region. Again, suburb-specific data on religious faith show intra-regional differences. For example, in 2001 13.8% of the Kensington/North Melbourne population identified as Islamic, compared with 2.7% of the city-wide population.

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[34] City of Moonee Valley Community Profile
http://203.84.234.220/Profile/MooneeValley/Default.aspx?id=117&pg=2&gid=10&type=enum ,
last accessed 1 December 2007.

Occupation and Income

The past two decades have seen a city-wide increase in the percentage of residents in professional occupations, and a decline in the number of skilled workers and labourers, reflecting structural changes in the Australian economy, rising education levels, and changing locational preferences. Professionalisation is most noticeable in the southern suburbs, with the percentage of Kensington/North Melbourne residents in professional occupations rising from 19.9% in 1991 to 31.2% in 2001, and a corresponding increase of professionals in Flemington/Travancore from 20% to 32.6%. The percentage of skilled workers in the total Moonee Valley workforce declined from 16% in 1986 to 10% in 1996. The percentage of unskilled workers declined from 10% to 7% in the same period. Data from this period confirms a longer-run national trend for less of the workforce to be self-employed or themselves be employers, and more workers to be employees. The data also suggest an increase in casual and part-time work, again confirming a longer-run national trend.

Income statistics from the 2006 census show that almost 1 in 4 Moonee Valley households earns less than $500 per week, with both the lower and upper range of household incomes greater than MSD. Moonee Valley ranked sixth highest on median incomes in Victorian municipalities in 2003/04. Low-income households are concentrated in the southern suburbs, with relatively larger numbers of public housing dwellings, and in the north-western part of the city. High income households are concentrated in the middle and southern parts of the city [35].

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[35] Moonee Valley City Council 2007: *2006 Australian Census – Preliminary Results for the City of Moonee Valley* (Moonee Ponds, Moonee Valley City Council) p.17.

Education

The secondary school retention rate in the Moonee Valley region is similar to the MSD average, with a decline in public secondary school attendance between 1991 and 2001 attributed to fluctuating age cohorts rather than increased private school enrolments. However, the closure of Flemington High School by the Kennett Government in 1994 (the buildings and grounds were subsequently occupied by the Victorian Racing Club) left the southern end of the city significantly worse for public secondary school provision. Some variations between suburbs on school preference can be matched to school locations. For example, the public secondary school attendance rate in the suburbs of Strathmore and Strathmore Heights (surrounding high-achieving Strathmore High School) is almost twice as high as the Moonee Valley average. The private school attendance rate in the suburbs of Essendon and Aberfeldie, with a choice of several private schools, is around 70% above the Moonee Valley average. However, taking the example of Strathmore/Strathmore Heights, there is no simple positive correlation between private school attendance and suburban affluence.

The proportion of Moonee Valley residents who reported having some form of post-secondary qualification rose from 25.9% in 1991 to 38.5% in 2001, with the greatest increase occurring at bachelor degree level. Computer and internet usage by Moonee Valley residents corresponds broadly with the MSD average, with 60% of residents reporting Internet access at home in 2006 (40% of this figure has a broadband connection) [36]. The Moonee Valley council has, like many other local authorities, developed the service transaction and information delivery capabilities of its website (www.mvcc.vic.gov.au), but has not at time of writing

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[36] *2006 Australian Census – Preliminary Results for the City of Moonee Valley*, p.22.

followed some other councils in using the web-casting potential of the internet for council or other public meetings [37].

Housing

Housing data over the past fifteen years indicate distinct housing sub-markets (for example, young renters and older owners) and point to the impact of rising property values in the inner urban region. The percentage of Moonee Valley residents who owned their dwellings outright increased slightly between 1991 and 2001, but declined in the past 5 years from 44.6% to 39.2%. The percentage of dwellings being rented increased slightly between 1991 and 2006 and, at 29.3% is higher than the equivalent MSD figure of 25.4%. The number of dwellings being purchased has changed little between 1991 and 2006 and, at 27.8% in 2006 is below the equivalent MSD figure of 36.3%. Moonee Valley has 8% of Victoria's public housing stock, with almost 7,000 tenants in 2006 [38]. The percentage of public housing tenancies in the Moonee Valley region as a percentage of all dwellings has declined from 8.2% in 1991 to 6.8% in 2001, although public housing rental is the dominant tenure form in Kensington/North Melbourne (34.6% in 2001) and second dominant in Flemington/Travancore (26.7% in 2001 - behind own outright/purchasing). On 2006 census figures, the most common country of birth of Moonee Valley's public housing tenants is Australia.

Around 35% of residents in the Moonee Valley region reported moving house in the five years prior to 2001, consistent with the mobility rate of the Victorian population. There is some evidence that population mobility has declined in the area covered by the former City of Essendon region over the past two decades, following a period of relatively high immigration to the area. Population mobility in

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[37] If the Council chooses to develop social media associated with its website it may find domain competition from www.mvcc.com.au (the website of a local Christian church) and www.mymooneevalley.com.au (the social media site of a local community newspaper publisher).
[38] *2006 Australian Census – Preliminary Results for the City of Moonee Valley*, p.20.

the Moonee Valley region, which has a relatively high proportion of households consisting of families and children, and older persons, is well below that of the City of Melbourne region (53%), which has a relatively high proportion of households consisting of students and working adults living alone. A high level of population mobility, particularly where it consists of out-of-region migration, is considered to have a generally negative impact on stocks of social capital, and has planning implications relating to household re-establishment and fluctuating service needs (Onyx and Bullen 1997).

Data on household structure indicate that couples with children comprise the largest single household type at 32.7% of all households in 2001. This figure declined from 37.7% in 1991. Between 1991 and 2006 the percentage of lone person households increased from 22.7% to 27.4%, with an increasing percentage of people over 55 in this category. These figures are higher than the equivalent MSD figures. The increased numbers of elderly people living alone pose future challenges for Moonee Valley in financial, social and infrastructure policy areas.

4.4 Politics and Civic Life

Local government in Victoria is a paradox. Its enabling legislation enshrines a commitment to open, participative and self-directed democratic processes at local level, yet confers ultimate power over the conduct of local affairs on the state government. Debate over the size, powers, organisation, efficiency and responsiveness of local government is a significant theme in its institutional history (for example see Fitzgerald 1899; Davies 1951; Larcombe 1961; Purdie 1976; Barrett 1979; Jones 1981; Barlow 1991). Analysts generally agree, though, that after a period of consolidation following the establishment of municipal government, local government politics attracted limited public interest, and, with the exception of early developments in social service provision, local government administration concerned itself largely with property functions (Davies 1951;

Purdie 1976; Bowman 1978:2-3; Worthington 2000; O'Toole and Burdess 2003). However the inter-connections between formal politics, business activities and civic and community life call for a broader conceptualisation of politics and government, if these are understood as the allocation of collective resources and the regulation of conduct. A study of civic life in the Moonee Valley region from the mid-nineteenth century points to the governmental or instrumental role played by civic associations, often in association with the local authority, and the degree to which this role was mediated by physical infrastructure. This association was a dynamic one. With the growth of the suburban population in the late nineteenth century the pragmatism associated with the initial tasks of developing essential infrastructure and services gave way to a more sectional and contested politics, and a more complex ethical make-up of civic life. Increased financial security of the region's boroughs in the twentieth century, new concerns over equity, and the impact of global events on local populations brought more interventionist and centralising forms of government. These arguments are developed in this section under four headings which provide a thematic overview of civic and political life, and their interplay, in the Moonee Valley region: civic institutions/business interests, caring for bodies and souls, nationalism and patriotism, and managing difference.

Civic Institutions/Business Interests

Civic initiative in the first years of European settlement in Moonee Valley was largely concerned with the establishment of public institutions and basic physical infrastructure. Civic activity, business interests and politics were intertwined as public meetings, committees, delegations and petitions were organised around road improvement, health, postal services, policing, banking, and, in 1862, municipal government itself. Private financing of infrastructure and user-pays systems were common prior to the establishment of property rating.

Formal political processes of local government have traditionally balanced participatory and representative forms of democracy. Public meetings and plebiscites were a feature of local governance in the first century or so of its existence - a mode of decision-making that could advantage a committed, articulate or powerful minority. Thus, following the terms of the Municipal Associations Act 1854 which required a public meeting to determine residents' wishes for local government, a small meeting held in an Ascot Vale hotel in 1860 agreed to petition the state government to create a municipal borough, and elected a group of businessmen as councillors. Public plebiscites were a common form of municipal decision-making, and continued to be used by councils to determine public opinion on a range of matters, co-existing with the secret ballot and compulsory municipal elections. Compulsory voting was introduced for the City of Essendon in 1939, and in 1961 Council meetings were opened to the public (Chalmers 1998b:436).

The strong connections between local politics and business were a feature of colonial politics, and, shielded by limited provisions for accountability, continued well into the twentieth century (Bowman 1978:esp introduction). An early example of how these connections operated in practice is seen in the history of the Melbourne-Essendon railway. The private venture which began operation in 1860 was financed by businessmen who formed the core lobbyists for local government. Several were then elected as the new borough's first councillors. Barrett (1979:97) suggests that concerns expressed over "workingmen" standing as Councillors were couched in rhetoric that success in business was a pre-requisite for municipal office. This was further confirmation for Barrett that municipal government was viewed at the time as an extension of business activity. A second example of the closeness of business and civic matters was the establishment of the Flemington (1882) and Essendon (1883) volunteer fire brigades. Prior to the formation of the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board in 1909, volunteer fire brigades were largely encouraged and equipped by insurance companies. The companies promised support for suburban fire brigades on the

basis of a certain level of policy coverage in the relevant suburb. The benefit for insurance companies, other than increased policy-writing, was the potential limitation of claim payments through the prompt action of the volunteers. In the last decade or so of the nineteenth century a territorial struggle took place over suburban fire protection between brigades allied with insurance companies and those that operated independently. Aldous (1979:90) suggests that the Essendon Council, influenced by one councillor with insurance connections, encouraged local brigades to ally with the companies, and householders to take out house insurance. Here was an example of the conditional provision of an essential service that governments sought to overcome through public ownership and universal provision.

If municipal government was a quasi-business, it was likely to be ruled by the logic of competitive advantage. This interpretation can be applied to the split of the wards of Flemington and Kensington from the borough of Essendon in 1882. The concerns of Flemington and Kensington ratepayers, led by the Flemington Ratepayers Association, that borough funds were spent disproportionately in the northern region, fuelled the secession movement. Business interests behind the push, such as Edward Byam Wight, first chairman of the Borough of Essendon and a member of the railway consortium, saw a bright future for the Flemington district. In the 1870s a swamp drainage program had opened up land for housing and industry in the west of the district. In 1880 the first shipment of frozen meat from the district had successfully arrived in England. Racecourse Road had developed as a business centre, and to attract further investment the new borough offered to build free streets (that is, not levy an additional rate on residents or businesses that would be serviced). However, the borough's residential boom during the 1880s brought conflict between industry and amenity. In 1886 residents voted 2 to 1 in a council plebiscite to close the saleyards and abattoirs. The Victorian parliament backed residents on the motion of Alfred Deakin, but initiative lapsed with the onset of the 1890s depression.

By the end of the nineteenth century a wide range of sporting clubs, garden societies, animal fanciers clubs, arts and cultural organisations and religious societies had been established in the Moonee Valley region. As the population grew, so did use of and conflict over public places. In 1885 the Flemington and Essendon Reserve Vigilance Committee was established, the first of a number of groups formed to safeguard and care for public places. These groups were the precursors of local reserve management committees, the latter established under council aegis to diminish the proprietorial hold of the invigilators and re-orient the focus of the groups to consultation and resource-sharing. The alternative cultivation and disavowal of this sense of 'ownership' of public assets is a significant theme in the history of community facility management, and recurs at several points of this thesis.

The monitorial focus of citizens was not confined to the activities of other citizens, but extended to the conduct of business, especially where it involved public assets. A citizens' committee was formed in 1915 to watch over the "interests" of the Essendon and Flemington tramway (part of which had been financed by community fund-raising) when the private lease ran out. Several river leagues were formed to lobby for 'purification' of the Saltwater River and the removal of the noxious trades along its banks (Kenny 2006). Suburban progress leagues and ratepayers associations served as a springboard for candidates in municipal elections, further connecting civic activity and formal political processes [39]. Occasionally, these groups oversaw capital works projects; the best example was the major contribution of the Essendon Progress Association to the Essendon Hall which opened in 1913 (Aldous 1979:86).

Churches, schools and institutes of adult education or 'mechanics' institutes were important nodes of nineteenth century civic activity. A Catholic school and a national or public school were in operation in the district by 1853. The Essendon

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[39] These included the Moonee Ponds People's Association, established around 1905; the Ascot Vale Progress Association, 1908; the Essendon Progress Association, formed sometime before 1913; the Ascot Vale West Progress Association, 1921.

and Flemington Institute was opened in 1879, part of a vigorous adult education movement that received colonial government subsidy to provide free access to books and journals at a time when subscription libraries – often conveniently located for commuters near railway stations – were the norm. In 1871 the *Essendon and Flemington Chronicle*, later retitled the *Essendon Gazette*, began circulation, assuming a central role as conveyor of municipal and civic information and booster of local business, especially real estate.

The arrival of service clubs in Australia with the establishment of Rotary in 1905 brought a new mode of civic engagement, their secular emphasis pointing to the decline of religious-based charity during the twentieth century (Parnaby 2002) [40]. The clubs provided an important point of contact between the council and business figures. Many service club activities were project-based, in some cases relieving the council of a burden of welfare provision. The clubs were seen as appropriate project partners with all levels of government. The Lions Club's first major project was construction of Lionsville Village, assisted accommodation for the elderly in North Essendon. Lionsville was largely funded by a new form of Commonwealth government capital works program established in 1953 (Baudinette 2003). Service clubs, especially the JAYCEES ("Junior Chamber") saw themselves as a training ground for new civic leaders through instruction in meeting procedures and public speaking. The significance of the service clubs in mobilising civic resources was recognised by their inclusion in the Essendon District Emergency Committee, formed in 1961.

Economic development continued to be a prime focus of council through the second half of the twentieth century, tempered by the introduction of a conflict of interest code for councillors. Although political parties began to exert a rival influence on candidate selection and election platforms, local government control over planning matters and the passage of the Strata Titles Act 1967 (which

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[40] Service clubs established in Moonee Valley were TocH Moonee Ponds 1927, Rotary 1935, Lions Essendon 1953, JAYCEES Essendon 1953.

permitted sale of individual apartments and led to a boom in apartment construction) raised the profile of planning concerns. This resulted in a victory in the 1972 Essendon council elections by Labor candidates promising to curtail apartment building (McLoughlin 1992:200). An energetic push to have Moonee Ponds designated a district centre by the state government, further encouraging business activity, was rewarded in 1983, although development of the shopping and commercial precinct suffered from rival developments, especially the massive Highpoint shopping mall in Maribyrnong, a few kilometres to the west (McLoughlin 1992:212-13). The desires of Essendon and Moonee Valley councils to integrate commercial, retail and civic activities in Moonee Ponds have for many years been thwarted by the strategic manoeuvres of major private retailers, the windswept empty block once occupied by the Moonee Ponds market symbolic of the council's hostage to wider fortunes of commerce and private land speculation. By the end of the twentieth century the balance between property development and civic amenity had become a dominant concern of Council and elected representatives and a major rallying point for citizens.

Caring for Bodies and Souls

A prominent strand in the discourse of liberal governance in the nineteenth and early twentieth century was a concern for the health, welfare and moral security of residents. Care of citizens' bodies and souls was closely and normatively connected. Idleness, poverty, immorality and disease were linked together in a chain of misfortune, whereas industriousness, thrift, healthy living and religious observance formed rungs in the ladder of prosperity. A great deal of community activity conjoined health, welfare and religion, the momentum declining in the twentieth century as Australian society became more secular and government provision of health care and social security was extended (Dickey 1980; Kewley 1980). Co-provision, a significant theme in nineteenth century welfare models, continued as an important mechanism for civic projects in the twentieth century (Murphy 2006).

Influenced by the British sanitary reform movement, public health and hygiene were early civic concerns in Melbourne, culminating in passage of the Public Health Act 1854. Public pressure to bring reticulated water to the Moonee Valley region, to reduce dust and mud through road pavement, and to remove dead animals and other offensive matter from public streets and watercourses, had an obvious practical intent. Campaigns to drain the Moonee Ponds and Kensington swamps pointed to a pre-Listerian concern over miasma and foul air. In this light, the persistent community and local government pressure to control the activities of noxious trades fronting the Saltwater River and Moonee Ponds Creek is more suggestive of concerns over community health than individualised notions of amenity. The arrival of reticulated water in the district in 1857, the same year metropolitan Melbourne's first reservoir, Yan Yean, became operational, made possible the provision of a range of public facilities – public baths, public toilets and drinking fountains - that would in the words of the *Argus*, be an important influence on the "health and morals" of inhabitants (cited in Barrett 1979:276).

The confluence of public health and personal morality is also seen in the municipal provision of mother and baby health centres from the 1920s. Reaction to the loss of life in the First World War called up earlier concerns over the vitiation of Australian society that had their locus in public debate about urban degeneration, infant and maternal mortality, and birth control practices. Baby health centres (appearing in the Essendon district in 1925) were part of a set of institutions and ideas that for some analysts confirmed the status of motherhood as a civic and national duty (Grimshaw, Lake et al. 1994:esp chapters 8&9). Public provision for pre-school education – the responsibility of local jurisdictions in Australia – began in Essendon in 1937 when the city mayoress presided over a public meeting to establish district Kindergarten. The so-called Free Kindergarten movement pointed to the movement's secular orientation (a religious-based Kindergarten had been operated by the Moonee Ponds Church of England since 1890) and the movement's concern with the health and

education of working class children (Gardiner 1982). This concern was also evident in the City of Essendon medical officer's regular warnings on the spread of contagious diseases caused by overcrowded classrooms, and by crowded and unsanitary housing in working class neighbourhoods (Chalmers 1998a:149,171).

The gospel of health and virtue was not preached solely by middle class reformers, but was a strong current in working class self-improvement. Public houses and the consumption of liquor played an important part not only in nineteenth century social life, but in municipal affairs, providing convenient and sometimes the only venues for public and local government meetings until the building of a town hall (Barrett 1979:22). Such was the situation in the borough of Essendon. Publicans were prominent in municipal government and local philanthropy. The status which some publicans were accorded is indicated by the testimonial given to T J Dean on his retirement in 1901 as publican of the Moonee Ponds Hotel (Chalmers 1998a:81). From about the 1880s local temperance advocates voiced concern over the impact of liquor on public and, particularly, domestic life. Temperance represented more than opposition to the consumption of liquor. For Davison (1978:177), it formed part of a new ethic of thrift, virtue and steady habits that represented a suburban ideology. "The interlocking directorates of building societies, temperance associations, social purity leagues and non-conformist churches attest an underlying consistency of social ideals" he argues. Although a number of faith-based temperance societies were established in the Moonee Valley region in the 1880's [41], Temperance Township, a triangle-shaped sub-division in Ascot Vale with over 300 cottage, villa and business allotments covenanted to prevent the manufacture or sale of liquor, was the clearest physical example of the ideal. A focus of community activities in this neighbourhood was Temperance Hall (built in 1891 and later destroyed by fire) which was used by the local branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Ascot Vale Total Abstinence Society, the Church of

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[41] Baptist Church Blue Ribbon Society 1883; St Thomas Temperance Society 1890; the establishment of the Primitive Methodist Church (1882) and the Salvation Army (1883) in the district might also be seen in this light.

Christ, and the Maribyrnong IOOF lodge. Temptation, though, lay at each corner of the triangle, where local businessmen launched their assault on the township's moral elevation by building large hotels.

An important strand of civic activity prior to the establishment of a national social security system related to provision through mutual or friendly societies for the infirmity or death of a breadwinner. The second half of the nineteenth century saw the establishment of at least six friendly societies and lodges in the Moonee Valley region, and a range of faith-based and municipal charities [42]. The shared worldview of these organisations, as well as their pragmatism, was reflected in the construction of the Friendly Societies Hall in Puckle St, Moonee Ponds in 1887 (Chalmers 1998a:27). The hall appears to have been used for this purpose for only a few years, indicative of a wider stop-start pattern of civic ventures in the region. This pattern suggests a mismatch between civic commitment and capability rather than a deficit of civic activity [43]. Mutual societies could provide relatively large amounts of welfare assistance at short notice, matched by generous public contributions. However, this was contingent on judgements about the deserving nature of the recipient and the development of institutional controls over access to contributions. The Friend Help Association, set up in Essendon in 1892, based its charitable activities on assessments from members' home visits. In 1900, a contribution by the local Masonic Lodge, together with a public appeal, raised sufficient funds for purchase of a brick house for the widow and eight children of a deceased councillor, but its ownership and surplus funds were held by a trust [44]. From about the middle of the twentieth century structural changes brought a decline in mutual provision, at least as it was formalised through the mutual societies and other charitable organisations, and through the

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[42] Independent Order of Rechabites, 1882; Independent Order of Oddfellows, 1883; GUOOF, 1883; Gordon Masonic Lodge 1885; Australian Natives Association, Hotham Branch, 1885; St Johns Ambulance Society, 1891. A United Friendly Societies drug dispensary opened in Moonee Ponds in 1916.

[43] Evidence for this view comes from a survey of contemporary newspaper reports of charitable and mutual society activities as collated in Chalmers, R W: *The Annals of Essendon* Vols 1 (1998) and 2 (1998).

[44] *Essendon Gazette*, 4 October 1900.

provision by municipal government of assistance to the unemployed and the aged poor. The large-scale commercialisation of health insurance, following Commonwealth government incentives to encourage private health insurance cover from the early 1950s, moved the locus of provision from the lodge to the national office (Kewley 1980:189).

Recreation pursuits profoundly shaped the civic and physical landscape. Sporting and recreation clubs were active in lobbying and fundraising for the establishment of recreation facilities. Disputes arose over the use of public facilities for particular forms of recreation, highlighting different outlooks on conduct, amenity and appropriate uses of public land. Sabbatarians campaigned against Essendon council's approval of the use of recreation facilities on Sunday. The long-running contest over the uses of Queen's Park, the region's premier park, is discussed in detail in chapter 7. Another lengthy dispute involved the Ascot Vale pony track run by gambling entrepreneur John Wren. As early as 1915 residents petitioned the council to close the track, arguing that it lowered the tone of the area (Chalmers 1998a:172). In 1945 an Ascot Racecourse Abolition Committee, formed under the aegis of the Ascot Vale branch of the Australian Labor Party, urged use of the land for workers' and soldiers' housing. In 1949 the Dunstan Labor government bought the land from the Wren consortium for public housing.

Despite the individualism of male national stereotypes, men's recreation was often highly social, if gendered. The first objective of the Essendon Fish Protection Society and Anglers Club, formed in 1903 and still active, was "…the promotion of fellowship amongst amateur anglers" (Jacklin 2003:3). The continuity between private, civic and public life is underscored by the tutelary nature of the Club's meetings (structured along "Parliamentary and Masonic" lines) and the policing function club members exercised over the river (club members were appointed as Honorary Inspectors of Fisheries in 1912). The club was exclusively male until the 1950s (Jacklin 2003:21). The region hosted a

number of male social clubs that sustained a male-nature/female-culture dualism. Members of the Women Hater's Club (a Presbyterian Church social group established in 1902), for example, liked to escape feminine clutches by camping far away on the Mornington Peninsula.

Where physical recreation presented an opportunity for men to escape from the constraints of domestic life to the ruggedness of outdoor pursuits, it also availed women the chance to enjoy a physical freedom perhaps denied them in other domains. The Essendon Ladies Rowing Club, gymnastic clubs for young women, and segregated bathing at the Essendon public baths provide examples. More exclusive faith-based organisations placed greater emphasis on self-improvement and useful occupation for women, in contrast to men's free-time. The Frances Willard Club, run by the Church of England and open to women aged fifteen years and above, "…aimed to provide pleasant and useful employment for leisure hours and promote social, physical and intellectual well-being for its members" (cited in Chalmers 1998a:103).

The popularity of the scouting and guiding movement during the twentieth century also made a distinctive infrastructural contribution in Moonee Valley and elsewhere (Milne and Heward 1987). The establishment of clubrooms was a prime focus for local packs, the sometimes rough-hewn construction reflecting the self-help ethos of the organisations. Scouting and guiding clubhouses in the Moonee Valley region range widely in construction form and tenure conditions. The First Moonee Ponds Scout Troop hall, a historically significant timber construction in a neighbourhood setting in Moonee Ponds built in 1929 (plate 2) was financed by the sale of shares in the building to scouting parents (1st Moonee Ponds Group Boy Scouts 1965). If this evokes an earlier, idealised period of community sentiment, the location of the structure was controversial from the first. Recent attempts to finance hall maintenance by hiring it for functions have, on the account of a scouting official (A5), resulted in complaints from neighbours over patron behaviour and a cool relationship with the council.

Plate 2: 1st Moonee Ponds Scout Troop Hall, c1929. The lower image was taken at the hall's 90th anniversary. (courtesy 1st Moonee Ponds Scout Troop)

The profile of charitable activity in the nineteenth and early twentieth century suggests that membership societies assisted individuals over their life course, whereas municipal charity was often event-based. For example, the Essendon

council provided flood relief following the 1891 flooding of the Saltwater River, a Mayor's Relief Fund provided assistance for the families of unemployed men in the economic depressions of the 1890s and 1930s, and various patriotic funds associated with the overseas military campaigns of Australian soldiers received council sponsorship. Council charity was also subjected to a regime of surveillance, which included an initial registration process (for the Mayor's Relief Fund), regular interviews (associated with the council's administration of Victorian state government old age pensions introduced in 1901), and enactment of the state government's policy of withdrawing sustenance provision for unemployed men who refused work. Both the council and local businesses (providing free food) sought to assist the growing band of the district's unemployed as drought and economic slowdown tightened their grip during the 1890s. The council provided financial backing in the 1890s for the establishment of a co-operative settlement near Daylesford for unemployed families from the Essendon district. The settlement was supporting around 140 people by the mid-1890s (Chalmers 1998a:57-8). The settlement movement involved a potentially radical critique of urban economy and politics, and its support during a period of industrial and social unrest may have seemed sound political strategy to the business-oriented council. Concern over political radicalism, increasing crime and a "downward moral trend" also motivated the council's provision of sustenance work, food, boots, clothes and haircuts during the 1930s depression (Chalmers 1998b:58). Political instability at state level meant that the Victorian government underwrote relatively few depression-era public works. The terraced banks of the Maribyrnong River at Moonee Ponds survive as the most substantial local job-creation exercise of that period. By the time of the next major economic downturn, in the 1970s, policy concern had shifted from unemployment of the male breadwinner (Castles 1994), to youth unemployment. As chapters 5-7 outline, infrastructure projects were seen by local and state officials as appropriate ways to ameliorate the effects of persistent youth unemployment in the 1970s and 1980s.

Nationalism and Patriotism

The rise of nationalist and militarist sentiments in the late nineteenth century exerted a strong influence on civic activities in the Moonee Valley region. The rhetoric of the locally active Australian Natives Association, and the nativist flavour of local clubs such as the Wallabies and the Wombats (whose social evenings were reported to be "…full of song and national pleasures" [45]) were located within a broader framework of imperialism. The establishment of the Essendon branch of the Young Victorian Patriotic League, recruitment and fund-raising for the Boer War, the formation of men's and women's rifle clubs, school cadet corps and the advent of scouting and guiding introduced a martial tone to civic activities that was greatly amplified by the declaration of war in 1914. The City of Essendon took a leading hand not only in encouraging civilian defence and support for active combatants, but in ensuring that the war effort became the focal point of civic effort. This confluence of interests was personalised by Councillor Pattison, who was the district's recruiting sergeant. Racism and sectarianism played a minor part in directing this effort, through the activities of the Anti-German League and the Protestant Defence League. Following the end of combat, the war effort was turned to commemoration. Anzac Day was established as an annual event in Queen's Park. Memorials began to dot the civic landscape, several unveiled by the heroic Bridadier-General H E "Pompey" Elliot, who prior to the war had been the Commander of the Essendon Rifles. Elected Senator for Victoria in the Federal Parliament in 1919 and suiciding in 1931, Elliot epitomised the complex psychic legacy of the war (McMullin 2002). The Essendon branch of the Returned Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia had a membership of 3,000 by 1920 – on available evidence the largest membership organisation in the district. The council built houses in Walter St, Ascot Vale for war widows and the Essendon Fathers group raised money and provided guidance for children left fatherless by a conflict that, as Essendon's Member of the Victorian Parliament observed, had enlisted one in

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[45] *Essendon Gazette*, 13 October 1892.

every twelve men from the district and buried one in every six of those (cited in Chalmers 1998a:213).

The call on public and civic resources made by the Second World War was perhaps greater than that of its predecessor. Victory Vegetables were grown in Fairbairn Park on the Maribyrnong River, and tramways were put through to the Maribyrnong Defence Factories (a major local employer) and the Essendon Airport. Local businesses raised funds for the London Bombing Relief Appeal and sponsored community singing in the Puckle St, Moonee Ponds theatre. The Essendon River League turned the annual Henly-on-Maribyrnong regatta into a patriotic carnival. Again, the drift of patriotism into chauvinism was limited, the relatively homogeneous make-up of the population providing few opportunities, although the regular smashing of an Italian fruiterer's shop windows in Racecourse Road, Flemington is recorded (Breen 1989:35). In 1945 Councillor Alexander resigned his position alleging preferential treatment by the council of a resident of Italian background, granted land for a market garden that Alexander sought to have reserved for returned servicemen's housing (Chalmers 1998a:248). However, in the same year the *Essendon Gazette* generously obituarised Michaela Capicchiano, owner of a Puckle Street business and an active charity worker (Chalmers 1998a:248).

Managing Difference, Managing Change

In the years immediately after World War 2 many Australians sought fulfilment in quieter, safer lives, as compensation for the conflict and disruption of the war. Deferred longings found release in consumer demand and commitment to home and family, although the freedom experienced by many women on the war-time homefront was not easily accommodated within the gendered spheres of nation-building (Grimshaw, Lake et al. 1994; Bolton 1996; Davison 2004).

In his history of governance in this period, Brown (1995) argues that the end of centralised planning and the management of scarcity that characterised depression and war-time government in Australia gave way to new policy problems, associated with the rise of consumerism, the government of the individual and the relationship between public and private spheres. Decentralisation, community planning and active citizenship were posed as useful strategies to counter the impersonality and materialism of an emerging mass consumer society. Community contributions to facilities were seen as practical ways of building a sense of community in new, poorly serviced suburbs, in addition to offsetting the high cost of infrastructure development (Neutze 1977:210; Brown 1995:chap 4). Advocacy of community input to local facilities called up earlier versions of the policy. For example, in 1935 Victorian Director-General of Education Frank Tate endorsed Andrew Carnegie's scheme of providing library buildings on the condition that local people provide the bookstock and future maintenance of the facility. To provide the entire facility without seeking a long-term local commitment ran the risk of "pauperizing" the local community by failing to stimulate their investment in public institutions (see Tate's Introduction to Munn and Pitt 1935:10). In the early post-war years community facilities featured prominently in the spatial and social imaginings of community. A community, said the NSW assistant commissioner for roads H M Gerrand, is most effectively defined by the radius of walking distance to the neighbourhood primary school (Brown 1995:145). In 1948 the Victorian Town and Country Planning Board distributed to all Victorian town clerks a copy of a Melbourne lecture by British planning pioneer Sir Patrick Abercrombie, in which he extolled the elementary school as the dominant physical element of the neighbourhood - one of three social "units" – (the others were family and community) - that modern planning sought to integrate [46]. A key figure in Australian post-war reconstruction, Lloyd Ross, argued that a community was "…a grouping of people in a small area around a central idea or a central

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[46] Sir Patrick Abercrombie: *A Great City*, Lecture delivered at Wilson Hall, University of Melbourne, 18 October 1948.

building", extending an argument made several years earlier by the
Commonwealth Minister for Health Senator Foll, that every municipality should
acquire a community recreation centre (cited in Maunders 1980:128,118). Social
infrastructure was assigned an important place in the Australian wage-earner's
welfare state. The economist and adviser to the Commonwealth Government D B
Copland, argued in 1948 that public investment in community facilities was a
form of (as he termed it) social capital:

> …it is one of the methods by which increasing wealth and income will be transmitted to
> the average man through better educational and health facilities, libraries, parks and
> gardens, town-planning projects, community centres and even housing (cited in Brown
> 1995:99).

Both state and local governments were active partners with local residents in
establishing civic infrastructure and institutions. State housing authorities focused
attention on developing new towns, segmenting suburbs into private-purchase
and working-class rental areas, and recruiting community development workers
to integrate the two (Bryson and Thompson 1972; Wild 1981; Peel 1995). Local
authorities tended to work with existing civic structures, the limited scale of their
financial and physical works capacities viewed as a safeguard against excessive
expenditure of higher governments (Maunders 1980:150). Essendon council
records from this period reveal an active partnership between the council and
social and recreational clubs to finance small-scale facilities, sometimes
constructed by club members themselves. The council's Pound for Pound Sub-
committee was particularly active in the 1950s, encouraging local sporting clubs
to contribute to the construction of pavilions, matching voluntary contributions of,
in one instance, £750 [47]. The council also underwrote bank loans to community
organisations for the construction of facilities [48]. The quality of these facilities was
variable, reflecting limited financial and professional inputs, minimal regulatory

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[47] PROV VPRS 7916/P/0001/26 City of Essendon Health and Parks and Gardens Committee
1951-54.
[48] Details of underwriting are found in Essendon City Council annual financial statements, dated
30 September and submitted to the Victorian government.

requirements, and scale of use. Each of these factors has contributed to emerging asset and facility management problems in the late twentieth century. While the policy impetus to break the proprietorial hold on local facilities is now strong, policy-makers were until quite recently extolling the economic efficiency of co-funding facilities that were safeguarded and physically maintained by club members [49].

Makeshift housing, the social isolation of home, and the emergence of teenagehood as a social pathology brought new facility demands and contested views on provision. A group of Strathmore residents campaigned for a community centre, convinced (wrongly as it turned out) that householders of the suburb would support an additional levy on property rates to finance the project (Maunders 1980). A second community centre, built in Bradshaw St, Essendon had a "youth hall" attached. The development of separate youth facilities was part of a wider strategy of self management and democratic training that ranged from the local establishment of youth councils (which operated sporadically in the City of Essendon) through to the encouragement of university student unions (Commonwealth of Australia 1957). In the face of such a concerted cross-jurisdictional policy focus on managing young people, it would be a bold claim that the infrastructural legacy of deteriorating facilities built for post-World War 2 youth was the result of poorly integrated local planning or ward-based politics. Rather, as this chapter indicates, social and physical planning rationales were complementary, and developed within a policy environment of constrained public expenditure. A more compelling argument is that the combination of limited public revenue and endorsement of community co-provision produced physical structures of limited life-span and escalating maintenance costs.

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[49] See MMBW: *Public Open Space – Strategic Directions to the Year 2000*, p.10 on PROV VPRS 12751/P/0001/79 City of Essendon Open Space/General/Proposed Open Space 266/1/1 Part 2.

Opening and Closing the Essendon Hospital

The municipality's major civic campaign and fund-raising project in the first few decades following World War 2 was a local hospital. The history of the hospital is an example of conflict between state-level political ambition and administrative policy overtaking local ambitions and civic contributions. At one level the story appears to illustrate the tension between wider efficiency and local preference discussed in chapter 1. Viewed more critically, it is a tale of the disregard of civic initiative and public ownership that is instructive for the management of change in the infrastructure area.

First mooted in the late nineteenth century as a public alternative to the several private hospitals in the region, the project was given impetus by the 1919 influenza pandemic, and reached design stage in the 1920s. With plans curtailed by depression and war, the organising committee returned major donations. A second fund-raising phase started after World War 2, actively supported by Essendon and surrounding councils. Completion of the maternity wing as its first stage in 1964 indicated medical requirement and social preference. Community effort to establish the hospital was sustained, but controversial at several levels. At contest were the compulsory acquisition of a historic property in Holmes Rd, Moonee Ponds that was used as a boarding house, and plans for a large regional facility with few redeeming architectural features in a suburban location. The site was chosen to shore up political support for Frederick Wheeler, local Liberal member (1958-1979) and later speaker of the Legislative Assembly, but the siting decision was at odds with health department policy which sought development of a regional facility further from the city centre (Maddigan 1995). Funding for the hospital was curtailed by the Cain Labor government and the facility was closed and site sold by the Kennett Liberal government, a decision that was condemned by the local parliamentary member on the grounds that the land on which the

facility was located had been purchased by community donations [50]. Some contributions, which were conditional on the construction of an emergency department, were returned; other unconditional contributions were lost. The new private owners re-opened the facility in the early twenty-first century as an aged assisted care complex, leasing additional space to a company operating the largest chain of privately-owned childcare facilities in Australia, and to private medical practitioners. The owners also leased space at a commercial rate to the local community health service, which provides primary health services there. The controversy surrounding the hospital has dissipated. However, this story of a community venture that is appropriated and commercialised by the state government is not unique (see McShane 2006). Nor has the impact of such state-level actions on public trust been sufficiently researched. Questions of trust in government have an extended analysis in Australia (Uhr 2005), but this single work pays little attention to local government. The instability of a policy position that seeks to both re-invigorate civic commitment and pursue aggressive rationalisation programs is further discussed in chapter 8.

Having a Place to Go

For a new segment of Moonee Valley residents the post-war experience was one of radical dislocation rather than an embrace or struggle with the familiar. A new discourse of civic action developed around the management of difference: initially focussed on assimilation of migrants, then more subtly directed to promoting cultural diversity. The enactment of the Commonwealth government's Citizenship Act 1948 saw local governments host a new ceremonial function. The City of Essendon conducted its first "naturalisation ceremony" in 1956, the mayor presenting bibles to new citizens. The ceremonies were linked to a regional system of Commonwealth government support consisting of reception accommodation at a nearby migrant hostel, English language classes, and

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[50] Notice of Motion No 106, Mrs Judy Maddigan, Legislative Assembly Motion Paper No 12, 7 April 1998.

funding of Good Neighbour Councils (Jordens 1995). Migrant workers helped overcome a labour shortage in the post-World War 2 years, particularly in unskilled, low wage jobs. By 1965, though, some 100,000 post-war migrants were either self-employed or employers of others, a reflection of a long period of economic stability as well as personal industriousness. Di Lorenzo (2001:123-3) notes that local suspicions of "new Australians" extended to complaints over the conduct of businesses in private homes, and the Essendon council stepped in to regulate clothing and knitwear production in suburban areas. As di Lorenzo (pp.47-50) observes, Italian settlement in the region defied conventional sociological interpretations of ethnic concentration, exhibiting a more steady pattern of comings and goings rather than serving as an initial point of arrival. In 1961 the City of Essendon had the fifth largest number of Italian-born migrants of Melbourne municipalities, but some families of Italian background had lived in the region since the late nineteenth century.

As English, Scottish and Irish settlers had done a century earlier, post-war migrants established ethno-specific clubs and churches. The Newmarket Picture Theatre closed in 1959 to re-open the following year as the Vesuvio, showing Italian movies, but the new venture was short-lived. The Ukrainian community built a church and clubrooms in the north-west suburbs. The St Vincent Liem social centre was established to support Vietnamese Catholics housed in the Flemington high-rise public housing from the late 1970s. Italian and Greek communities planned substantial social centres in the north-west of the municipality, partly financed by capital grants from higher governments, with bank loans taken out by the clubs guaranteed by the cities of Keilor and Moonee Valley. The Greek centre, an ambitious and costly construction on a council-leased site, was never finished and occupied. In 2006 the Moonee Valley council, under political pressure, took over the building with a view to converting it to a multi-use community centre in a new partnership with the YMCA. The episode is an example of both cost-shifting and property-led path decision making. However, this is not an isolated example of declining support for ethno-specific

social clubs in the western region of Melbourne, as descendants of those who built such premises find different forms of social engagement and support [51]. The physical assets of religious organisations, often with significant heritage value, are under similar pressure. In the Moonee Valley region in recent years a number of church halls, used for a range of social and recreational activities by the wider community, have been sold to property developers. Religious organisations, as an aggregate, have one of the largest property portfolios in the municipality, rivalling the council and the state housing authority, and are faced with similar dilemmas over the strategic use of capital funds tied up in property, without the constraints of service or access requirements. This discussion raises the wider question about whether the community services planning of local authorities takes sufficient account of the contribution of third sector facilities, and whether the continued loss of these places will adversely affect councils. In this light, one local authority in Melbourne's western region, the City of Maribyrnong, expanded a 2006 review of community facilities to include analysis of third sector facilities[52].

In the 1970s a rise in local-level activism, the movement of professionals into inner-city locations, and new forms of state government funding for community service provision re-invigorated community-based organisations in the fields of housing, employment and health in the Moonee Valley region [53]. Civic organisations developed a rights and advocacy orientation, in part a response to the growth of state provision during the twentieth century and the widening scope of administrative law. In the 1990s local residents campaigned to re-open the Ascot Vale library, unhappy about loss of the service and plans to sell the building. The campaigners launched an action against the library service on anti-discrimination grounds, arguing successfully that re-location of the service to the neighbouring Moonee Ponds library branch discriminated against a library user

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[51] The Polish community in Footscray have approached the City of Maribyrnong for help to maintain their social club. Pers comm, Nick Matteo, Manager, Community Planning and Advocacy, City of Maribyrnong, 27 November 2005.

[52] Pers comm, Nick Matteo, Manager, Community Planning and Advocacy, City of Maribyrnong, 27 November 2005.

[53] For example, Kensington Community Health Service, 1978, Flemington Community Legal Centre, 1980.

with limited mobility. The legacy of the decision is that the service continues to operate in a facility that is too small for its current purpose, but the political cost of changing the service model (for example, providing more computers and public internet access at the expense of book stock) may be high [54]. A changing library funding formula (a ratio of state:local funding) has increased the burden on local library services met by local authorities, and accordingly, if viewed in classical public finance terms, re-orients libraries in the direction of a ratepayer service rather than a wider public good. Victorian state government special purpose grants for local libraries were halved in the five years between 1996 and 2000 (Johnson 2003:46).

Managing change in the late twentieth century involved adjustment to changing structural economic conditions, especially the persistence of high youth unemployment. The management of leisure, a debate initially connected to theories of post-industrialism and abundance (Glyptis 1989), became a driving force behind infrastructure and facility provision, as a means of providing both local employment in the public works tradition and also providing leisure options. Public works such as the construction of two pedestrian bridges across the Maribyrnong River in the 1980s and 1990s were financed by Commonwealth and state funding sources with little consideration of long-term maintenance costs [55]. Policy objectives and project pressures focussed on local employment were more immediate, but practical judgement nonetheless yielded two structures of significant long-term utility. It was not always the case with local employment generation associated with infrastructure projects, as chapter 6 shows.

Demographic change and shifting state-level policy began to impact negatively on the perceptions of security and sense of community felt by many of the original tenants in the municipality's public housing estates. Elderly residents of the Ascot Vale estate voiced concerns over safety following the withdrawal of

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[54] This interpretation is based on a discussion with Elizabeth Jackson, Manager, Moonee Valley Library, Service, December 2004.
[55] Pers comm, Barry Gough, former Mayor, City of Moonee Valley, 21 October 2006.

regular Department of Housing inspections, alarmed at the arrival of "the rowdies", as Mavis Agg (b.1916) referred to new, younger tenants (cited in de Iacovo 2001). Some residents resented a perceived reliance of new arrivals on government services. In the southern suburbs this was inflected with a sensitivity to the changing ethnic profile of local populations. A 1992 community survey associated with preparation of the City of Melbourne's Kensington/Flemington Recreation Policy drew the following comments:

> Community centres have worked so hard to accommodate people of ethnic background that we Aussies of anglo saxon origin feel left out and out of place.

> Flemington-Kensington library has less books for English-speaking people than it did when it opened about 25 years ago.

> English speaking, self supporting members of the community TOTALLY IGNORED. [56]

Others perceived a neglect of infrastructure and social services associated with public housing, and set about remedying it. The Flemington Tenants Association was formed in 1982, and Flemington high rise residents campaigned vigorously for better maintenance of the complex, provision of play equipment and better security. A youth drop-in centre was established, and Debney Park High School became involved in a closed circuit television channel for tower residents. Flemington Community Enterprises was set up to counter high unemployment in the blocks. One of its projects, the organisation of security patrols by residents, is reported to have been opposed by police and the Department of Housing (Breen 1989:34). The Flemington-Kensington News was established in 1979 to provide more localised and progressive media reportage than existing suburban newspapers, and continues to advocate the re-unification of the suburb following its split across the municipalities of Melbourne and Moonee Valley in 1994.

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[56] City of Melbourne: *Kensington/Flemington Recreation Study Appendix 12 & 13 – What Else People had to Say about Kensington and Flemington*, (Melbourne, 1992), p 21.

The sense of resentment highlighted above retains its force in selected quarters. One resident interviewee was highly critical of what he perceived as preferential access to aquatic facilities for people of Islamic culture, predicting a "civil war in 2020" (R5). Interpersonal crime and conflict between young males of African background and police in the Flemington area has received considerable publicity in recent years. A controversial Commonwealth government response to wider issues relating to the resettlement of East African immigrants has been to curtail acceptance of this cohort, blaming difficulties in integrating in Australian society [57]. Local initiatives, including appointment of a refugee health nurse by the community health service, recreation programs, and new police-youth liaison underscore the reliance of social policy on community facilities. Following a violent confrontation between youths from the African community and police in Flemington in November 2007, Eritrean Community in Australia president Berhan Ahmed criticised the recent closure of weekend programs at the North Melbourne Community Centre.

> The young people are roaming to the streets because they don't have a place to go. The programs that used to be there have died. [58]

The 'glocalised' character of this episode illustrates the complex policy and operational domains in which community facilities are located.

4.5 Auditing Moonee Valley's Assets

Following the statutory creation of the City of Moonee Valley in 1994, officials developed an imaginary or policy narrative for the new entity that strained to promote diversity and the management of difference as its defining feature:

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[57] Hon Kevin Andrews MP, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship - "Refugee and Humanitarian Intake 2007-08" http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media-releases/2007/ka07104.htm , last accessed 9 November 2007.
[58] "Ceasefire off", *Moonee Valley Community News*, 13 November 2007, p.1.

> The City of Moonee Valley is home to people from many different ethnic backgrounds, to the young and the old, to people with disabilities, to growing families and individual artists – all of who celebrate and express their cultural values in different ways.
> (Moonee Valley City Council 1996)

The use of sophisticated techniques of demographic and service needs analysis accompanied this commitment to managing difference. However, increasingly complex – in terms of service provision and partnership management - and costly demands have been placed on the council by compounding effects of a retreat from public housing provision by the state government, the tightening of access by the Commonwealth government to employment and social services for asylum seekers and some other classes of newly arrived people, the de-institutionalisation of people with mental illnesses, the increasing demand for child-care and an ageing population profile. Accordingly, the proportion of Moonee Valley council's budget spent on community, cultural and recreational services has increased relative to property and general public services, in line with the pattern of local authority expenditure over the past three decades (Worthington 2000; Johnson 2003; see Appendix A).

In 1996 the City Commissioners appointed by the Kennett Government on creation of the new city released a 10 year strategic plan that was highly critical of the state of the municipality's building assets, asset management and the financial consequences of ageing infrastructure (Moonee Valley City Council and GHD Pty Ltd 1996:11). The document foreshadowed rationalisation of facilities, promising community consultation on which facilities would be retained and upgraded, or identified as redundant. The document emphasised state government urban consolidation policy, supporting its current iteration through the concept of urban villages and the regeneration of existing areas to make more effective use of infrastructure and reduce the need for services at the fringe (Moonee Valley City Council 1996:15, 19; also see Birrell, O'Connor et al. 2005). The theme of rationalisation also underpinned the use of facilities as foci of integration and promotion of a Moonee Valley identity:

"The City comprises various local communities. The sense of community can be strengthened by the development of integrated, multi-purpose community centres that are a physical focus for community life, community networks and services. The multi-use community facilities can progressively replace the lesser quality, single use buildings now found throughout the City. (Moonee Valley City Council and GHD Pty Ltd 1996:4)

Towards the end of the twentieth century, theories of community based on culture and identity came under pressure from critics wishing to re-emphasise shared experience and location (Delanty 2003). In Australia and elsewhere this renewed concern with community defined by sameness rather than difference is framed by global politics of terror and a retreat from multicultural policy, as well as the increasingly uneven social and locational impacts of neo-liberalism (Smyth, Reddell et al. 2005). The renewed aspiration for the development of facilities as community "hubs" (in current parlance) illustrates the degree to which asset rationalisation and community building converge in current community facility policy. The first outcome for Moonee Valley of this new alignment was the Niddrie Community Hub, accommodating the local community health service, elderly citizens centre and meeting rooms. The building opened in 2006 on the site of the former Niddrie branch library. The former library building, dating from the 1970s, had limited functionality and access difficulties, and was demolished without opposition. The library re-located nearby to refurbished leased premises in a busy shopping strip, and a 60% increase in patronage made the merits of such a move difficult to contest [59]. The capital cost of the purpose-built community hub was largely financed by the state government, with future maintenance costs to be met by the council. This example neatly illustrates policy trends and dilemmas. There is little doubt that the service quality of the facility is substantially higher than the one it replaced, but the rationale for the funding formula remains obscure, and on the face of it repeats a pattern criticised by state government policy.

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[59] Figure provided by Elisabeth Jackson, Manager, Moonee Valley Library Service, email, 6 June 2006.

This renewal exercise pointed to the wider facility problem in Moonee Valley. The 1998 *Facing the Renewal Challenge* study, discussed in chapter 2, confirmed the Moonee Valley commissioner's view cited above by ranking of Moonee Valley as the 13th lowest of 78 municipalities on asset maintenance and renewal expenditure. 'League tables' of this nature [60] were first used to rank local authority performance following the UK Major Conservative government's introduction of the Citizen's Charter in the early 1990s, and have strongly prescriptive and symbolic purposes that are little troubled by context or complexity. The FRC ranking permitted no insight to the impact of amalgamation on the new city's asset portfolio, particularly the transfer of three major facilities in poor condition – the East Keilor Leisure Centre from the City of Keilor, and the North Melbourne Community Centre and the former Kensington Town Hall from the City of Melbourne.

The Moonee Valley council's 2002 submission to the Hawker 'cost shifting' inquiry took vigorous issue with the withdrawal of contributions by higher level governments to facilities and services, and the cost implications of corporatisation and privatisation of infrastructure networks. The submission pointed to the types of negative cost impacts resulting from changing social and micro-economic policy settings (compliance, under-funding, function transfer, levy, flow-on), compounded by rate-capping measures imposed by the Victorian government and the real decline of taxation transfers through the Victorian Grants Commission following the 1994 amalgamation [61]. In 2006 the Moonee Valley council commissioned an audit of its physical properties that confirmed bleak assessments made over the previous decade, and detailed the nature and

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[60] FRC's authors argue that the "sustainability ratings" should not be understood as council rankings (p.34) is undercut by a later reference to ranking (p.64). There is evidence that councils also perceive the ratings as a performance table (for example see CT Management Group 1999:44).

[61] Moonee Valley City Council: *Cost Shifting to Local Government – Inquiry by House of Representatives Economic Standing Committee: Submission*, 29 August 2002.

scale of problems associated with community facilities [62]. The consultants surveyed 210 address locations and the list of properties gives an insight to the scale and complexity of local authority property management:

- child care centres
- halls, community centres & neighbourhood centres
- general buildings, libraries, cultural buildings and public housing
- Moonee Valley civic centre
- Moonee Valley works depot
- sporting clubs and pavilions
- scout and girl guide halls
- leisure centres
- public toilets and exeloos
- storage sheds
- miscellaneous   (Vol 1, p.2)

The audit drew a contrast between "commercial" premises (those where council services are provided) and "publicly accessible" premises, which were found to be in poorer overall condition, some with significant structural, compliance (for example, with fire and safety regulations) and access problems. While the report was critical of basic aspects of public property management such as lack of emergency signage, building security and asbestos management, the interface between the council and user groups was presented as a significant issue:

> It is our understanding that the operational arrangements for these sites are that the buildings have been in some cases constructed, owned and operated by third parties, as tenants to the MVCC, where other sites are Council operated. On this basis, significant discrepancies may be evident between some sites. (Vol 1, p.35)

> As a general comment, it appeared that repair works were not co-ordinated consistently. Through staff interviews carried out as part of the audit, many of the maintenance issues that are reported to Council are not responded to in a timely manner or not followed up at

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[62] Australian Essential Services Compliance Pty Ltd: *Moonee Valley City Council Building Condition and Risk Management Audit*, June 2006, 2 Vols.

all. It may be prudent to examine the interface arrangements between the various
business units or tenant groups. (Vol 1, p.38)

In making these observations, the analysis shifts from a property audit to a
discussion of governance. While the study of governance, especially at local
level, has now produced a substantial literature (Sproats 1997; Andrew and
Goldsmith 1998; Goss 2001; Considine and Lewis 2003; O'Toole 2003;
Considine 2004; Municipal Association of Victoria 2004; Smyth, Reddell et al.
2005; Stoker 2006; Crowley and Coffey 2007), connections with local
government facility management have rarely been made in Australia (Heywood
2007).

The attention given to the audit of the municipality's physical assets over the past
decade contrasts with a more fragmented interest in surveying community groups
and social networks. The Moonee Valley council's community directory – a
survey of community and civic groups begun by the City of Essendon – has been
published intermittently. Anecdotal evidence suggests a lack of resources and
perceived difficulty of maintaining and updating the paper publication lay behind
this decision [63]. When the council began to consider the fate of the Greek
Community Centre in East Keilor, discussed earlier, it had, on the account of one
officer (A4), no firm sense of who might become tenants or users of the site.
Perhaps this is indicative of dynamic social and demographic environments, but
the different resource priorities which, simply put, favoured physical assets over
social ones, illustrated a problematic aspect of recent community facility
management: the degree to which these two 'asset classes' had become
separate. The chapters that follow examine this claim and its consequences for
facility management, local governance and the public realm.

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[63] On-line production of the directory from 2007 indicates a new commitment to the audit of civic
groups and minimises problems with its currency.

4.6   Conclusion

This chapter has argued that much civic life in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was organised around broadly agreed, largely utilitarian goals. Structural and social changes in the twentieth century encouraged the transfer of responsibilities to the formal realm of government and a diffusion of community interests and identities. Government provision of social and community services was intended to introduce universality, improve the actuarial basis of the services, and attenuate the moralising dimensions of charity. Government and community roles in the governance of community appeared in clearer contradistinction, and the endorsement of diversity and pluralism accompanied governmental techniques that managed an increasingly differentiated population.

The civic and political history of the Moonee Valley region departs from the standard narration of a shift of policy focus downwards from state or society to the level of community and individual, emblematic of what Rose (1996) terms advanced liberalism. Instead, the history bears out observations made by others about the limitations of Rose's argument when it is applied to the complex power relationships in the sphere of local government (Stenson and Watt 1999, Diamond 2004). The history offered in this chapter also counters a view that public-private partnerships are a novel element of late twentieth century neo-liberalism. Instead, we may need a more nuanced conceptualisation of the relationship between government, civic and commercial interests.

The history of facility provision in Moonee Valley highlights three significant arguments that are further developed in later chapters of this thesis. The first is that local authorities may not be the sole "owners" of community facilities (a point made in the MVCC 2006 facility audit) and thus be solely authorised to make decisions about their future. The second is that the disposal of facilities owned or managed by community or third-sector organisations, as their membership structures, views on property needs and finances change, may throw an

additional service burden on local authorities and lead to a loss of socially significant "third places" in neighbourhoods. The third point is that the trend in facility regeneration to multi-use centres that aggregate service provision and meeting places under a single roof, whatever the arguments in favour (and these have not been made out in any detail), has diminished diverse partnership opportunities with community groups in vernacular or neighbourhood level structures, and lessened the visible and functional presence of the civic sector at a local level. The civic and social impact of this policy has yet to be analysed and factored in to facility renewal policy – indeed it has yet to be fully recognised - reinforcing the argument developed in this thesis that economic efficiency is the dominant influence in recent facility management policy and practice.

The introduction to the Moonee Valley region provided by this chapter and discussion of the rationales and structures that underpinned facility provision gives a broad context for the examination of particular facilities in the following three chapters. This begins at chapter 5 with a focus on the complex and contentious subject of municipal swimming pools.

5. Aqua Profonda – the Culture and Politics of Municipal Swimming Pools

5.1 Introduction

Around the time when the Australian nation was inaugurated in a park (Hoskins 2003), a significant aspect of the national sporting and cultural mythos – the Australian crawl swimming stroke – was first observed in a suburban swimming pool (Osmond and Phillips 2006). The confluence of nation and natation is more than coincidence. Australia's swimming success at the 1900 (and subsequent) Olympic games, the abolition from 1902 of by-laws prohibiting public bathing during daylight hours (effectively a prohibition on mixed bathing), and the promotion of public health and eugenist views on the benefits of sun-bathing, swimming and surfing contributed to the central position that aquatic recreation occupies in Australian culture. Attempts to install observance of Natation Day in New South Wales (Booth 1994a) suggests elevation of swimming to a civic religion, and the widespread provision of swimming pools by local authorities points to the influence of such views on rationales and priorities for municipal infrastructure.

In the last two decades, though, the perception of municipal pools, especially seasonal ('outdoor') pools that is held by governments, infrastructure analysts and some elements of public opinion has changed dramatically, perhaps permanently. It has changed from a view of pools as an essential municipal facility, reflecting local progress, a cultural pre-disposition for outdoor, particularly aquatic recreation, and representative of the public good role of local authorities; to an image of pools as infrastructural and financial burdens, providing a poor or at least limited level of service to the local community, a symbol of uncoordinated development within the local government sector and, in some areas, of unsustainably high water use.

To illustrate this shift it is useful to recall discussion in the thesis introduction of the Hawker 'cost shifting' inquiry, and its focus on municipal pools as exemplars of what it considered to be the failure of the democratic political process as a mechanism for allocating infrastructure funding. At municipal level, there is ample evidence that swimming pools, particularly seasonal ones, have in recent years come to be viewed increasingly in cost terms. For example, despite evidence that the outdoor pool in Queen's Park, Moonee Ponds had the lowest operating subsidy of six comparable pools in metropolitan Melbourne, the Essendon City Council concluded in a 1990 report that:

> [t]he issue at hand is that Council has a facility that is currently losing $75,000 per year. Not only is it losing considerable amounts of money, it is providing a very limited service to the community and is an under-utilization of a major public resource. [64]

Similarly, Essendon council landscape architect Pauline Kerley (Kerley 1988:np), in a report on the re-development of Queen's Park criticised the pool as "unprofitable". Neither is this change in attitude to public swimming pools exclusive to Australia. US authors Osborne and Gaebler's (1993:2-3) famous treatise on government reform and public entrepreneurship begins with a case study on the purchase of a new public swimming pool, the authors pointing to savings made by decentralized authority and creative financing.

That this change has been observed and contested within local communities is evident in a series of vigorous protests against proposals to close or remodel municipal pools. In the Melbourne metropolitan region over the past decade or so there have been at least six well-organised community campaigns against pool closure [65]. Several of these campaigns frustrated local authority ambitions. The campaign to re-open the seasonal pool in the western Melbourne suburb of Sunshine was fought bitterly for fifteen years, culminating in an unsuccessful

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[64] VPRS 12751/P0001/67 City of Essendon Facilities and Recreation Swimming Pools Essendon Swimming Pool 260/2/1 Part 3 Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Council 26 March 1990, p.10.
[65] Sunshine 1992, Fitzroy 1994, Queens Park, Moonee Ponds 1994, Pascoe Vale 1994 and 2006, City of Glen Eira late 1990s and ongoing, Footscray 2003.

legal challenge to the local authority's proposal to redevelop the facility [66]. The coincident timing of these campaigns highlights common infrastructural and policy factors that this chapter will analyse: the limited life-span and physical failure of a generation of municipal pools, the changing terms under which the costs, benefits and funding provision of outdoor pools have been assessed, the rise of indoor leisure centres, leisure consumption and the commercialisation of leisure, changing local populations and recreation preferences, changing jurisdictional boundaries and the consequent impact on asset portfolios. The varied responses of local authorities and local residents to the provision of aquatic facilities that will be discussed in this chapter suggest the importance of fully understanding local contexts in planning a future for these facilities, whether it involves retention, redevelopment, or disposal, rather than acting from pre-determined positions of change or resistance.

Supplementing the policy focus in the past decade or so on rationalisation, in the new millenium Victoria's local swimming pools are the subject of renewed interest in infrastructural investment, and the shifting terms in which this interest is framed warrants critical analysis. Swimming pools, or more accurately aquatic facilities (indicating the move to multi-purpose structures), are viewed as enterprises that are well-suited to the development of innovative partnerships for capital funding and facility operation. Long identified as core recreation and health facilities, public pools are now viewed explicitly as policy instruments for addressing social and locational disadvantage and, during a period of prolonged drought and concern over its social impact, a means to reinforce cultural connections with water and social connections within a community.

The title of this chapter, with its allusion to both treacherous waters and mis-communication, is a useful metaphor to convey the political sensitivity and infrastructural complexity of local pools. The phrase *aqua profonda* was inscribed

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[66] Hedditch v Brimbank CC [2005] VCAT 2899 (23 January 2006) .

at the deep end of the Fitzroy Public Baths around 1954**,** a time of high of Italian migration to Melbourne, to warn Italian-literate swimmers (see plate 3).

Plate 3: Warning sign at Fitzroy Baths (Courtesy Heritage Victoria)

The sign serves to indicate changing community structures and the user populations of swimming pools, yet points to the trans-cultural appeal of swimming. The use of the Latin *aqua*, instead of the Italian *acqua*, suggests a degree of cultural misunderstanding, a genuine but not wholly successful attempt to communicate across languages. In one sense, this conveys the sometimes frustrated attempts of local authorities to convey to their residents the physical and financial requirements of pools, and of residents to articulate the value of these places. The result is that some councils are treading water, unable or unwilling to adequately fund retention and use of their existing facilities, but nervous of a political backlash when proposing change. However, as this chapter

argues, the entrepreneurship of some local authorities around pool redevelopment, especially where it involves private funding initiatives and revenue-earning, has contributed to levels of suspicion and resistance of citizens over future plans for public assets. Municipal pools are, for reasons outlined in this chapter, a focal point of policy dilemmas and competing visions, and their analysis provides useful and general insights to wider debates around community facility provision and change.

Chapter structure

Section **5.2** reviews cultural, recreational and infrastructural aspects of aquatic facilities. The review contrasts the high output on technical, recreational and management dimensions of aquatic facilities with the minimal discussion of their wider infrastructural, public good and social value considerations. It also contrasts an extensive international literature with a limited Australian output. These deficits are consistent with the limited interest in public policy aspects of municipal infrastructure in Australia. The literature, then, provides limited support for evaluative exercises and holistic facility planning, a deficit this chapter and this thesis seeks to remedy. Section **5.3** examines the history of Victorian local authority provision of aquatic facilities, with particular attention to two phases of seasonal pool construction hinging around World War 2. The complex rationales for providing community facilities and the range of actors involved further cautions against the uncritical acceptance of arguments about council infrastructure decisions as political aggrandisement. This section tracks the development of concerns at state government level about the under-utilisation of seasonal pools and the desire for year-round facilities. This policy position is developed remarkably soon after the second and major phase of pool construction by a new, interventionist state government portfolio of youth, sport and recreation. The resulting state government subsidy for indoor pools marks the rise of multi-purpose leisure centres in Victorian municipalities. In one sense, then, local protests over pool closures that surface in the 1990s can be viewed as

an outcome of consecutive state-level policy manoeuvres concerned with the entrenchment of swimming as a life skill, equity of facility provision (particularly between urban and rural areas), and financial efficiency. The popularity of indoor leisure centres can be explained by factors such as their extended-hours and year-round availability, new ancillary services such as child-minding, a new emphasis on swimming for older people, and a wider shift in recreation preferences to "dry", programmed activities such as aerobic classes and weight training. Some municipalities have sought to offset the cost of their seasonal pools by remodelling sites to incorporate indoor facilities. Others have seen the two as alternatives, with the running costs of seasonal pools - increased by new requirements for capital investment in sun protection, safety equipment and disability access added to the costs of cyclical maintenance - weighing heavily against their continued operation. The development of property entrepreneurship at local government level, discussed in chapter 2, has brought interest in private finance mechanisms for the redevelopment of municipal aquatic facilities. While this strategy has proved successful in some cases, a sense that such policies indicated a loss of commitment by local authorities to public provision and local democracy lies at the heart of several pool campaigns. The fiscal stress experienced by local authorities in the last decades of the twentieth century, and continued outcry over pool closures, especially in rural areas, has done much to shape a new state-level policy focus on investment in community facilities by the Bracks Labor government, eager to distance itself from its predecessor through a communitarian policy stance. However, this section concludes, rising land values, the limited service capacity of seasonal pools, and new concerns over water use, suggest a difficult future for these facilities.

Sections **5.4** and **5.5** look in greater detail at issues of provision, rationalisation and renewal of aquatic facilities by examining two case studies in the City of Moonee Valley: the Queen's Park seasonal pool and the Ascot Vale Sports and Fitness Centre (AVSFC). Section **5.4** outlines the history of the Queen's Park pool, a characteristic fusion of Olympic standards and municipal engineering.

This case study examines the original rationales of the Essendon council for pool construction, suggesting that if infrastructure decisions have long-lived consequences, some of the rationales behind those decisions also have enduring value. This section also analyses the circumstances surrounding an unsuccessful attempt to close the pool in 1994. Here it is argued that in addition to losing the service and social values of the facility, a lack of trust in the motivation and decision-making processes of the local authority was an important concern contributing to local community opposition. Section **5.5** analyses AVSFC as an example of the type of year-round, multi-use facility which the Victorian government and many local authorities see as a preferred alternative for the limited service of seasonal pools. While the closure of existing facilities might be expected to attract controversy, MVCC's decision in 2004 to borrow funds to refurbish AVSFC was also contested. Aversion to public debt, ward-focussed councillor and resident sentiment, personal and political antagonisms amongst elected representatives, and concern over limited municipal and regional infrastructure planning were elements in this controversy. This section, though, places the redevelopment debate in a wider context by analysing the tension between the community and commercial elements of AVSFC that were present in its initial planning.

5.2 Swimming as Culture and Recreation

Swimming and Culture

The tensions arising from the clustering of a population on the edges of the world's driest permanently inhabited continent have seen themes of aridity and water strongly expressed across the span Australia's cultural outputs. The beach features frequently as a *mise en scene* in Australian literature, visual arts, television and film (Dutton 1985; Fiske, Hodge et al. 1987; Huntsman 2001). Connections between surf lifesaving, masculinity and nationhood have been explored by several historians (Jaggard 1986; Booth 1998; Saunders 1998);

surfing as an Australian sub-culture (Pearson 1979; Booth 1994b; Jaggard 1997), surf lifesaving as a civic endeavour (Brawley 2001) and as a commercial realm (Lanagan 2002) have also been examined. The physical and metaphysical qualities of water are explored thematically by a number of fiction writers, most notably Tim Winton (1983; 1985) and Robert Drewe (1983; 1991; 2003), and in Peter Weir's 1977 film *The Last Wave*. The duality of water - danger and life-source - is represented most famously by the drowning of A B Patterson's swagman in a billabong. Richard Flanagan's *Death of a River Guide* (1994) is an extended meditation on this dualism. Pierce (1999) has analysed the theme of the lost child in Australian culture; the theme of the drowning child or adult awaits a full critical exposition, but its salience in fiction is indicative of widely-held real-life fears that gave rise to mass swimming education campaigns.

Early twentieth-century journalistic, literary and visual representations of Australian swimming, especially competitive swimming, conform to Sprawson's (1993) cultural analysis of the swimmer as hero, although the influence of vitalism, eugenics and nationalism on swimming and aquatic recreation in Australia overshadows the classicism that in Sprawson's analysis inspired the revival of swimming in nineteenth century England (also see Rodwell 1999). Classicism and vitalism fuse in the modern Olympic movement. The Melbourne *Herald*, lionising hometown Olympic medallist Frank Beaurepaire, wrote in 1910 "[a] few years ago, Beaurepaire was physically weak, the sea has made him a bronze Hercules…[i]f all young Australians were like Beaurepaire, we should be like the Greeks of Plato's time" [67]. Sprawson's account of the upbringing of a later Australian Olympic champion, Murray Rose, indicates the persistent association of classical motifs with swimming:

> Rose's mother was to write that his most prized possessions as a boy were his 'much worn' books by Ancient Greek writers. 'These he studied and thought about constantly,'

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[67] Extract from *The Herald*, no date, Frank Beaurepaire Scrapbook 1910-11, p.199, Beaurepaire Collection, Australian Gallery of Sport and Olympic Museum, Melbourne.

while she brought him up on a diet of seaweed, sesame, and sunflower seeds, to imbue
him with the 'Greek reverence for a disciplined mind and a perfected physique.' (p.12)

Cecil Healy, Australian swimming record-holder and representative at the 1906
and 1912 Olympic games, founded the "Anti-Lunch Club" to encourage mid-day
swimming amongst Sydney businessmen at the Domain Baths and campaigned
for the right to swim at any hour of the day at local beaches. Killed in battle in
1918, his obituaries drew parallels between swimming, national fitness and
imperialism. "He fought for freedom of the surf" lamented the Sydney Morning
Herald (Anonymous 1919; Rodwell and Ramsland 2000).

The photographer Max Dupain (especially *Portrait of a Boy in Sunlight* 1936,
Sunbaker 1937, *The Floater* c1940, *At Newport* 1952) represented swimming
and beach culture through a modernist lens that, while framing aquatic recreation
as typically Australian, was linked stylistically with other idealist and nationalist
representations of naturalism, swimming and the mesomorphic body (Dupain
1986; Crombie 1999). In the mid-twentieth century books by Australian swimming
coaches suggest the degree to which success in the sport depended on
discipline and competitiveness, traits that could curb teenage delinquency or
provide an arena in which young persons could triumph over adverse home
environments (Knox 1962; also see Fingleton 2002).

The late twentieth century mediatisation and commercialisation of swimming,
which has positioned elite swimmers (notably Ian Thorpe) as brand spaces and
entrepreneurs as well as national types, overshadows the earlier and broader
cultural significance of swimming. Match races, sometimes between swimmers of
different nationalities and conducted on almost any expanse of water, often drew
large crowds. Diving and acrobatic displays in water were popular, particularly
when they featured international figures such as Annette Kellerman. Conversely,
the danger of drowning or shark attack in an era where relatively few people
could swim or swim in safe places was signified by public subscriptions

rewarding rescuers – Ned Kelly and Frank Beaurepaire two well-known Australians thus rewarded.

While Australians had enjoyed success in Olympic swimming competition since 1900, the 1956 games in Melbourne consolidated swimming's popularity as organised sport and community recreation in Australia, Victoria especially. McDonald (1993) observes that spectators queued for up to an hour to watch training sessions featuring Australian swimmers at the new pool built for the games by the Victorian government in Batman Avenue, Melbourne. This was an era of major public swimming pool provision and rising participation. It also produced new commercial ventures that suggested the municipal pool might in a small way rival the beach within the sphere of youth culture. In the 1970s Melbourne radio station 3XY toured pop star Issi Dye and his band around Melbourne pools, negotiating deals with councils for the distribution of Coca Cola products in the process [68]. The best known example of the creative engagement with a municipal pool though, is Helen Garner's novel *Monkey Grip* (1977, later adapted to film), with its sustained use of the Fitzroy pool as location and of *aqua profonda* as a metaphor for the troubled relationship of the story's protagonists. Garner's work is cited in Heritage Victoria's assessment of the historic significance of the *aqua profonda* sign [69]. The pool itself is not registered by Heritage Victoria – a curious but unexceptional disconnection between public culture and the physical settings in which it is enacted. In opposition to Garner's use of the municipal pool as a symbol of leisure and youth culture, Rowan Woods' 2005 Australian film *Little Fish* features central character Tracey Heart swimming laps as a regime to assist withdrawal from heroin addiction. Together, these works reinforce the long-standing tension between the social and the disciplinary perceptions of pools and swimming in Australian culture (Gray 1984:30; Huntsman 2001).

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[68] Clyde Simpson to Town Clerk, Essendon City Council, 13 Rocktober (sic) 1975, PROV VPRS12750/P0001, Unit 25 City of Essendon, Essendon Swimming Pool 26/13.
[69] Victorian Heritage Register, "Aqua Profonda" Sign, Fitzroy Pool, H1687.

Swimming and Recreation

Historians have drawn different conclusions about the prevalence of swimming as a recreation in colonial Australia, alternatively remarking on its popularity (Huntsman 2001:19) and on the reluctance of colonists to enter the water (Inglis 1974:126). Official attitudes to swimming shift between prohibitionist views on its indolence and immorality, and its promotion as a rational recreation and life skill. These attitudes underpin the emphasis on training and competition that was associated with the promotion of swimming from the late nineteenth century and the relatively recent infrastructural provision in Australia for water play (Methven 1989). Early regulation sought to enforce a ban on daylight bathing, then gender segregation and dress codes to enforce propriety and moral conduct. The Fitzroy Public Baths, constructed in 1908, was probably Victoria's last municipal pool with separate male and female swimming facilities; although segregated swimming continued for some years, and was re-organised along different lines from the 1980's, discussed in detail below. The first statistical evidence on swimming participation was produced by the ABS in 1975 (Methven 1989:71). While definitional vagaries recommend a cautious reading of such data (Methven 1989:228), recent ABS figures show that swimming had the highest participation of children (14 years and under) of any ABS-recognised sport or physical activity in Australia, and the third highest for adults [70]. The first ranking physical activity for adults as measured by ABS, walking, requires no special infrastructural provision and incurs no transport or admission costs, adding further weight to the statistics on swimming.

The analytical literature on Australian swimming emphasises its sporting dimension, through institutional histories of state swimming associations (Clarkson 1990; McDonald 1993; Daly 1998) and cultural analysis of competitive swimming (Osmond and Phillips 2004; Rockwell 2005; Osmond and Phillips

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[70] Australian Bureau of Statistics 1301.0 Year Book Australia, 2005, Table 12.33 Children's Participation in Selected Organised Sports 2003; Table 12.30 Adult Participation in Selected Sports and Physical Activities, 2002.

2006). Several historians have taken an interest in the cultural and health aspects of bathing and swimming (Bailey 1992; White 2004; McDermott 2005). Despite its promotion as a recreation and prominence in extra-curricular education, the first (and so far only) major Australian-based academic study of the recreational aspects of swimming appeared in 1989 (Methven 1989). Methven's study is central to this chapter for two reasons: its uniqueness as a piece of research, and its engagement with an emerging critique in leisure policy of welfarist arguments for facility provision, in favour of a more user-centred, public choice model. While the date of this study points to the relatively recent development of both recreation planning in local government and leisure studies in academe (a point discussed in further detail in chapter 7 with regard to public open space), the absence of any other major studies in this field defies the profile of aquatic recreation at local authority level and the intense policy activity surrounding the provision of aquatic facilities.

Methven (p.228) distinguishes swimming as sport, with funding and infrastructural provision made largely by state governments, and swimming as community recreation, supported by local government provision. In terms echoed by the Hawker 'cost-shifting' inquiry fifteen years later, Methven's study, which focuses on Adelaide and Melbourne, identifies opportunism rather than planning as the guiding approach of local authorities in this field. Local authorities, she argues, acquired swimming pools to keep pace with neighbouring councils, a race for status that was exacerbated by the establishment of the 'Olympic' pool as a facility standard [71]. With such superficial decision-making, Methven argues, it was unsurprising that the full costs of swimming pools were not disclosed, and councils eventually began questioning their operating deficits (p.230). Methven's assertion that "…no reasons of any kind usually accompan[ied] the recommendation to have a pool" (p.230) is critically examined in Sections 5.3 and

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[71] The reference to Olympic standard or Olympic sized pools is colloquial, but is used throughout this chapter in recognition of its widespread use in Australia. The standard used in Olympic competition is set by the Federation Internationale de Natation (FINA), the governing body of world amateur swimming. A more precise reference, then, would be the FINA standard pool.

5.4 below. However, Methven concedes that while there was some basis to the criticism that councils have been overly concerned with facility provision rather than recreation opportunities, she acknowledges that aquatic recreation is more dependent on facility provision than other forms of community recreation (p.208).

While recreation planning academics have largely ignored aquatic recreation, it has become a significant topic in public health literature, reflecting the growing awareness of social and environmental factors on health. A major area of interest has been the prevention of drowning, especially of infants and children who are statistically over-represented in drowning morbidity (Cass, Ross et al. 1991; Mackie 1999). Discussion has focussed on water safety (Mitchell and Haddrill 2004) and regulatory regimes for backyard pools (Scott 2003), reflecting the high percentage of infant and child drowning deaths which occur in private swimming pools. The rising numbers of backyard pools in Australia raises important questions about whether private pool use substitutes for public pool use [72]. This issue becomes topical with restrictions on domestic water usage, which raises questions about the sustainability of private swimming pools, the loss of an active recreation opportunity, and rising demand on public facilities. In addition, a study showing the incidence of drowning deaths of Tasmanian children in dams and ponds (Riley, Larsen et al. 1996) highlights the limited, urban-centric focus of discussion around swimming and swimming pools, public or private.

A second area of discussion in public health literature relates to the health benefits of swimming. Numerous Australian and international studies have grouped swimming with other forms of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity in demonstrating their positive effects on maintaining physical and mental health and preventing the onset of chronic disease. However there is limited discussion of swimming or aquatic recreation alone, a significant contrast with the

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[72] Swimming in private pools as a recreation activity grew at almost twice the rate of swimming in public pools between 1994-2001 (the latest available figures) and may have expanded further with increasing capitalisation of domestic dwellings in the years since. (figures from Lynch, R. and A. J. Veal (2001). Australian Leisure. French's Forest NSW, Longmann.

large published output relating to walking and the use of public open space which is analysed in chapter 7 (for exceptions see Audera, Peart et al. 2000; Wen, Thomas et al. 2002). Fullagar (2003) argues that swimming is linked with other forms of active physical recreation by a public health discourse based on calculative logic and self-scrutiny ("30 minutes per day, on most days" as specified by the Australian Sports Commission's *Active Australia* policy) that reduces embodied activity to bio-mechanics. While Fullagar's critique focuses on the under-valuing of women's leisure experiences, it also confirms tensions between swimming and play, and between the individual and the social as components of aquatic recreation. Renewed attention to physical education in schools to counter growing rates of childhood obesity, though, has not brought any special focus on the prevalence and effects of school swimming programs (although see wider discussion of physical education in Victorian schools in Kirk and Twigg 1995; Moran 1998).

Consistent with the limited attention on the health impacts of swimming, there is a limited and scattered literature on the social impacts of recreational swimming. Methven's pioneering work sheds some light on the sociology of swimming. She provides survey evidence that the majority of private swimming pool owners acquired their pools to provide a home-based recreation outlet for children and to keep children under surveillance (Methven 1989:350). Teaching children to swim was a lesser reason; indeed, Methven found that many private pool owners took children to public facilities for swimming lessons (pp.339-40). Methven found that survey respondents in all categories (both users and non-users of public pools) expressed concern about unsocial behaviour at public pools (pp.346-7), although she points out the irony associated with the major reason cited for non-use of public pools, over-crowding, given an overall pattern of falling attendances (p.341). James (2000) disaggregates the 'public' at public pools by surveying the experiences of young women at these facilities. Many of her respondents were discomforted by their self-consciousness and the male gaze, which affected the quantity and quality of their participation. Recognising the influence of early

experiences on life-long recreation patterns, James offers a range of suggestions in areas of facility design, access and regulations, and the demeanour of other swimmers (male and female) to enhance participation. James' study links to discussion of the experiences of women in public open space discussed in chapter 7, and highlights the conflictual and sometimes oppressive nature of the public domain and the importance of the skilled management of behaviours at public facilities.

The chapter introduction observed that in recent years public swimming pools have become an object of intense policy interest, through twin and sometimes competing foci on financial efficiency and social outcomes. Debate surrounding the provision of pools in remote indigenous communities, most notably in shared responsibility ("no school-no pool") agreements between Indigenous communities and the Commonwealth and state governments, has produced an empirical and policy literature that has expanded the modest Australian output on swimming pools. The health benefits, especially in combatting chronic eye and ear conditions (Audera, Peart et al. 2000; Lehmann, Tennant et al. 2003) have been documented; the social benefits claimed from the provision of swimming pools (as far as it is possible to separate these from health-related concerns) have been assessed as the social cohesion encouraged by sporting events, crime prevention, increased school attendance, reduction of alcohol consumption, training and employment opportunities, and self-esteem and sense of purpose (Beneforti and Cunningham 2002:12). Health researchers have been forthright in raising ethical, public health and citizenship dilemmas surrounding the conditional provision of what might be considered items of basic infrastructure in other parts of Australia (Collard, D'Antoine et al. 2005; Kowal 2006), although, as discussed in chapter 4, the conditional provision of community facilities has been commonplace in Australia.

The benefits to be obtained from swimming in metropolitan areas are, obviously, dependent on access to swimming pools. There is limited available research to

show the way in this area (Kavanagh, Goller et al. 2005). Methven (pp. 336-8) concludes from data obtained in a survey of catchments for recreational swimming in the Salisbury (South Australia) local government area that swimming pools are essentially local facilities. Very few people, she argues, are prepared to travel for longer than 20 minutes to a pool regardless of travel mode. This rule applies with greater force to schools, she argues, with travel time and costs, and opportunity costs for other curriculum areas, particular considerations on the inclusion of swimming in physical education curricula (p. 274). These interdependencies raise questions about the role of community facilities as foci of neighbourhoods or localities and, conversely, the impact of trends towards larger, fewer recreational facilities intended to serve regional catchments. School decisions may have a significant impact on pool attendance figures. For expensive facilities such as swimming pools, it can be concluded, the balance between accessibility and cost must be carefully weighed.

Swimming and Infrastructure

The overwhelming emphasis of available literature concerning municipal swimming pools is on design and technical operation. While this can be attributed to the complex operational and regulatory requirements of pools, it also shows the influence of historical links between swimming pools and municipal engineering. Methven argues that well into the 1980s pool attendants were effectively employed as technicians rather than recreation officers or facility managers. Concern over falling attendances, new leisure planning and management theory, the move to replace seasonal pools with year-round multi-purpose leisure centres (also reflected in the institutional change from the Swimming Pool Superintendents Association to the Australian Institute of Swimming and Recreation Centre Managers) were influences for change. Thereafter, Methven comments, the operational focus began to shift towards facility management and marketing (p.239).

What can the development of the public pool as a physical form tell us about the social, educational and civic roles of swimming? Van Leeuwen (2000) argues that swimming pools make an indispensable contribution to the reading of twentieth-century architectural modernism. There is some support of this argument in Australian heritage citations. The Australian Heritage Commission's *Register of the National Estate* includes ten public swimming pools. The Victorian Heritage Register lists three municipal swimming pools, along with one state government-owned and one university facility. The assessment for the only state registered municipal pool built in the first half of the twentieth century (in the central Victorian town of Maryborough, 1940), emphasises the functionalist design that responded to modernist concerns for hygiene, efficiency, safety and moral formation [73]. Similarly, Sydney-based municipal engineer C J Chesterfield, discussing his 1930 design for a seasonal pool in suburban Chatswood, observed the positive hygiene measures achieved by routing swimmers through lavatories, showers and foot baths prior to pool entry (Chesterfield 1931:67-9). By mid-century this health emphasis was replaced by a focus on design and construction as distinctions between bathing and swimming widened, municipalities enjoyed greater prosperity, and facility design was more commonly contracted out to architectural firms. The several swimming pools registered by Heritage Victoria that were built in the second half of the twentieth century are cited for their stylistic innovation and construction techniques rather than their didactic built form [74].

In the 1970s concerns about declining attendances and rising operating subsidies of seasonal pools in Australia brought interest in new pool designs and new user cohorts. Policy moves at state government level steered local authorities towards the construction of indoor, multi-purpose aquatic centres. Building on an existing research interest in extending the use of seasonal pools (Milton 1966), the energy crisis of the mid-1970s prompted new research into

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[73] Victorian Heritage Register, Maryborough Municipal Olympic Swimming Complex H1319.
[74] Victorian Heritage Register, Harold Holt Swim Centre, Malvern H0069, Olympic Swimming Stadium H1977, Beaurepaire Centre H1045.

solar heating, energy-efficient water handling, and lightweight enclosures. The programming literature acknowledged a shift towards play (through free-form pool design and the provision of water play equipment, for example), breaking from rectangular configurations and lane divisions. A second shift that can be observed in the literature is the change in emphasis on swimming as an activity for the youthful and able-bodied, to a suitable recreation for infants, older people and people with disabilities [75].

Framed by an analysis of the declining patronage of seasonal pools and preferences for private leisure consumption, Methven's work is generally scathing of the design and services offered by municipal pools, especially seasonal ones. "Most pools are clinically unfriendly places with no attractions whatsoever apart from the water…They should be places to meet and enjoy company and for watching other people in action, rather than places to go and get wet and cold" she railed (p.282), singling out the new East Keilor Leisure Centre as "one of the bleakest and windiest" (p.287) [76]. Seasonal pools, she observed, "…were built on the premise that Australia enjoyed a permanent heatwave and people would always wish to cool off" (p.299). Yet, she argued for the value of seasonal pools as public open space, claiming they provide "surrogate garden areas" in high-density residential areas, and a safer alternative to public parks for "sunbathing" (p.271). Methven provides no evidence for these claims, but data from the Moonee Valley interview sample (discussed in chapters 7 and 8) support the general tenor of her remarks that seasonal pools are valued for their open space qualities.

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[75] This section is largely based on Methven's bibliography, which is the most extensive record of pre-1989 publications on swimming pools in Australia.

[76] The East Keilor Leisure Centre was built by the former City of Keilor in 1985. Its current configuration is a 50 metre outdoor pool, diving pool, learners and toddlers pools, a 25-metre indoor pool, gymnasium, weight room and crèche. Built on the region's highly reactive clay substrate, the foundation showed evidence of movement and cracking from the time of its construction. The City of Moonee Valley assumed ownership of this facility following the 1994 municipal boundary changes.

Methven suggests several reasons for what she considered to be poor facility design: little policy attention was given to sport and recreation until the 1970s, the activity of "swimming" was narrowly defined and corresponded with the single-use focus of the facility, local authorities emphasised physical rather than social planning, municipal engineers or public works departments were in charge of building local facilities, and Australia was slow to incorporate progressive international thinking on pool design and client focus. It might be expected that new professional cadres (for example in recreation, arts and culture, health and community services) would seek to bolster their positions in local and state government administrations through criticism of the utilitarian and functionalist approach of municipal engineers. However, Methven's claim is well substantiated[77], and the design process of AVSFC, detailed in Section 5.5, provides further empirical support. The claim was also acknowledged by the engineering profession (Local Government Engineers 1973). Private sector interest in this area pointed to an emerging market for leisure centre construction and a desire by contractors to see improvement in the quality of municipal tender documents (Gutteridge 1981).

Extensive surveys of aquatic facilities undertaken by state government recreation departments in the 1970s and 1980s (Sharp 1977; Methven 1978; Division of Sport and Recreation 1980; Martin and Prior 1981) provided benchmarks to assess the viability of seasonal pools in a period of declining attendances and competition with private provision of aquatic and other recreation forms, and point to an emerging concern over local authority finances and lack of infrastructure coordination. A sharpening focus on the physical and financial performance of aquatic facilities indicated a shift in policy rhetoric from concern about the productive uses of leisure in post-industrial society which underpinned the establishment of sport and recreation portfolios in the 1970s, to the language of efficiency and public choice in the 1980s (Schor 2006). Methven (p.372) cites a

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[77] Methven's *Appendix B – Swimming Pool Bibliography* (p. 444-465) has details.

1983 UK government publication on sport that reflects the changing expectations placed on leisure managers and facilities:

> The big challenge to leisure managers is to be wholly professional, to run complexes and activities to make them as viable as possible, to demonstrate that when leisure is well packaged, well-marketed and vigorously sold it need not be a hand-held amenity.

If the public good rationale for funding local swimming pools was under challenge, how was the viability of aquatic facilities to be assessed, especially in a tightening regulatory climate in the areas of water quality, access and public safety? In 1990, informed by new service quality and business performance instruments, a group of South Australian academics developed CERM-PI [78], a performance instrument for recreation facilities that became an industry standard in Australian local government leisure and aquatic centres, and attracts international interest (Howat, Crilley et al. 2002; Howat, Crilley et al. 2005). CERM-PI measures facility performance in four areas: services (including visitors, program range, catchment), marketing, organisation (staff costs, training, facility maintenance, energy and water costs) and finance (fees, income per metre of facility space, surplus/subsidy). These measures, in the developer's view, incorporate both operational and social objectives, the latter assessed as visitation ("participation") from the local catchment. A recent study by CERM-PI's developers suggests that public aquatic facilities with only seasonal pools will attract significantly fewer "customers" than multi-purpose centres with indoor pools (Howat, Crilley et al. 2005). As the authors note, this finding provides industry-wide data supporting a significant trend in local authority provision – in 2002-03 it was estimated that around 100 multi-purpose aquatic centres were refurbished or newly opened in Australia (Benton cited in Howat, Crilley et al. 2005:7). By 2006 the chief executive of the peak body of Victorian aquatic

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[78] Centre for Environmental and Recreation Management, University of South Australia http://business.unisa.edu.au/management/cermpi/default.asp .

facilities was suggesting that the seasonal pool as a stand-alone facility was "doomed" [79].

Public Good, Private Markets and Civil Society

In recent years a significant commitment of public funding by local authorities has been made in an area in which a private market is increasingly active, through gymnasia and pools catering mostly for swimming instruction [80]. The implementation of the National Competition Policy by the Council of Australian Governments in 1995 was followed by several complaints from private leisure operators against public facilities, forcing local authorities to identify and defend the public interest basis of their provision. In broad terms, local authorities relied on access, equity and social welfare rationales to justify subsidised pools (Local Government Division 2002) [81]. Aquatic facilities not intended specifically for swimming instruction have market failure characteristics - there is no evidence that private operators can supply these goods at a profit. While the leisure literature has often cited the production of good citizens as a rationale for public recreation services (Ravenscroft 1993; Coalter 1998), in an era of diversified leisure choices, Coalter (2000) has questioned policy assumptions that public facilities develop civic capacities and competencies and private ones do not. Glover (2002:205) argues that competing claims by welfare liberals for greater state intervention and market liberals for less have been reconciled through government support for civil society. This analysis provides a useful framework for understanding the trend amongst Victorian local authorities to contract out management of aquatic facilities to the YMCA – a third sector organisation with a

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[79] Andrew Whittaker, CEO, Aquatics and Recreation Victoria, *From Where to Here?,* Presentation to Aquarec 2006, National Aquatics and Recreation Conference, Melbourne.
[80] In Victoria there are 148 privately-owned swimming pools catering for public uses listed in a database of swimming pools in Victoria compiled by AquaRec Victoria and presented by Whittaker in *From Where to Here*, see note 16 for details. All subsequent figures in this chapter on swimming pool construction are taken from this database.
[81] Victorian Competition and Efficiency Council findings on competitive neutrality complaints, which include a number concerning aquatic facilities and leisure centres, are at http://www.vcec.vic.gov.au/CA256EAF001C7B21/0/F62F31D6E3AA12DCCA256ECA001A8A80?OpenDocument , last accessed 26 September 2006.

pro-social or community orientation rather than an exclusively profit-seeking rationale. The limited diversification of facility management models in the past several decades has been principally guided by financial considerations and changing views on the role of local authorities in service delivery. Glover's 2002 Canadian study investigated empirical links between citizenship orientation and facility management or "production" models (direct provision, contracting out, and co-provision, involving community and local government partnership), concluding that co-production was associated more strongly with social and political citizenship than the other two models. Although Glover focussed on community centres as his research sites, his findings are pertinent in the Australian setting to aquatic and leisure centres, given that their range of management models is consistent with his typology.

The above discussion has identified a range of sources that establish the significant cultural position of aquatic recreation in Australia, and analysed relevant research literature dealing with policy aspects of aquatic recreation and the management of its physical infrastructure. The discussion has contrasted the widespread provision of public swimming infrastructure by local authorities with a limited research interest in the subject, despite the centrality of aquatic facilities to debates over recreation, local infrastructure management and rationalisation. A second contrast that can be noted in the above discussion is the emphasis on the quantitative performance of aquatic facilities, evidenced through the extensive use of CERM-PI, and the limited conceptual and empirical attention to qualitative values of public facilities. A number of questions arise from this discussion: why was the FINA-standard, seasonal swimming pool installed as the municipal standard, and why did it enjoy such a brief period of policy and funding support? Was this a case of local political aggrandisement, or are there other explanations that might shed a more generous light on the history of municipal infrastructure management? What are the losses and the benefits involved in closing or remodelling seasonal pools? Why have some proposals to close or remodel existing local pools been so controversial? Can the regeneration

process be managed more productively? Conversely, what evidence is there to support claims by the Victorian government that public re-investment in local pools will contribute to community building? The absence of empirical research in this field provides little assistance in answering these questions. The remainder of this chapter attempts, through an analysis of the provision of municipal aquatic facilities in Victoria and two case studies in the Moonee Valley region, to remedy this situation.

5.3 The Provision of Municipal Swimming Pools with Reference to Victoria

The distinctions between bathing and swimming, natural coastal or river formation and built facility, and community, commercial and public enterprise are sufficiently fluid to cast doubt over claims for the 'first' municipal baths [82]. Many early bathing facilities and swimming clubs were private establishments (Vamplew, Moore et al. 1992:344; Daly 1998:13; Huntsman 2001:33-6). In Melbourne, marine baths were operating near the St Kilda Pier in 1853, with structures such as boats and bathing machines used to enclose bathers. The Municipal Institutions Act 1854 (Vic) empowered local authorities to provide public baths, along with public health measures such as water supply, sanitation and drainage, and cultural facilities such as museums, libraries and places of public recreation (Dunstan 1984:56). Municipal public baths were provided in Melbourne and Adelaide from around 1860 (Dunstan. p.80, Daly p.15).

Competitive swimming was well established by the last decades of the nineteenth century, institutionalised through state-level swimming associations, beginning with New South Wales in 1892. The relaxation of prohibitions on surf bathing quickly led to the establishment of surf clubs, and by 1910 surf lifesaving associations were established in all Australian states (Daly 1998:44). Olympic success from 1900, domination of world records, and feats of endurance

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[82] The Spring Hill Baths, Brisbane (1886) is claimed to be the first municipal baths complex in the Southern Hemisphere - http://www.splash.com.au/pools/spring_hill/main.html, last accessed 6 October 2006.

swimming contributed to the popularity of the sport in early twentieth century Australia, and to agitation for public provision of swimming pools and swimming instruction. In the early twentieth century municipal action reinforced swimming in school physical education curricula from the late nineteenth century by building new swimming facilities, improving existing ones in rivers and coastal areas, and prohibiting swimming in dangerous waters. Daly (p.15) notes that the Adelaide City Council, concerned about drownings in the Torrens River, encouraged swimming by providing free entry to the Adelaide Baths. Concern over unsupervised swimming in natural waterways was a strong motivation for rural councils and shires to construct pools. Technological developments in cement and its local manufacture (James and Chanson 2000), limited local authority budgets, and the oversight of municipal engineers combined to produce utilitarian structures. Conversely, Huntsman's (2001) and Booth's (1994) accounts of the early history of surf bathing and life-saving suggest that local authorities, at least in Sydney, were principally concerned with enforcing moral standards in public bathing areas, leaving the provision of facilities to surf-bathing clubs. Municipal action in this sphere was restricted to authorising clubs to build accommodation on council land, sanctioned on the grounds that they were providing a public service. Booth (p.238) notes that bathers referred to the first clubs as "dressing-shed syndicates", providing evidence of the significance of club provision of civic facilities that is a theme in this study.

In the first half of the twentieth century, promoters of swimming competency began to focus on the provision of modest-sized aquatic facilities at schools in addition to provision by local government authorities. Whereas in 1847 a Sydney commentator criticised school truants for "learning to swim instead of learning to write" (cited in Huntsman 2001:20), by the 1930s the secretary of the South Australian Amateur Swimming Association, A E Kenny, argued that "…baths should be considered as important as playgrounds", arguing for "school" pools not Olympic standard ones (Daly 1998:50). Similarly, T I Thompson, a physical education instructor with the Queensland Department of Education, argued in his

Popular Handbook of Swimming that schools should build special 25 metre pools, rather than "scaled-down" versions of community pools (Thompson 1956:50). Published in Melbourne in the Olympic year, Thompson's book gives a useful insight to the development of thinking about the benefits of swimming and the nature of swimming facilities. Swimming was popular, he argued, because of "the out-of-doors temperament" of the "average Australian", more than half of whom lived less than one hour's travel from the sea. "Every single person owes it to himself to lean how to swim and recognise hazardous situations which are beyond his capacity" he argued (p1).

Thompson was writing at a time when access to public swimming facilities highlighted the contingent definition of the "average Australian" in some places. The University of Sydney *Students Action for Aborigines*' (SAFA) 1965 'freedom ride' through western and coastal New South Wales towns included campaigns to obtain admission for indigenous people to public swimming pools in Moree and Kempsey (Curthoys 2002). The Moree situation is worthy of a brief recap for the light it sheds on the cultural and political symbolism of swimming pools. Public bathing facilities in Moree date from 1895, when a bore tapped thermal mineral springs. The council built a more elaborate facility known as the Bore Baths in 1913 which became a successful tourist attraction. In 1950 the council passed a resolution excluding indigenous people from the baths, reasoning that "…the preservation of the thermal baths for the exclusive use of white patrons is vital to the town's prosperity" (Curthoys, p.118). In 1960, a Moree councillor unsuccessfully sought to have the resolution rescinded. Opponents argued that the exclusion was for hygiene reasons, specifically to prevent the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases. Some concession, though, was made in admitting Indigenous students in school or organised sporting groups (Curthoys, p.123). With the colour bar coming under pressure from contradictions in the council's own reasoning, an alternative mechanism for segregation was found when the local Apex Club, supported by funding from the Aborigines Welfare Board of New South Wales and local donations, built a 25-metre pool at the Meehi mission, on

the eastern outskirts of Moree, although only half of the town's indigenous population lived there (Mulvaney 1989:216). The subsequent political action by SAFA received international media coverage and can be considered a turning point in race relations in Australia.

The Moree episode brings into focus questions about social citizenship that are pertinent to this thesis. These recur in debates around the conditional provision of swimming pools in indigenous communities today, as earlier discussion notes. The discussion of rights-based access to public swimming pools, though, is wider than this relatively well-known example. Does the ubiquity of municipal pools bring an expectation that all municipalities or shires should provide residents with such a facility? And, having effectively de-segregated public swimming pools through equal rights campaigns such as that of SAFA, what provision, if any, should be made for access to public swimming facilities for cultural groups whose beliefs prohibit mixed-gender bathing? A substantial and controversial jurisprudence over the past decade or so has exempted some Victorian local authorities from equal opportunity legislation to enable female or male only admission to local indoor pools at certain times, specified by caselaw as outside normal opening hours. This provision has been sought particularly to enable people of Islamic faith to use public pools – these are the cases that have attracted controversy, although the City of Brunswick's attempt to provide special access *within* normal hours was the initial flashpoint [83]. No statutory exemption has been required and no similar controversy generated for local authorities to hire out their indoor facilities after hours to other exclusive groups, such as naturalist ('nudist') clubs. This, rather, has been seen as an effective way to

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[83] The precedent reasoning for permitting discriminatory access only outside normal opening hours is contained in City of Brunswick [1992] EOC 92-450. Other exemptions are YMCA of Victoria - Exemption [2000] VCAT 425, City of Moonee Valley [1999] VCAT 655, Moonee Valley City Council (exemption) [2003} VCAT 2026, YMCA of Moreland [2003] VCAT 1255, City of Kingston Don Tatnell Leisure Centre [2003] VCAT 376, Moreland City Council Fawkner Leisure Centre (Anti Discrimination) [2006] VCAT 1807, St Albans Leisure Centre and Sunshine Swim and Leisure Centre (Exemption) (Anti Discrimination) [2006] VCAT 298.

garner additional revenue [84]. This discussion can be connected with Booth's (1994) observation that early surf-bathing and swimming had moments of re-segregation. The history of aquatic recreation, then, might be written not as a gradual enlargement of the swimming public, achieved through de-segregation and encouragement of swimming competence for all, but as an interplay between impulses of exclusivity and universality.

In Victoria, the development and nature of municipal swimming facilities have been influenced as much by external forces and state policy as local preferences. The account offered below identifies and analyses three of these: the influence of Olympian, swimming instructor and Melbourne city mayor Frank Beaurepaire, Melbourne's hosting of the 1956 Olympic Games, and the development of policy and funding provisions by the Victorian Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation.

 "A swimming conscience has been aroused…" – Frank Beaurepaire and Community Effort

Olympic swimmer and industrialist Frank (later Sir Frank) Beaurepaire was a key figure in the promotion of swimming and the construction of local pools in Victoria. The son of fruiterers from an inner Melbourne bayside suburb, Beaurepaire broke New South Wales' dominance of male competitive swimming when he won an Australian title in 1907 at the age of 16. He won two medals at the London 1908 Olympic games, adding a further four in the 1920 and 1924 games. In 1911 Beaurepaire took paid employment with the Victorian Department of Education as a swimming and physical education instructor, a move that resulted in revocation of his amateur status by Australian swimming

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[84] Examples of hiring to naturalist clubs are cited in Urban Design Division, Technical Services Department, City of Camberwell: Report on Tour of Inspection of Indoor Pool Facilities, Central Pool Redevelopment, City of Camberwell (undated), copy on PROV VRPS 12751/P0001/65, Essendon City Council Facilities and Recreation/Leisure Centre/Ascot Vale Leisure Centre/260/1/1 Part 1.

authorities and the International Olympic Committee until 1920 (Gordon 1994:71). One of Beaurepaire's activities in this role was to advise the Australian Infantry Forces on swimming instruction, underscoring the connections between militarism and swimming elaborated by Sprawson, discussed in Section 5.2 [85].

Beaurepaire is remembered as an Olympic competitor and official, swimming promoter and business figure, but his role as an educator and advocate for voluntary effort and local-level partnership deserves greater prominence. In 1929 Beaurepaire, by then prominent as founder of the Olympic Tyre Company and a Melbourne city councillor, joined with the Melbourne *Herald* newspaper in a campaign to promote swimming education, travelling throughout Victoria to seek the agreement of local authorities and citizen committees to build swimming pools [86]. In a forward to a swimming instruction booklet, Beaurepaire paints a revealing picture of the political and sociological aspects of swimming in the era. Noting the scale of the program – in four summers around 45,000 people had been taught by 4,000 instructors, many of whom were volunteers - Beaurepaire the businessman engages in some social accounting:

> It would be difficult to assess the time thus given so freely. Certainly, it would amount to thousands of pounds. In addition, some hundreds of pounds worth of valuable work has been given in providing better facilities for swimming. What a pleasing example of the spirit of self sacrifice to help others. The result of this cheerful effort is that a swimming conscience has been aroused. In the minds of the people, there is an impression that there is something lacking in the child who does not show a love for the water, and a desire to learn swimming. (Beaurepaire and Cox 1933:np)

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[85] These connections re-emerged in Australian public debate during the second world war over concerns that Japanese soldiers were, as a result of their government's endorsement of swimming as a national sport and a major program of pool construction, better swimmers than their Australian combatants and thus better suited to fighting in the Malay archipelago and Melanesia. A major program of swimming pool construction on Australian military bases followed. (B R Galland, Hon Secy, NSW Amateur Swimming Association to F M Forde, Minister for Defence 1 August 1944, NAA MP742/1 323/1/1138).

[86] The *Herald* Learn to Swim campaign continued into the 1970s, replaced by the Vicswim program organised by the Victorian Aquatic Industry Council.

Beaurepaire's biographer records his influence behind the opening of public pools in Footscray, Brunswick, Carlton, North Melbourne, and the Olympic Pool in Batman Ave, Melbourne, as well 15 unspecified pools in country Victoria in 1929 alone (Lomas 1960:93-4). The dispersed or absent archival record in this area limits the possibility of fully testing this claim. Available statistics on municipal swimming pool construction during this period provide limited support. The AquaRec Victoria inventory of Victorian swimming pools (see note 18) identifies only eleven pools that were constructed in the state prior to 1939, although it is possible that some of the 36 pools in the inventory that are not dated may have also been built during this period. Beaurepaire's advocacy may also have coincided with the construction of public pools as a local government response to economic depression.

The concerns and activities of municipal engineering at the time offer an additional perspective to this claim of extensive pool construction in Victoria. Indicative is a higher degree thesis on municipal engineering by City of Willoughby (NSW) engineer C J Chesterfield (Chesterfield 1931), introduced earlier in this chapter. Chesterfield includes swimming pool construction in the range of subjects he considered covered "the major phases of Municipal activity", demonstrating "the type of technical work a Municipal Engineer is called to undertake – public service of the widest and finest kind" (p.1) [87]. Chesterfield contrasted the relatively high number of public pools in Melbourne with their lack of provision in Sydney, a fact he attributed to the popularity of Sydney's surf beaches. Chesterfield's thesis gives some indication of the high weighting of swimming pools amongst other municipal facilities (especially in Melbourne), providing support for the claim in the chapter introduction that pools are emblematic local public goods.

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[87] Chesterfield's subjects were town planning, mechanical handling of materials, freshwater swimming pools, and road construction. See also papers of Leslie Dale Fawckner, 1934-1960, State Library of Victoria MS 10999. Fawckner was Benalla Shire Engineer and the papers include his design for the Benalla Swimming Pool, a 50 yard seasonal pool that opened in 1956.

The extent to which the Olympic ideal and international swimming facility standards influenced the style of public swimming facilities promoted by Beaurepaire is difficult to gauge. A common length for public baths in Australia in the early twentieth century, for example the Melbourne City Baths (1904) and the Hawthorn Baths (1926), was 33 1/3 yards, although there were exceptions – the Essendon Baths (1915) was 50 yards in length. The separation between bathing and swimming, the emphasis on competitive swimming, and the growth of swimming as a local club sport, were key factors in the lengthening of pools. If municipal budgets were tight, construction economics and regulatory policies prevailing for much of the twentieth century were favourable. Relatively cheap or unvalued land and the willingness of local authorities to convert existing public open space, the use of municipal staff as facility designers, modest construction costs due to simple building and plant design, a relative freedom from compliance-related costs, limited competing demands on municipal budgets, and local fund-raising and voluntary effort all contributed to making such projects possible. However, Melbourne's hosting of the Olympic games in 1956 appears on available evidence to be the tipping point, when facilities constructed for major events, such as the Batman Street, Melbourne Olympic pool raised councillor and local resident expectations. This is examined below.

The Olympic Era

The major phase of municipal swimming pool construction occurs in the decades between 1950 and 1980, when a total of 170 of the 277 pools owned by Victorian local authorities were built. Australia's swimming success at the Melbourne 1956 Olympic Games contributed to the rising profile of swimming in Victoria, but should not be singled out as a causal factor. Beaurepaire's influence continued to be felt, although indirectly, as chairman of the Victorian Olympic Committee

and presenter of Melbourne's bid for the games [88]. Other demographic, sociological and policy influences on pool construction include increasing prosperity, population growth, pent-up demand for facility provision following depression and war, and, perhaps above all, the use of local facilities to forge a sense of community. Civic and commemorative impulses converged around municipal facilities in the early post-World War 2 years. Inglis notes that 90% of respondents to a 1944 Gallup poll asking "What kind of war memorial do you favour" voted for "useful" structures (Inglis 1998:352). Architectural modernity clashed with an earlier taste for commemorative monuments. War historian C.E.W. Bean formed a Parks and Playgrounds Movement which advocated recreation facilities as suitable memorials. Ever alert to co-funding opportunities for facility provision, Tasmanian local authorities took advantage of a funding program for memorial halls, and councils elsewhere encouraged tax-deductible donations by citizens (Inglis, pp. 354-5). The closure or redevelopment of war memorial pools in recent times has been contested by some local residents on the grounds that it involves de-sacralisation of the structures [89].

Specific statutory reference to Victorian local authority provision of swimming pools (as distinct from bathing facilities) first appears in the <u>Local Government Act 1958</u>. A revision of the earlier reference to municipal baths noted above, this nonetheless points to the profile of swimming as a local recreation. The significance of pools as municipal assets is evident in their addition as a separate subject of discussion in editions of Lonie's (later Lonie and Gifford's) *Victorian Local Government Handbook* – the classic reference to local government powers and legal authority – that appeared after the new act came into force. The authors venture a rare editorial opinion on the civic role of these facilities, pointing to the alliance of clubs and facilities promoted by local authorities during this period:

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[88] Beaurepaire died six months before the games commenced. A tangible legacy to swimming was his donation of £200,000 to the University of Melbourne for construction of its swimming pool and gymnasium, now listed on the Victorian Heritage Register.

[89] Pers comm, Kevin Pound, Sport and Recreation Victoria, 4 December 2006.

> The number of councils desiring to encourage swimming clubs to use their municipal swimmingpools [sic] is increasing. The development of swimming clubs is worth fostering from the municipal viewpoint. When properly conducted, these clubs do a great deal to foster an interest in swimming and to teach young children how to swim. (Lonie and Gifford 1964:225)

However, Lonie and Giffard counsel, swimming pools presented physical and moral dangers, and councils must use their regulatory powers in this field to prevent harm to patrons and minimise risk to councils.

> The proper preparation of the rules of conduct embodied in the by-laws, and the proper enforcement of those rules of conduct, can make the difference between an attractive swimmingpool and a swimmingpool that attracts undesirables. (p.225)

Institutionally, the promotion of competitive swimming grew in strength and organisational capacity in the early post-World War 2 years. By 1958, 26 metropolitan and 60 country swimming clubs were affiliated with the Victorian Amateur Swimming Association (VASA) (McDonald 1993:93). In that year, VASA toured two Dutch swimming champions throughout the state, further boosting the popularity of the sport. In 1964, the Victorian Women's Amateur Swimming Club (formed in 1908) merged with VASA.

Melbourne's successful staging of the Olympic games was at least partly due to state-level investment in sporting infrastructure, especially the Melbourne Cricket Ground and the Batman Avenue Olympic pool. The level and quality of this investment contrasts favourably with Adelaide's initially successful bid for the British Empire games in 1962, subsequently transferred by the international games body to Perth on the grounds of lack of suitable facilities. Successful major events conferred prestige on host cities, but set in motion competing forces that on the one hand raised facility standards and expectations for local authorities and on the other diverted potential sources of capital works funding to

state-level facilities. The influence of the Melbourne games cannot be assessed with any precision. The numbers of local pools constructed in the following decade suggests that, at the least, the games confirmed Olympic pools as a most desirable local recreation facility, especially in new suburbs with relatively high numbers of young people [90]. In the decade 1950-59, 54 pools were built in Victoria, most of them by local authorities, and 69 in the construction peak between 1960-69. Seasonal pool construction was encouraged by state-level subsidies to local authorities auspiced by the Department for Local Government. The minimal information on this program in the archival record allows for speculation that it was developed as an equity measure, to assist poorer councils or those on the urban fringe experiencing rapid population growth to acquire pools. However, this subsidy program and state-level policy support for seasonal pools was short-lived, overtaken by new portfolio arrangements and policy outlooks. This is examined in detail below.

Policy Tumble-turn: the Establishment of the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation

At the high point of seasonal pool construction, the Victorian state government began to take an interest in the new (to Australia) concept of multi-purpose leisure facilities, and established subsidy programs to steer local authorities away from further investment in what McDonald (1993:127) described in his history of the Victorian Amateur Swimming Association as "white elephants". According to McDonald (p.127), the change in Victorian government policy on local pools occurred around 1970, when the Minister for Local Government, Hon Rupert Hamer, responding to submissions from local authorities, introduced a subsidy to build indoor heated pools. By 1970 the Victorian Amateur Swimming Association began to lobby Minister Hamer "to rationalize and increase subsidy distribution for swimming pools" particularly by directing funds to outer metropolitan and

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[90] In 1976 44.53% of the Victorian population was aged under 25. (Victorian Yearbook, 1977).

country areas [91]. This program was superseded by a matched grant program administered by the newly created Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation (YSR). Established in December 1972, YSR emerged from the former Department of Social Welfare, which had a strong youth policy interest (Deane 1982). The terms of YSR's funding program were initially set by the short-lived Sports Promotion Act 1972, which aimed to establish a Victorian Sports Commission and divert royalties from a new state government gambling scheme on Australian rules football to fund sporting facilities. Multi-purpose sporting facilities, notes Deane (p. 42) were given priority. The football pools failed to attract patronage, and YSR was established as a more broadly-based administrative response, although one that was still heavily and ironically dependent on gambling revenue to promote more active recreational behaviour (Deane, p.74). Despite criticism of the portfolio configuration, especially the elevation of sport (this followed the example of the UK Department of Sport, established in 1969) and the exclusive link between youth and recreation, YSR's policy remit was broad and pioneering in Australian terms. Funding and promotional programs acted on new concerns about declining physical fitness and the unproductive use of leisure time – YSR's commissioning of the *Life. Be in It* campaign the most prominent example. YSR targetted local authorities in an endeavour to promote and coordinate active recreation, offering to subsidise half the salary of a municipal recreation officer (MRO). By 1979 the MRO scheme was funding 76 officers, although the Municipal Association of Victoria warned of the likelihood that councils would be left shouldering the burden of rising costs associated with the scheme (Deane, p.68; also see Cook and Szirom 1980). The funding scheme for multi-purpose leisure centres was a second major, if less co-ordinated, initiative. YSR provided matching grants for council allocations to such capital works, and also channelled funds from the Whitlam Federal Labor government's (1972-1975) Department of Tourism and Recreation to local

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[91] Hon Rupert Hamer to C T Edmunds MLA 12 Feb 1970, Victorian Amateur Swimming Association to Mayor, Essendon City Council, received 27 January 1970, PROV VPRS 12750/P000/25 City of Essendon/Essendon Swimming Pool 26/13 (June 1959-4 September 1974).

authorities for the same purpose. As the example of the AVSFC discussed below indicates, the attractiveness of these combined grants was a major factor in municipal capital works decision-making, and the YSR funding program encouraged a new and critical attitude to the useability and financial performance of seasonal pools.

One of YSR's most substantial achievements was to broaden the emphasis of aquatic recreation from swimming instruction and competition to water play, and from an emphasis on youth to all age swimming. For the first half of the twentieth century, swimming was regarded as an activity for young people, and its competitive rather than recreational aspect was emphasised. Conventional views on adult propriety, tracing back to the prohibition of daylight and mixed bathing, as well as the disciplinary attributes of swimming, retained their influence for many decades. The expansion of public swimming pools, especially year-round pools, coincided with widening participation in aquatic recreation. YSR encouraged aquatic recreation for babies and toddlers and emphasised the benefits of warm water exercise for the elderly or infirm. Most noticeably, the numbers of older swimmers began to increase, although this met with resistance from some local pool managers [92]. In 1973 the "masters" swimming movement began in Sydney, followed a year later by formation of the Australian Union of Senior Swimmers International (McDonald 1993:106).

YSR's strong interest in municipal pools springs from a range of sources, including new leisure theory articulated in early departmental planning documents, the interests and expertise of staff (Methven, whose work is cited above, was a former swimming instructor and YSR's first recreation adviser), survey work that pointed to the uncoordinated nature of pool development, rising costs and declining patronage of seasonal pools, and awareness of northern hemisphere developments in pool design and use. YSR's emerging policy

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[92] Methven (p.99n) notes the manager of the Harold Holt Memorial Swimming Pool in Malvern commented to her that he "hated oldies" and that pools were for young people.

interests, though, did not necessarily align with administrative or funding structures. As the AVSFC discussion below shows, local authorities sent administrators and elected officials interstate or overseas to investigate facility design. The available evidence suggests that discussions on the coordination and rationalisation of such facilities were organised less frequently - the provision of a capital works subsidy by YSR to individual councils worked against co-operation, as Methven (1989:180) observed.

YSR's funding program set a pattern for state-level contributions to local aquatic facilities that continued in direct form into the 1980s, and indirectly through the Community Facilities Fund set up by the Kennett Liberal government in the 1990s. The number of applications and amount of funds requested under this scheme by local authorities for pool refurbishment indicated an emerging infrastructural problem, which was addressed by the Department of Sport and Recreation (YSR's successor) with the establishment of the *Better Pools* funding scheme. In 2006 the Victorian government announced additional funding to keep rural pools open in drought affected areas, arguing for their social and recreational significance in small towns, a role that has not been as forcefully articulated for metropolitan pools [93]. Recent state-level policy action directed at rural pools can be interpreted to suggest a pre-conception of rural pools as social benefits and metropolitan pools as economic burdens. However, the inconsistency of state policy in this field is indicated by a decision to donate four portable pools acquired by the state government for the 2007 world swimming championships, held in Melbourne, to local authorities. The identification of beneficial community outcomes is a condition set by FINA for hosting this event. State government policy on local authority asset management and financial prudence, then, gave way to the prestige and short-term economic benefits garnered by an international sporting event. Local authorities were thus enrolled

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[93] "$12.5 M Drought Community Support Package Released", Media Release, Office of the Premier, 12 October 2006.

by the state government to assist in recouping costs and managing the political risk (criticism of wastage) associated with the event [94].

As the above discussion indicates, policy rationales for state intervention in local swimming provision have, in addition to the achievement of swimming competency, promoted its instrumental uses in the encouragement of volunteering and community building, the productive use of leisure, especially for young people, and personal well-being and social cohesion. Changes in the portfolio providing principal state-level oversight of municipal pools - from the Health Commission (which approved the construction of all public buildings under state health regulations), to the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation, to (from 2002) the Department for Victorian Communities – suggest the modulations of this policy ensemble, but confirm the overall consistency of its character. This background assists in examining in the following two sections the development and operations of two contrasting aquatic facilities in the Moonee Valley region. The case studies provide an empirical study of local pools within the complex and changing social, political and infrastructural contexts outlined above.

5.4 Queen's Park Pool

The introduction to this chapter argued that the construction of swimming pools has had considerable symbolic and instrumental value for local authorities, as an indicator of municipal progress and local authority commitment to the health and welfare of citizens. In this light, it is unsurprising that the Essendon City Baths were built soon after the conferral of city status on the Borough of Essendon in 1909.

Planning for the baths can be traced back to the initial development of Queen's Park, Moonee Ponds in 1890 [95]. Intermittent activity by borough administrators

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[94] Hon James Merlino: "12th FINA World Championships – Planning", Victorian Parliamentary Hansard, Legislative Assembly 15 February 2007, p. 372; Chris Johnston, "Melbourne's Slam Dunk", *The Age*, 8 December 2006, p.13.

over the next two decades identified a site, drawing protests from local residents that the baths would lower the value of surrounding properties [96]. A parcel of Crown land on the northern side of Queen's Park was subsequently reserved for the baths and a council depot [97]. Thus was established a connection between the park and an aquatic facility that, despite controversy over the alienation of parkland, persists. The little available information on the baths suggests they were, like most of the city's public works in the early twentieth century, designed by city engineer and town surveyor W M Pullar (1870-1951). The *Essendon Gazette* observed that construction of the baths was necessitated by "numerous reports of death by drowning in the Maribyrnong River", and their completion was "another step in the direction of health preservation" undertaken by the city governors [98]. Despite widespread concern over river pollution, the Don Swimming Club, established in 1905, used it for swimming competitions. Local lore suggests that the desire of council officials to eliminate nude bathing in the river may have been an equally significant factor in the decision to construct the baths. The Essendon Baths appear to have been a high-quality construction. The pool was 50 by 20 yards in dimension, with a diving board at one end. Patron facilities included 15 closed dressing booths (recalling the configuration of early seaside bathing facilities) and "ample" open dressing shed space, sanitary facilities, a laundry and storage for trunks and towels, and an office. The pavilion was constructed of jarrah and corrugated iron and featured an upper story viewing platform. The Mayor's opening speech, reported by the *Essendon Gazette*, gives a useful insight to the views of municipal representatives on public swimming pools in this first era of construction, challenging Methven's argument about the lack of explicit rationales for the acquisition of local pools:

> My Council's intention to throw the baths open on certain days at nominal prices of
> admission, so that the scholars attending our schools may be given the opportunity of

[95] *Essendon Gazette*, 21 August 1890.
[96] See *Essendon Gazette* 12 March 1908 and 7 August 1913 on site selection and 7 August 1913 on residents' petition against construction of the baths.
[97] *Victorian Government Gazette*, No 24, 17 February 1915.
[98] *Essendon Gazette* 26 August 1915.

learning swimming, is also one that will meet with the appreciation of residents. The Australian native takes to the water almost as naturally as a duck when facilities are afforded, and with such facilities general swimming – which is not merely a pleasant and healthful pastime, but a particularly desirable accomplishment, should become a recognised branch of public education. The exhilarating effects of sea-bathing cannot be imported to Essendon, but a dip in the spacious swimming basin…will at least prove invigorating to the muscles and good for the general health of residents. [99]

Little is known of the pool's operation beyond its use by schools for swimming lessons and the Essendon Amateur Swimming Club (EASC, formed 1916) for championships [100]. Chalmers (1998b:256) records a public meeting in 1946 to discuss improvements to the baths. Kerley's assessment of the middle decades of the twentieth century as a period of decline of Essendon council's infrastructure is suggestive of its fate (Kerley 1988; Moonee Valley City Council and GHD Pty Ltd 1996:11) [101]. However, by mid-century the configuration of the changing facilities may have become anachronistic and inefficient in an era of mass leisure consumption: desegregated and more tolerant of the revealed body, requiring streamlined handling of large visitor numbers, and no longer reliant on public authorities to monitor public decency and health through the centralised provision of swimming costumes and towels. In the absence of contrary evidence, then, it is possible to argue that the original facility may not have physically deteriorated to the point where it was unserviceable, but that new visitor behaviours required differently configured facilities. This view is also supported by the council's action in offering the Baths' administrative building to the Department of the Army for use, rent free [102].

Around 1955 the Essendon city engineer, C S Steel, began to review suitable sites in Queen's Park for a new pool. Choosing an area of some 3,000 square

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[99] *Essendon Gazette* 26 August 1915.
[100] See "Schooldays 1912-1918" by "Oldtimer", *Essendon Historical Society Newsletter*, 8(5), p.3-4; *Essendon Gazette* <u>passim</u> for reports of the Essendon Swimming Club.
[101] This assessment is also made in Moonee Valley City Council in association with Gutteridge, Haskins and Davey 1996: *A Vision for the City of Moonee Valley 1996-2010* (Moonee Ponds, Moonee Valley City Council), p.11.
[102] PROV VPRS 12705/P0001/25 City of Essendon/Essendon Swimming Pool 26/13.

metres on the eastern boundary, Steel designed the facility and organised a public tender for the pool area. Construction was delayed by the addition of a toddlers' pool to the specification, again designed by council staff, and a realisation that staffing levels would not permit construction of the buildings by council day labour, as originally intended. Instead, the state government Housing Commission, using pre-formed concrete panel construction it used for dwellings it built at this time, undertook the work [103]. The building consisted of separate female and male change rooms, administration and storage areas, and a kiosk designed to serve visitors to Queen's Park as well as pool patrons. A clubroom was built for EASC on the flat roof of the dressing pavilion; the remainder of the roof was intended to be available for sun-bathing (see plate 4).

Plate 4: Queen's Park Pool, Moonee Pond

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[103] PROV VPRS 7916/P0001/12, Essendon City Council Public Works Committee minutes 9 May 1955, p. 90; VPRS 7916/P0001/13, Essendon City Council Public Works Committee minutes 24 February 1958, p. 212; *Essendon Gazette* 28 November 1959.

Methven's observation on the lack of explicit rationales for acquiring pools finds more support on this occasion in the reported remarks of the Mayor at the opening ceremony in 1959: "I would like you to remember that it is your pool. Look after it. It cost a lot of money and is worth looking after" [104]. The tenor of these remarks may have been influenced by repeated acts of vandalism that had occurred during construction. The president of EASC was more expansive when invited to speak, suggesting that the provision of such a facility placed a new responsibility on parents:

> [I] look forward to the day when every child could swim well enough to save its own life, and perhaps another's life in an emergency…It is up to parents to encourage children…to make sure their child could swim and not leave everything to clubs and schools. [105]

Lonie and Giffard's advice on regulation, cited earlier, was heeded by the Essendon council in its administration of the pool. The pool manager, a council employee, was empowered with a by-law that prohibited a range of physically unsafe, unhygienic and lewd behaviours. The pool was open for swimming for four months of the year, sometimes longer in a warm season, and attracted patronage from both Essendon and surrounding municipalities, especially the cities of Brunswick, Coburg and Keilor, which were not then well served by aquatic facilities (Keilor had none), and/or had limited public open space. The siting of the pool within a larger park setting attracted patrons to extend their visit and combine swimming with a picnic or other socially-oriented activities. Patronage was heavily influenced by seasonal conditions, but during the 1980s typically ranged between 47,000 and 67,000 per annum. In cost terms, the pool was one of the least subsidised seasonal pools in inner Melbourne – in 1986, 32.9% of its annual operating cost was raised through own-sourced income. Of six inner-urban pools that the Essendon council compared it with, the Fitzroy

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[104] *Essendon Gazette* 27 November 1959. Construction cost £51,000 financed from a loan mortgaged against future rate revenue.
[105] *Essendon Gazette*, 27 November 1959.

pool, site of a celebrated and successful campaign against closure and sale in 1994, was the worst performer, raising 11.7% of its expenditure as income [106].

Council and Club

The opening of the new Queen's Park pool was a considerable fillip for EASC. The provision of a clubroom at the pool provides clear evidence of the symbiotic relationship between clubs and facilities that councils cultivated. The club provided swimming instruction at the pool and assisted over the years with maintenance and improvement of the pool and grounds. The history of the relationship between the club and the council, though, highlights the tensions associated with a local authority policy transition from co-provision to an equity-based regime that sought to meet principles of universality while balancing competing user demands. The complexities of managing such a transition – driven by new legislation at state and federal level, by local authority wishes to widen the customer base for user-pays services, and by citizen/consumers demanding equal access to facilities – are considerable. Local clubs are focal points of volunteering (Oppenheimer 2005) and councils have no wish to discourage the civic-mindedness of residents. Local swimming clubs, along with schools, provide core patronage for a facility type subject to demand and revenue fluctuations. Local swimming clubs were at one time major providers of extra-school swimming instruction – a Beaurepairean institutional arrangement that emphasised the civic and disciplinary elements of aquatic recreation whilst netting shoals of prospective club members.

The archival record sheds little light on arrangements for EASC's exclusive use of the pool at certain times, although its request to the council for a rent reduction in return for the provision of swimming instruction suggests payment was made

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[106] Essendon City Council Administrative and Community Services Committee, Report to Council on Future of Queens Park Pool, June 1986, PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/67 City of Essendon/Facilities and VPRS 12751/P0001/66 Recreation/Swimming Pools/Essendon Swimming Pool 260/2/Part 1. It is not clear whether the calculation of pool expenditure costs (did this include depreciation, for example?) is consistent in this survey.

by the club [107]. Club members did not pay an individual admission charge for
training sessions, a point of contention for some pool users. One swimmer
complained to the council about EASC's sole use of the pool on Sunday
mornings, suggesting that non-members of the club be admitted at this time for a
reduced admission fee [108]. The ensuing flurry of reports and file notes on whether
non-members would attempt to circumvent the charge if the general public was
admitted when the club trained underscored the problems of preferential
treatment. During the 1970s and 1980s the council sought to end exclusive use
arrangements across a range of facilities by asserting public ownership rights
(sometimes with doubtful authority) and brokering new users. A number of clubs
protested, a common theme being concern for security and care of the premises,
and damage to the assets of the 'home' clubs. The council countered by
developing standard user contracts and threatening to spill use allocations
amongst a range of clubs and organisations. The relationship with EASC sank to
its lowest point in 1984 when the Essendon city manager threatened to lock the
club out of the pool's meeting room (as the council now labelled the clubroom) for
rejecting a request by a local cricket association to hold a meeting there:

> It is the Council's policy to utilize whatever buildings it has available for use by community
> groups within the Municipality, and this, to everybody concerned, excepting the
> Swimming Club, is quite an appropriate use in accordance with Council's policy. [109]

EASC's major concern was for access to year-round swimming facilities,
preferably Olympic standard, and the club lobbied the council persistently to heat
the Queen's Park pool. When the cost of operating the pool began to escalate,
the council forged an alliance with the Essendon Football Club for the

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[107] W J Dawes, Secretary, EASC to Town Clerk 28 June 1970, PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/25
City of Essendon/Essendon Swimming Pool 26/13 Part 1.
[108] Captain J A Laming to Town Clerk, 13 February 1974 PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/25 City of
Essendon/Essendon Swimming Pool 26/13 Part 2.
[109] B C Beattie, City Manager, to Greg Jessop, Secretary, Essendon Swimming Club 8 May 1984
PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/67 City of Essendon/Facilities and Recreation/Swimming
Pools/Essendon Swimming Pool 260/2/1 Part 1.

development of a 25-metre heated indoor pool at the Essendon Recreation Reserve ("Windy Hill"), and found itself in political hot water.

Knowing the Cost

Quite early in its operating life the Queen's Park pool operators were confronted with a key problem associated with public infrastructure spending: the vicious circle of a subsidised facility allocated insufficient capital and maintenance budgets to ensure continued service quality, thus losing patronage over time and requiring ever greater subsidy (Johnson and Whitehead 2000) [110]. The facility's design was a major contributor to this situation. Relatively soon after the building's opening it began to exhibit some of the poor performance characteristics associated with elements of modernist architecture (Cunningham 1998). In this case the problem was an inability to effectively weatherproof the joining edges of the building's concrete panels, a problem that was well known to the Housing Commission at time of construction (Howe 1988:56). In 1976 a council officer noted that "very little maintenance has been carried out on the pool in the past 10 years" and that equipment failure and environmental conditions (leaf litter from nearby park plantings) adversely affected the water quality [111]. In 1978 council investigated the feasibility of roofing the pool area and opening a gymnasium in a first story extension, but the limitations of the original design and the planning conflicts associated with additional car-parking requirements weighed against the proposal. Two years later, the council declined a substantial subsidy from YSR to build an air-supported cover over the pool, unconvinced of its structural and environmental integrity – a nice inversion of the 'failure' narrative discussed earlier [112]. As the pool's water treatment plant aged and new compliance standards (for example in chlorine handling and water quality) were

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[110] See letter of complaint about the standard of pool facilities 6 September 1971 and report on deterioration of fixtures and water quality 3 May 1976, PROV VPRS 12750/P0001/25.

[111] PROV VPRS 12750/P0001/25 *Urgent Improvements and Maintenance to the Essendon Swimming Pool Complex, Queens Park*, 3 May 1976.

[112] PROV VPRS 12750/P0001/25 City of Essendon/Essendon Swimming Pool/26/13 Part 2, Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Council 12 May 1980, p.886.

introduced, the financial performance of the facility came under increasing scrutiny. Despite installation of a new filtration plant, the debt-laden council calculated in 1986 that the pool would require a further $100,000 for plant upgrade and basic maintenance within the space of three years. At this point, it appears, the council began to look at the option of closure. A public campaign, with EASC a major force, launched a counter-attack to make the facility more financially viable by installing a heating system and attracting more patrons [113].

The focus council placed on the pool's running costs and forward expenditure requirements was sharpened by the introduction of program budgeting, discussed in chapter 2. In 1982, the Essendon City Manager made out his case for introducing program budgeting to Council's Finance Committee:

> …Council's expenditure on services has been basically examined at Budget time with a concentrated analysis on items of expenditure with the highest increases…there was no systematic process for constantly reviewing areas of Council services and costs, and there was no measuring of output…Council cannot continue expanding the level of some services without reducing the level of others or increasing other revenue levels…it was necessary for Council to formulate a method of programme evaluation and review with the objective of making continual priority assessments. [114]

The introduction of program budgeting placed greater emphasis on measures of economy and efficiency amendable to calculation than more subjective notions of effectiveness. Program budgeting had the benefit of isolating and identifying facility operating costs, but this process risked discounting or closing off wider perceptions of facility benefits or values. The point was effectively made by a ratepayer complaining of a rise in the pool's admission price, who summarised the dilemmas of local authorities in an era of rising fiscal pressure and service trade-offs: "[e]ven if the Essendon pool doesn't make a profit surely children

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[113] Essendon City Council Administrative and Community Services Committee, Report to Council on Future of Queens Park Pool, June 1986, PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/66 Essendon City Council Facilities Recreation Queen's Park Pool 260/2/1 Part 1.
[114] PROV VPRS 12750/P0001/25 City of Essendon/Essendon Swimming Pool 26/1/13 Part 2, Minutes of Finance Committee 22 November 1982.

having good healthy fun is more important. Maybe less flowers in the Council gardens and median strips would save money" [115].

In 1990, when the Council's Human Services Committee met to consider a report into the future of the pool, it had one eye on its strategic relationship with the Essendon Football Club (EFC), nominated by a previous mayor as one of the municipality's two most valuable "assets" [116]. The football club is a prominent example of an organisation that has effectively monopolised a public facility – the Essendon Recreation Reserve – although its participation in a state (now national) sporting competition, its significance to the local economy, and its political support put it beyond scrutiny in this regard. In fairness, EFC has developed its role as a corporate citizen as it expanded its sporting and business enterprise, including the provision of public access to its facilities, but this has also been a strategy for building club membership and revenue. The council report on the Queen's Park pool set out a series of options for the pool's future, one of which recommended closure of the pool and construction of a new indoor facility in partnership with EFC as part of a major redevelopment of the Essendon Recreation Reserve. EFC's contribution was to be financed, at least in part, by the introduction of poker machines to the club, taking immediate advantage of new state gambling legislation and mirroring the state-level reliance on gambling revenue to fund recreation facilities. The report argued, quite correctly, that the popularity of wet and dry recreation facilities (pools combined with gymnasia, ball courts and weight training facilities) had increased greatly in recent years – an issue that is examined in Section 5.5 – as if this were sufficient reason to close the seasonal pool. Although the report canvassed the option of solar and gas heating of the seasonal pool, it leaned heavily towards closure, offering no

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[115] PROV VPRS 12750/P0001/25 City of Essendon/Essendon Swimming Pool 26/1/13 Part 2, Val Davis to Mayor and Councillors, Essendon City Council 7 December 1976

[116] Perkin, Corrie: "Brian Shanahan Mayor", reprinted from *The Age* in *Aqua Bomber: Newsletter of the Essendon Amateur Swimming Club*, December 1985. The second asset was Dame Edna Everage, whose fictional home in 'a nice brick area' at 36 Humoresque St, Moonee Ponds was a focus of satirist Barry Humphries' (Everage's creator) derision of Australian suburban life.

analysis of the benefits of the pool against which its costs could be weighed [117]. The effect of the report was to steer the elected councillors towards a form of public-private partnership without any recorded internal discussion about the policy implications or public interest elements of such a deal. With the Management Panel - a group of senior council officials - supporting the report's recommendation not to heat the pool but to examine development of aquatic facilities elsewhere, local residents began to organise against closure. EASC presented a 1,300 signature petition to heat the pool, and in April 1990 the council voted to extend its life and its use by installing a gas and solar heating plant. The preference of the administration and some of the councillors in favour of permanent closure and redevelopment of the Essendon Recreation Reserve, though, had been clearly signalled.

Closure of the pool was consistent with a strategy of fiscal discipline followed by the Essendon council from the mid-1980s in response to increasing debt (see Appendix A), a strategy that was, in the view of the city manager Peter Seamer, not sufficiently appreciated by residents. In 1991 the *Essendon Gazette* reported that Essendon council charged the lowest per-capita rates of any inner Melbourne council, quoting Seamer's complaint that "six years of really hard work had gone unnoticed" [118]. In 1993 retiring mayor Dianne Geddes, at 26 years of age the youngest person in Victoria to have served in that role and determined to prove critics of her leadership capacities wrong, nominated – somewhat hastily - the four "greatest achievements" during her term of office as the redevelopment of the Essendon Football Ground, the closure of the Queen's Park Pool, no new loans contracted by the council and no rise in property rates [119]. In 1993 the council outsourced management of the Queen's Park pool for what was projected as its final season, bundling the contract with management of the new Windy Hill Fitness Centre (the Essendon Recreation Ground indoor pool). The successful

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[117] Minutes of the Ordinary Meeing of Council 26 March 1990, Agenda Item 10 Human Services Committee, on PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/67 City of Essendon/Facilities and Recreation/Swimming Pools/Essendon Swimming Pool 260/2/1 Part 3.
[118] *Essendon Gazette*, 2 August 1993.
[119] *Essendon Gazette*, 9 August 1993.

tenderer was RANS, a Melbourne-based private leisure management company established in 1986 that expanded rapidly following the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering of certain municipal services by the Kennett government.

One Moonee Ponds resident (R35), interviewed as part of the primary research for this thesis, raised a large family in a house sited several blocks from the pool, and her association with the pool will be recounted in the section that follows. She recalled her children "practically lived there", regarding the pool as a safe, low-cost environment and recalling with approval the authority of the pool manager and staff. A long-time volunteer worker for a religious charity and later for the council's elderly citizens programs, the decision to close the pool inspired her to engage in her first political protest activity. Her motivation was not simply to prevent the loss of the pool, but was related to a wider concern over the perceived lack of transparency by the council in its plans and decisions over the use of public assets. The trust she invested in the operation of the pool as a public facility and the care of its staff for young patrons contrasted with a lack of trust in some administrators and elected officials.

ECC was not the only local authority in Melbourne that was closely scrutinising the financial cost and performance of its aquatic facilities at this time. If the decades spanning 1950 to 1980 were a golden age of municipal pool construction, the 1990s was a period of rationalisation and closure. In 1992 Melbourne City Council, following a consultancy review of its pools in Carlton, North Melbourne, Flemington and Kensington, decided to close the North Melbourne and Flemington pools. The latter, a 25-metre seasonal pool sited near the Debney Park high-rise public housing estate, came within the City of Essendon boundary following the re-drawing of the boundary between Essendon and Melbourne in 1993. Mirroring the situation in the City of Essendon, Melbourne's decision to close the North Melbourne pool followed a partnership deal with the North Melbourne Football Club for the co-development of an indoor

facility. Local community protest, led by the well-organised North Melbourne Coalition for Local Democracy, led to a reversal of the decision and the reopening of the redeveloped facility in 1995 [120]. The Debney Park pool, which a long time local resident (R10) observed had long suffered from neglect, remained closed, the site used for a new community centre built by the City of Moonee Valley. The closure of the Fitzroy pool in 1994 is the most well-known example of a Melbourne-based swimming pool campaign at this time. Careful rebuttal of the rationale for closure, occupation of the site by protesters, widespread media coverage, and lobbying by figures such as the then Deputy Prime Minister, Hon Brian Howe, gave this campaign a force and status that set a benchmark for subsequent campaigns (Connor 1998). However, its success, and the subsequent upgrade of other pools in Melbourne's inner-city and eastern suburbs has been interpreted by opponents of the closure of the Sunshine pool in Melbourne's west as indicative of distinctions between the "haves" and "have nots" [121].

As state-level policy favourable to public-private partnerships developed during the 1990s, local pool development plans became increasingly entrepreneurial. The clearest example of this is the closure in 2004 of the Footscray City Baths situated close to the municipality's commercial and civic precinct, in favour of a development partnership with the Sussan Corporation, owners of the giant Highpoint Shopping Centre, on a greenfield site adjacent to the centre. The baths were in poor condition, leaking badly and heavily subsidised, but the combination of the loss of a local service, uncertainty over the future of the baths' site, and the perception of a private benefit arising from redevelopment decisions fuelled vigorous protests against its closure. The long-standing Sunshine campaign, discussed in the chapter introduction, also raised the question of what can be termed community equity or de-facto ownership. In this case, the legitimacy of

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[120] Rev Wes Fellowes, pers comm, 12 May 2006.
[121] See "Unfair Victoria, a case of the haves and have nots", http://www.savesunshinepool.com/ last accessed 14 December 2006.

the council's decision to close the seasonal pool, built in 1959, was questioned in light of the extensive fundraising efforts of local residents towards the facility [122].

The rationales for pool closures and the processes followed by various local authorities during the 1990s have unique aspects that deserve fuller analysis than the focus of this chapter permits. Common elements, though, paint a coherent picture: a deteriorating asset requiring expenditure to maintain service levels and ensure regulatory compliance, concern over the level of operating subsidy, and a policy view that fewer, larger, multi-purpose facilities would permit a better balance between cost and recreation needs. During this period commitment to the concept of the 'local' pool was finally submerged in favour of economic and service efficiencies [123].

Saving Queen's Park Pool?

The Save Queen's Park Pool (SQPP) protest group was formed in 1993, with core membership from the Moonee Ponds Residents Association and EASC. Their activities focussed around public meetings, building community support through the local press, and lobbying of councillors. Several meetings filled the Essendon Town Hall, the strength of community opposition to the closure and support for the group surprising organisers (R35). The group also linked up with other save the pool groups in Fitzroy and Pascoe Vale, building a loose community alliance that was ultimately successful in retaining all three pools in use. SQPP's success can also be attributed to a favourable political cycle. The August 1993 Essendon council poll saw the election of several new Labor-aligned councillors receptive to the protest message [124]. One new councillor identified alleged deficiencies in the council administration's calculation of the

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[122] http://www.savesunshinepool.com/images/history1.html , accessed 14 December 2006.
[123] The specified criteria around 1970 was one pool per 20,000-30,000 population, maximum travelling distance of 1 mile and serviced by public transport – *Report on the Desireability, Construction and Operating Costs of Swimming Pool* (undated but file context suggests about 1970), PROV VPRS 12750/P0001/25 City of Essendon/Essendon Swimming Pool 26/13.
[124] Barry Gough, ECC Mayor 1993-4, pers comm, 21 October 2006.

pool's operating costs that, for SQPP, undermined the council's closure arguments and eroded trust in the council [125]. An allegation that RANS were transferring some of the pool's equipment to the Windy Hill site added to this sentiment (R35) [126].

In July 1994 the council announced that the pool would remain open for one further season due to delays in completion of the Windy Hill complex [127]. Ironically, perhaps, the suspension of local political processes in late 1994 and appointment of local government commissioners by the state government, as part of its re-organisation of Victorian municipal boundaries, effectively ended the momentum towards closure. The commissioners were critical of the poor state of the city's assets and sought to identify savings, but looked to improve asset management systems and overall administrative efficiency rather than reduce service provision through facility closure. The commissioners undertook the first wide-scale resident consultation in the municipality's history in preparing a ten-year strategic plan for the management of the new City of Moonee Valley. Closure of the pool was not identified in this plan (Moonee Valley City Council and GHD Pty Ltd 1996).

Sensing they had won a battle rather than a war, SQPP transformed into *Friends of the Queens Park Pool* (FQPP), and became vigilant of the physical state of the facility and the political posture of the council. A change in the relationship between the pool and the local community that followed management outsourcing was exemplified by our informant (R35) who assisted as a volunteer with the upkeep of the pool grounds and gardens. Accustomed to being waved through the entry turnstile, one day she was informed by the contracted managers that her admission required payment of an entry fee. Complaining to the city commissioners, she was advised that the condition was imposed for

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[125] The issue was that the entire pool manager's annual salary (who worked four months of the year at the pool and the remainder with the Parks and Gardens section) was attributed to pool operating costs.
[126] RANS went into voluntary liquidation in 2002.
[127] *Essendon Gazette*, 5 July 1994.

insurance purposes and sent a roll of admission tickets. The episode symbolised the transition from a local facility closely associated with a local club or community to a service where all residents were equal in the marketplace.

The operations of the Queen's Park pool have continued relatively unchanged over the past decade. Solar heating has boosted patronage and stabilised the operating subsidy. Best Value reporting, introduced in 1999, provides the principal mechanism for evaluating the service and financial performance of the pool. Field observation cross-referenced with admission statistics showing a high rate of (student) concession admissions indicate that the pool continues to be a focal point of youth recreation and socialising. The Moonee Valley resident interview data, similarly cross-referenced with admission statistics, also indicates that the pool attracts family groups, who may combine uses of the pool and park, especially for picnicking. The pool continued to have supporters and detractors within the council. The current council position is expressed in the *Queen's Park Master Plan 1999-2005* - the pool is "acknowledged as [an] important community resource whose role and location will not change during the life of this Master Plan" [128]. Despite a history of intermittent winter use for scuba-diving, canoeing and angling, the head gardener of Queen's Park described the pool as "…a waste of space as it is only operational for four months of the year. An alternative use should be looked at it for winter months" [129]. This view is not without merit. The patronage, service options and operating costs of the Queen's Park pool compare unfavourably with indoor-outdoor and indoor-only configurations, if those are the chosen benchmarks. While there has been no further attempt to close the pool, the recent trends in aquatic recreation policy and local authority facility management outlined above suggest that the combination of subsidised operation, service limitations and the constraints that the pool's siting places on future development options raises the question of its long-term viability, if it is

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[128] Queen's Park Master Plan 1999-2005 Draft, MVCC 48/17/3 Parks/Reserves/Queen's Park Redevelopment, Part 4.
[129] Russell Thompson, Head Gardener, Queen's Park: Notes of site meeting, Queen's Park 27 January 2000, MVCC Parks/Reserves/Queen's Park Redevelopment 48/17/3, Part 4.

considered as an isolated facility rather than part of a spectrum of recreation and social opportunity.

This point is underscored by looking at the development of AVSFC. In many ways, AVSFC acts as a counterpoint to the Queen's Park pool – a multi-purpose versus a putatively single-purpose facility, a profitable operation versus a subsidised one, a relatively flexible physical and service environment versus one that is constrained in physical adaptability and program capacity. As has been argued, perceptions of the purpose, performance and value of seasonal pools were strongly and negatively influenced by the shift in Australia from the 1970s of policy and patronage to indoor multi-purpose aquatic or leisure centres. However, the Essendon council's decision to construct an indoor leisure centre in Ascot Vale was not simply indicative of changing views on aquatic recreation. The following section argues that it can be viewed as an exercise in public entrepreneurship, where the local authority sought to balance profit and equity roles but found itself in an environment increasingly influenced by market rather than community-based rationales.

5.5 Ascot Vale Sports and Fitness Centre

During the 1960s, the Essendon council began to consider construction of a new aquatic facility somewhere in the municipality, endorsing a prevailing view, outlined above, that swimming pools were a desirable, subsidy-driven local recreational facility. The council had been in discussions with its north-west neighbour, the Keilor City Council, over the possibility of a jointly-funded facility intended for use by residents from both municipalities, but disagreement on siting and the political and financial barriers raised against co-operative facility planning saw the talks founder [130].

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[130] Details of discussions between officials of the two cities are on PROV VPRS 12750/P0001/25 City of Essendon/Essendon Swimming Pool/26/13.

The council identified two sites for a new pool, both on land it owned and had designated as public open space, Lincoln Park in Essendon and Victory Park in Ascot Vale, suggesting that land availability as much as standards-based planning underpinned site nomination. Victory Park, adjacent to the Royal Agricultural Showgrounds in Ascot Vale, was chosen, on the grounds that that suburb had relatively few facilities [131]. Initial planning focussed on an unheated seasonal pool and a reserve fund was established to finance the project. A subsequent council report argued that "swimming pools as single service items were not economically viable" recommending a multi-purpose "leisure centre", with staged development of a heated indoor pool, gymnasium, racquet courts, sauna and creche, to which would be added a sports hall, meeting rooms, jogging track, boxing gym, spa and licensed bistro [132]. There was some needs-based logic to this ensemble, as a response to the increasing popularity of squash and exercise classes during the 1970s, and equity considerations with inclusion of creche facilities. The apparent lack of specialist advice on such a facility (the city engineer undertook an overseas study trip, identifying a leisure facility in South Yorkshire as a model[133]), a shifting menu of inclusions, and the facility's status as the first large scale leisure centre project to be undertaken by a Victorian council, suggests local authority adventurism, but the planning was consistent with YSR's policy stance and financial incentives at the time.

Tension between the desire for the centre to be financially self-sufficient and its role as a community facility was evident from the moment of initial planning. Its original title, Ascot Vale Leisure Centre, suggested a commitment to municipal leisure provision, and located it within contemporary leisure policy discussion. This observation is supported by evidence that the council also saw the facility as

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[131] Minutes of Corporate Services Commmittee meeting 17 November 1986, PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/65, Essendon City Council/Facilities and Recreation/Leisure Centre/Ascot Vale Leisure Centre/260/1/1 Part 4A.

[132] Minutes of Corporate Services Commmittee meeting 17 November 1986, PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/65, Essendon City Council/Facilities and Recreation/Leisure Centre/Ascot Vale Leisure Centre/260/1/1Part 4A.

[133] The model included a caretaker's dwelling on the first floor, which was built then deemed unsuitable and converted to the creche area. It was reached by stairs only.

providing an opportunity for local youth employment on building, landscaping and maintenance projects, funded through state and Commonwealth employment programs [134]. However, early discussion that the "right mix" of services would enable the centre to return an operating profit points to an emphasis on what was termed the financial viability of the project.

Funding for the first stage of the project costing $1.3 million came from three sources: an outright grant of $250,000 from YSR (half provided by the state government, half by the Commonwealth), loan of a similar amount from the same source, and the balance provided by the council from a bank loan mortgaged against future rate revenue. A staged approach to the capital works was designed to enable income from the centre to pay the loan interest. The project architect, who had a practice in Moonee Ponds, was briefed by the city engineer, and recalled that the low budget for the first stage of the project precluded some internal finishes, leaving part of it as a "tin shed" [135]. The Council sought approval from the state government to exceed its borrowing cap to fund the second stage of the development only twelve months after the centre's opening [136]. The facility's annual surplus grew from almost $15,000 in the first year of operation (1977-8) to $136,000 in 1984/85, but loan servicing costs competed with centre maintenance [137]. By the mid-1980s, the compounding effects of a modest capital works budget, wear and tear on the centre from its high use, and what the City Manager considered to be inadequate maintenance motivated the council to continue the revenue-led development cycle, planning further extensions and examining ways that revenue might be increased [138]. While the council had sporadically investigated increasing the size of the pool, its strategy from the mid-

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[134] VPRS 12751/P0001/45 Essendon City Council/Unemployment Govt Schemes/Ascot Vale Leisure Centre Stage 2 (CEP) 24/2/18 Part 1.
[135] Pers comm. Jack Honson, Project Architect, 7 December 2006.
[136] B C Beattie, City Manager to A J Hunt MLC, Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation 20 December 1978, PROV VPRS 12750/P0001/64 Essendon City Council/Ascot Vale Leisure Centre 64/23/A Part 3.
[137] PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/65 Essendon City Council/Facilities and Recreation/Leisure Centres/Ascot Vale Leisure Centre Part 7.
[138] PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/65 Essendon City Council/Facilities and Recreation/Leisure Centres/Ascot Vale Leisure Centre, Part 1.

1980s was to expand the profitable "dry" areas [139], boost the sale of corporate memberships, and identify leasing opportunities within the facility. Breaking the nexus between local aquatic clubs and swimming instruction was a prime objective in the drive for profitability at Ascot Vale, and, on archival evidence, aquatic facilities of other councils at the time [140]. The Essendon council took the view that the centre should be oriented towards casual usage rather than organised competition; in reality it sought to substitute a different form of core patronage – individual memberships – in place of a council-club alignment.

The opening of a licensed bistro in 1987, leasing of office space to a private physiotherapist, and the marketing of staff membership packages to business corporations in Melbourne shaped the facility as a fitness club as much as a community facility. The council pointed out in its marketing literature that the service limitations and risks of corporate memberships with insolvencies of private gymnasia or health clubs were non-existent with a public provider. The "dry" program areas of the facility were enlarged in two building stages and users of these services became the dominant visitor group. By 1998/9, 87% of 774,800 visits during that financial year were to 'dry' areas [141].

How did the original intention of providing recreation and civic facilities for local residents, in an area stated to be relatively poorly served in this regard, measure up against the building development and use pattern? Firstly, with regard to the physical configuration of the complex, the proposed civic element of the complex - meeting rooms – was not built, and the service emphasis fell increasingly towards commercial leisure operations. Secondly user surveys consistently

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[139] By 1986 revenue from gymnasium use had doubled revenue from the pool use: Corporate Services Committee 17 November 1986, PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/65 Essendon City Council/Facilities and Recreation/Leisure Centres/Ascot Vale Leisure Centre, Part 4a.
[140] See Urban Design Division, Technical Services Department, City of Camberwell c.1984: *Report on Tour of Inspection of Indoor Pool Facilities, Central Pool Development, City of Camberwell,* p.5, copy on PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/65 Essendon City Council/Facilities and Recreation/Leisure Centres/Ascot Vale Leisure Centre, Part 1.
[141] Michael King and Associates: *Moonee Valley City Council Aquatic Centres Planning Study – Final Report*, November 2000, p. 1 (hereafter cited as King Report).

showed that the facility had a regional rather than local catchment. A survey conducted after the first year of operation showed that 65% of gymnasium patrons lived outside the municipality [142]. Membership records from 1983 showed 176 members from the City of Essendon, 150 from surrounding municipalities and 120 from "other areas" [143]. Other discussions within the council suggest that the equity role of the facility was subordinated to its use by full-paying clients able to access a standard program range, especially within the gymnasium. For example, in response to a query by the state parliamentary member for Ascot Vale, C T Edmunds, regarding the extension of pensioner discounts for use of the pool to all the centre's activities, the centre manager advised his council supervisor that this "…would possibly encourage a greater usage by pensioners where maximum usage already exists by members of the general public". The city manager subsequently replied to Edmunds "I would be interested to receive details of the types of pensioners who would envisage using the facilities other than the pool as the other facilities involve intense physical exertion which could have an adverse affect on certain categories of pensioners" [144]. The council's normative view of centre users contrasted with the geographical location of the complex, in a suburb containing high numbers of public housing dwellings, associated high rate of dependency on income assistance, and limited access to private open space or recreation facilities.

Until 1990 the leisure centre was run by council employees, consistent with the original brief for the community facility to provide local employment opportunities. Its high level of patronage and consequent high impact on the physical fabric tested the strategic capacities of council and the facility management capacities of centre staff. Opening every day of the year except Christmas Day hampered centre maintenance, and the quality/cost compromise of the original construction

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[142] PROV VPRS 12750/P0001/64 Essendon City Council/Ascot Vale Leisure Centre 64/23/A Part 4.
[143] PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/45 Essendon City Council/Unemployment Govt Schemes/Ascot Vale Leisure Centre Stage 2 (CEP) 24/2/18 Part 1.
[144] Bruce Armstrong to Deputy City Manager 15 April 1980; B C Beattie to C T Edmunds MLA 17 April 1980, PROV VPRS 12750/P0001/64 Ascot Vale Leisure Centre 64/23/A Part 5.

contributed to escalating maintenance costs [145]. Questionable judgement in the second stage development – in spite of negative references from two other local authorities the project architect recommended a builder who became insolvent during construction [146] - stood in contrast with the Council's emphasis on the financial self-reliance of the complex. Archival records relating to the operations of the complex in the latter half of the 1980s contain a string of complaints about cleanliness and maintenance standards, and the behaviour of the centre manager. A Council working party to oversee management of the centre was convened in 1987, with limited success. The president of the Ascot Vale Residents Group wrote of the "…many problems with the operation of the Leisure Centre" and expressed disappointment that there was to be no representative of local residents on the working party [147]. In 1989 the secretary of the Aberfeldie Primary School in West Essendon advised that the school would no longer be using the centre for weekly swimming lessons "because of the declining standards of hygiene and service we have experienced, particularly over this past year" [148].

Community Facilities as a Servicescape

In 1990 the council sought advice from the YMCA on the maintenance program of the centre, referring obliquely to a "change process" for program planning and resource allocation. In the same year that organisation was engaged on contract

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[145] On the problems of maintenance in a continuously used facility see Ordinary Meeting of Council, Essendon City Council, 26 September 1988, Item 3 Human Services Committee – Ascot Vale Leisure Centre Report on file PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/65 Essendon City Council/Facilities and Recreation/Leisure Centres/Ascot Vale Leisure Centre Part 7; the poor performance of asset components and contribution of poor building work oversight to future maintenance costs are discussed on VPRS 12750/P0001/64 Ascot Vale Leisure Centre 64/23/A Part 5.

[146] See memo 26 July 1979, PROV VPRS 12750/P0001/64 Ascot Vale Leisure Centre 64/23/A Part 5.

[147] Anthony Isaacs, President, Ascot Vale Residents Association to Councillor Kevin Bell, 11 May 1987, VPRS 12751/P0001/65 Essendon City Council/Facilities and Recreation/Leisure Centres/Ascot Vale Leisure Centre Part 6.

[148] Alice M Lawrie, Secretary, Aberfeldie Primary School Council to City Manager, Essendon City Council 1 November 1989, VPRS 12751/P0001/65 Essendon City Council/Facilities and Recreation/Leisure Centres/Ascot Vale Leisure Centre Part 8.

as the centre's manager [149]. This point, and a change of name to the Ascot Vale Sports and Fitness Centre, effectively completed the transition from a locally-run community facility – however notionally this project was realised - to a commercialised recreation centre. The YMCA's tenure as AVSFC facility manager from 1990 to the present day has been noteworthy for the increase in participation in 'dry' activities and increasing alignment of public health rhetoric with private consumption practices. Apects of the YMCA's stated mission to "build stronger people, stronger families, stronger communities" [150] had limited application to AVSFC as its strategic development was predicated increasingly on success in those aspects of its activities that are serviced by private markets. Under YMCA's management the centre continued to return an annual operating profit, the 'dry' areas cross-subsidising the aquatic facilities and programs. Despite some expansion of aquatic programs, notably the development of "aquarobics" for older patrons, since 1990 the total program range of the centre has been reduced, with the loss of tennis courts to car parking, and three squash courts to a creche and a "spinning" room (a form of aerobic exercise using exercise cycles). The use of the hall for ball sports also came under review, as a solution to programming conflicts in an area that was heavily used for aerobics classes. The change in programming reflects the decline in popularity of some activities and the dramatic rise in demand for gym circuits and exercise classes. In the three years between 1996/97 and 1998/99 gymnasium visits increased 187% and exercise classes 105%, in contrast to the more modest increase over the same period in child swimming (+38%) and family swimming (+40%), while adult swimming decreased by 3% (Michael King and Associates 2000:20).

The YMCA management's success in boosting visitation highlighted the physical limitations of the complex. Safety and liability concerns were raised in the late 1990s following deterioration of building and plant components, resulting in the

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[149] Marjorie Gadsden, Manager Human Services to Bob Nicholson YMCA 24 May 1990 VPRS 12751/P0001/65 Essendon City Council/Facilities and Recreation/Leisure Centres/Ascot Vale Leisure Centre Part 8.
[150] See www.ymca.org.au

closure of one part of the complex due to concerns over its structural integrity. The physical layout of the complex also provided limited support for rules governing the use of the pool by children. Children under ten years of age were only admitted with a supervising adult, but Royal Lifesaving Association of Australia regulations on obstructions near pool edges, combined with the narrow pool concourse, precluded provision of adequate pool-side seating. While this might be seen to encourage swimming by adult carers, it limited the centre's capacity to build social capital through facilitating adult social interaction, as well providing minimal visitor comfort [151].

The programming emphasis and successful promotion of recreation products in a competitive marketplace also highlighted consciousness of what Bitner (1992) terms the "servicescape" – the physical surroundings that influence customer choice and behaviour. The development of facilities at Windy Hill, the Maribyrnong City Council's plans for the new Highpoint aquatic centre within AVSFC's catchment, and the City of Melbourne's refurbishment of the Kensington pool were seen by the Moonee Valley council as market rivals. The requirement for the facility to maintain market share was strongly argued by consultants, the YMCA management and council staff in proposing upgrade of the facility. Reliance on CERM-PI indicators to assess the facility and contractor's performance reinforced the sense that sustainability of the complex was dependent on mass recreation consumption.

In 2000 the Moonee Valley council commissioned recreation consultants Michael King and Associates (2000) to undertake a planning study of its two leisure centres – Ascot Vale and East Keilor – that identified compliance failures and major structural and design problems at each site, leaving the council with options of either committing funds to a substantial upgrade of each, or the more radical solutions of closing or selling the sites. Radical solutions? The council's

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[151] Alternatively, current facility specifications that children under 10 years of age swim within an arm's length of an adult carer could be regarded as hindering the acquisition of children's swimming competency.

corporate services committee had investigated sale and lease-back options for AVSFC as early as 1986 (around the time when the financial cost of the Queen's Park pool came under scrutiny) to determine whether a better return on capital might be obtained, but concluded that the council should firstly seek to improve the "efficiency, effectiveness and profitability" of the centre [152]. The King study was predicated on continued rising demand for 'dry' programs, and based its development proposal on the further expansion of these areas, additional car parking and a new reception area to accommodate customer peak loads, and an expanded café to encourage the 'secondary spend' of patrons. The report also argued for the expansion of swimming facilities to cater for learn-to-swim programs (nine schools were currently using the facility for this purpose in addition to Vicswim holiday programs) and demand from older persons for warm-water exercise programs, and the report contains substantial discussion of facilities and plant required to enhance aquatic programs. The study noted that the indoor aquatic facilities of both AVSFC and the East Keilor Leisure Centre, while smaller in water area than many other municipal pools attracted relatively high program usage, but recommended expansion of what was termed the "health and fitness facilities" (the 'dry' areas), and a corresponding increase in memberships, as a development priority (Michael King and Associates 2000:ii). The absence of any recorded discussion of wider social or community purposes of the facility locate it firmly within a servicescape model.

In 2004 the council announced an intention to borrow $11 million to finance redevelopment work. The political sensitivity of the project was evident in letters of protest to Moonee Valley's two community newspapers, mostly from residents in distant suburbs querying expenditure on a facility they were unlikely to use, but residents from other municipalities would. Correspondents offered their own optimised list of municipal capital works, with priority given to expenditure on parks or other recreation facilities in the correspondents' own neighbourhood.

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[152] Minutes of Corporate Services Committee 17 November 1986, VPRS 12751/P0001/65 Essendon City Council/Facilities and Recreation/Leisure Centres/Ascot Vale Leisure Centre Part 4A.

Other correspondents objected to the council borrowing money for capital works, anticipating a rate rise as a consequence. The Mayor was accused of a conflict of interest, favouring the project as a regular patron of the centre. A similar range of arguments opposing the project were presented to Council in the pre-budget submission process in 2004. These arguments were replayed when the draft 2004/5 budget, with the refurbishment proposal as its major capital works item, was passed on the Mayor's casting vote at a rowdy Council meeting [153].

The redevelopment of AVSFC was completed in late 2007 (see plate 5), with enlarged 'dry' areas, warm-water pool facilities, reception and changing facilities, but without a ball court. Early visitor responses have generally been very positive, and the building makes a significant contribution to Moonee Valley's civic landscape. Ironically, with the complex's emphasis even further removed from the original intentions of a community-based centre, its name has reverted to the Ascot Vale Leisure Centre. At time of writing there has been no resurfacing of concerns over debt financing. However, the financial package that underwrote the redevelopment raises wider questions than debt management. The Victorian government contributed $1.7 million to the capital costs of redevelopment, and the YMCA contributed $500,000 and undisclosed "other works" [154]. Depending on the scale of such contributions, such arrangements may induce changes in ownership and management models, introducing hybrid forms that are neither fully public nor fully private. Hybridity is important element of the history of community facilities, and current policy trends give it a renewed emphasis. The relationship of past and future forms of hybridity, and their significance for facility management, is discussed in detail in chapter 8.

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[153] Minutes, Ordinary Meeting of Council, MVCC, 15 June 2004.
[154] "Residents Celebrate Health and Fitness", *Valley View* (MVCC), v.61, November 2007, p. 3.

Plate 5: Ascot Vale Sports and Fitness Centre – old and new (courtesy MVCC)

Evaluating AVSFC

AVSFC can rightly be considered a pioneer facility of its type in Victoria, and possibly Australia, and some concession must surely be made for the inadequacies of its initial design. The facility was constructed at a point of transition from seasonal pools of relatively simple design and construction which had their locus in engineering-led municipal building regimes, to complex, high-visitation multi-purpose facilities that sought to resolve the paradox of mass consumption and on-demand programs. In a similar light, acknowledgement must be made of the desire of council administrators and centre managers to find cost-effective ways of meeting expanding and changing recreation trends and responding to changing regulatory environments.

The encouragement of more people to exercise more often is a goal that underpins many public health programs, and the popularity of aerobic and moderate weight training has a sound epidemiological basis. Extended opening hours and flexible timetabling assists in reconciling conflicts between paid work, household management and recreation in a deregulated labour market. Supervised indoor facilities provide personal security and year-round comfort. There is no necessary reason why aquatic facilities should assume priority in a wet and dry leisure complex, assuming such provision is not so residual that benefits such as swimming competence, play opportunities and physical well-being, are compromised or not reasonably available elsewhere. However, the council's original mandate of financial self-sufficiency established a path dependence for the facility, locking it into a regional recreation market that stands increasingly at odds with the original intention of providing a community facility, and exposes the concept of "community demand" that is used freely in the King Report and council documentation as largely rhetorical. The limited extent to which these elements – market and local community - overlap is indicated in the King report, which shows that only 56.3% of centre patrons live in one of five postcodes of the Moonee Valley municipality, and the reach of some of these

postcodes into other municipalities suggests that the figure might be further discounted (Michael King and Associates 2000:i,ii) [155]. Should this matter, if the facility provides public or merit goods at reasonable prices (it has regularly been 'benchmarked' against similar public and private facilities), is available to local residents, and the cross-subsidy effects between dry and wet areas assists in the provision of a range of recreation opportunities? There are four issues to consider in response to this question.

Firstly, the history of AVSFC recounted above suggests there has been a substantial hidden cost to ratepayers of the incremental development of the centre and council's administration of a large and complex facility, incurred during a period of time that is marked by the deterioration of other municipal assets (Moonee Valley City Council and GHD Pty Ltd 1996) [156]. Secondly, the original plans for the complex and initial discussion of the major redevelopment of 2005/06 both identified a need for flexible spaces and meeting-rooms that could expand the facility beyond a recreation complex to provide a civic element. On both occasions, these plans were overtaken by a desire to minimise capital outlays and ensure maximum use of programmable, profitable space [157]. Thirdly, the capacity of a leisure complex to consistently return an operating profit sets a new benchmark for facility performance, but brings with it the danger that activities such as swimming are viewed as an avoidable cost. Fourthly, the physical size and traffic movement generated by centres such as AVSFC either have disbenefits on surrounding residents or, if built on greenfield sites, have environmental (car-dependency) and social costs that are yet to be fully identified or debated. The move away from locally-oriented civic or community facilities that developed as integral parts of the spatial and social functioning of neighbourhoods or suburbs has been promoted for economic or service

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[155] This figure is contexualised by a recent carefully phrased claim that 80% of *visits* are from Moonee Valley – "Residents Celebrate Health and Fitness", *Valley View* (MVCC), v.61, November 2007, p. 3.
[156] This conclusion is also supported by data in the Moonee Valley City Council Municipal Assets Register 2006 and data at Appendix A.
[157] Therese Samson-Tierney, General Manager Corporate Services, MVCC, pers comm, 19 July 2004; Brooke Le Sueur, Recreation Services Manager, MVCC, pers comm, 22 Nov 2004.

efficiencies. However, a policy environment that draws heavily on rhetoric of interdependency and TBL has largely neglected to consider the social and environmental benefits of earlier, more localised relationships between facilities and communities.

5.6   Conclusion

The critical focus by local authorities over the past two decades or so on the service capacities and operating costs of aquatic centres, framed by discourses of public choice theory, the servicescape and strategic asset management, recognises the complexity of these facilities as public goods and physical infrastructure. In a period of increasing fiscal stress for the local authority sector, declining attendances at seasonal pools and rising maintenance costs placed them in a poor position to claim a public subsidy ahead of other welfare measures, in the absence of well-articulated arguments for the public benefits of this form of aquatic recreation. Perceptions of the limited service attributes of seasonal pools – their supposed 'single-use' character and short operating period – further eroded their viability as recreational assets. Changing attitudes to sun exposure reduced their attractiveness at the very time they relied on peak visitation to compensate for slack periods, and compelled local authorities to outlay funds to provide shade structures. A shift away from club-based competitive swimming to less institutionalised and disciplined forms in which swimming competence is acquired, and moves to extend participation in aquatic recreation to older age cohorts, raised questions about the ongoing suitability of the FINA-standard configuration.

The relative success of multi-purpose aquatic facilities which include an indoor, heated pool, as measured in visitor numbers, service attributes and financial subsidies, makes a strong case for the redevelopment of municipal seasonal pools to include a component that can be used year round. Many local authorities have followed this path, mostly by constructing new indoor facilities, some by

adding an indoor pool and dry facilities to the existing seasonal pool, some by closing existing seasonal pools to make way for new indoor facilities or simply rationalise existing services. Of these options, as this chapter has argued, it is the latter that have generated most community controversy and opposition. The strength of this opposition, as the Queen's Park pool case study indicates has been fuelled by concerns over deal-making, lack of transparency and transfer of public assets by the local authority. In this regard, this chapter has argued, concerns over closure or redevelopment encompass issues of administrative accountability, local democracy and notions of public interest as well as more localised concerns over service loss.

Defence of the seasonal pool, especially its FINA standard form, as a seemingly natural part of the Australian recreation landscape and the suite of municipal facilities should, as this chapter indicates, be contextualised with an awareness of the instrumental purposes for which it was installed and the limited period of time for which it enjoyed policy support. The typical mixture of state and local level funding for pool construction raises the question of whether the value of these facilities should be more explicitly identified and tied to ongoing funding formulae. As Crase and Dollery observe, social welfare functions are customarily seen as a universal responsibility and funded through taxation, whereas local services are funded from municipal rates (Crase and Dollery 2005). Victorian state government policy on local swimming pools has positioned these facilities as mixed goods: providing social welfare (community building) and public good (swimming competency, health, productive leisure) functions as well as catering for individual recreation choices. This combination, along with the access and equity requirements of public facilities, means that public pools are unlikely to be profit-making ventures on their own. However, singling out municipal pools as either poor financial performers or local electoral trophies masks their profile in the suite of local community facilities and the purposes they were intended to serve, and limits imagination of the futures that can be secured for them.

The specialised nature of seasonal pools as infrastructure has effectively precluded their adaptation for other local community uses in the event of redundancy. The difficulty of re-using pool infrastructure for other public purposes in part explains the level of contest over closure proposals. Redundancy of buildings, though, is a wider and prevalent issue for local authorities, with their comparatively large portfolios of physical assets. The issue has attracted limited attention within specialised fields of heritage, architecture and facility management, but little consideration of wider infrastructure policy issues. The question of adaptive re-use, and its particular association with cultural facilities, is taken up in chapter 6.

6. "A Work House for the Arts" – the Adaptive Reuse of Municipal Buildings

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 of this thesis identified two trends in the recent provision of community facilities in Australia: 1) the co-location or 'clustering' of facilities and services in new accommodation, often on greenfield sites; and 2) the adaptive reuse of existing public buildings or sites. The first strategy is predominantly associated with new suburban growth areas on the metropolitan fringe. Inner-urban municipalities such as Moonee Valley, which hold existing stocks of built assets, face greater restrictions on land availability and may be subject to statutory requirements or political pressure to reuse assets, more typically pursue the second strategy. The division is not rigid. Adaptive reuse projects may also face pressure to cluster services or activities, to address needs of multiple constituencies and pursue revenue opportunities to offset the relatively high redevelopment and running costs of heritage buildings.

This chapter looks at an example of the second strategy: the conversion of a municipal waste incinerator in the City of Moonee Valley designed by Walter Burley Griffin [158] to a community arts complex known as the Incinerator Arts Complex (IAC) (see plate 6). Redundancy of public buildings has numerous causes, including demographic, technological and regulatory change, building failure, changing service strategies and consumption preferences. The high proportion of built assets in local authority asset portfolios suggests the significance of redundancy – as constraint and opportunity - to this jurisdiction. In the IAC's case, the functional change from a core municipal service, waste

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[158] Walter Burley Griffin (1876-1937) trained as an architect in Chicago, USA, later working under Frank Lloyd Wright. He arrived in Australia in 1913 with his partner Marion Lucy (Mahoney) Griffin, following success in an international competition to design Canberra. An acrimonious relationship with Federal government bureaucrats led to increasing work at municipal and domestic level. Initially classified as modernists, later assessment rates the Griffins as pioneers of environmentalist architecture.

disposal, to a cultural facility is the type of initiative celebrated by analysts who perceive a strategic interdependence between urban regeneration, culture and the 'creative economy' (Landry 2000; Florida 2002; Hartley 2005). Heritage agencies have long argued for the adaptive reuse of public buildings as a conservation measure, sounding occasional cautionary notes about the seemingly natural transition of old buildings into museums or galleries (Museums and Galleries Foundation of New South Wales 2004). Legislators have commended the potential economic and service efficiencies gained from adaptive reuse, particularly where it involves service co-location (House of Commons - Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing 2004; New South Wales Parliament Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Public Works 2004). In recent years, understandings of the conservation benefits of adaptive reuse have extended beyond heritage and social value to encompass environmental sustainability, realised through retention of the embodied energy of existing buildings (Department of Environment and Heritage 2004).

While the broad policy position of government agencies and conservation bodies in favour of adaptive reuse has been publicised, at a local level arguments for reuse remain to be made on a case-by-case basis, with cost, service capacities and building characteristics critical areas of scrutiny. Australian planning jurisprudence provides further constraints on adaptive reuse. In 2003 the New South Wales Planning and Environment Court rejected a developer's claim for an inherent benefit in adaptive reuse – in this case the conversion of a motel into residential units [159]. Roseth J argued that to be in the public interest, a reuse project must demonstrate a public benefit in one or more of four ways:

- the building has historical or heritage value
- the building is attractive and fits into its urban design context
- the building is much loved by the community, and
- the new use serves the public interest better than the existing use (p.16).

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[159] Michael Hesse v Parramatta City Council [2003] NSWLEC 313

Plate 6: Incinerator Arts Complex, front and rear views.

Applied to IAC, the anodyne term adaptive reuse masks radical changes to environmental and service requirements, the complexities of the redevelopment process, and the uncertain future costs associated with this project. What are the potentialities and limits of such conversions? Whose interests are served in reuse projects? Can examination of a single project offer useful general insights? While there are many recorded examples of adaptive reuses of public buildings, available analysis is often technical in nature and customarily focussed on the conversion project, rather than on the ongoing use and resource requirements of facilities or evaluation of the wider public benefit of conversions. Roseth J's statement cited above, however general, may be the most developed summary of wider public interest questions associated with adaptive reuse projects currently available in Australia.

How can the social value of a project such as IAC be appraised, and is a focus on social value itself analytically limiting? This chapter argues for the development of broadly-based and long-term evaluative perspectives for local cultural facilities to reflect their social value and capture the sustained commitment of operating funds for such initiatives. IAC's current positioning within a subsidy model of culture exposes it to a funding rationale that is vulnerable to the fortunes of welfare economics and electoral populism. At the same time, the model also has the effect of characterising the outcomes of IAC as 'arts', a function expected of a civilised community and supported by a mature economy. Recent literature analysing creative industries points to the degree to which creative inputs are becoming increasingly embedded in the wider economy (Hartley 2005), suggesting that re-orientation of cultural activities in policy from subsidised public good to a driver of economic growth is warranted. The relevance of this argument to IAC, and by extension other aspects of the local public realm, is outlined below. Re-positioning IAC's activities in terms of creativity, innovation and social networking makes possible a fusion of culture, civics and economics that enables funding of the facility to be seen as

investment, and may provide for a more secure future for the site and broader support for sport's cultural 'other' in Moonee Valley, the arts.

Chapter Structure

Section **6.2** analyses the physical redevelopment of the site. The history and significance of the structure have been extensively reviewed, most notably by Raworth, Navaretti et al (1994) in the site's conservation plan. The historicity of the site is *not* the prime focus of this section, although some historical detail is necessarily provided. In keeping with the overall focus of this thesis, this section addresses the wider policy and administrative contexts of the redevelopment. The incinerator served its original function for a relatively brief period, between 1932 and 1943, and was used as a council store and workshop until the 1970s. A core argument of this chapter is that its later acquisition of heritage status, principally associated with the contribution of Burley Griffin to its design, effectively determined its reuse as a cultural facility. Regulatory and political pressure prevented the council from disposing of the asset, and compelled it to find a use that was sympathetic to the new status of the site and met a perceived community need. The formal recognition of the site's heritage status gave it statutory protection, created new (if conditional) funding opportunities for redevelopment and gave impetus to the establishment of a centre for performing and visual arts in a region that was poorly supplied in this field. The analysis divides the refurbishment project into two overlapping phases, roughly dating 1975 to the early 1990s, and the early 1990s to the present time. Each phase has planning, capital works and operational stages. The first stage of the redevelopment effectively saved the building, but failed to achieve its sustainable reuse. Subsequent development of the council's strategic planning and administrative capacities, as well as wider changes in philosophical and strategic views on the reuse of historic buildings, contributed to more successful outcomes in the second phase.

The regeneration process, though, can also be seen as an exercise in downward cost-shifting between levels of government, where the state heritage agency through its statutory listing process imposed a stream of future costs on the local authority with, to this point, limited compensation. Failure to adequately consider issues of subsidiarity – determining the appropriate level of government to administer the site and matching that responsibility with resources – has left Moonee Valley residents with a potentially significant future cost burden. Do they receive a corresponding benefit, and, if so, how is this understood and conveyed to ensure ongoing resident support? The unresolved issue of future conservation costs raises questions about the long-term sustainability of the site, and suggests the importance of clearly articulating the site's value. This is attempted in section **6.3**. Although a relatively constrained facility in terms of physical configuration and program capacity, the re-opening of the IAC in 2004 was nonetheless a landmark in the council's provision of arts and cultural programs. The lack of cultural facilities in the region contrasts with their relatively generous supply in other parts of Melbourne and regional Victoria, a tradition established as a legacy of the nineteenth century gold export economy and the endeavours of civic reformers. While state-level cultural facilities such as the State Library of Victoria, the National Gallery of Victoria and several campuses of Museum Victoria assume some of the characteristics of local goods for Moonee Valley residents in terms of proximity and access, it is arguable that few other Victorian population centres of Moonee Valley's size have made such limited provision for either the production or consumption of the arts. Archival and anecdotal evidence suggests that the high profile of sporting facilities and patronage in the Moonee Valley region 'crowded out' arts provision by successive local administrations [160], although this raises questions about the conceptualisation and uses of culture that are taken up later in this chapter. The appointment of a community arts

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[160] The Australia Council had allocated funding for the appointment of a community arts officer at ECC from 1990; ECC/MVCC did not allocate matched funding to proceed to appointment until 1994, following municipal amalgamation and appointment of an administrator. The first incumbent in the position (1994) recalls the MVCC CEO, at their first meeting, indicating to him that 'culture' had strong sporting connotations in Moonee Valley (Martin Paten, former Community Arts Officer, Moonee Valley City Council, pers comm, March 2006).

officer by the council in 1994, the establishment of a cultural facilities administrative section, and resource commitment to cultural facilities and programs suggests the 'sport-is-culture' view has been superseded in recent years. However, does the categorisation of the facility as an arts complex introduce new limitations in arguing for the ongoing political and funding support of the facility? Section **6.4**, analyses arguments and strategies for investment in cultural activities by local authorities and locates IAC's operations within this discussion.

The lack of certainty over future costs evident in the IAC project conflicts with local authority asset management policy (discussed in chapter 2) and remains obscure to residents. The chapter concludes at **6.5** with an analysis of the IAC site as 'unfinished business', by looking at some policy issues surrounding the future conservation needs and costs associated with the facility. This section discusses recent legislative and policy trends in the conservation and funding of built heritage, most notably the Environment Protection (Biodiversity Conservation) Act 1999 (Cth) and a Productivity Commission (2006) inquiry into public funding of built heritage, and their implications for IAC and Moonee Valley administration and ratepayers. The Productivity Commission report seeks to re-organise funding responsibility for heritage conservation in Australia by matching it with a hierarchy of heritage significance (national, state and local). This section argues that this move has potentially major consequences for the way that social value has been interpreted within heritage policy and significant implications for local authority management of heritage sites.

6.2   From Engineering to Art

"Almost a white collar job…" – the incinerator's history

While sanitation and waste disposal were major concerns of local governments from their establishment, industrialisation and urbanisation in the second half of

the nineteenth century brought water shortages, deteriorating environmental quality and periodic disease outbreaks. Colonial and state-level responses sought to improve and coordinate urban environmental governance through the creation of boards of health and public works (Christoff 1999). In 1911 the Victorian government Board of Health, responding to negative press coverage of the use of a section of Albert Park as a rubbish tip as well as broader concerns over dumping at sea, instructed municipalities to abolish rubbish tips, with incineration the preferred alternative (Barnard and Keating 1996:87).

This change in the treatment of household rubbish created a promising commercial opportunity. In response to the poor efficiency of early municipal incinerators, John Boadle, an engineer and Moonee Ponds resident, designed a new type of furnace which deflected or reverberated gases produced by burning waste. The reintroduction of the gases to the combustion process produced very high temperatures, increasing the destruction of solid waste and minimising the release of noxious fumes. The Reverberatory Incinerator and Engineering Company (RIECO), founded by Russian migrant Nisson Leonard-Kanewsky, built the first reverberatory incinerator at Sandringham, which opened in 1925. RIECO subsequently built incinerators at Box Hill and Geelong, and duplicated the Sandringham structure. The success of the venture prompted Leonard-Kanewsky to commission architects Walter Burley Griffin and Eric Nicholls (Burley Griffin's Melbourne partner) to design the housing for twelve municipal incinerators in several Australian states [161]. Five of the twelve incinerators that resulted from the partnership are extant. The Moonee Ponds incinerator is the sole Victorian survivor. The most recent and controversial demolition of one of the structures was in 1991 at Pyrmont, inner Sydney. Another of this group of incinerators, at Ipswich, Queensland, was converted in 1969 to a small community-run performing arts space, and one at Willoughby to a restaurant in 1980, and later to offices. None of the extant structures are operating as incinerators.

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[161] Burley Griffin established a practice in Melbourne in 1916, and his commissions included design of a building for Leonard-Kanewsky in Elizabeth St known as Leonard House. It was demolished in 1972.

RIECO's commission by the Essendon council followed persistent complaints by residents in the west of the municipality about the local rubbish tip. The council agreed to build an incinerator next to the tip site, on the Maribyrnong River flood plain bordering Moonee Ponds. The adjacency of the site to a residential area suggests the council's confidence in the incineration technology, but brought a stipulation that the design demonstrate architectural merit and blend with the surrounding built environment. The architectural features of the Moonee Ponds incinerator have been extensively analysed elsewhere (Johnson 1977; Markham 1982; Raworth, Navaretti et al. 1994). Several aspects of the design and siting of the structure have particular relevance to this analysis. Firstly, while the composition and stylistic elements of the original structure reflect Griffin's idiom, Spicer (1989:16) suggests that of the two partners Eric Nicholls was most involved in the project, citing Nicholls' name on the architectural plans and the commemorative plaque on the building, and Griffin's frequent absences from Melbourne as evidence. A 1976 report on the site prepared for the Victorian Historic Buildings Preservation Council concluded that the design could be attributed to Burley Griffin but that the architectural drawings were done by Nicholls [162]. The significance of this point is that the association of the site with Burley Griffin, a figure of international standing, secured the site's registration on the Commonwealth Register of the National Estate and the Victorian Register of Historic Buildings. No examples of Nicholls's work are registered nationally and only one at state level, and that (Manyung Scout Camp) is noted for its stylistic debt to Burley Griffin. It can be speculated, then, whether sole attribution of the architectural design to Nicholls would be sufficient to gain national or state registration of the site, and invoke the statutory obligations for protection this entails at state level. Following this line of argument, the recognition of a more local or vernacular significance of the site might have given greater prominence to Eric Nicholls' and John Boadle's achievements, but is more likely to have consigned the building to destruction.

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[162] PROV VPRS 12750/P0001/23/City of Essendon:Walter Burley Griffin Incinerator 22/20 Part 1

The incinerator was opened with a small ceremony in 1932, the Essendon mayor Arthur Fenton describing its operations as "almost a white collar job" (Raworth, Navaretti et al. 1994). Although praised for their efficiency, the incinerator's boilers were fired with crude oil, which came under supply restrictions during World War Two, and the incinerator ceased operation in 1942. Raworth et al (1994) offer an alternative and wider perspective on the relatively limited operating span of municipal incinerators - changes to the packaging of consumer items, notably the introduction of plastics, and an increase in the volume of household waste during the inter-war years outstripped the capacity of incineration as a method of municipal waste disposal, bringing a return to the landfill method. In 1947 an additional structure, designed by the city engineer, was added at the front of the original building, and from that date the site became a council depot.

State Heritage, Local Responsibility

In the late 1960s the Victorian Branch of the National Trust of Australia began to take an interest in the incinerator as a historic structure. The archival record suggests that the council was planning to redevelop the Holmes Road, Moonee Ponds works depot, which included the incinerator and its 1947 addition. The council, however, was coy about future plans. In April 1970, the city engineer RA Cameron wrote to the National Trust indicating that while there were no current plans to replace the structure, it was not known what impact future development of the depot might have on the building [163].

The Victorian branch of the National Trust was a prime mover in the development of state-level heritage conservation measures. A major influence on the Hamer Liberal government's passage of the Historic Buildings Act 1974 (the first

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[163] PROV VPRS 12750/P0001/23 Essendon City Council Walter Burley Griffin Incinerator 22/20 Part 1.

heritage legislation in an Australian state jurisdiction), the Trust's register of classified buildings was adopted by the Historic Buildings Preservation Council (HBPC), which was established by the legislation, as its first register (Davison 1991:22). The Historic Buildings Act 1974 amended state planning legislation, thus exercising jurisdiction over structures owned by local authorities that were placed on the HBPC's register. The significance of this move was immediately apparent to ECC. In response to advice from the HBPC that the National Trust had applied to have the building placed on the Historic Buildings Register, Cameron pointed to the likely high cost of restoration and ongoing maintenance. The HBPC gazetted the structure on its Register in 1977, on the basis of its association with Burley Griffin and rarity as the sole remaining example of his incinerator design in Victoria – a Burley Griffin incinerator in Brunswick had been demolished in 1975. The town clerk replied that the council had no objection "subject to the State Government meeting all requirements in repairing and maintaining the incinerator to the standard as required by the Historic Building Preservation Council" [164].

While the exchanges over the building reflect a clash between state heritage values and the utilitarian view of the local authority, both levels of government applied what Yelland (1991) refers to as a preservationist ethic to the site. The main aim of the Historic Buildings Bill introduced into the Victorian Parliament in 1973, to "…save from destruction…a reasonable number of the better examples of architectural style or of historical significance", reflected the influence of the architectural profession and the values of the National Trust membership. Yelland argues that a focus on individual buildings rather than streetscapes or precincts, and privilege given to the "old, architecturally important and elegant" distinguishes Victorian legislation from later enactments in other state jurisdictions (Yelland 1991:45-54). The inquiry into the national estate, commissioned by the Whitlam Federal Labor government in 1973, marks the

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[164] J P Scott to B Pizzey, 18 October 1977, PROV VPRS 12750/P0001/23 Walter Burley Griffin Incinerator 22/20 Part 1.

introduction to Australian heritage theory and practice of conservation as an adaptive process. The concept widened the scope of historical significance, emphasising the importance of site and context as well as structure, urging respect of the contribution of all periods to a site's history, and favouring continued use of historic sites as a practical aid to their long-term survival (Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate 1974). This outlook was codified for Australian heritage practitioners in 1978 by the Australian chapter of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (Australia ICOMOS 1996), and reflected in the dropping of "preservation" from the renamed Historic Buildings Council (HBC) in 1983 (but note the continued emphasis on buildings).

With the IAC site registration process underway, Cameron advised HBPC that the structure would be "left in its present form in an isolated corner of the depot site" [165]. While a preservationist stance can be read into this advice, the archival record suggests that Cameron's opposition to HBPC interference with depot expansion plans, an absence of any contingency planning by the council, and lack of experience with the new business of heritage also shaped the terms of the response. By April 1978, its claim that the state government bore funding responsibility for the heritage declaration rebuffed by HBPC, the council sought funding from the Commonwealth Government's new National Estate Grants Program (NEGP), administered by the Australian Heritage Commission. The submission was slight, with an uncosted building restoration program and no discussion of the future use of the site. In June 1978 the council advised that the estimated cost of restoration was $50,000, with an annual maintenance cost of $4,500. Twelve months later, in June 1979, ECC received a $2,917 grant from the NEGP (via HBPC, the administering authority in Victoria) for urgent maintenance. This grant was the first of several obtained by the council from various funding bodies, with time limits or other conditions placed on their expenditure that led to hasty planning and decision-making and outcomes of

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[165] R A Cameron to B Pizzey, HBPC, 2 Nov 1977 - PROV VPRS 12750/P0001/23 City of Essendon - Walter Burley Griffin Incinerator 22/20 Part 1.

variable quality. State-level legislative requirements and local level capacities were mismatched. The assessment of the building's significance and the technical conservation specifications of HBPC were not supported by adequate funding, policy or administrative regimes.

Community Asset, Community Taste

The first recorded proposal for reuse of the building was a request in 1980 by the Essendon Theatre Company (ETC) to use, jointly with the Northern Theatre Company, a large covered area where trucks deposited their loads into the incinerator hoppers as a theatre, and other parts of the building for set production and storage. The council disputed ETC's view that the proposal would involve no cost to ratepayers, and the matter lay dormant until a third theatre group, WEST Community Theatre (hereafter WEST), made a similar and ultimately successful submission to the council in August 1981.

Contributors to Fotheringham's (1987) history of community theatre outline the emergence of a vigorous alternative theatre movement in all Australian states in the 1970s, featuring a strong nationalist repertoire, and innovative formats and performance locations. The Australian Council for the Arts (established by the Commonwealth government as a departmental unit in 1968 and statutory authority in 1974, hereafter Australia Council), underwrote the movement, with its Community Arts Committee channelling funds to community theatre groups. WEST was a regional company, employing 14 people at this time and funded by the Australia Council, the Victorian Ministry for the Arts, and several western Melbourne councils (including Essendon). While the Essendon council sought to balance competing demands by assuring all three companies use of the proposed Incinerator Theatre, WEST's size and resource base and the council's existing support appear to have influenced a decision to confirm it as the resident company.

The significance of these developments relate to the path dependant nature of the project: at no stage did the council appear to have canvassed other development options for the site. ETC and WEST's proposal (the latter augmented by a proposal to use a small space in the lower level of the structure, where the furnaces were tended, as a gallery) was accepted on face value, despite estimates for the cost of building conversion for these purposes rising from $180,000 in December, 1981 to $275,000 in June, 1982 [166]. The council appears to have sought no independent advice on the merits of the proposals, although in February 1982 the city manager B C Beattie expressed concern over the council's exposure to future costs in a council committee meeting [167].

The council sought to manage the project risk, broker competing interests in the use of the site, and assist restoration fund-raising efforts through the formation of a limited liability company, the Walter Burley Griffin Incinerator Complex Company Limited. The objectives of the company were (inter alia) "…to provide a public forum for Australian culture past and present as represented by the performing and visual arts". The formation of a company was a pre-condition for access to tax-deductible private donations, which Commonwealth legislation directed through the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust [168]. Project risk, as perceived by the council, came in two other areas – artistic taste and building tenure - and the Council engaged in lengthy discussions with its lawyers to address both in the company deed of agreement. In Beattie's view, the status of the building as a "community asset" meant its artistic programs should conform to community taste [169], the council's lawyers advising against attempts at "editorial control" by the authority [170].

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[166] PROV VPRS12750/P0001/23 City of Essendon - Walter Burley Griffin Incinerator 22/20 Part 2.
[167] Minutes of the General Purposes Committee of Council, 22 February 1982, PROV VPRS 12750/P0001/23 City of Essendon - Walter Burley Griffin Incinerator 22/20 Part 2.
[168] In this elaborate arrangement, donations were made to the AETT, an approved charity under Commonwealth taxation law that effectively 'harvested' donations to Australian performing arts agencies. The donations were notionally unconditional, but AETT suggested to donors that they instruct it to (in the Incinerator's case) "give consideration to the needs of the Walter Burley Griffin Incinerator Complex Company Ltd when distributing funds."
[169] PROV VPRS12750/P0001/23 City of Essendon - Walter Burley Griffin Incinerator 22/20 Part 4.
[170] PROV VPRS12750/P0001/23 City of Essendon - Walter Burley Griffin Incinerator 22/20 Part 4.

The issue of tenure also turned on the perception of the building as a community asset. Beattie argued that the building was "too valuable" to be used by one group alone. However, Beattie (who was the council's representative on the Company board of management and its treasurer) sought to balance competing preferences for on-site management and wider community access by describing WEST as the "first resident group". The council's dealings with WEST suggest a fine balance between reliance on partnerships to achieve community-level project goals and 'capture' by the partner organisation. The issue of capture re-emerged several months later when WEST asked the council to act as guarantor for a $10,000 bank overdraft to cover "liquidity problems". The council was now faced with the problem of an insolvent major partner. As Beattie and the council discovered, the risks associated with partnership projects remained with the public authority [171]. In this case, though, risk was also transferred to the local authority by the statutory heritage listing, narrowing the range of site uses and exposing the council to pre-emptive community actions.

Funding to Fail?

In 1982, the council launched a vigorous fund-raising campaign for the restoration and refit of the building. In spite (or perhaps because) of its financial problems, WEST was the driving force behind the campaign, particularly through its energetic board member and WEST's representative on the IAC management board, Sadie Stevens [172]. Between 1982 and 1984 the campaign raised over $200,000, through donations from individuals and corporations, and a combination of tied and untied state government grants and loans. Local businesses also provided in-kind donations of building materials. The uncertain and conditional nature of the funding had a major impact on the management and outcomes of the first stage of the building's refurbishment. As the following

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[171] PROV VPRS12750/P0001/23 City of Essendon - Walter Burley Griffin Incinerator 22/20 Part 3.
[172] Stevens was a well-connected educationist and community worker in the Western Region, and later deputy chancellor of Victoria University.

section indicates, discharging funding conditions became an overriding concern for the council, resulting in an effective loss of sovereignty over the project and sub-optimal use of public and private funds.

The funding campaign centred on a brief drawn up by the project architect, Keith Streames, who was appointed to that position in April 1983. When the campaign was launched, the council had received the NEGP grant described above, and undertook a loan of $9,000 from HBC, to be repaid within five years. The campaign consisted of written requests to state government ministers, business heads and philanthropic organisations, as well as a public appeal sponsored by local community newspapers. Major funding of $80,176 came from the state Department of Employment and Training, a reflection of the economic recession and high level of unemployment in Victoria at that time. These funds were to be expended within six months. Further grants were made by the state Department of Tourism and by the Department of Youth, Sport and Recreation, again with a short expenditure timeframe. The grants were structured to meet the objectives of the state agencies rather than the council or the project, and the council's agreement to match state grants effectively meant that part of its current year budget expenditure was decided by state priorities. Beattie and the project architect sought to manage the situation by staging the work, and using the largely unskilled labour for clean-up work, and the complex was officially opened in 1984 [173].

By 1985 Streames and at least one user group commented on the poor workmanship, standard of finishes and fitout. The bulk of the funding raised for the project was spent on building restoration and meeting regulations for public use, and Streames, who volunteered his services when project funding ran out, estimated an additional $120,000 was required to complete the project. However, in a 1985 document titled *Creative Plans for the Incinerator*, WEST identified a tension at the heart of the project:

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[173] Pers comm, Keith Streames, 27 April 2006.

> Do we want a well finished tidy centre or a rougher busier working environment…Is it the fact that it is a Burley Griffin building working against the idea of a work house for the Arts? Is it conceptualized as a show place without real heart or can the two ideas of a historic building be mixed with vitality and variability?

The irony associated with the 'museumification' of the structure is shared with many utilitarian structures or objects that are transformed into heritage assets, where maintenance and use becomes subject to stringent legislative and ethical processes, and sometimes costly conservation requirements. While the poor initial construction and condition of the building (Streames later described it as "exhausted" and noted substantial variations between the original plans and the built construction[174]) meant that much of the initial site work was directed to stabilisation and weather proofing, Streames struggled with the interior conversion, particularly the technical requirements of a theatre, which neither the building nor the budget adequately accommodated. The lighting control box, for example, was located beneath the theatre floor level, giving no direct view of activity on stage. Neither heating, adequate stage lighting nor seating had been installed when the building was opened. WEST's rough working environment may have added frisson to cultural production at the site, but it made no concessions to audience comfort in its consumption.

A second major problem confronted the council in this phase of the site's re-use - the development of an appropriate management model for the site. While the council envisaged WEST Theatre would provide a level of site management services as part of its residency, WEST does not appear to have shared this view, and there is no available documentation specifying WEST's role. Indeed, although WEST's letterhead indicated it was headquartered at the site, the company was developing during the 1980s as a location and touring company rather than a box-office one. The lack of effective site management meant poor

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[174] Pers comm, Keith Streames, 27 April 2006.

coordination of existing user groups, lack of promotion and forward planning, poor appearance and upkeep, and exposure of the site to vandalism.

In February 1988 council officials made a bleak assessment of the project. Around $200,000 had been spent on the theatre and gallery conversion, leaving an estimate of $42,000 to finish work to the theatre building and the exterior of the structure. The complex was lightly used. Essendon Community Amateur Theatre (ECAT) performed two seasons per year, and the only other regular use was a weekly gymnastic class. Other one-off events were held occasionally, but tended to be social rather than theatrical. "The [Walter Burley Griffin] company" said the assessment, "was initially an active one but was at all times extensively resourced and funded by Essendon Council" [175].

The council then advertised in the metropolitan and national press for expressions of interest in the site with three objectives: heritage conservation, use as an arts centre, and financial viability. While the objectives suggest an element of path dependence as a cultural facility, this appears to be the first time in the course of the refurbishment project that the council specified strategic goals for the centre. In response, WEST and ECAT made submissions that broadly concurred in their criticism of the facility: it had poor acoustics, a squeaky floor, limited preparation, storage and display space, poor lighting, no heating, a hard-to-find main entrance, and little sign of habitation. But, as WEST observed, Melbourne was "desperately short of small theatre spaces", and both companies sought to continue their association with the site [176].

In May 1988, ECC agreed to appoint a part-time manager of the complex. Previously, administrative responsibility for the site had rested with the recreation officer, located within the Parks and Recreation Division (a typical administrative

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[175] PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/20 Essendon City Council Buildings and Depots – Walter Burley Griffin Incinerator Complex 5/3/5 Part 8.
[176] Submission by Neil Greenway, WEST, PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/20 Essendon City Council Buildings and Depots – Walter Burley Griffin Incinerator Complex 5/3/5 Part 8.

configuration at that time). This initiative sparked a new round of funding applications by the council. In the late 1980s the council again applied to HBC for funds to complete work on the eaves, fascia and soffits of the building and to repair the chimney. HBC offered a $50,000 loan, which the council accepted, with no apparent discussion on how the loan interest repayments would be financed [177]. In 1989 though, with the Victorian government confronted by a burgeoning public debt and the collapse of its recently privatised State Bank, the Ministry for Arts cut WEST's recurrent grant ($89,000 in 1987/88) and the company folded, leaving a $4,700 debt for the council to meet. ECAT was also, according to the interim management committee of the complex, "floundering" as a result of staging its productions at the unpopular venue [178] . ECAT continued as the principal tenant for several more years. However, ECAT's residency was not geared towards the long-term sustainability of the site - its program was neither sufficiently frequent nor varied to build a diverse core audience and its user requirements effectively restricted other uses of the site. By 1994 most activity had ceased at the site.

6.3 Identity Complex – Stage Two Development

As chapter 3 discusses, the political context in which Victorian local authorities operated changed significantly in the 1990s. Victoria was in economic recession when the IAC redevelopment project began, and the state Labor government and the Labor-dominated Essendon council perceived short-term employment gains in the project. When planning work resumed on the project in 1993, the Kennett Liberal government was preparing statewide municipal amalgamations, involving the appointment of administrators in place of elected councillors, and urging a business model on local authorities.

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[177] See complaint by ECC Accounts Manager, PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/20 Essendon City Council Buildings and Depots – Walter Burley Griffin Incinerator Complex 5/3/5 Part 9.
[178] PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/20 Essendon City Council Buildings and Depots – Walter Burley Griffin Incinerator Complex 5/3/5 Part 5.

The extent to which these events changed the strategic outlook of what became the Moonee Valley administration can be observed in the IAC project. Where the first phase of the redevelopment was guided by external institutional interests, in the form of the HBPC/HBC and WEST, as well as a "stand alone" attitude to the facility, the second phase saw the integration of the project in wider council processes of resource and asset provision and use. The adoption of cultural and service planning frameworks also guided the development. A second change that can be observed in this phase of the project is the development of a rhetoric of local citizenship. Local administrators sought to enrol residents of four former municipalities as citizens of Moonee Valley, and IAC became a key site in the project of establishing a sense of community identity.

In 1993 Essendon councillors – challenged by council administrators to either commit resources to the further development of the site or investigate commercial options – agreed to a three year plan for the completion of works [179]. A position of community arts officer, created in 1994 (with Australia Council funding assistance) and expansion of the existing Recreation Services administrative unit to Recreation and Cultural Services, gave arts and culture a distinct administrative base. This marks the professionalisation of arts administration in the Essendon/Moonee Valley council, and the beginning of attempts to install cultural development as a cross-portfolio policy. The two major outcomes of this change, and a key influence on IAC's future, were the preparation of a conservation plan for the site (Raworth, Navaretti et al. 1994), and the engagement of consultants to develop a City of Moonee Valley cultural plan (Taylor and Cullity Pty Ltd and Collaborations 1996). The following brief account of the history of conservation and cultural planning, and their application at local authority level in Australia, assists in understanding the IAC's development trajectory from this point.

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[179] Minutes, Ordinary Meeting of Council, 30 August 1993.

Heritage Conservation in Australia

An Australian adaptation of the international code of practice governing the conservation of historic sites was developed by the Australian branch of the UNESCO affiliate International Committee on Monuments and Sites (Australia ICOMOS) at a meeting at Burra, South Australia in 1979. Article 23 of what became known as the Burra Charter says "[w]ork on a place must be preceded by professionally prepared studies of the physical, documentary and other evidence, and the existing fabric recorded before any intervention in the place". The Burra Charter has no statutory basis in Australia, and its influence spread slowly and unevenly during the 1980s, congruent with wider developments in heritage protection in Australia (Davison 1991:24-5). Discussion of the charter and its application appeared in Australian heritage literature around 1983 (Lewis 1983), post-dating early developments at the incinerator site. Hence, the archival record of the first development phase of the Incinerator shows no reference to the Burra Charter as a conservation guideline, and no conservation study or plan was prepared for the building beyond occasional written advice from HBC.

The IAC conservation plan was developed following a 1994 agreement between Heritage Victoria (which superseded HBC) and the Moonee Valley council, with funding contributions from both parties. The building's association with Burley Griffin attracted a team of conservation architects and Burley Griffin specialists to the project, producing a highly researched document critical of earlier redevelopment efforts. Following the Burra Charter's emphasis on securing the future of heritage places (breaking from earlier 'preservationist' precepts) the plan discusses the "self-sustainability" (Raworth, Navaretti et al. 1994:64) of the project, suggesting that the construction of new buildings on the site

> …is likely to play an important role in establishing a viable use for the site, as the existing buildings have been imperfectly suited to their recent roles…Maintenance of the functions of theatre and gallery within the incinerator building should only be undertaken subject to confirmation that these uses can be made viable and sustainable. (p.63)

The plan also recommended that some modifications to the building during the 1980s be removed, to conserve its "primary significance". The consultants' suggestion for additional buildings on the site brought into view a major unresolved conflict - the continued presence of the municipal waste-transfer station and works depot on the western side of the Incinerator.

Cultural Planning and Local Government

The concept of cultural planning developed in response to economic and social dislocation and the decline of inner-urban areas of UK and US cities. In the UK, the association of cultural planning with left politics and its primary application at local government level fused a long tradition of local-level political activism in that country with new concepts of cultural democracy. The US variant of cultural planning developed as a critical response by physical planners to urban renewal projects of the 1960s and 1970s, and had a strong emphasis on place, physical amenity and quality of life. Stevenson considers the result an unstable mixture of social democratic and neo-liberal politics, a "third way" approach designed to address all agendas, but ultimately resolved in favour of a civics based on economic liberalism (Stevenson 2004).

The Australia Council has been Australia's most influential promoter of cultural planning, particularly through its fusion of community arts and community cultural development. Hawkins (1991) and Gibson (2001) analyse the Australia Council's shifting response to its mission to (inter alia) "widen access to and application of the arts in the community" which led to the establishment of a Community Arts Board in 1977. While Gibson argues that access to the civilising and educational influences of the arts was the Australia Council's initial guiding model, the rising profile of community arts within that organisation "opened an important space for more pluralist constructions of arts product and practice" (p.107). Concepts of cultural democracy and cultural rights displaced an earlier 'disadvantage' model,

and were given further shape and impetus by government policies promoting cultural diversity. The Australia Council's adoption of an anthropological definition of culture – a way of life – supported a connection between community arts and the wider scope of cultural planning. As the Australia Council's direct funding responsibilities for community arts waxed and waned (the Community Arts Board was downgraded to a unit and the Council came under pressure to "devolve" community arts to local and state authorities, it saw in cultural planning a strategic opportunity to extend arts participation and cultural vitality in local communities (Mills 2003).

Cultural planning advocates connected most substantially with Australian local government planning interests through the concept of Integrated Local Area Planning (ILAP). Sponsored by ALGA with the Australia Council's support (Local Government and Arts Task Force 1991), ILAP was conceptualised as a holistic, spatially-integrated approach to planning, involving each level of government, all relevant planning authorities, and local communities. The ILAP concept sought to establish cultural development and cultural planning as a core local government activity, not simply confined to the cultural services area. ILAP was an important vehicle for introducing into Australia the rhetoric of community well-being and partnership (Australian Local Government Association 1993), later to be taken up enthusiastically by state governments and 'returned' to local government in policy and regulatory forms.

The ILAP-Australia Council nexus articulated connections between arts, culture, place and place-making (Graham Sansom Pty Ltd and Praxis Research 1994). The development by cultural planners of a language and set of planning tools that connected social, cultural, economic, governance and urban policies resonated with Australian local authorities (for example see Grogan, Mercer et al. 1995). This was particularly the case for small authorities where one officer might be responsible for the entire range of social planning. Alliances between Australian regional arts associations and local authorities have been particularly

important for the promotion of cultural development. However, the ILAP concept was only sporadically applied. For larger authorities such as Moonee Valley, competing and more specialised bureaucratic interests and the dominance of land-use in strategic planning has attenuated the influence of cultural planning.

Brecknock (2000) argues that the transformation of local authorities into "business units" in the 1990s positioned Council administrative departments as competitors rather than collaborators, striving to achieve bottom-line results. While numerous local authorities have undertaken cultural planning or mapping exercises, few have, as Mills (2003) points out, integrated the process with wider allocative and administrative logics. The inner Melbourne City of Port Philip added the concept of cultural sustainability to triple bottom line goals of financial, environmental and social sustainability (Hawkes 2001), representing the most developed response by a Victorian (and perhaps Australian) local authority to cultural planning precepts. The New South Wales state government encourages local authorities in that state to produce cultural plans, trading largely on ideas of local cultural distinctiveness as a development 'capital' (New South Wales Ministry for the Arts and Department of Local Government 2004). However, Mills (2003) suggests that cultural planning has been implemented as an add-on to other planning approaches, rather than a foundation for the planning process itself. In this sense, culture remains marginalised, unable to force structural reform within council administrations.

Culture or Facilities?

Mills' analysis cited above is, with some qualification, an accurate illustration of the Moonee Valley situation. In a report to the council in May 1995, the community arts officer noted the achievements of the position since its establishment: production of a local arts directory, expansion of the Essendon Festival, initiation of an arts grant scheme, development of an art exhibition and prize, and completion of the municipality's first community art project – a mosaic

in Puckle St, Moonee Ponds. The report contains limited analysis of these projects in terms of their cultural output, but emphasises their contribution to the local economy, sense of community identity, and (through fostering contemporary art) as an indicator of Council's "commitment to a modern and innovative future". The report was prefaced with a brief on cultural planning, advocating its strengths as a unifying rationale for urban design, planning and development control, recreation, community services and facilities, indeed, almost all of the major strategic and operational areas of the Council. The threat of such expansive claims to established power structures within local administrations would be significant at any time, let alone during a period of change and instability (a context overlooked by Mills). Arts and culture, then, continued as an event- and facility-based initiative, one administrative 'silo' amongst several, rather than "part of an integrated approach to promoting the wellbeing of local communities and their environment" as advocated by the report [180].

Mills' analysis also underestimates the traditional dominance of physical assets and infrastructure in local authority planning. The project brief prepared for the cultural planning consultancy focussed on cultural 'mapping' through a request to identify "cultural groups and individual artists" and prepare a "profile of arts resources" in the region. The discussion paper, conflating arts and culture, alluded to the capacity of new cultural planning tools - needs analysis, asset mapping and the measurement of economic impact – to establish the relevance of culture to other council areas. However, and importantly for our purpose here, the brief also invited the consultants to establish how three of Council's major built assets (the Civic Auditorium and Moonee Ponds Community Centre (formerly the Essendon Town Hall and municipal offices), IAC, and the former Kensington Town Hall might service the cultural needs of the municipality. This task was addressed in a separate report (Taylor and Cullity Pty Ltd and Collaborations 1997). The consultants argued in this report that a survey of 400 residents established that existing sites did not meet the cultural plan's goal "[t]o

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[180] Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Council, May 1995: Item 1 "Arts and Cultural Development".

provide high quality cultural facilities which support a diverse range of activities" (p.25). There is little doubt that the existing facilities were under-utilised, a situation exacerbated by the amalgamation. As the consultant's report noted, the prominent location of the Moonee Ponds Community Centre site meant there was pressure for other "non-cultural" uses of the site, such as a hotel or housing (p.9). Against such pressures, the consultants' development strategy was to re-position existing activities conducted on each site under a *community* banner (markets, community education, recreation) as part of a wider cultural enterprise, and emphasise the potential economic contribution of the "cultural industries" to the municipality. The fusing of community, culture and the local economy in the document is a clear illustration of the synergistic intentions of cultural planning. However, the role of culture and cultural facilities in Moonee Valley narrowed, at least in the council's rhetoric, to serve an integrating function through an over-riding concern with post-amalgamation community identity.

The cultural facilities strategy prioritised the redevelopment of the Essendon Town Hall and community centre. The report argued for the potential of the site to contribute to a cultural/civic precinct, which included the nearby library, historical museum, Civic Centre auditorium and Queen's Park. This focus has since been overtaken by commercial and planning considerations involved in the regeneration of the adjacent Moonee Ponds shopping precinct. The design of the new venue, known as the Clocktower, reflected its location at the 'civic centre' of the municipality, through incorporation of a performing arts venue with a professional staging capacity, as well as meeting rooms to be used for a range of civic and local government activities, and a café to extend the venue's capability and offset running costs. The opening of the Clocktower as the municipality's self-styled flagship cultural facility re-directed the emphasis of IAC, and of community arts in Moonee Valley, from performing to visual arts. The following section outlines the second stage of the refurbishment of IAC and tracks the first two years of operation.

IAC Stage Two Capital Works and Operations

In 2003 site works re-commenced at IAC. The work, planned and managed by architectural firm Gregory Burgess Pty Ltd, nationally recognised for cultural facility design, was largely focussed on improving visitor handling and comfort, compliance with building codes for disability access, and landscaping. The project involved reversal of some work undertaken in the first phase of the redevelopment, in accordance with recommendations in the site conservation plan. Allocation by MVCC of its contribution of $745,000 to the project budget of $835,000 (the remaining $90,000 was granted by Heritage Victoria from its Public Heritage Program, a scheme providing financial support for the renewal of municipal-level civic places or community facilities) was uncontroversial. The work proceeded smoothly to enable a reopening of the facility in early 2004 - the planning, financing and execution of the second stage work contrasting with the deficiencies of the first phase in each of these areas.

A number of factors contributed to the success of the second stage: changes to the political context surrounding the project, administrative changes within the organisation, a greater sense of urgency in making effective use of major physical assets, and re-positioning of arts and culture within wider council goals. A resurgent state economy encouraged allocation of state-level funding free of restrictive grant conditions and congruent with project requirements. This enabled the engagement of project management services and a fully planned, costed and tendered approach to construction. A second success factor was the development of the council's strategic planning processes, and correspondence with other council objectives. A third factor was the establishment of a cultural facilities unit, and appointment of an on-site manager of the facility. Contrasts between the first and second development stages also show evidence of the maturing of heritage conservation philosophy and practice, through the development of the Burra Charter with its emphasis on use as a strategic form of conservation, and the capacity of local authority staff to understand and apply the

document. However, the focus of capital works in phase two on 'front of house' functions meant limited attention to the rear, Burley Griffin building.

From 1997 the cultural facilities unit in the council produced a series of planning documents that set out terms for the further development and operation of IAC. During this planning process, the council was presented with two development options for the site, reworking WEST's Burley Griffin showplace/work house alternatives as cultural icon or community cultural development base (Moonee Valley City Council 2003). Choosing the latter, MVCC's planning rhetoric for the new development stage shifted away from an emphasis on "professional" outcomes and "excellence" to renewed focus on community participation and heritage interpretation. The demands made on the site began to widen, accommodated by the expansive brief given to IAC to "provide an active, innovative community and professional cultural facility, expressing the character of the City of Moonee Valley" (Moonee Valley City Council 2003:18). The 2003 management framework indicated that the facility would provide exhibition space, individual artist studios, space for events, programs and classes, and low-cost meeting space for small groups. The combination of hired and public access space introduced a revenue/access trade-off associated with two facility goals: the provision of affordable studio space, and contribution of own-source income to the facility's running costs. A third objective, set by the management framework, was to promote public awareness of the river precinct. In this regard, the site featured in the Moonee Valley Tourism Strategy (2002), and the IAC co-ordinator sought to theme the river in programming and build collaborative programs with other cultural facilities located near the river [181].

The commitment to community arts is, on the face of it, a good fit with the 'workhouse' nature of the facility. Its restricted capacity as a gallery or museum - it does not, for example, meet environmental standards for the display of fragile cultural material sourced from state and national cultural institutions – is offset by

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[181] Dan Mitchell, IAC Co-ordinator, MVCC, pers comm, 17 March 2005.

a physical robustness and location that has permitted a wide programming repertoire. Imaginative music, performance, digital arts and cultural ceremony programming has added substantially to the municipality's arts output. The complex has hosted over 200 separate events each year of operation since its reopening in 2004, attracting more than 20,000 visitors per annum [182]. Open programming capacities also permit (or make it difficult to resist) opportunist uses of the site, such as the unsolicited donation in 2004 of a ceramics kiln purchased from ward funding allocation by a Moonee Valley councillor with an interest in ceramics. Similarly, the site enabled the council to respond tactically to state-level events such as the 2006 Commonwealth games, with an exhibition on the region's sporting history. The facility's rhetorical positioning as a community facility and the building's sturdiness has encouraged its use by the council for civic events such as public consultative exercises and meetings, use by schools, commercial hire and festivals. In this sense, IAC can be seen as aspiring to an ideal of cultural planning by fusing civic or public attributes and cultural activities.

Planning exercises for IAC that were part of Stage 2 redevelopment focussed on identifying service needs and establishing roles and objectives for the facility. However, in the development and policy documentation there is little discussion of how IAC's performance against specified goals will be assessed, beyond a revenue target from hire fees. Why this is so is open to speculation. Perhaps the attention of consultants and staff was on ensuring the success of the development stage, given the past history of the facility. As the second part of this chapter indicates, the development of evaluation frameworks for public cultural institutions has been problematic, alternatively exposing institutions to quantitative measures that may fail to capture the fundamental purpose of cultural funding, or to accusations of special pleading in allocative processes. The following section critically examines debates about and approaches to the evaluation of cultural facilities, and their applicability to IAC.

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[182] Figures supplied by James Buick, Director, Cultural Facilities Unit, MVCC.

6.4 Evaluating the Incinerator Arts Complex

This second part of this chapter identifies and analyses resources to assess the social value of IAC. This section summarises a large literature on the economic and social impact of the arts that has been produced over the past two decades, a body of work that offers a sophisticated rationale for public expenditure on the arts and an array of indicative measures to assist with its evaluation. It then discusses recent critiques of instrumental justifications for cultural funding, and attendant methodological and evidentiary problems of some well-known studies. This critique does not reject instrumental rationales outright, but seeks a re-balancing of instrumental and intrinsic arguments for participation in arts programs. This section returns to one of the wider themes of this thesis: the importance of public value "stories" in securing the sustainable provision of community facilities.

When IAC re-opened in 2004 around $1 million of public funds, mostly financed by property rates, had been invested in project capital works, with an unquantified additional amount in indirect costs such as administrative support. The Incinerator Management Framework estimated that the complex would *initially* require an annual subsidy of between $100,000 and $120,000 to operate effectively. Its projected annual income, from rental of studio space and venue hiring fees, was estimated at $27,000. In the 2006/07 MVCC budget, the net operating cost of IAC was projected at $162,000. The projected net operating cost of the facility, then, had risen 50% over three municipal budget terms.

The redevelopment of IAC had been strongly supported by one long-serving councillor, a former mayor who was a member of a succession of post-amalgamation Labor majority councils. The November 2005 Victorian local government elections saw the end of this majority, with the retirement of the IAC's champion and defeat of other incumbents familiar with the project. Nominally independent councillors, now a majority, brought a renewed focus on

traditional municipal services such as the management of household waste, and resident concerns over planning and traffic management. Funding decisions of previous councils, notably a fund-raising and sponsorship program for the town of Liquicia, East Timor, were criticised on the grounds they were outside the municipality's core responsibilities. Expenditure on public art installations was criticised, as was expenditure on the celebration of National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Commemoration (NAIDOC) week - the theme of one of IAC's most successful programs - and Harmony Day. One councillor was reported to have spent 600 hours preparing a traffic management plan, with a focus on the part of his ward in which he resided [183]. Another councillor (elected deputy mayor in 2005), who campaigned on a platform to cut municipal rates, sought a redirection of funds towards the provision of higher service levels, such as more frequent street cleaning services [184]. Moonee Valley's incoming mayor indicated in her inaugural speech that the new council would "get back to community values – engaging in a genuine two-way consultation with residents, providing money for roads, keeping a watch on rates and enhancing our recycling revolution. These goals are just as important as entrepreneurial decisions in relation to leisure centres and land purchases" [185]. The speech's rhetoric, echoed in the Moonee Valley Council Plan 2006-10 subtitled "A New Direction", served to politically distance the new council from its predecessors, its focus on service provision and financial efficiency echoing a familiar theme examined in chapter 2. While the plan acknowledged the civic, educational, and recreational benefits of community facilities as rationales for infrastructure spending, its discussion of IAC is framed in terms of cultural consumption: "…conversion of the Incinerator and the Clocktower into regional facilities brings locals and visitors from surrounding suburbs to live theatre, exhibitions and the like" (Moonee Valley City Council 2006:9). The plan continues the familiar rhetorical elevation of sport (notably the forms that do not require council subvention) with an opening

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[183] *Community Times* 23 May 2006.
[184] Agenda, Ordinary Minutes of Council,16 May 2006.
[185] http://www.mvcc.vic.gov.au/Council/Councillors/2005_Mayors_Speech/index.asp (accessed 6 June 2006).

mention of Australian Football League clubs and the Moonee Valley racecourse in a discussion of Moonee Valley "icons" (p.9).

Australian local government cultural facilities have a mixed record of survival. Political rivalries, funding structures biased towards capital works rather than running costs, and narrow performance expectations have combined to threaten institutional sustainability. The Monash Gallery of Art, operated by the City of Monash in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, offers an instructive example. Opened in Harry Seidler-designed premises in 1990, it developed a nationally significant photography collection and reputation as an innovative regional gallery. A change in the political complexion of the Monash City Council in 1998 brought a critical focus on visitor numbers and ratepayer subsidy of the enterprise, bringing about its closure and mothballing. It re-opened in 2002 following additional capital investment in visitor services and gallery areas by a new council, and by industry standards is very successful. The point to this story is not that such an enterprise should be subsidised by ratepayers regardless of visitor numbers or its self-promotion as a gallery of national significance, but that the public interest in optimising the original investment in the facility was discarded in favour of political interests and narrow value assessments. However, the gallery's continued reliance on visitor numbers as the principal demonstration of its value raises the prospect of a repeating pattern [186].

The recent history of the IAC also points to the limitations of categorising and valuing it solely as an arts venue. In 1991 Deborah Mills (1991:7) described community arts in Australia "vigorous and oppositional". Gibson (2001) points to the long-standing interest of art-making in Australia in questions of identity, arguing that such an interest locates art as a strategy of governance. By contrast Hawkins (1991) sees a useful ambiguity in the term community arts, an "invention of government" which serves as a "dumping ground" for diverse cultural projects

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[186] Jane Scott, Director, Monash Gallery of Art, pers comm, *Grass Roots – Communities, Collections, Councils Forum*, Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, 22 August 2003.

and enables the incorporation of a range of constituencies within a policy framework of access and participation. While the connection between art and identity is given emphasis in Moonee Valley policy, neither alternative described above offers an exclusive or satisfactory approach to understanding the response of the IAC to objectives set by the council. Perceiving community arts as a tool of governance risks denying the creative agency of arts workers and subscribing to an over-determined role for governments. Additionally, both views focus on community arts practice, however conceptualised, and ignore the wider value of IAC as a historic site and public place. How, then, might we approach a wider appraisal of IAC's value? The following sections critically outline two approaches.

The Impact of the Arts

Early government support for cultural institutions in Australia was underpinned by a belief in the civilising and person-shaping effects of exposure to art, science and technical knowledge and the regulated public environments in which they were presented (Bennett 1998). Mechanics Institutes played an additional and distinctive role in providing more localised educational, recreational and civic spaces (Balnaves and Biskup 1975:26; Bargwanath 2000). Gibson (2001:122) connects the Mechanics Institute tradition with the later provision of suburban community halls, although chapter 4 of this thesis suggests that religious, philanthropic and sporting organisations might have equal claims to patrimony here.

Rowse (1985) has documented the development of government support for artists (that is, for cultural production rather than consumption) in the twentieth century, culminating in a major institutional transformation with the establishment of the Australia Council in 1968. Public funding for the arts was broadly argued on grounds of public interest or public good, opaque expressions of the civilising logic of nineteenth century liberalism. The rapid growth of funding to the cultural sector provided by the Whitlam Federal Labor government from 1972, and a

challenge by commercial theatres to the terms of this funding, led Whitlam to an Industries Assistance Commission (1975) inquiry into performing arts funding. While the Commission's recommendation to phase out funding for the operating costs of performing arts companies was rejected by the subsequent Federal government (the Fraser Liberal government 1975-1983), the concept of the arts as an *industry* was installed in public policy rhetoric, along with new methodologies for assessing funding efficiency. The Commission's report, with its emphasis on audiences rather than institutions, supplanted the prevailing logic of public interest with market-based theories of public choice. Later Parliamentary, Commonwealth and state government inquiries into aspects of arts funding (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Expenditure 1986; Department of Finance 1989; State-Local Government Finance Unit 1989) consolidated new principles of accountability and measures of funding efficiency and effectiveness for the arts.

O'Fairchealleagh (1999) has described the subsidized arts sector as a "reluctant client" of government, critical in its cultural praxis but largely supported by public funding. However, the cultural sector responded quickly to the challenge to sectoral funding implied by new accountability demands. Australian economists Throsby and Withers (1984), with Australia Council funding, sought to reconcile government support for the arts with market rationality through an empirical application of market failure theory. The study sought to identify externalities or public benefits of the arts and quantify taxpayers' willingness to pay for assistance to the arts. Throsby (2001a:15) rightly points to this study as a pioneering effort in the emerging field of cultural economics. By the end of the twentieth century several major publications surveyed the economic and policy arguments in this field (Frey 2000; Heilbrun and Grey 2001; Throsby 2001b). Ironically, while Throsby, especially, argued that the value of the arts could *not* be appraised solely in economic terms, arts policy research and advocacy responded to the changing policy paradigm by focussing on the economic impact of the arts (for an influential example see Myerscough 1988). The Australia

Council and the Commonwealth government arts ministry initiated the collection of statistical data on the arts sector and led the way in Australian-based 'impact' advocacy (Guldberg 2000). This output also included regional and local studies (National Centre for Cultural and Recreation Statistics 1997).

In the 1990s a developing critique of what Horne (2001:138) later characterised as the 'economisation' of culture sought to broaden the existing evaluation framework to include a focus on the social impact of the arts (for surveys of this literature see Jermyn 2001; Reeves 2002; Newman, Curtis et al. 2003). A leader in this area was the UK urban and cultural planning consultancy Demos (Landry, Greene et al. 1996; Matarasso 1996; Matarasso 1997), again reinforcing the convergence of culture, community, urban renewal and planning. Demos' principal researcher in this field, Francois Matarasso, carefully positioned this work in the larger field of program evaluation:

> Over zealous pursuit of scientific objectivity and the internal validity of evaluation programmes are inappropriate and unhelpful approaches to the evaluation of social programmes and especially arts projects. (cited in Newman, Curtis et al. 2003:312)

While advocates of social impact studies sought to qualify the reliance on positivist, particularly economistic measures of the value of cultural activities, Selwood (2002) assesses the contribution of impact studies as a lengthy episode in the governmentalisation of culture. The statistical focus, she argues, enabled the UK government to 'know' cultural organisations better, but empirical and policy failures associated with two decades of data gathering said more about policy intention than actual impact. Criticism of the conceptual and methodological foundations of arts impact studies is anticipated by earlier work in environmental economics on the value of places (Power 1996), a subject taken up in chapter 7 of this thesis. In the cultural sector criticism was amplified in 2004 by research published by the US-based Rand Corporation that called for re-thinking the terms in which cultural institutions had typically justified their activities to governments over the past two decades or so (McCarthy, Ondaatje

et al. 2004). This report gained currency for its extensive review of policy documents and trends, and its argument for renewed attention to the intrinsic value of arts activities. Extending Selwood's criticisms, McCarthy et al argued that the reluctance of arts organisations to compromise funding sources by arguing for intrinsic benefits overlooked two vital points: intrinsic benefits are the principal reason individuals participate in the arts, and the intrinsic effects can produce public benefits of their own (p.68). The report argued:

> [T]he arts can create and foster a range of intrinsic benefits that are primarily personal, but they can also generate private benefits that have indirect, spillover effects on the public sphere, as well as direct effects on the public sphere…for example, the arts experience can promote greater individual receptivity to new perspectives to a society whose population is growing increasingly diverse and whose central values include free speech and freedom of religion. Moreover, the ability of the arts to express communal meaning and present expressions of shared cultural heritage are intrinsic benefits that have broader public value. (p.69)

Following a detailed critique of the limitations of research on instrumental benefits, the report recommends the development of a language for discussing intrinsic benefits of the arts.

> Intrinsic effects may not ultimately be susceptible to rigorous quantitative analysis, but their removal from the public discourse is equivalent to ignoring the defining element and essential appeal of the arts. (p.72)

This plea for new ways of arguing for the intrinsic merit of cultural activities was echoed in the United Kingdom by Tessa Jowell, secretary of culture in the Blair government (Jowell 2004; Jowell 2005). These publications and subsequent responses (Blaug, Horner et al. 2006; Ferres and Adair 2007) evidence an adaptation of Moore's conceptualisation of public value. Jowell argues that cultural policy should identify and mediate three value perspectives on arts participation: intrinsic, instrumental and institutional (or perspectives developed through consultative processes). This work finds a place within a new,

international policy narrative that seeks to re-authorise and direct public provision in the field of arts and culture. Building on this literature, Ferres and Adair (2007) commend the potential "nimbleness" of small cultural facilities, able to vary programming, seize attention, and act as creative incubators that reflect the blurring of cultural production and consumption. Claims for the benefits of public investment in culture are similarly converging around the concept of public value. In addition to new arguments for the intrinsic merits of the arts, and new models that connect intrinsic and instrumental outcomes (see Brown in Ferres and Adair 2007:25), the expansion of digital content production within the span of creative outputs re-introduces an argument for economic investment. The gross value added multiplier of investment in digital content is estimated to be the second highest of any industry sector, behind education (Department of Communications 2005:22). This discussion assists in framing the potential of IAC as a cultural and economic asset.

Community Arts and Beyond - IAC as a Heritage and Civic Space

This analysis of IAC is framed by two decades of research that has, notwithstanding concerns about its limitations outlined above, produced evidence for positive economic, educational, social, and health related outcomes of participation in community arts programs. Evaluative models in this field seek to de-couple the assessment of arts participation from political cycles in favour of longer-term analysis, similar to assessments of educational programs or environmental change. Renewed interest in intrinsic benefits derived from public funding of arts and culture seeks to make room for political judgements that are not driven by measurement metrics but acknowledge some useful ambiguity in earlier public good rationales. However, IAC's catalogue of activities suggests the hybrid nature of the site – arts venue, heritage site and civic space. Exclusive focus on IAC as a community arts venue risks overlooking other perspectives on the significance and value of the site, and the potential contribution of these perspectives to policy.

Interviews conducted with a sample of Moonee Valley residents as part of primary research for this thesis elicited wider recognition and appreciation of IAC as a heritage site than a location of arts or cultural programs. The site appeared on some interviewees' "cognitive map" (Lynch 1960) of the Moonee Valley region, despite the fact they had not visited it. Such a response could be anticipated given the IAC's limited tenure as a public facility. The references of interviewees to heritage as providing "fabric" and "texture" to local identity and aesthetics (R1, R30) summarised a persistent concern amongst interviewees with the destruction of public and private historic buildings, together with an appreciation that the historic value of IAC had been recognised and conserved. Thus, although the connection of Burley Griffin with the site was acknowledged by some interviewees, the value of the site was articulated more in terms of local attachment, the site's contribution to urban form, and its role as a link to the past during a perceived period of rapid urban change, than to its associational qualities. The primary significance accorded to the site at state government level, then, is not necessarily shared by local residents. However, to the extent that what Throsby (2000) terms the "existence value" of the site resides in its formal architectural qualities, local and state level significance coincide.

The focus on arts programming at IAC and resource limitations during the first few years of its operation have competed with attention to public interpretation of the site's history. The principal reason for the conservation of the site, then, has not been conveyed through interpretive programs, limiting what might be termed the public historical accountability of the project. Hall and McArthur (1996:3) observe that technical documentation of sites in conservation processes has customarily taken precedence over interpretation. The site has a significant and interesting story that blends aspects of urban and environmental history with the history of the Moonee Valley region and Burley Griffin's architecture and its influences. But it is a tale yet to be fully told. Investment in public historical resources in the Moonee Valley region has been limited. Existing historical

resources consist of a small museum collection held by the membership-based Essendon Historical Society, and print and visual resources in a dedicated local history room in the Moonee Ponds branch of the local public library network. The council has initiated a program of interpretive plaques or panels recognising significant local sites. However, the council's major heritage initiative, like those of many other local authorities, is directed towards meeting state-level statutory requirements to develop heritage overlays (mostly residential precincts) for planning and development purposes. The council employs a part-time heritage adviser, who focuses on heritage aspects associated with development applications. Lack of investment in interpreting the history of the IAC site under-capitalises the site as a cultural asset that can enlarge the sense of place and knowledge of the local past for residents, and connect with the international interest in the work of Burley Griffin.

As an acute observer of urban decline and troubled race relations in his home town of St Louis, Missouri, historian Robert Archibald writes eloquently on the contribution of public infrastructure to a sense of place and what he terms the habits of community (Archibald 1999; Archibald 2004). Archibald uses the metaphor of the "new town square" to convey the role of cultural institutions in facilitating public conversations, anchoring (a favourite Archibald term) the present to the past. Archibald's discussion of the civic role of cultural institutions alerts us to the use of IAC for formal council consultative exercises, and the less formal social connections that take place around site-based activities. Thus, the launch by the council of a consultative process at IAC in 2004 made use of the aesthetics, informality and physical robustness of the site, attracting a large crowd and facilitating resident input to strategic planning. Subsequent activities such as a 2007 public forum on environmental sustainability make use of the site's unique history and aesthetic as a place for civic conversations.

Critical literature on regeneration has focussed on issues of design and cultural consumption rather than the civic and political uses of public places. The shift to

processes of governance at local level, understood as horizontally-aligned, participatory forms of decision-making has broadened the authorising environment in which allocative priorities are decided. Without seeking to idealise notions of public space or democratic practices, it is important to recognize the value of IAC and similar public places in providing imaginative settings for participatory processes. Public spaces, argues Kohn (2003) have symbolic valence, or the capacity to bring people together and initiate change. The museum theorist Elaine Gurian (2006) writes of the importance of "peaceful congregant behaviour" in a public sphere increasingly conditioned by suspicion of difference. The value of public facilities enabling encounter with difference, at times uncomfortable or confronting but increasingly optional through the privatisation of public space and patterns of personal consumption, was mentioned by several interviewed residents. The City of Moonee Valley's culturally diverse population gives this issue particular force. Cultural facilities can approach this issue in particular ways, contextualising difference through interpretive programs and mediating it through shared use of public space.

6.5 Unfinished Business – Conservation and Future Costs

Ceremonial 'openings' of capital works projects give an impression of their completeness. In the case of the IAC redevelopment, both formal openings (1984 and 2004) masked the necessity for further work to realise and sustain project objectives. Installing environmental controls in the reception and gallery spaces to aid visitor comfort and conserve cultural material, and stabilising the Burley Griffin building are major outstanding physical elements of stage two.

To a degree, the adaptive reuse of IAC can be seen as an evolving process, as initial visitor responses are understood, service needs and building codes change, and new site uses planned. The concept of 'soft' openings for public facilities, where a portion of the project budget is reserved to enable remediation following a period of public use, is common practice. In IAC's case, a substantial

amount of project funds was unexpended at the completion of capital works in 2004 to assist this task [187]. However, the prospect of major or ongoing costs to maintain those parts of the site with the highest heritage rating raises the question of how future costs and benefits can be apportioned and who should bear the cost burden. At one level, this can be analysed from a cost-shifting perspective, involving the downward shift of a cost burden from state to local government. Such discussions now take place in Australia within a changing heritage policy environment, which brings uncertain consequences for the assessment and funding of heritage sites. There has been no published analysis of these changes or their potential impacts on local authorities. This task is attempted below, and the relevance to IAC and similar adaptive reuse projects is clarified.

In 1997 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed on a new three-tiered scheme for the management of natural and cultural heritage, assessed against whether places have local, state or national significance. One outcome of this agreement was the passage of the Environmental Conservation (Biodiversity Protection) Act 1999 (Cth) and the Australian Heritage Council Act 2003 (Cth). These acts abolished the Australian Heritage Commission and removed the statutory status of the Register of the National Estate, replaced by an Australian Heritage Council and a national heritage register dramatically reduced in size and scope, ostensibly refined to include only sites of national significance. In 2005 the Productivity Commission (2006) conducted an inquiry into public funding for what it termed historic heritage conservation, concluding that subsidiarity should be the guiding principle for heritage management in Australia (p.xxi). The Productivity Commission report also takes heritage conservation down a de-regulatory path, proposing that contractual agreements would produce better conservation outcomes than statutory regimes. Recognising that the dominant proportion of heritage stock (determined numerically) consists of private residences, the report

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[187] James Buick, Director, Cultural Facilities Unit, pers comm, 17 March 2006.

gives considerable weight to property rights over wider heritage values in recommending new statutory and funding approaches to heritage conservation.

The acceptance by COAG of the thrust of the heritage reforms has several major consequences for heritage conservation and local authorities. Firstly, the enactment of state and national heritage legislation came about through public pressure to halt the destruction of historic buildings and environments that had gathered pace in the 1960s and 1970s. Much of this destruction was sanctioned by local authority planning decisions. Secondly, the introduction of a new hierarchy of statutory protection and responsibility rejects the notion that a mosaic of historic sites, each with meaning and value to a local community, contributes to a national story. A consequence may be the loss of commitment to community-based consultation on heritage values, pioneered by AHC through the concept of social value (Teague 2004). One of the criticisms of the statutory and policy changes is the loss of leadership in the heritage field, and the subsequent threat to the availability of public funding from higher levels of government for local heritage places [188]. Thirdly, the changes hold the potential for further downward cost-shifting to local authority level. Administrative costs, possibly of a substantial nature, may be incurred in the development of contractual arrangements with owners of heritage properties, if this is agreed as the preferred protection mechanism. Restricted local authority resources allocated for heritage matters may shift away from the conservation and interpretation of public heritage places towards administration of the new contractual regime with private owners. State level heritage agencies may be similarly effected if such a regime is implemented (although the numerical figure is significantly less at state level).

This discussion flags the extension of a contractual relationship between local authority and residents discussed elsewhere as emblematic of neo-liberalism.

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[188] See Australia ICOMOS comments on the Commission's draft report at
http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiry/heritage/subs/subdr255.pdf , last accessed 27 September 2007.

The strengths and weaknesses of this relationship are assessed in chapter 8. Here, however, it can be noted that the proposed regime may also offer an opportunity to reverse the direction of cost-shifting associated with IAC and better harmonise costs and responsibilities. The history of the IAC development shows clearly the cost effects for local residents of state level statutory listing. The prospect of substantial future costs may threaten community and political support for the project, and the loss of the wider values and benefits of the site. There is little prospect that the council will be relieved of state-level statutory requirements to conserve the site. The development of a funding agreement between the council and the state heritage agency, to assign funding responsibility proportionate with the hierarchy of site significance, may assist with securing a sustainable future for IAC. Sustainability, though, may not be achieved by contract means alone. Re-positioning sites of culture and social engagement within policy to view them within a policy model of innovation and creativity, rather than solely as subsidy-driven public goods, may be required to stake such agreements. Such analysis is absent from the narrow scope of the Productivity Commission's work.

6.6   Conclusion

This chapter shows that an analysis of IAC offers an insight to the complex nature of social value and its optimisation in the operation of a public cultural facility. In this instance, the site has heritage value, its programs add to hitherto minimal public cultural programs for local residents, it assists in staking the region's claim in a creative economy, and it has value as a civic and public institution. This analysis both consolidates and extends IAC's conceptualisation as a community arts venue, introducing contexts that may assist in broadening its perceptions and sustainable uses by the Moonee Valley council and public. The site values are not readily quantifiable, beyond visitation level and revenue raised from hire of the facility as an indicator of community use, which involve trade-offs with access provisions. At time of writing MVCC cultural facilities staff have not

undertaken any structured consultation with IAC visitors (or non-visitors) to obtain qualitative views on the site and programs.

The analysis indicates the complex and hybrid nature of the site and suggests some conceptual, administrative and political tasks required to secure its chances of a sustainable future, especially in a changing heritage policy environment. To assist with this task, especially in its early years as an adapted building, it may be useful to weigh up the analysis developed in this chapter against Roseth J's public interest criteria discussed at the start of this chapter. The building clearly has heritage value. It contributes to a diverse urban form, through its iconic design, rarity and orientation towards the increasingly popular Maribyrnong River precinct (a point taken up in chapter 7). There is evidence that it is well-regarded by the community (although this claim might be further tested through a quantitative economic methodology such as willingness to pay). Its new use serves the public interest well, in terms of its cultural and civic orientation. However, the sustainability of the site requires renewed consideration of inter-governmental cost sharing. Such an exercise may prove exemplary for the equitable funding of a public heritage asset. However, the terms within which funding for that asset is conceptualised – as a value proposition supporting investment as much as a public good requiring subsidy - requires greater attention within policy.

Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis have focussed on built structures, analysing the dilemmas that arise when changing service, financial and policy frameworks are mapped onto more permanent physical sites. The thesis now extends the scope of fieldwork research from built structures to public open space, arguing in chapter 7 that understanding the social value of public open space enables policy connections to be forged between places and spaces within a wider framework of the public realm.

7. Don't Bowl Us Over - the Provision and Value of Public Open Space

7.1 Introduction

In 1923 a group of local residents raised funds for the purchase of an area of privately-owned land in the suburb of Ascot Vale to establish a lawn bowling club. Three local businessmen were appointed trustees for the club's assets, and club members adopted a constitution with a clause stating that if the club wound up the land should be reserved for other community uses. The club operated for many years, with the only substantial change to its governance arrangements occurring in 1986 when it incorporated under the <u>Associations Incorporation Act 1981 (Vic)</u>. Like many bowling clubs in the late twentieth century, it had difficulty attracting new members. Although the club had a liquor licence, its site lacked a street frontage, limiting its public profile and revenue options. As club finances declined, the value of the site increased. By the late 1990s the club could no longer support the costs of competitive bowling. Members who wished to continue bowling were encouraged to join other clubs. Forty two remaining members held a special general meeting to change the relevant constitutional clause to permit sale of the land and distribution of the sale funds to the remaining club members. Subsequently, the land was sold for $1.3 million to a developer, who then demolished a house owned by the club in an adjacent cul-de-sac and made a road access to permit sub-development of the site. Many residents surrounding the bowling club were outraged at the move. Faced with the prospect of a medium-density housing development on the site and the loss of safe street space where children played, they formed a protest group named *Don't Bowl Us Over* [189]. While the action of club members was lawful, their ethical

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[189] This section is based on information on the file A9726, relating to the administration of the Ascot Vale Bowling Club under the <u>Associations Incorporations Act 1981</u>, held by Consumers Affairs Victoria and discussions with members of Don't Bowl Us Over.

disposition was strongly criticised, with one member of the Victorian Parliament describing it as "morally repugnant" [190]. The act cited above was subsequently amended to discourage opportunistic winding-up of not-for-profit community associations.

Don't Bowl Us Over's campaign was fought on two fronts: objections to planning approvals for the new housing development, and a campaign for the Moonee Valley council to purchase the land for use as a park or, failing that, other community or environmentally oriented purposes. The new landowner obtained planning permissions that met profit objectives and state government medium-density development goals by successfully appealing the council's failure to make a decision in its favour at the state-level planning appeals tribunal [191]. The land was subsequently subdivided into 14 lots, which were sold with building envelopes on the open market. MVCC declined to purchase the site or any individual lots, observing that the residents had reasonable access to an existing neighbourhood park (which the council had purchased for $565,000 as freehold land in 1986 [192]). The council also argued that the funds required to develop an expensive parcel of inner-city land into a public park, likely to be of immediate benefit to a relatively small number of residents, would be more effectively used upgrading other, higher-use areas of existing public open space [193]. Residents argued that they were separated from the existing park by a railway line, obliging access through a subway. The council response overlooked an important argument made by *Don't Bowl Us Over* – that the space might be used for public purposes other than a park. This pointed to the wider intent of the campaign – that what the group considered to have been a community resource, however ambiguously this had been expressed, should be retained in public hands.

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[190] Hansard, Legislative Assembly, Parliament of Victoria, 2 November 2000, p.654.

[191] Millenium Properties Pty Ltd v Moonee Valley CC & Ors [2002] VCAT 1353 (4 November 2002).

[192] Rothwell Park (4 ha) is within 500 metres of the bowling club site, thus meeting the definition of a neighbourhood park for residents in the bowling club precinct.

[193] "Purchase, Unley Grove, Ascot Vale": Agenda, MVCC Ordinary Meeting of Council, 19 October 2004, pp.50-52.

The complex and competing factors at play in this episode frame this chapter on the provision, use and value of public open space in the Moonee Valley region. Whatever one's view of the ethics of the Ascot Vale Bowling Club members, the sale and subsequent use of the site complied with existing statutory and planning frameworks. However, the episode raises two significant issues that are explored in this chapter. Firstly, it highlights the potential – realised in this case – for governance arrangements based on a normative concept of community to be undermined by the passage of time and a calculated resort to legal empiricism. The second, wider issue raised by the bowling club episode is the meaning and value of public open space. For whom was *Don't Bowl Us Over* speaking? Indeed, was securing public open space an appropriate description of the group's objectives? Was the site ever a public one, or can it be more accurately described as belonging to a proprietorial community? Was *Don't Bowl Us Over* concerned with preserving private amenity and property value? And to what extent do these notionally public and private aspects coincide or merge?

Don't Bowl Us Over's campaign can be located within a recent "backlash" narrative about the loss of suburban amenity, perhaps way of life, through the local impress of state government urban consolidation policies and the wider forces of market liberalism (Stretton 1993; Troy 1996; Lewis 1999; Birrell, O'Connor et al. 2005; Gleeson 2006; also see Stretton 1970 for an early defence of suburbia against urban consolidators). Data from the Moonee Valley resident interviews suggest the resonance of this issue. 'Don't bowl us over' serves as a metaphor for the current concerns of many residents about perceived negative changes to the dominant suburban form of Moonee Valley - 70% of dwellings in the City of Moonee Valley are located on single dwelling lots (City of Moonee Valley 2006:2) - brought by higher density development policies and the perceived loss of local government sovereignty in the area of statutory planning. There is little evidence from the resident interview series to suggest that purported benefits of urban consolidation, for example in arresting urban

sprawl[194], are widely accepted. On the contrary, a number of the interviewees contended that aesthetic, social, environmental and health benefits are promoted through an optimal combination of private and public open space. While the issue of the distribution and upkeep of public open space across the municipality was a prime concern, the interviews also highlighted wider questions about what constitutes public open space, and whether a conventional policy focus on parks and recreation grounds, and their relationship to residential development, overlooks significant issues relating to the connections between public open space and the public realm.

The bureaucratic resources and energies devoted to managing land use planning in local government jurisdictions weigh heavily in favour of development regulation. The development paradigm typically describes public open space as undeveloped land. Similarly, conventional planning language used to describe public space allocation – the concept of the *reserve*, for example – suggests an aspect of the public realm that is in some way beyond the reach of either the private market or public entrepreneurship, or the widening zone of contact between the two. This language, these surface appearances, can be misleading. Urban consolidation, citizen activism, increased and diversified user demand, rising land values, a blurring of public and private sectoral roles, heightened risk and security awareness, new problems and perspectives in population health, and environmental consciousness form new and sometimes fragile alignments that have intensified the task of open space management. These new alignments also stand in tension with a substantial tradition of community-level governance of public open space, and participation in its management and improvement. Resident and club involvement in the management of public open space, a task that sometimes included the provision of sports ground pavilions and other structures by the facility users, was, for much of the nineteenth and twentieth

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[194] There is an extensive debate on the applicability of the USAmerican term "sprawl" to the conditions of planned growth in Australia. Gleeson (2006:189n), for example, rejects its applicability. For a critical analysis of the American version see Hayden, D. (2004). A Field Guide to Sprawl. New York, W W Horton.

century, an important mechanism for management of the resource and an important focus for civic engagement and the formation of community identity. This changed towards the end of the twentieth century, as local authorities responded to allocative pressures and newly-framed objectives of equity and accountability by breaking with this sense of local proprietorship. As this chapter will show, shared use of facilities and resources has long been part of public open space policy, but local authorities, particularly jurisdictions enlarged through amalgamation and those in inner urban areas, now play a role as the broker of many user groups rather than the partner of a few. One outcome of this change has been the consolidation of a contract-based relationship between council and resident, through which local authorities define user rights and responsibilities, impose standardised user charges, and seek to manage risk. However, as this chapter will argue, it was partly the sense of proprietorship that motivated civic groups to devote time and financial resources to the task of improving and caring for local-level facilities. The dilemma that public goods theorists and analysts of 'commons' resources have debated for many years – that everybody's property is nobody's responsibility – is now a central problem for local authorities to ponder.

This new policy orientation should not be understood solely in terms of neo-liberalism's emblematic use of the contract as a strategy of governance (Alford and O'Neill 1994). It is also a response to a situation where earlier governance arrangements and political settlements regarding the use and management of public open space have faltered or failed. Some sporting and civic organisations that played a part, sometimes a major one, in providing and managing facilities within public open spaces have declined, and their physical infrastructure has fallen into disrepair. This transition also reflects a decline in citizen commitment to older civic organisations characterised by formal structures, rule-based processes and regular time commitment (scouting and guiding packs are the prime example), in favour of newer membership groups that are more broadly-based, less time-intensive and reflect changing civic interests (the regional and ecological focus of Friends of the Maribyrnong Valley, established in 1986, is the

prime example here). Conversely, the often intense interest of residents in matters relating to space and amenity is now viewed through statutory planning processes as largely private or sectional in nature, disconnected from a wider civic sensibility. This form of citizen engagement is likely to be seen by local authorities in opposite terms to those described above: more as a political coalition to be managed than a resource to be utilized.

Moonee Valley City Council's responses to the increasingly complex task of managing public open space are typical of many local authorities. The responses range from the development of an extensive policy suite governing the provision and use of public open space (Jan Bruce and Associates and Murphy Design Group 2000; 2002), the commissioning of 'community needs' studies or other strategic planning exercises, the undertaking of master planning exercises for specific sites with surrounding residents (Leisure Solutions Australia Pty Ltd 2004), the development of user contracts, and 'Best Value' style surveys of service provision. Local authorities, including Moonee Valley, have also in recent years sought to rationalise and consolidate the provision of public open space through the disposal of land assets that are perceived to be redundant or limited in their service potential. The scale of such exercises can be significant and politically provocative. For example, asset management consultants to the City of Manningham in outer-eastern Melbourne recommended the "rationalisation" (disposal) of almost one-third of the city's small parks and play spaces (CT Management Group 1999:106). However, the oversight of this policy regime by administrative units responsible for landscape and recreation tends to correlate public open space and 'green' areas. While obvious and often contentious changes to parks and green space are now routinely approached through community consultative processes, and assessed against objective 'needs' formulae, more stealthy changes, such as the removal of public street seating in

favour of footpath lease arrangements, may go unnoticed [195]. So too may assumptions underpinning local authority budget allocations that have shifted funding from the provision of outdoor recreation facilities and public open space, funded largely through municipal rates, to indoor facilities increasingly funded by user charges.

There can be little argument with policy principles that direct the allocation of a finite spatial resource in equitable, accountable and sustainable ways. However, these principles disclose limited acknowledgement of subjective perceptions and value of public open space, and may rest on arbitrary and exclusive definitions of what constitutes useable public space and to whom. Increased awareness of the market value of public open space, influenced by the objective fact of rising land values (especially in inner urban municipalities) and a policy focus on financial valuation (discussed in chapter 2), has favoured calculations of the benefits and costs of provision, a tendency supported by a substantial and useable research output in this area. Indeed, McConnell and Walls (2005) argue that benefit-cost calculations will become increasingly important as pressure on open space increases with urbanisation. Arguably, then, assessment of the social values or benefits of public open space requires attention, if Victorian local authority policy in this area is to meet the statutory requirements outlined in chapter 3. This is the task set for this chapter.

Chapter Structure

Section 7.2 defines public open space, to assist in outlining the scope and approach of the discussion. It is argued that current definitions are biased towards 'green' space, at the expense of policy attention to other areas of open space such as streets. The rationale for this and its significance for resident use of public open space, and understandings of the public realm character of public

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[195] In 2005 MVCC removed a public bench seat on a corner of Ascot Vale's main shopping street to lease the space to a new café. The placement of 4 tables and 16 chairs yields a minimum of $424 in annual lease fees to the Council at 2007 rates.

open space, are discussed. **Section 7.3** analyses relevant theoretical and policy approaches to the provision of open space as a public good. Public open space, it is argued, has long been seen as an instrument for shaping the personal qualities and civic attributes of citizens, with local authorities assigned a dominant management role. This section points to the durability of core arguments framed in the nineteenth century on the health, environmental and democratic values of parks and associated recreation facilities, and the refashioning of these arguments by new research and policy interests. However, the policy context in which these benefits are evaluated has changed. This section points to a rise of interest from the 1980s in new ways of calculating the value of public open space, in response to increasing use conflicts and policy pressure to refine allocative arguments. During this period the influence of market liberalism and public choice theories on public policy structured this knowledge in terms of market and non-market value. It is argued that despite intentions of introducing commensurability to evaluative exercises (principally through a triple-bottom-line style analysis), this trend serves to highlight a gap between the two forms of value that newly entrepreneurial public land managers may be unwilling to sustain.

The chapter then moves to an empirical analysis of the provision of public open space in the Moonee Valley region. **Section 7.4** provides evidence of the long history of civic groups and individuals caring for and fighting over public open space, and the concern of the local authority to mediate this involvement through administrative and political processes. This history also suggests the limits of an analysis that sees a causal connection between local political aggrandisement and facility acquisition, discussed in chapters 1 and 2. Following a review of the major state and local policy developments in public open space provision, this section focuses on Queen's Park, a mixed-use park of 11 hectares in the City of Moonee Valley's civic and business centre of Moonee Ponds. Queen's Park is the most historically significant, best loved and best documented public open space in the Moonee Valley region. Its long history of competing uses and

incremental development enables debates around purpose, value and resource allocation to be tracked across a century or more.

The history of public open space provision, and insights to theoretical approaches to and debates about value provided by this chapter, provide a useful framework to analyse the interview data on current residents' uses and value perceptions of public open space in the Moonee Valley region. This task is undertaken in **section 7.5**. The interviews were based on a broad definition of a facility as a physical place providing a service or program (after Brackertz and Kenley 2002). Interviewees were keen to discuss public open space, nominating it for discussion more than any other facility class. However, the frequent mention by interviewees of footpaths and streets as social and recreational space challenges pre-conceptions of public open space, and calls for a re-examination of the conceptual, policy and administrative connections between parks and streets, formal and informal public open space.

7.2 Defining Public Open Space

The concept of public open space brings together the complex uses and values of *open space* – leisure, recreation, ecology, heritage, education, culture, sociality - with legal and political conceptions of *public space*. Definitions of public open space and consequent management regimes emphasise its spatial and service dimensions, sometimes giving only rhetorical attention to its public status. The following three definitions, from Australian, UK and US sources, illustrate this point:

> Open space refers to areas that are significant for public use, recreation and conservation. In Metropolitan Melbourne, open space includes parklands, trails for walkers and cyclists, linear reserves that link parklands, the coastal foreshores of Port Phillip and Western Port Bays, and waterways and river corridors. [196]

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[196] Australian Institute for Urban Studies: *Environmental Indicators for Metropolitan Melbourne*, Bulletin 5 www.aius.org.au/indicators/documents/Bulletin5.pdf .

Public open space is used for many activities such as formal and informal recreation and some areas are designated as public open space to create breaks within built-up areas for the purposes of protecting amenity. Within urban areas public open space can take the form of parks, recreation grounds, gardens, sports pitches or can comprise 'green wedges' or 'green chains' as part of an open space network or series of transport corridors that link larger open space areas together. [197]

Large, undeveloped areas owned by institutions or the public and used for recreation or open space are included in this category. These areas serve as buffers to historic sites, as educational resources, and as areas for public recreation and enjoyment. [198]

The concept of *undevelopment*, observed in the third citation above, points to the emphasis of local authority statutory planning policy on the regulation of land *development* (Eccles and Bryant 1991:1). However, this emphasis masks what may be a high degree of physical and policy intervention in public open space, particularly through park-making and the construction of outdoor recreation facilities such as sporting grounds and pavilions. More speculatively, the emphasis may also contribute to a limited awareness or commitment by decision-makers to the funding needs of such places (Crompton 2000). Perceptions of non-development, openness, or absence may underestimate earlier civic and social uses of open spaces, and, in particular, the political arrangements put in place to mediate competing visions and uses of these places. So, too, residents and administrators may have difficulty 'reading' parks and public spaces as historical palimpsests.

If public open space is undeveloped or unbuilt space, it is also invariably 'green'. This observation chimes with Hamilton-Smith's (2001:1) argument that the critical and policy foci on the value of public open space are biased towards wild or non-

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[197] Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2002). <u>Valuing the External Benefits of Undeveloped Land - A Review of the Economic Literature</u>. London, Department for Communities and Local Government.; Section 2.2.2

[198] http://www.james-city.va.us/about/2003CompPlanUpdate/landusedata/definitions/def_parkpublicsemiopen.html accessed 18 July 2006.

urban places. This chapter argues for an expanded conception of public open space. The interview data on Moonee Valley residents' use and perceptions of public space indicated the significance of streets and footpaths for recreation and socialising, and suggests a requirement to broaden the current emphasis in the analytical and policy literature. These data are consistent with a finding by a 1997 Commonwealth Parliamentary inquiry into the funding of sport and recreation facilities that put the issue in its simplest terms: "…streets are the most widely used community facility" (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment 1997:22), and is supported in a recent study of the social value of public places in East London (Dines, Cattell et al. 2006:ix).

Inclusion of streets as public open space also assists in looking beyond the limitations of a binary categorisation of networked (eg streets) and stand-alone (eg parks) infrastructure, and assumptions of the dominance of technical knowledge in the management of the former, a point discussed in chapter 2. Additionally, inner-urban municipal public open space policy has moved towards a more linear and networked perception of 'green' public space, a concept that seeks to optimise ecological value, reflects increasing demand pressures (for example, provision for bicycle commuting) and recognises that utility easements and drainage channels offer a scarce opportunity for the provision of 'new' areas of public open space. McNeil and Dollery (1999:4-5) provide useful insights to the complexity of allocative and governance issues associated with public open space by contrasting it with networked infrastructure such as drainage and roads. Public open space, they argue, is distinguished from other kinds of infrastructure in that the local community can express diverse preferences about its desired form – bushland, formal gardens, playgrounds, outdoor sports facilities, and so on. By contrast, roads and drainage have more limited service functions, may be subject to more exacting regulatory standards in the health and safety fields, and offer more limited scope for reflecting community preferences. Inclusion of streets and footpaths within a definition of public open space not only recognises use patterns, it assists in analysing resident concerns about the security of public

space that were strongly expressed in the interviews. Focussing on streets, footpaths and public plazas also brings into view an important critical literature on the privatisation of public space, discussed in this chapter. This, in turn, raises questions of citizenship rights and differentiated publics, highlighted in the restrictions placed on the access of certain population sectors (for example young people [199] and convicted drug dealers [200]) to public space in Melbourne.

Municipal planning processes, in Victoria at least, embed a definition of public open space in a broader conception of the public realm. The State Planning Policy Framework, with which the Victorian government sets statutory planning guidelines for its local authorities, specifies that "[d]evelopment should achieve architectural and urban design outcomes that contribute positively to urban character and enhance the public realm while minimising detrimental impact on neighbouring properties". Although the framework defines the public realm as "…includ[ing] main pedestrian spaces, streets, squares, parks and walkways…" by reference to its opposite - private property - it nonetheless offers a broad and flexible approach to public open space that brings together functional, sociological and legal/political attributes, useful for the purposes of this chapter[201].

A further point on the definition of public open space that will assist in outlining the scope of this chapter relates to outdoor sporting facilities, which comprise a major proportion of municipal public open space. The State Planning Policy Framework recognises the prevalence and significance of this type of open space by using the term "open sports ground", or

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[199] Legal prohibition and physical deterrence of skate-boarding, and the use of 'move-on' powers available to police in several Australian state jurisdictions are examples here.
[200] In July 2006 local police launched Operation Curfew, a 12 month program whereby court applications are made for exclusion orders to prevent convicted non-resident drug offenders from entering the nine suburbs that make up the City of Maribyrnong, in Melbourne's inner-west. Similar schemes have been tried periodically in other parts of inner Melbourne and Sydney.
[201] Section 19.03-2, State Planning Framework, as at 19 January 2006
http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/planningschemes/aavpp/19_sppf.pdf , accessed 24 July 06

"[l]and used for sport, but which is available for informal outdoor leisure or recreation when not being used or prepared for an organised game. It may include lights, change rooms, pavilions and shelters." [202]

When is an area public open space, a private sports facility, or both? Australian jurisprudence has found in favour of public access where local authorities propose restrictive lease conditions for private sporting clubs [203]. Drawing on the definition above, and the Moonee Valley interview data on perceptions and uses of public open space, sports facilities qualify as open spaces when they have ready and free (ie, non-paying) access, and permit informal and diverse use patterns. As this chapter argues, the construction of pavilions, sheds or other structures by local sporting clubs on public open space has not necessarily been seen in the past as a form of enclosure or privatisation, but rather evidence of local need and opportunities for local stewardship. However, this discussion points to underlying tensions between notions of public ownership and private use, in instances where the use of sporting grounds is assigned to clubs on long-term lease, excluding or restricting other user interests. A second approach to the question of definition here is to ask whether the emphasis of the facility is on personal participation or spectating. This approach is consistent with Hamilton-Smith's (2001:1) definitional boundary in excluding major sporting and fitness facilities. In his view "[t]he massive industrialisation of sport means that the extent to which these facilities can now be considered as public open space is questionable".

Questions around accessibility highlight the wide variety of forms that public open space takes, matched with a diverse set of allocative arrangements. Some public open space, such as community gardens, is allocated for specified periods to a limited number of users, customarily through the membership processes of an incorporated association. The resurgence of community gardens (there are four

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[202] Land Use Terms, Clause 74, State Planning Framework, as at 19 January 2006
http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/planningschemes/aavpp/74.pdf
[203] For example, see Storey v. North Sydney Municipal Council [1970] HCA 44; (1970) 123 CLR 574 (10 November 1970).

within the City of Moonee Valley) is celebrated by Bollier (2002:15-25) as an example of renewed interest in the 'commons' and a rebuff to Hardin's (1968) influential 'tragedy' thesis that advocated external management institutions to prevent resource depletion. A second example of diverse form and allocative arrangements is offered by internal reserves. Their popularity in suburban planning in the early twentieth century resulted in the creation of open spaces without street frontages, designed not for general public access, but for primary production and community-building purposes involving those householders with rear boundaries backing onto the spaces (Nichols and Freestone 2003). Many of these reserves in metropolitan Melbourne have been 'enclosed' or resumed; one survives as part of a Walter Burley Griffin-designed subdivision in East Keilor, a north-western suburb in the City of Moonee Valley.

As questions of access reveal the qualified nature of both 'public' and 'open', the *ownership* status of public open space is similarly complex. Public open space in many Australian municipalities is likely to be owned or managed by a range of public agencies and made available on diverse terms and conditions. Often, scraps of land that are not considered suitable for development or that serve other purposes such as utility or drainage easements become, de jure or de facto, used as public open space for many years, and later assertion of ownership rights may create significant controversy. Rising land values in the inner city and more business-like outlooks of government authorities may encourage a focus on the economic value of sites, sometimes to the significant detriment of long-term users [204]. The scale of land holdings by state government authorities means that a change of central agency policy can have widespread

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[204] An example of this is the suggestion made in 2005 by Victrack, the management authority for Victorian rail land and infrastructure, that a Footscray-based scouting troop buy the railway reserve they have leased since 1915, and on which their hall has been located since 1925, in order to continue their activities on the site. Victrack's policy is sale at a value approved by the Victorian Valuer-General. Independent market valuation obtained by the scout association was $650,000. However, the hall is listed on the Victorian Register of Historic Buildings, significantly limiting development options, and calling into question the rigour and logic of the market-based process (Wal Hopkins, Property Steward, 1st Footscray Scouts, pers comm, 1 August 2006).

local impact [205]. Land tenure scholars have questioned the adequacy of the public/private binary in describing land ownership, pointing to constraints on the activities conducted on private property (through nuisance, zoning or environmental laws, for example) as well as conditions on access and use of public land. A pertinent example is the role ascribed by local government planners to residential land and its owners in providing passive surveillance of streets and open space. Thus, Geisler (2000) argues that the concept of property pluralism is a more appropriate reflection of the full spectrum of interests in land, and a framework for assessing values and negotiating management regimes.

The above discussion assists in clarifying the scope of this chapter and it also underscores the shifting nature of the terms with which it works. The complexity of these questions prompted Kohn (2004:11) to describe public space as a "cluster concept …a term that has multiple and sometimes contradictory definitions". The only way to approach such a definition, she argues, is to outline a range of defining criteria. Her definition rests on three core components of public space - ownership, accessibility and intersubjectivity (that is, the fostering of communication and interaction). While these criteria should be read within the context of Kohn's critical emphasis on the privatization of public space in US legal and economic contexts, her approach blends empirical and normative elements that provide a suitable foundation for the discussion that follows.

7.3 Providing Public Open Space – Policy Rationales

What were the principal arguments and processes for the provision of public open space, and how did these settle on municipal government as a major provider and regulator? Answering this question requires some understanding of the development of land use planning and its connection to wider social policy goals. This is provided in the following section.

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[205] At time of writing Victrack has 371 parcels of land leased to Victorian community organisations (email from Carl Kelsen, Victrack, 17 October 2007).

Space as a Civic Resource

The restriction of rights of common in English land use tradition by enclosure legislation from the eighteenth century gave the public reservation system central importance for spatial planning. Initial government provision of urban public open space, at least in England, was motivated by concerns of disease and moral and political disorder in the swelling cities, especially London. The British House of Commons Select Committee on Public Walks, established in 1833, argued for the benefits of parks as an alternative to "the temptations of the tavern and the beerhouse, and their frequent accompaniments of immorality and vice" (cited in Barnard and Keating 1996:11). These arguments were given new urgency towards the end of the nineteenth century by the findings of social investigators such as Charles Booth, and by concerns over national and racial decline (Hall 1988:13-46).

Instructions to British colonial governors included directions to reserve lands for what was variously described as health, recreation, amusement and enjoyment of town dwellers (Wright 1989:5-8). Wright points to the use of public reserves for a wide range of purposes: local amenity, active and passive recreation, demarcating civic precincts and providing symbolic evidence of community identity and progress, assisting landscape and acclimatisation endeavours, establishing a commons for stock pasturage, securing water supplies, and protecting mineral and forestry resources were common, often plural motivations. The process of establishing a reserve was straightforward, usually involving an approach to colonial authorities by several individuals or a sporting club, following which the petitioners were customarily appointed as the management committee, a process that, for Wright (p.136), points to the ambiguity of the notion of public interest. This was, like local government itself, a pragmatic response by poorly resourced colonial authorities to demands for local services and amenities and

the resolution of arguments about their use. It was, though, a qualified devolution, retaining colonial (later state) level ownership of significant reserves.

Wright (p.34) observes that "English precedent, moral improvement, inter-class contact, reinforcement of family values, and physical and psychological well-being are marshalled as supporting evidence and justification…" for claims to land reservation in Melbourne. The British sanitation movement gave further direction to this sentiment from the 1840s, extending public works provision to water supply and drainage, both of which shaped the appearance of public parks (Barrett 1979:272-76). The salience of public health as an administrative logic in nineteenth century Victoria is seen in an unsuccessful request in 1872 by the Board of Health for the transfer of metropolitan parks to its jurisdiction, the Board arguing that "…the benefit which these reserves accord to the public health is really the means if not in every case the primary or ostensible purpose of their existence…" (Wright, p.181). Wright's analysis of the varying uses and misuses of open space in nineteenth century Victoria leads him to reject more deterministic views on the role of parks as agents of social control. They were, he argues, "opportunity spaces" to be used in whatever way factions, classes or groups chose, irrespective of official regulations or threat of sanctions (Wright, p. 195; also see Brown May 1998; Hoskins 2003). However, he observes increasing complexity in the use and management of public open space towards the end of the nineteenth century, which found an increasingly bureaucratic response in the passage of by-laws and regulations.

Wright details instances where the colonial government sought to excise or revoke Crown reserves, including metropolitan parklands, to sell and bolster public finances, or other purposes such as district settlement or road building (Wright pp.234,245,254; also see Sanderson 1932; Dunstan 1984:104-5; for a Sydney example see Cuneen 1980). Each of these episodes provoked significant public protest, some successful, and can be seen as marking the beginnings of a persistent concern over the loss of public open space in Melbourne. The central

government, having refused the entreaties of local authorities for outright transfer of Crown reserves on the grounds that the land would not be responsibly cared for (Wright 1989:38-9), at times appeared to apply no such test to its own stewardship.

Positive Environmentalism

The planner of New York's Central Park, Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903), is widely regarded as a key figure in the articulation of a philosophy for the provision of parks in urban areas. Olmsted's theories on the physical, psychological, social and environmental benefits of parks continue to provide a point of reference in Australia and elsewhere (Maller, Townsend et al. 2002). Olmsted's biography (he once served as general secretary for the United States Sanitary Commission) again highlights the connection between health reform and the provision of public open space. While Olmsted's ideological position is variously interpreted by commentators (Holt 1996 sees politically conservative adjustment in his architecture; Rybczynski 1999 views him as a social progressive), Frug (1999:176) focuses on his contribution to the public realm. Recognition of the self-interest of social elites in improving the circumstances of immigrants and the poor in rapidly growing US cities was an important rationale for park-making, he argues. However, stripping away the rhetoric of moral elevation and refinement used by Olmsted, Frug argues, leaves "a vision of a city [that] should be open to everyone and supported by everyone". Frug connects Olmsted's work with that of other key nineteenth century American advocates of the public realm: Dewey's view that public education should expose pupils to a wider social environment, and de Tocqueville's view that local institutions provide a mechanism for working with strangers on common problems.

Nineteenth century urban reform had radical and conservative strands which informed (US) City Beautiful and (UK) Garden City planning theory. Utopian and communitarian ideals gave way to expert physical and social planning

interventions that forged intellectual and institutional connections between urban parks, health and town planning in both countries, and in early twentieth century Australia (Hall 1988; Freestone 1989; 2007). In Melbourne, for example, eye specialist and president of the Medical Society of Victoria J W Barrett (1862-1945) served as secretary of the newly formed Victorian Town Planning and National Parks Association (Roe 1984:70-1). The author of an early text on town planning, Barrett's advocacy for the development of supervised playgrounds connected with the inter-war interest in maternal and child health and the kindergarten movement. The physical evidence of these synergies between planning, population health, public open space and community facilities can be seen in the co-location of maternal and child health centres, kindergartens and playgrounds in or adjacent to many of Melbourne's older suburban parks. The exhortations of the Victorian government in recent local authority infrastructure policy to build multi-use facilities (Department for Victorian Communities 2003a) is oblivious to earlier integrating and holistic views of facility provision, particularly the articulation of built facilities and public open space.

Policy Influences in the Late Twentieth Century

The formation of the Royal Australian Institute of Parks and Recreation in 1930 reflects increasing specialisation within the planning profession and the upsurge of interest in outdoor recreation in the inter-war years. Sessoms (2000:143) observes that the initial focus of research and policy formation in the field of recreation was of an inventory nature, yielding survey data on park dimensions and facilities, programs, personnel and financing. Developing interest in the social and environmental factors associated with health and illness deepened understanding of the contribution of leisure and recreation to personal wellbeing. Hamilton-Smith (2001:36) cites a 1988 nationwide Australian study in which survey respondents nominated leisure as the highest contributor to life satisfaction, with the social element of leisure a central component. A more politicised concept of environmentalism, encouraged by popular works such as

Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) and given a theoretical foundation by Naess'
(1973) concept of deep ecology, broadened research and policy interest in public
open space. The influence of environmentalism and its research focus on wild or
nature parks has drawn comment on the relatively small amount of research that
had been done on the more frequently used urban parks (Mercer and Hamilton-
Smith 1991:1-2; Nankervis 1997). Research into development and use pressures
on wild parks by Stankey and others in the 1970s had a significant influence on
urban open space policy, encouraging a holistic view of open space provision
and use. Clark and Stankey's (1979) Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)
was a typological approach to open space which sought to rationalise
development and facility provision, matching leisure interests to open space
types ranging from intensively developed urban parks to wilderness. ROS quickly
became a popular policy instrument in Australian public open space planning
(Stankey 1982; Stankey and Wood 1982). While the focus on environmental
sustainability as a local policy goal was promoted nationally through the
Commonwealth Government's Healthy Cities Program and UNESCO's Local
Agenda 21, more utilitarian local concerns, notably hydrological management,
highlighted the interdependencies between urban development, public open
space and networked infrastructure [206].

Social Capital, Health and Wellbeing

Interest in the social and health outcomes of public open space was given a new
research direction and policy claim by the growing attention to primary health
care, the environmental and 'neighbourhood' effects on health, and theorisation
of the social model of health (Marmot and Wilkinson 1999). The emergence of

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[206] A pertinent example is the 2006 agreement by MVCC for a developer to lower the level of a
recreation ground in Ascot Vale by half a metre to receive run-off from a new housing
development on the Maribyrnong River floodplain. Fifty years earlier, ECC had raised the gound
level by the same amount to improve its drainage in and attract the Essendon Football Club to
use it as a training oval. PROV VPRS 7916/P0001/26 Health and Parks and Gardens Committee.

social capital within political and social theory in the 1980s and 1990s chimed with research interest in the importance of social connectedness to health and wellbeing, and a convergence between social capital and wellbeing can be noticed in the expansive international literature in this field (Hawe and Sheill 2000; Baum and Palmer 2002).

A major research question of this literature has been to identify and evaluate the health outcomes of access to and use of public open space. In this regard, research has focussed on park design and spatial distribution (Coen and Ross 2006; Timperio, Ball et al. 2007), accessibility and security (Krenichyn 2004; Krenichyn 2005; Seeland and Nicole 2006), physical activity, especially children's play (Veitch, Bagley et al. 2006) and adult walking (Giles-Corti and Donovan 2003; Giles-Corti and Broomhall 2005). The significance of gender and age-related perspectives on facility provision and safety in parks and public open spaces is a significant theme in this literature. The desire to contain rising public expenditure on secondary and tertiary health care, together with more specific epidemiological concerns with childhood obesity and diabetes, have brought health-related rationales to the centre of public open space policy. This perspective is embedded with an ecological perspective that positively correlates environmental quality and personal health. Parks Victoria was sufficiently convinced of the policy and publicity value of such a rationale to coin "Healthy Parks, Healthy People" as its marketing slogan in 2000.

Social capital theory informed several studies into the importance of public open space in building community networks on public housing estates in the United States (cited in Walker 2004). Hulse et al's (2004) study of the redevelopment of a Kensington, Melbourne public housing estate made a similar finding on the use of surrounding parklands by tenants, especially significant to the City of Moonee Valley with its relatively high proportion of residents in public housing. However, an extensive US review of social capital in New Urbanist developments (which emphasise public open space and walkable neighbourhoods) argues that it is

positively correlated with cultural homogeneity and high education achievement (Sander 2002), suggesting the inconclusive state of this research. One general criticism that can be made of the social capital literature, though, is its *lack* of attention to physical settings, in contrast to the long-standing interest of urban studies and geography in the influence of public space configurations on social interaction (Jacobs 1961; Whyte 1980; McNulty, Jacobson et al. 1985; Comedia 1995). Research sponsored by Parks Victoria has urged the development of programs to link social capital and natural capital through the development of social programs in parks and encouraging "civic environmentalism" such as participation in park 'friends' groups (Maller, Townsend et al. 2002; Senior and Townsend 2005). At least one Victorian local authority has sponsored research relating to the benefits of open space within its jurisdiction (Townsend 2005). The organising framework of this study ("health, wealth and social capital") follows a 'benefits' typology that has become a standard in both academic literature and municipal open space strategies. Maller et al (2002) locate this typology within a triple-bottom-line reporting framework. "The triple bottom line concept is essentially the principles of an ecological theory of health put into practice" note the authors (p.60), a framework that can be "…almost effortlessly integrated into public health" (p.59). While accepting the interdependency of economic, environmental and social factors and the capacity of ecological or social models of health to illuminate the connections, such a claim makes no concession to political or institutional settings that condition TBL reporting (Low, Gleeson et al. 2005:193).

The Physical Experience of Democracy

In contrast to the research output appraising the contribution of public open space to public health and social capital outcomes, there has been little Australian-focussed evaluation of the democratic character or value of public open space. This subject brings together the green spaces of parks and the grey spaces of streets, footpaths and plazas within the concept of the public realm or

public sphere, here understood as the "physical experience of democracy" (Shonfeld cited in Gallacher 2004:2).

Limited Australian-based discussion of this topic also contrasts with its substantial presence in the international literature. In the US, where privatising and segregating impulses have long been a source of tension in urban policy, the importance of the diversity and heterogeneity of public places is argued in the key works of Sennett (1977) and Young (1990). Kohn (2004) has analysed the negative consequences for democratic practices such as free speech, peaceful protest and leafletting brought about by the privatisation of public space through mall enclosures, gated communities, and the installation of private security or management regimes in public parks, or its more subtle direction by the creation of free speech zones. Bollier (2002) draws a parallel between the enclosure movement in pre-industrial England and the privatisation of public space in the United States, and connects modern-day 'enclosure' with the marketisation of other physical and institutional commons, including publicly-funded research, telecommunications spectra, and the internet. Kohn (p.191) makes a key point about the seeming anachronism of the public/private binary in a world where many places are neither, but part of a vast "grey zone" of privately owned "social" spaces. In contrast to Kohn's argument that private initiatives can create social spaces but not public places, Oldenburg's (1989; 2001) sociological interest in public places disregards their legal and political status to observe a widespread loss of social habitat through the disappearance of "informal" spaces that "…hosted the easy and informal, yet socially binding, association that is the bedrock of community life" (2001:284). Echoing Wright's concept of opportunity spaces discussed earlier in the chapter, Oldenburg continues

> [m]ost of the informal public life we managed in the past represented the triumph of the
> space user over the space planner - we simply took over establishments and spaces
> created for other purposes. What is revolutionary about the new environment is...its
> unprecedented resistance to user modification. (2001: 286)

Oldenburg's idealist representations of the past 'we' inhabited might be disputed at a number of points, but his concept of the 'third place' (social spaces that are neither work nor home) influenced later commentators on urban regeneration, economic vitality, community and the public realm (most notably Florida 2003). The significance of the third place thesis to this chapter is its capacity to identify points of connection between public and commercial spaces and their uses, rather than focus exclusively on points of difference.

While the works discussed above engage with US legal, commercial and political contexts, the ethical and policy dilemmas they describe are highly relevant to this thesis. Bollier for example (pp.156-9) highlights instances where cash-strapped US local authorities have obtained funds for facility renewal through sponsor branding of public spaces. The brand appeal of some areas of public open space in Australia has made such places more attractive to local authorities as revenue sources and added complexity to their management. Beaches administered by local authorities provide the best examples. The controlling authority of Sydney's famous Bondi Beach proudly announces on its website "[l]ocations within Waverley City Council have been used for films, TV commercials and photography shoots for Looking for Allibrandi, Cosi, Two Hands, Farscape, Bonds, Kelloggs, Best and Less and Grace Bros Catalogues" [207]. By contrast, the inner-Perth municipality of Subiaco, lacking Waverley's iconic coastal features and under less demand pressure, has a stated policy of *not* supporting the use of passive open space for commercial gain [208]. Beaches controlled by local authorities raise acute questions about their status as local public goods, questions that relate to their sense of 'ownership', access and the use of their symbolic power. The clearest recent example of this is the widely-reported racial

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[207] http://www.waverley.nsw.gov.au/council/bprs/openspace.asp, accessed 26 August 2006. Waverley City Council is responsible for managing Bondi Beach.
[208] http://www.subiaco.wa.gov.au/uploads/activePassivePolicy.pdf, p.1, accessed 26 August 2006.

conflict on beaches controlled by Sutherland shire, in Sydney's south, in December 2005 (Hartley and Green 2006) [209].

Two aspects of UK-based research warrant particular attention in this discussion of public open space as a public realm: regeneration policy and practice, and the administrative reform of local authorities. McInroy (2000) argues that the goal of regeneration or 'place-making' is to achieve strategic reconciliation between economic investment and bottom-up community building. Where McInroy offers a critical view of place-making processes as intended to produce administered space rather than unfettered public interaction, Gallacher (2004) argues that attention to the significance of the public realm has been one of the leading criteria of successful physical and social regeneration projects over the past two decades. Taking up cultural geographer Doreen Massey's argument that 'public space' is not an existing good that must be provided for but is in a continual process of being constituted, Gallacher argues for greater attention to the public space of neighbourhoods, in contrast to attention on the renewal of urban cores. A second relevant area of UK-based research has focussed on the impact of reform to local authority service provision in relation to public open space. Jones (2000) assesses the efficiency gains of contracting-out local park maintenance, and weighs this against a loss of wider public service ideals such as a sense of public duty, local knowledge and a continuous care ethic entailed by this move. Victorian councils have taken divergent paths in exposing municipal services to competition, with some retaining park maintenance staff for their public service role (Wise and Sciulli 2004).

There has been limited Australian-centred discussion of ownership and access issues relating to public space, perhaps a reflection of the less forceful or obvious

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[209] The incidents followed an assault on a Cronulla beach lifesaver by young men of Lebanese background from Western Sydney, and centred on attempts of largely young white Australian male residents of the relatively monocultural Sutherland shire to regulate access to and conduct on "their" beaches. Cronulla beach is the only Sydney beach with a direct rail connection to Sydney's western suburbs, and has been a popular destination for western Sydney residents for many years.

privatising influences at local authority level in this field. Dovey (2005) examines the implications of contracted management arrangements for Federation Square, a new public plaza in central Melbourne's. Gleeson's (2006) more polemical and broadly-based criticism of the decline of the public realm in Australia describes the loss of both public and private open space through gated communities, urban consolidation and housing styles, as well as an increased perception of personal risk in the use of public spaces. Gleeson, like many commentators in this field, draws on the work of Sennett in arguing for the psychological, social and democratic value of engaging with the difference and disorder of the public realm (p.84). Similarly, Iveson's (1998; 2000) analyses of disputes over the use of public places argue for acceptance of a politics of difference and the concept of a multi-public in putting the public back into public places. At local government level in Australia, concern focuses on the policy and legal issues related to public open space contributions by developers (Barnes and Dollery 1996; Neutze 1997; McNeil and Dollery 1999) [210]. In inner-urban areas, the acquisition of public open space through developer contributions is, under current local authority budgetary and infrastructure policy, the most promising vehicle for the acquisition of additional public open space and, perhaps, the preservation of existing space. Its use, though, is a matter of controversy, as section 7.4 on open space in the Moonee Valley region indicates.

'Beyond Recreation' - Quantifying Value

As with arts and culture discussed in chapter 6, the morphology of research and advocacy on public open space follows the changing contours of public policy. The development of neo-liberal policy settings in the 1980s brought new interest in quantifiable assessment of value. Arguments by open space advocates that policy views should move "beyond recreation" to call attention to "urban parks as

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[210] In all Australian state jurisdictions, planning authorities can charge private developers a real or monetary contribution towards open space provision in return for development approval. The relevant Victorian statutes are Part 3B of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the Subdivision Act 1988.

contributors to larger policy objectives, such as job opportunities, youth development, public health and community building" (Walker 2004:1; see Sherer 2006 for a similar view) began to tap into a large body of literature that assessed the benefits of public open space in economic terms. Two recent studies, one from the United States and one from the United Kingdom are discussed below to reflect approaches in the international literature in this field. A review of the Australian literature in this field then follows.

McConnell and Walls (2005) survey two major approaches in the valuation of open space in a twenty five year span of North American economics literature – revealed preference (so-called hedonic valuation) and stated preference or contingent valuation (CV) [211] - although far more studies using the hedonic valuation method have been undertaken than CV. The authors concur with the conclusions of a study of some 56,000 properties sampled in a hedonic valuation study that "…the task of developing an index to represent these amenities is more complex than most of the empirical literature has acknowledged" (p.16). The authors point to the influence of local context on values determined with this method and the limitations on using case-study data in comparative or generalised studies. Secondly, structural issues associated with local housing markets may influence values more than the proximity of open space. With regard to CV, the authors point to problems associated with the exact description of goods to be valued to avoid problems of "embedding", or a response which values the preservation of parklands in general, rather than in a specific location. A second and more intractable problem is one the authors term over-estimation – the disparity between a willingness-to-pay response to a hypothetical question, and an actual payment (p.34). Nonetheless, the authors argue, CV has the capacity to tease out reasons for stated preferences. The authors conclude that

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[211] Revealed preference infers open space value by estimating the impact of that open space and/or other neighbourhood characteristics on property value – the so-called hedonic property value; CV calculates value through the expressed preferences that people place on open space – this is commonly done through willingness-to-pay methods. McConnell and Walls consider that a range of other valuation methods used by economists to calculate nonmarket benefits: for example avoided costs and travel costs are not considered sufficiently developed, rigorous, or are too specialised in their application to be considered in the scope of this study.

the studies under review show it is possible to calculate the economic benefits (or disbenefits such as proximity to a busy park) in preserving open space that can assist with the development of planning policy or municipal budgets.

A second meta-analysis of the economic valuation literature, with more explicit connections to policy options is a UK government-commissioned study of the economic benefits of undeveloped land (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2002, hereafter ODPM) [212]. Its authors argue that in the absence of economic valuation the benefits of undeveloped land, which they listed as recreation, ecology, cultural heritage, hydrology, air quality, tranquility, accessibility and soil, were understood as market externalities enjoyed "free" by nearby residents, and not reflected in land prices. In the authors' view, this created an uneven playing field between environmental conservation and development. The study context outlined by the authors corresponds with that of McConnell and Walls:

> [t]he demands on the land resource in the UK are greater than ever. Development
> pressures such as providing for the estimated 3.8 million new households by 2021
> requires effective, efficient and equitable use of this resource (Section 1.1).

Reflecting the study's focus on undeveloped land, the review identified more studies using CV techniques than hedonic valuation, thus offering a useful contrast with McConnell and Walls' focus. However the ODPM study arrives at a similar conclusion to McConnell and Walls. While the studies point to the technical capability of calculating a monetary unit value for non-market values of undeveloped land (although the ODPM makes the important qualification that none of the literature reviewed captured total economic value, or the sum of use and non-use values), methodological limitations and the significance of local and policy contexts suggested the qualified adoption of ranges of values rather than individual estimates. The ODPM study drew two conclusions that assist in interpreting data from the Moonee Valley region interviews, discussed later in this chapter. Firstly, the studies suggest that WTP is greater for avoiding loss of open

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[212] The authors' typology of undeveloped land was: private open space, public open space, previously developed land, agricultural land, forestry and natural and semi-natural land.

space, through development, than improving it, through upgrade of a park (Sections 6.1.2, 7.3.2). This conclusion corresponds with the expressed opposition of most of the Moonee Valley resident sample to the sale of local authority assets, although no specific WTP data was gathered that permits a local comparison with ODPM findings on the reluctance to fund improvements. Secondly, the study pointed to the absence of empirical studies that assessed the loss of amenity associated with the development of private space (urban consolidation), experienced by those living near the developed land (Section 9.1.1). Again, this was a resonant issue in the interviews. The ODPM study recommended research in this area as a priority task.

The Australian literature on non-market valuation contributes only a small proportion of the thousands of studies that ODPM estimates have been undertaken in this field. Lockwood and Tracy (1995), using a CV methodology, concluded that the economic value of the non-market benefits of Centennial Park, Sydney ranged between $23 million and $33 million, with a non-use value of at least $2.6 million, well in excess of annual park expenditure of $6 million. However, the authors point to the limitations of this study by referring to constraints imposed by a politically risk-averse park management on the scenario outlined to survey respondents to elicit responses - for example, that the park may be run down or sold (p.165). Sydney Urban Parks and Research Group (2001) undertook a study of the benefits of public open space for community service provision with a focus on selected sites in Sydney and Melbourne using the concept of avoided costs, arrived at by comparing different levels of expenditure for program delivery if the nominally free space in parks was not available. This study, considered by the authors to be the first of its type in Australia, concluded that avoided costs to community service providers through park use in greater Sydney and Melbourne was around $28 million per annum.

What policy implications arise from the above survey of research and policy literature? In the United States, Crompton (2000) and Kaczynski and Crompton (2006) developed the concept of *repositioning* to argue for an increase in local

authority expenditure on parks, which is low relative to other municipal services. In a major longitudinal study, Kaczynski and Crompton (2006) observed that proportionate expenditure on US local authority service areas remained "remarkably stable" over the fourteen year study period. The authors attributed the "immutability" of these allocations to a reliance on incremental budgeting (using the previous year's budget as a starting point), and a relatively high level of non-discretionary expenditure commitments in areas such as staff salaries. The authors continue:

> Although the education, police, health and transportation departments…are likely to continue to receive priority in funding, it is the outcomes provided by these agencies, rather than the agencies themselves, that the public supports with their tax dollars. Outcomes such as crime protection, health, and transportation are generally deemed to be public goods from which the entire community benefits, whereas parks and recreation are perceived by many to be private or merit services that primarily benefit only those who use them. However, research has suggested that parks and recreation can contribute to many of the outcomes that are generally associated with other public agencies…To gain a greater share of total available resources, parks and recreation agencies have to reposition their services as essential contributors to the principal public concerns in a community (p.100).

Not until 2005 was a sustained argument for the psychological, social and environmental benefits of vegetated public open space produced in Australia that could also point to policy innovations of several Australian local authorities in the provision and management of public open space (Low, Gleeson et al. 2005). Municipal land-use planning in Australia has conventionally relied on quantitative formula (usually the early-twentieth century British minimum standard allocation of 7 ½ acres (around 3 hectares) of public open space per thousand of population), which, although criticised for its slavish application (Commission of Inquiry into the National Estate 1974:95; Marriott 1980:118-9; McNeil and Dollery 1999:9,13), provided some reconciliation between public good aspects of public open space and cost. A local authority infrastructural policy environment without such adjudication, one characterised by property entrepreneurship and cost

pressures, may give priority to the economic value of public open space. Kohn (2004:155) makes the point emphatically in describing a battle over public open space in New York City. Residents of the newly regenerated Battery Park district wanted additional recreation facilities. The Battery Parks City Authority argued that the revenue forgone in making such provision would cost one hundred million dollars, making it "the most expensive Little League field in the world." A compromise was eventually reached, but for Kohn the episode reveals "why the language of profitability makes it difficult to defend non-pecuniary public priorities. Once each schoolyard, basketball court, and lawn is thought of in terms of millions of dollars of foregone revenue from commercial real estate development, then each of these alternative uses seems wasteful. Public or civic space will never seem like a rational choice from this perspective for the simple reason that such space does not generate a profit. Its benefits cannot easily be calculated in terms of dollars and cents".

One solution to this dilemma, suggested by Low et al (2005:193) is to resist the financial valuation of public open space, in effect to 'alienate' public land from local economic modelling and aggressive asset management. This proposal connects with long-standing arguments – notably made by J S Mill - that scarce resources be held in public trust (Coombs 1990:161). Putting public land beyond the reach of public entrepreneurship may preserve it for unforeseen beneficial future uses. Perhaps the best Victorian example is the adaptive reuse of disused rail permanent ways for cycling and walking trails. The former "Inner Circle" permanent way in inner north Melbourne is a prime urban example. The "Mountains to Murray" trail which re-uses the rail easement that once carried tobacco trains in the King Valley, north-east Victoria, has proven highly lucrative to the local tourism industry and recouped capital investment in the first few years of operation [213]. Alternatively, quarantining land from public entrepreneurship may saddle local authorities with sub-optimal areas of public open space that

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[213] This is based on a 2003 analysis of the trail use by Assoc Prof Sue Beeton, Dept of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management, La Trobe University, and supplied to the author by Darren Murphy, Wangaratta City Council.

may not be easily traded to achieve better social and environmental outcomes. Low et al's suggestion seems unachievable in the face of state government asset valuation policies and current accounting standards, and perhaps it is made for rhetorical purposes rather than policy direction. However, the argument strikes a chord with persistent concerns over the alienation or disposal of public open space that indicate there is strong political support for considering vegetated space as (in Low et al's analysis) "basic infrastructure" (p.78) rather than a fungible asset. US economist Thomas Power (1996), in his influential work examining value conflicts over natural landscapes, argues for the replacement of the quantitative 'economic base' model, which he argues has typically informed analysis of residential amenity, with the qualitative concept of vitality and the preservation of the non-reproducible unique qualities of public open space over other land use choices. The focus of Power's criticism is the extractive industries, but the argument has equal force when applied to urban development.

7.4 Public Open Space in Moonee Valley

In the Moonee Valley region public open space broadly refers to parks (with varying degrees of built interventions), playing fields and playgrounds. The civic or commercial areas contain no major public plazas or squares that might expand this list. For much of the City of Essendon's administrative history, oversight for public open space rested with council sub-committees such as Health and Parks and Gardens [sic]. The title again points to the prominence of health administrators in arguing for public space reservations, although it may also indicate a concern to limit the further expansion of sub-committees, which were a principal administrative mechanism prior to expansion of staff numbers in the second half of the twentieth century [214]. The development of discrete administrative departments such as recreation, parks and statutory planning, and the subsequent delegation of decision-making, occurs in the second half of the twentieth century.

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[214] In 1952 the Essendon City Council had 28 sub-committees – PROV VPRS 7916/P0001/24.

The provision and improvement of public open space in the Moonee Valley region was a major council initiative for the first thirty or so years of the twentieth century, fulfilling an early marketing theme for Essendon real estate noted in chapter 4. The upkeep of public open space was undertaken by gardeners, skilled trades and day labourers employed by the municipality. Major capital works were undertaken by contractors, usually overseen by the City Engineer. The archival and published records of the City of Essendon suggest that the expansion of parkland and city beautification was eclipsed by economic depression, war and the post-World War 2 concern with housing provision and facility development, to re-emerge as a major focus of political pressure during the 1970s when urban development first became an electoral issue. While this serves well enough as a guiding narrative, it risks overstating the role of local authorities in the provision and management of public open space at the expense of both state-level authorities and civic groups. Conversely, following Stretton's (1993:287) analysis, a communitarian perspective risks perceiving public open space as a commons shared and tended by the community. A more nuanced account, that sees public open space as a site of competing visions and resource conflict that has required institutional settlement, is offered below. The following section provides an overview of the acquisition and management of public open space in the Moonee Valley region, followed by a closer look at Queen's Park, the most historically significant and most compromised park in the municipality.

"More or Less Improved…"

The north-western suburbs distributed along the Essendon railway line contrasted the densely-settled villages of Kensington and Flemington, with a pedestrian workforce concentrated on the stockyards and associated industries, and the villa-and-garden suburbs of Moonee Ponds and Essendon designed for a commuting middle-class. The emphasis of both land developers and home-owners in the garden suburbs was on the contribution of private gardens rather

than public spaces to suburban amenity (Lewis 1999:29). The surrounding open space, including undeveloped, privately owned space, offered different qualities – a vista, a buffer to inner city bustle, healthy air, opportunities for informal recreation, and animal husbandry.

The borough of Essendon and Flemington first became manager of a designated area of public open space in 1863, when appointed as the committee of management for Crown land surrounding the Moonee Ponds, the future site of Queen's Park. In 1906 local historian James McJunkin (1906:27) noted that the borough of Essendon (Flemington-Kensington became a separate borough in 1882) had, in addition to Queen's Park, charge of a total of 30 acres of recreation area "more or less improved". In 1945 the City of Essendon Town Clerk reported to Council, in the context of discussion about improvement of public open space, that the total area of public reserves, parks, gardens and playgrounds was 305 acres [215]. This comparison is indicative rather than precise, but it points to a period during which the borough (city from 1909) was particularly active in city beautification (especially through the planting of street trees) and the provision of public open space. Substantial parcels of land were acquired by the council through a range of methods – purchase [216], donation [217], lease, and appointment as a management authority of Crown reserve land (Kenny 2005). The acquisition of public open space registered the new city status and memorialised the First World War [218], but at least one of the acquisitions, Maribyrnong Park, realised a long-running public campaign to rescue the river for public use. Contrary to Lewis' (1999:9) observation of isolated protests over grabs for public land, agitation for the reservation or protection of public open space, and local community involvement in its upkeep and use is a consistent theme in the history of the Moonee Valley region. Similarly, Bowman's (1978:67) conclusion from a

[215] VPRS 7916/P/0001 Unit 26 City of Essendon, Minutes – Health and Parks and Gardens Committee, Town Clerk's Report on Reserves.
[216] Maribyrnong Park was purchased from a private vendor in 1906; see Aldous 1979:94.
[217] In 1919 businessman Theodore Napier donated an area of land in Strathmore, later to take his name; see Aldous 1979:101.
[218] Victory Park in Ascot Vale, proclaimed in 1919.

study of civic associations in an eastern Melbourne municipality that "[i]f Box Hill residents organise to follow their self-interest, it is usually either to play sport or garden" might be qualified by locating gardening interests within a wider connection of residents to open space and natural systems.

Public Open Space and Planning

How was the acquisition of public land in Moonee Valley related to wider land use policy? The distribution of town planning powers between jurisdictions and authorities in Victoria is a complex story, reflecting the expansion of local authority responsibilities, state-level responses to perceived housing crises and problems of coordinated development, particularly of networked infrastructure. Tension between the two jurisdictions, and within state-level authorities, over planning issues has been a constant theme. Local authorities were first given town planning powers (mostly relating to sub-division) in 1915, which were then extended by the Local Government Act 1920, but the following year a Metropolitan Town Planning Commission was appointed to prepare a plan for Melbourne's general development. A Town and Country Planning Board was established as an advisory body to the state government in 1944. The Housing Commission of Victoria was given town planning powers on its establishment in 1938. However, the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW), established in 1891 to coordinate development of water supply and sewerage systems, was appointed as the planning authority for the metropolitan area in 1949, with its powers extended in 1968 (Dingle and Rasmussen 1991; McLoughlin 1992; Lewis 1999).

The first Victorian state-level policy on the provision of public open space was set out in the MMBW's Metropolitan Planning Scheme of 1953. MMBW adapted the British planning guidelines discussed in section 5.2 to its own perception of Melbourne's open space needs and uses. The 7 ½ acres was divided into 3 acres of playing fields (excluding golf and race courses), 1 acre of tennis courts,

2 acres of parks and gardens, and 1 ½ acres of playgrounds [219]. This calibration concurred with the emphasis in Moonee Valley on the use of public open space for traditional competitive sports, especially in the first few decades following World War 2, and council's view of the city's assets and desired image. During preparation of the plan, MMBW wrote to the Essendon council to ask if a town plan had been prepared for the municipality. The council's town planning sub-committee, which appears to have been established in 1950, responded that the city was already so built up that the task could be left to the Board, requesting, though, that the Maribyrnong River precinct be included in the Board's scheme as a green belt area [220].

In 1976 MMBW undertook an inventory of public open space in the metropolitan region, later interrogating this data with ROS analysis to challenge earlier standards. By 1986 MMBW had abandoned the quantitative formula as setting an unrealistic objective for densely-settled inner suburbs, applied in disregard of the physical characteristics of open space and user demand. Open space uses, MMBW argued, should be determined on demand. "It is virtually impossible to define objectively how much open space people actually need" argued an MMBW policy paper, meekly suggesting that these needs are "…probably largely culturally determined" [221]. In place of the formula, MMBW's 1986 Metropolitan Open Space Planning Guidelines proposed a "hierarchy" of public open space, a concept borrowed from the 1969 Greater London Development Plan (Burgess, Harrisson et al. 1988:455), against which local authorities could assess and distribute local demand. In reality, this was a typology of open space types: regional parks and sites, district parks, local parks, linear parks, outdoor sporting areas, commercial and industrial open space, ornamental open space. MMBW

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[219] MMBW: *Draft Metropolitan Open Space Planning Guidelines – Background and Information*, 1987 - copy on PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/79 City of Essendon Open Space/General/Proposed Open Space 266/1/1 Part 2
[220] VPRS 7916/P0001/26 City of Essendon Health and Parks and Gardens Committee 1951-1954, Town Clerk's Report 21 June 1954.
[221] MMBW: *Public Open Space – Strategic Directions to the Year 2000*, 1987, p.2; - copy on PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/79 City of Essendon Open Space/General/Proposed Open Space 266/1/1 Part 2.

suggested a number of planning goals and precepts to guide the hierarchy's application: access for all households to a neighbourhood park within 500 metres, the rejection of mini-parks (less than 1 ha) as the typical developer response to statutory provision of public open space in new residential developments, co-location of public open space and other community facilities, and the rejection of moves to substitute public open space with indoor facilities. The paper argued that councils should not dispose of areas of useable public open space unless they acquired a site with similar service levels [222].

The 1986 plan also set out a rationale for restructuring community involvement in the planning and management of open space areas. Community participation in planning, asserted the MMBW policy paper, was likely to increase the use of facilities and decrease vandalism. In advocating multi-use facilities, the MMBW document cautioned local authorities about the political power of organised sporting groups. Rather than assume the tenure of sporting clubs over recreation facilities, MMBW suggested that local authorities call for bids from interested groups for the use or development of facilities, to be evaluated with a test that considered "…whether the general community would be better off with the proposed development and that no particular individuals or groups would be severely disadvantaged" [223].

That the City of Essendon administrators had an eye to the MMBW planning formula is suggested by an archival record noting that in 1984 the municipality had a ratio of 230 persons per hectare of open space (although it is not clear how open space is defined) [224]. This exceeded the MMBW minimum by a factor of four, confirming MMBW's concern over the usefulness of the ratio. The key issue

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[222] MMBW: Draft Metropolitan Open Space Planning Guidelines: Background and Information, 1987, p.16; copy on PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/79 City of Essendon Open Space/General/Proposed Open Space 266/1/1 Part 2.
[223] MMBW: Draft Metropolitan Open Space Planning Guidelines: Background and Information, 1987, p. 14.
[224] PROV VPRS 12751/P/0001/79 City of Essendon Open Space/General/Proposed Open Space 266/1/1 Part 2.

was not the quantum of open space but its accessibility and useability. As MMBW noted, public open space provision tended to assume a "settled" character once suburbs were developed, and further provision or redistribution in these areas was likely to incur high financial and political costs. Alternatively, the use of linear open space, such as waterways and utility easements, was suggested as the best way of providing additional open space in densely settled areas.

The council followed the logic of MMBW's draft open space policy closely. Nominating its priorities for public open space provision to the Melbourne Western Region Commission in 1986, the council argued the principal need was for neighbourhood parks within walking distance (500 metres) of any household. Noting its concern over the maintenance "difficulties" of small parks, the council indicated it had a low budget for park maintenance, and resources were further depleted by conversion of an open space area adjacent to the Melbourne Showgrounds, which had generated an estimated total of $50,000 in car parking revenue over the years, to a park. This claim was disingenuous – Victory Park had been proclaimed soon after the end of World War 1, but some time later the council perceived a revenue opportunity if it permitted car parking there during the Royal Agricultural Show, clearing an obstruction by sacking the park commissionaire who protested at what he saw as desecration of the war memorial site by flying the Australian flag upside down – a sign of distress – from the memorial flagpole [225].

The statutory responsibilities and policy influence exercised by MMBW over local-level land use planning in Melbourne has been extensively discussed (Dunstan 1984; Dingle and Rasmussen 1991; McLoughlin 1992). McLoughlin (1992:82) observes that the absorption of MMBW into the multi-disciplinary "super ministry" of Planning and Environment in 1985 suggested "…the days of

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[225] PROV VPRS 12751/P/0001/79 City of Essendon Open Space/General/Proposes Open Space 266/1/1 Part 2 – John James, Executive Director, Western Region Commission to Town Clerk, City of Essendon, 24 June 1986, citing an interview with City of Essendon officials.

the hegemony of the engineers and surveyors were perhaps over". It might be equally valid to argue that engineers contributed important infrastructural and hydrological perspectives to public open space policy emerging from the ministry that now dealt more explicitly with quality-of-life and environmental issues. In 1987 MMBW released a "strategic directions" paper on public open space provision that outlined what it termed the value of public open space in the following terms:

> "…providing settings for a wide range of outdoor recreational activities, shaping and complementing urban form, buffering various conflicting elements within the urban system, preserving historic and natural features, providing habitat for wildlife, increasing community pride, alleviating noise and air pollution, providing for the protection of floodplains, visually enhancing the urban environment and emphasising space, upgrading the 'image' of a city, town or region and contributing to increased tourism, providing areas to which people can temporarily escape from urban life" [226] .

This statement reflected new public policy interests of the Victorian government in cultural tourism and conservation (exemplified by the State Conservation Strategy, 1986), but more significantly it strengthened the claims for public open space to be perceived as a natural as well as a cultural system.

The development of neighbourhood parks in areas without such provision, although not officially endorsed as council policy until 1989, was a priority objective for open space planning during the 1980s. This was pursued in several directions by the council: land swap and purchase, negotiation with MMBW for public access to the foreshores of Moonee Valley Creek, and the negotiation of community use agreements with local schools. The complexities of inter-jursidictional agreements frustrated progress with the most promising of these – the use of school grounds – and no formal agreements appear to have been reached.

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[226] Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works: Public Open Space – Strategic Directions to the Year 2000, (1987), p. 2 - copy on PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/79 City of Essendon Open Space/General/Proposed Open Space 266/1/1 Part 2.

Following the launch of the Metropolitan Open Space Plan in 1988, the council received matched funding assistance from the state government for the development of two existing parks in North Essendon. Perhaps more than any other class of facility, the development and maintenance of public open space has been funded by intermittent community contributions, council funds and borrowings, and grants or co-funding schemes of higher tier governments. Improvements to public open space are probably more capable of coping with funding ebbs and flows than other class of municipal asset, particularly built assets, thus suiting such opportunism. However, as the following review of Queen's Park shows, such regimes also favour incremental, ad hoc development over long-term planning and vision.

Queen's Park

Queen's Park is the municipality's oldest and most historically significant recreation reserve. It currently provides opportunities for passive and active recreation and is a venue for commercial and community events. Adjacent to the council's administration block and the Clocktower centre, it is regarded as part of the municipality's civic precinct, and used by the council for a range of ceremonial purposes. The formal, botanical appearance of the park once featured in municipal symbology. This is a partial and privileged rendering of one aspect of the park's history, or, to echo the argument set out in the introduction to this chapter, a 'surface' view of contested civic terrain. A more complete outline of the history of Queen's Park suggests change and controversy over its appearance and purpose from its establishment around 1890, with arguments over landscape themes, the balance between 'active' and 'passive' recreation, the alienation of portions of land for private or putatively single-use activities, and funding.

From a public resource management perspective, Queen's Park is an exemplary case study in compromise, ad hoc development, and the cultivation of local political interests. While this account conforms to the terms of the 'renewal challenge' analysis outlined in chapters 1 and 2 – that is, the argument that local authorities have not devoted sufficient planning or financial resources to ensure the sustainable management of their infrastructure - the decline of the park's use and appearance in the middle decades of the twentieth century holds up to question the timeframe and causal factors embedded in this analysis. One purpose of this section, then, is to examine whether the 'renewal challenge' argument is sufficiently accommodating of either local circumstance or wider structural factors, or whether a more nuanced analysis can assist in clarifying the policy and operational challenges this argument poses.

Queen's Park was originally an area of land surrounding a chain of water holes (the Moonee ponds) that was a camp and ceremonial site of the Doutta Galla people. Water rather than land was the key resource, and a trade developed in its sale to travellers. Competition for use of the area intensified with the establishment of pastoral industries. The area became a camping ground for goldminers on their way to the Mt Alexander and other central Victorian diggings from 1851. The area's two most famous campers, Robert O'Hara Burke and William Wills, stayed there in 1860 en route to the first south to north crossing of the Australian continent and their subsequent deaths. In 1863 the Department of Lands and Surveys (DLS) placed the area under the jurisdiction of the Borough of Essendon and Flemington. This management arrangement continues to the present: the symbolic and financial value of Queen's Park is reflected in the fact that its management as a Crown reserve is vested in a statutory body rather than a committee of citizens.

The formation of the Flemington and Essendon Reserve Vigilance Committee in 1885 signals the start of an organised campaign to halt the alienation of the commons for housing and industry, and fence off the area to protect new

plantings from grazing stock (Chalmers 1998a:25). The *Essendon Gazette* promoted the campaign, calling for appointment of a gardener "…to look after what might be a very pretty place if we do not wish to be behind other suburbs" (cited in Kerley 1988:4). Following construction of a weir several kilometres to the north of Moonee Ponds in what is now Woodland Park, DLS agreed that a reserve for watering purposes was no longer required, and planning for the park began. An 1892 plan included a bowling green, tennis court, cricket ground (the Essendon Cricket Club had signed an agreement with the council in 1873 to play there) and band rotunda (Kerley 1988:5). In response to concerns expressed by the Board of Health over the presence of effluence, the water holes were drained, deepened and connected to become a small lake. Stormwater was diverted and the lake was filled by water from Yan Yean reservoir. The *Essendon Gazette* continued its campaign against the alienation of the park, thundering that "[s]port has no right to ruthlessly destroy our finest public pleasure ground" following the construction of a cycling track around the cricket ground in 1896 (cited in Kerley 1988).

The appointment in 1890 of long-serving curator John Oliver marked the transition of the area from a minimally-regulated commons to a municipal amenity and local beauty spot, partially built with volunteer labour and donations (Aldous 1979:102). The park was named Queen's Park on the occasion of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in 1897. By 1906 a local historian (McJunkin 1906:24) was describing the park in Olmstedian terms as "the lung of the people", and the botanic park asserted itself over other uses. Kinnears Rope Works moved from the north-west corner of the park to Footscray and the tennis courts were resumed. Oliver established a 600 plant rose garden and a fete in 1912 raised £500 for construction of a conservatory, one of many such "fetes, charities and moonlight promenades" (Kerley 1988:8). The Great War (1914-1918) saw the park used for fund-raising and patriotic events, and the site of the annual commemoration of the Gallipoli landing in April 1915. The design by city engineer H M Pullar of a memorial cenotaph and its location at the park's main entrance in

1924 consolidated its commemorative role (see plate 7). The period 1900-1930 was the park's "boom period" and the highpoint of the botanic park, according to City of Essendon's landscape architect Pauline Kerley (1988:11), who in 1988 undertook a major review of the park's condition and drew up a plan for its redevelopment. Kerley's observation that the park then entered a long period of decline and neglect is supported by newspaper reportage and the fragmented archival record. Symbolic of the neglect was the deterioration and eventual removal, during the 1940s, of the conservatorium.

Plate 7: Queen's Park, featuring its formal aspect.

By the 1980s the council's archival record contains a stream of written complaints about the park's condition. While the substance of these complaints, and internal memoranda and replies by council officers, attest to lack of consistent maintenance, the effect of a declining park workforce, which dropped from 6 in

1982 to 2.5 in 1988 (Kerley p.41), and issues of workforce demarcation within the council are also apparent. Complaints point to the well-kept gardens, but poor state of the play structures, pollution of the lake and pot-holed paths. Other letters give a more damning view of the overall state: "[t]he only well kept area was that in and immediately outside of the Caretaker's residence", wrote one resident in 1987. "It is appalling", wrote another, "to read the signs advising the public to take care of the park, and then to see the lake in this dreadful condition". One of the council's responses to the litter problem was to establish a junior park rangers program (citizen ranger programs had been operated periodically under the council's aegis), urging young letter writers to join [227].

Kerley's argument of decline and neglect mirrors the analysis of the Victorian state government municipal infrastructure consultants (AMQ International, Skilmar Systems Pty Ltd et al. 1998). As observed in chapter 2, such critiques may have a disciplinary intent in offering a version of the past that will build support for a preferred course of policy action. Thus, Kerley marshals her argument in support of advocacy for the regeneration of the botanical park, suggesting that the ad hoc developments in the park during the middle years of the century, particularly the building of the swimming pool and extension of the bowling club, was evidence of poor judgement and failure to develop a wider vision for the park. The Kerley plan will be discussed in detail below, but two observations can be made here of this narrative; both have particular bearing on how we understand the terms under which municipal infrastructure was acquired and how its future is imagined. The first observation relates to Kerley's failure to concede that decisions taken about the park during the 'middle years' may have conformed to a vision of residents' recreational needs rather than departed from one. While the council perceived Queen's Park as a spatial resource, inappropriately in Kerley's view, the use of the reserve for active sport predates and then runs parallel with its botanic development. The other major

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[227] See correspondence on PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/74 Reserves, Parks and Gardens, Individual Parks/Reserves/Queens Park. 263/1/2 Parts 1 and 2.

encroachment on the park, the Moonee Ponds Bowling Club, was established on the site in the 1880s. As a membership organisation it has less claim to use of the commons than does the swimming pool, and the expansion of its rinks in the late 1940s is less defensible, although this move can also be understood in the context of a strong sporting culture in the City and the long association of this culture with Queen's Park. The second comment about Kerley's narrative of decline relates to the increasing strain on council resources brought about by the pressure to develop other open space and recreation facilities, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century. The council's financial statements show that, whereas funding allocations for properties (which included parks) increased less than other budget lines between 1947 and 1984 (see Appendix A), parks did proportionately well *within* this budget line. However, competition for resources is graphically illustrated by the city manager's report on councillor responses to the 1988 Queen's Park redevelopment plan: "The total cost of the project seemed to be a problem to Councillors, with the line 'Why should we build Queen's Park to a high level when we cannot even mow Aberfeldie Park?' being commonly used"[228].

"Return the Park to the People"

Despite Kerley's observation of the decline of the park and public complaints about its upkeep, its use by individuals, civic groups and commercial organisations expanded and diversified, to the extent that the council had by 1984 introduced a space and facility booking system and imposed hiring charges[229]. In part, the ad hoc additions to the park to which Kerley drew notice were the result of service club initiatives and were indicative of the close relations of service clubs and the council. Rotary contributed a wishing well and co-financed with the council a sound shell in 1983. The sound shell proved popular,

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[228] PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/74 Reserves, Parks and Gardens, Individual Parks/Reserves/Queens Park. 263/1/2 Part 1.
[229] The first mention of a booking requirement is March 1984 – PROV VPRS 12751/P0001/74 Reserves, Parks and Gardens, Individual Parks/Reserves/Queens Park. 263/1/2 Part 1.

but introduced a new factor - noise - to park management, and ultimately proved too small for some performance requirements [230]. While single events were regulated in the manner described above, council officers were now inclined to refuse requests by civic groups wishing to use the park's resources on a regular basis, anticipating future problems of equity, resource-sharing and regulation [231]. In 1988 the council administration embarked on an ambitious campaign to secure funding to upgrade the park, setting out the redevelopment proposal in a report titled *Return the Park to the People*. The talismanic nature of this campaign reflected the high political stakes involved in seeking removal of the swimming pool and the bowling club. Who were the 'people' if not the existing park users? This was a central issue for the Kerley report. This report, and subsequent resident and council responses, dominate the recent history of the park. A detailed discussion of the report follows.

The Kerley report is the most substantial review of the history and use of Queen's Park undertaken to this point, and especially interesting for its mix of analysis and advocacy, for the recognition of the park as a botanic reserve, and its users as predominantly seeking 'passive' recreation and the aesthetic experience of a formal historic garden. Kerley argues that Queen's Park "…has a rich and colourful history as a social focus for the Essendon community" (p.1) but gives emphasis to the social interaction that occurred through common interests in gardening and botany:

> This park provided a highly appropriate leisure venue for the local community which catered very precisely to their needs and to the fashions and interests of the time such as gardening and plant collecting. This resulted in the park becoming an important place for social interaction – for exchanging news or the latest plant seeds and for exercise and education. (p.14)

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[230] VPRS 12751/P0001/74 Reserves, Parks and Gardens, Individual Parks/Reserves/Queens Park. 263/1/2 Part 1.
[231] VPRS 12751/P0001/74 Reserves, Parks and Gardens, Individual Parks/Reserves/Queens Park. 263/1/2 Part 1, 26 September 1984.

This picture of respectability and shared interests contrasts with periodic discussion of inappropriate behaviour in the park. Removal of the original boxthorn hedge surrounding the park was urged in the early 1900s as a way of discouraging vandals and sundowners. In the 1950s, culprits variously described as "new Australians" or "migrants" were accused of disobeying regulations by riding bicycles in the park, and engaging in unspecified inappropriate behaviour. A proposal by a resident whose way home from work took her through the park to light the paths was rejected by the council on the grounds that it would encourage undesirables. Kerley's own proposal to re-fence the park drew a strong negative response from residents with security concerns.

Kerley connects past and present by pointing to a revival of interest in gardening and historic gardens, quoting the results of a survey of 160 park users undertaken as part of the review in which 90% of respondents answered yes to the question "Is the old style character of the park important to you?". Was there much likelihood of a strong negative response to a question phrased thus? Other survey findings contrasted with Kerley's vision. Respondents' suggestions for park improvements such as the provision of barbecue facilities, which did not accord with Kerley's preferred park aesthetics and user comportment, were not highlighted (p.29).

In setting out a future for the park, Kerley was on stronger ground when she argued for the historical significance of remnants from the park's botanic period, and its distinctiveness from other parks and open space areas in the municipality. To build public support for the redevelopment, Kerley was instrumental in establishing in 1988 the Friends of Queen's Park, in which she and several councillors were active. However, the price tag of $1.1 million for the capital works outlined in *Return the Park to the People* was too steep to secure political commitment. Instead the council obtained a Ministry for Planning and Environment matched grant of $82,000 to undertake priority improvements such as the lake water quality and replacement of furniture. Funding was sought for

repairs to larger structures, for example the Trugo Club pavilion, through the Commonwealth government's Community Facilities Program. This program was established in 1972 by the newly created Commonwealth Department of Tourism and Recreation to fund local-level sporting and community facilities. The funding focus changed to elite facilities in 1980 (following Australia's poor 1976 Olympic performance), with the emphasis swinging back to community facilities in 1988-89 budget. The scheme was discontinued in 1993-4 following criticism by the Commonwealth Auditor of the administration and accountability of the program and the resignation of Federal Sports Minister. This brief illustration suggests both the opportunism and vulnerability of local-level facility funding when exposed to the political dynamics of higher level governments (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment 1997).

As redevelopment planning proceeded it became clear that the park was not only to be returned to people as citizens, but as customers. In 1991 the council sought expressions of interest in the national press for the development of a conservatory restaurant, on the site of the 1912 conservatory. The alienation of land for this purpose required permission of the state authority controlling Crown reserves, the Department of Conservation and the Environment, which was refused using the same reasoning put forward by Kerley against park encroachment: "[a] restaurant is a separate entity which could easily be provided for on private land, and not at the expense of public open space" [232]. The Department suggested the council explore the conversion of the former caretaker's residence (built for John Oliver in 1890, and vacant since the death of its last occupant, head gardener John Eyries in 1991), a proposal which the Council then acted upon.

The 1994 municipal amalgamation and appointment of local government commissioners halted further momentum on the redevelopment. The new council

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[232] Lynne Stronell, Department of Conservation and the Environment to John T Higgins, Manager, Statutory Services, City of Essendon, 19 May 1992 , MVCC file 48/17/3 Parks/Reserves/Pavilions/Queens Park Redevelopment.

sought to locate further development of the park within a broader assessment of cultural and recreation needs, and in 1998 commissioned a new analysis of park use and user preferences [233]. A survey by Frank Small and Associates [234] (hereafter Small) makes interesting comparison with the survey undertaken as part of the Kerley report a decade earlier. Both show the regional status of the park: less than half of visitors reside within the former City of Essendon area (essentially the park's surrounding suburbs), and almost two-thirds travel to it by car. Both surveys also show the predominantly family oriented nature of park visits – the majority of visitors come as part of family groups and to entertain children. Both surveys suggested that visitors appreciated the lake and gardens as the prime features of the park, but the Small survey also emphasised the popularity of the play equipment. Small's more detailed questioning about park uses and preferences brings into question Kerley's passive/active binary distinction: visitors appear comfortable with, indeed demand both. However, the clear majority of Small's survey respondents who disapproved of a skateboard ramp in the park suggested where the line was drawn, highlighting the problematic issue of the appropriate type and placement of facilities for young people. This population group does not feature in the vision offered by either Kerley or Small.

The Small survey provided a basis for the development of a new master plan, undertaken not by the council's landscape staff (too much 'producer' interest?) but by the consultancy firm that had produced the council's cultural plan (Collaborations in association with the City of Moonee Valley 1999). The plan concentrated on visitors and their preferences rather than on the design integrity of the park, as Kerley had done. The plan proposed retention of the park's historic character, but not its historicisation, arguing for a mixture of formal and informal elements to encourage the existing wide range of activities. The major

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[233] Frank Small and Associates: Queens Park Analysis – Topline Findings, October 1998.
[234] Examples of MVCC's service planning consultations are Centre for Local Government Research – Cultural Services Telephone Survey 1996; Frank Small and Associates: Queens Park Analysis – Topline Findings, October 1998.

strategy for development of the park, foreshadowed in the 1999 draft, was zoning the park into discrete areas: community events, recreational, and commemorative. This had become the main theme in the final version of the master plan, released in 2003. The Kerley report sought to nullify the influences of competing uses and ad hoc developments through an appeal to the botanic integrity of the park. However, the master plan sought to recognise and rationalise changes to the park. But what of the alienation of the public resource by the private bowling club? The master plan took a realpolitik view of the bowling club's occupancy of the park, recommending "[r]einstatement of parklands on the site of the Bowling Club when the present use of the Club and green is no longer required by the current leasees…" (Collaborations in association with the City of Moonee Valley 1999:22).

A second significant difference between the Kerley Plan and the Collaborations master plan is the subjectivity that each assigns park visitors. The Kerley report (pp.17-8) argues that a botanic park would portray an "appropriate image" for a region stereotyped as a "featureless industrial area of urban blight" – a questionable characterisation of the City of Essendon as chapter 4 indicates. Rather, in the context of the report the statement reveals more about the author's view of the desired behaviour of the park's visitors – shaped by a centrally supplied aesthetic and identity that paired the Victorian era fashion for botanic gardens with Victorian notions of respectability (Hoskins 2003). The master plan, by contrast, focuses on the need for the park to "[r]espond to community diversity by reflecting needs and aspirations of cultures within the City (eg recreation/leisure/cultural opportunities that reflect different cultural traditions)". Where the gardens provided the integrating element in the Kerley report, the Master Plan suggests that this would be "community involvement" in the development of the park itself (Collaborations in association with the City of Moonee Valley 1999:14).

Public Open Space Strategy in the New Millenium

In 2000 the Moonee Valley engaged consultants to prepare its first strategic plan for the management of public open space, in line with a suite of similar plans undertaken in the post-amalgamation phase. The consultant preparing the open space strategy faced a distinctly different demographic and political environment than that in which earlier park planning, such as the Kerley report, had been formulated. The inclusion of parts of North Melbourne, Kensington and Flemington in the south of the new municipality added areas with a concentration of apartment dwellers and limited public open space. The addition of the north-western suburbs increased the total number of dwellings with access to private open space, but also added a large number of poorly serviced and maintained areas of public open space. In sum, the amalgamation increased the disparity of distribution of public open space, the diversity of the population using it, the renewal and maintenance task, and the political problem of prioritising funding allocation. The consultant's approach was guided by an initial finding that almost 90% of parks were "not of good quality landscaping", and that large amounts were "relatively inaccessible" and offered limited recreation opportunities (Jan Bruce and Associates and Murphy Design Group 2000:13,8). Limited space was devoted in the report to outlining the benefits of parks:

> [o]pen space is an integral element of the Moonee Valley landscape, and an integral element of the environmental, social, recreational, sporting and cultural landscape of the City. Open Space provides low cost recreation opportunities for the community and locations where the environment can prosper and be protected. (p. 5)

Rather, the consultant focussed on reworking MMBW's hierarchy into a complex schema which sought to balance community expectations and the council's budget [235]. Noting the lack of parks along the municipality's "spine" (the suburbs

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[235] The typology is: focal nodal parks (large group), focal nodal parks (standard group), conservation parks (regional), focal parks, local parks, neighbourhood parks (Jan Bruce and Associates and Murphy Design Group 2002:4-13).

distributed along the railway line), the strategy argued that expectations of land purchase and park development in high-cost residential areas were "unrealistic" and urged the strengthening of landscape quality on the edges of the municipality (p.41). This was, in effect, a 'fewer, better parks' strategy, reflecting a strong focus on service levels in recommending that parks should be made sufficiently attractive to entice residents with limited local access to travel to them. On the face of it, this was a downward adjustment of resident expectations from the earlier goal of access to a park within 500 metres of each residence. The consultant argued that the distribution of parks was unrelated to their accessibility, recreation opportunity and landscape quality – the three criteria by which the consultant assessed the parks and prioritised their renewal (p.14). The consultant also urged the development of improved asset and risk management processes for parks, including asset recording, maintenance schedules, a risk inventory, and revised budgeting processes to include a recurrent component (Jan Bruce and Associates and Murphy Design Group 2002:30-1). This commitment to strategic management reflected best practice principles for local authority asset management, but calls attention to the separation of asset registers and different maintenance priorities between functional areas (park furniture and landscape assets are recorded by the parks department, and structures sited within public open space recorded by the property area.

One of the strategy's objectives included increasing community involvement in the planning and management of open space and public awareness of its value and potential. Consistent with the approach adopted in the cultural planning process (discussed in chapter 6), the development of the Open Space Strategy pointed to a new council consultative process that engaged place and identity communities. The consultants undertook what it termed as "micro-surveying" of "special groups" including Italian, African and Indo-Chinese communities, the pressure to acknowledge difference perhaps leading to the unsurprising conclusion that African children had a particular affinity with swings, which would be accommodated in playground design (Jan Bruce and Associates and Murphy

Design Group 2000:3). However, the concept of community was sliced a different, entirely new way in the document's assessment of public open space use, a way that distinguished between those with and without access to private open space. The document asserted "[p]eople with access to private open space at their houses, particularly for families with young children, should have less demand for use of public open space with many of their needs being met at home" (p. 3). This claim conflicted with earlier consultancy advice to the council that play areas in public open space should complement opportunities in private places (Jeavons and Jeavons 1992) and revealed the weakness of over-reliance on a public choice or service-based approach to the provision of public facilities. The consignment of a residual status to public open space – used primarily by those who have no access to private space – has both a questionable empirical basis and denies diverse uses and perceptions of public open space.

Service Levels, Amenity and Urban Consolidation

A final point to note in the strategy is its discussion of urban consolidation. The strategy flags increasing demand on public open space exerted by medium-density development, on the basis of the limited private space included in such housing (Jan Bruce and Associates and Murphy Design Group 2000:7). This is the flip-side of the argument that access to private open space lessens demand on its public equivalent. The council open space strategy was finalised after local and state government policy statements favouring urban consolidation (Moonee Valley City Council and GHD Pty Ltd 1996; Department of Infrastructure 2002) and can be read in context with these documents. The strategy thus makes an indirect acknowledgement of arguments discussed in chapter 2, that consolidation reduces existing service levels and amenity of public open space – an argument that challenges the particular framing of the 'return of scarcity' thesis of municipal asset management. Despite the rigidity of the (superseded) open space formula discussed earlier, it provided a measure of equity and transparency in the provision and distribution of public open space. The degree

to which current policy achieves these goals is questionable. The open space consultants urged the council to develop an "appropriate system" for accepting developer contributions for open space in new residential developments (Jan Bruce and Associates 2000:53). Victorian government statutory regimes permit local authorities to levy an open space contribution on developers through the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the Subdivision Act 1988. The contribution may be made in the form of land or cash or a combination of both not exceeding 5% of the site value of the sub-divided land (S18, Subdivision Act 1988). In 2006, a Moonee Valley councillor argued that the council was either waiving the full 5% contribution, or using cash contributions from developers to upgrade existing open space areas rather than provide for new open space in areas where development was occurring [236]. A pertinent example was council's approval in 2006 of a sub-division of 460 housing lots on a former industrial site on the Maribyrnong River floodplain in Ascot Vale [237]. The contribution accepted by Council in this instance included a cash contribution to upgrade the sporting pavilion and cricket nets on an adjacent sports oval. This instance raises the complex issue of whether councils use development windfalls to maintain existing facilities that would conventionally be funded through a separate budget process, and whether the facilities upgraded through the cash contribution are likely to cater for the demand created by the new development (this "nexus" is required under S18 of the Subdivision Act 1988), or whether this episode can be located within the tradition of opportunist funding. However, the councillor's concern over the sub-division levy also related to the distribution of open space throughout the municipality. The councillor advocated a policy that 80% of developer contributions be spent within areas of the municipality that have the least open space relative to population levels. The motion was not supported by a majority of councillors, and council administrators thus made no formal response. At one level the episode discloses a lack of transparency or clarity surrounding the

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[236] Moonee Valley City Council Agenda – Ordinary Council, 18 July 2006, Item 11.3, Notice of Motion No 2006/14: Review of Council's Open Space Development and Acquisition.
[237] Moonee Valley City Council Executive Committee Agenda Papers 7 March 2006: Moonee Valley Planning Scheme Amendment C60 Ascot Chase – Report of the Independent Panel.

developer levy process. More fundamentally, though, it reinforces the political salience of public open space. The failure of the councillor moving the motion to gain support of elected colleagues can be seen in terms of political and personal alignments within the elected council rather than resident disinterest in the topic, as the analysis of resident interviews in Section 7.5 of this chapter suggests.

Open Space Management – New Alignments

If local sporting and community groups had once played a key role in maintaining open space and recreational assets, what role was assigned them in the new policy framework? The strategy indicated the degree to which resident involvement in the development and management of public open space has been expanded, from the direct participation of a relatively few (in the areas of physical infrastructure provision and maintenance, the running of clubs and user programs, and governance) to the indirect participation of the many through consultative processes. A recent master planning exercise for the Buckley Park recreation reserve, a large, multi-facility sporting precinct in residential West Essendon, provides a useful and typical example.

Buckley Park was developed in the 1950s with club contributions to pavilion construction, and for many years was oversighted by a committee of management, comprised of representatives of the tenant sporting associations (football, cricket, tennis, lawn bowls). The committee agreed on use allocations, facility provision, and maintenance, sometimes settling major disagreements amongst the tenants. The increasing professionalisation and cost of sport, especially Australian Rules football, led to the football club obtaining a liquor licence and expanding revenue-earning social activities on site. This brought the club into conflict with residents, and expanded the management role beyond ground use to encompass local laws and planning issues. In addition, the committee of management's focus was largely operational, with limited concern (and perhaps capacity) for long-term strategic and infrastructure planning. As the

reserve infrastructure aged and the management task became increasingly complex, the existing governance arrangements showed their limitations [238].

In 2004 the council engaged a consultant to review user demand, infrastructure requirements and local planning issues of the reserve, in preparation for a long-term strategic plan (Leisure Solutions Australia Pty Ltd 2004). The plan is a cogent analysis of these issues and provides a clear path of action for the renewal and use of the park - in many ways it is a model for strategic infrastructure management. However, it makes no reference to the committee of management or past governance processes, locating new responsibilities and capacities, with local residents:

> …local residents are capable of identifying their own needs and participating in the problem solving and decision-making process with respect to open space provision, provided they are given the appropriate and necessary supports. (p.11)

The consultative process undertaken in the master planning exercise, then, points to the reworking of a conventional open space management process that was seen to have reached its limits in a new governance environment requiring strategic thinking, accountability and inclusiveness. The committee of management continues to function, but not as the sole or even principal governance structure. Local committees are re-positioned to deal with operational and tactical issues, and the task of strategic management is undertaken by a new alignment of consultants, council administrators and citizens.

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[238] This discussion is drawn from PROV VPRS 12750/64/10 Parts 1-3 Reserves, Recreation Grounds, Use of Buckley Park and VPRS 12751/262/1/9 Committees of Management General Buckley Park Committee of Management.

7.5 Evaluating Public Open Space – Analysing Resident's Views

The introduction to this chapter observed that public open space was the facility class most frequently nominated by the interview sample to discuss and exemplify use of community facilities and perceptions of their value, and appraisal of local authority provision and performance. Why was this so, and what light does it shed on the evaluation and management of public open space and other facilities? The context of the interviews is particularly significant in responding to these questions. The interviews were conducted during a period when urban consolidation policies established by state planning frameworks were the subject of widespread public debate, through metropolitan media outlets, critical responses to planning policies of the Kennett and Bracks governments, community newspapers and council planning processes. Development projects in the City of Moonee Valley during this period did not generate the same apparent level of controversy as high-rise apartment proposals elsewhere in Melbourne at this time [239], but a review of council meeting agenda papers between 2000 and 2005 suggests persistent neighbourhood-level concern and activism around in-fill development and changes – real or perceived - to the established urban form. One interpretation of this concern, raised in earlier discussion of the Ascot Vale Bowling Club development, might identify in it a paramount desire to preserve private amenity and property values. The connection between amenity and property value has its fullest critical examination in a US context, through Fischel's (2001) homevoter (the homeowner who votes) hypothesis. "[R]esidents who own their own homes", argues Fischel, "have a stake in the outcome of local politics that make them especially attentive to the public policies of local government" (p.ix). Fischel argues that local decisions, especially in the areas of service provision, amenity and planning, directly affect home values in a way that the decisions of higher governments do not. The political decisions of homevoters, then, are conditioned

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[239] Notable recent examples are proposals for an apartment tower at Mitcham, in outer eastern Melbourne, and the development of vacant land adjacent to the Camberwell Railway Station, in inner eastern Melbourne.

by a desire to maintain or increase property values. This argument may have less relevance in Australia, where local jurisdisctions have comparatively limited roles (they do not, for example, provide school education, one of Fischel's most politically sensitive functions). Approached in broad terms though, Fischel's thesis resonates. The desire to preserve suburban amenity has been subtly caricatured and undermined in successive Victorian policy statements, firstly, by associating a 'new urbanist' concept of urban villages with a heightened sense of community and expanded leisure opportunities, and secondly, by pointing to the negative environmental consequences of urban sprawl. Urban consolidation and public open space were enjoined by interviewees in a narrative of loss that poses a challenge for policy-makers seeking to win approval for higher-density housing development in inner urban areas. Interviewee responses evidence a deep attachment to the current urban form based on the relationship of private and public space. The value articulated by residents can be divided into three categories which structure the following discussion: personal and social benefits, environmental concerns and perceptions of the public realm.

Personal and social benefits

A major finding of the interviews was the high use of footpaths and streets for recreation, especially walking, and the significance of walking as a physical recreation and, for some, social activity. Several interviewees nominated Puckle Street, Moonee Ponds (a busy shopping strip) as a significant public place, warning against an overly strict distinction between leisure and consumption. The frequent mention by interviewees of footpaths and streets as social and recreational spaces challenges policy preconceptions of public open space as 'green'. Admittedly the sample selection, with a predominance of interviewees aged over 30, is likely to have had some influence on this result. In this light, one should be wary of generalising from the result in seeking to optimise environmental conditions that encourage walking. Veitch et al's (2006) research on children's active play suggests that environmental conditions that encourage

adult walking (straight roads, direct connections with open space areas) pose higher safety risks for children [240]. Conversely, Veitch et al observe, optimal street spaces for children's active play (culs-de-sac), have been shown to discourage adult walking. However, green or vegetated spaces are, from the interview data, preferred venues for walking, for psychological and amenity reasons (peaceful, pleasant environments, offering a chance for isolation, or a balance of isolation and security), and, where permitted, for the off-lead exercise of dogs [241].

Public open spaces containing playgrounds and play structures provide convenient places for parents, grandparents and carers with children to meet and socialise. Several interviewees noted a preference for public playgrounds that offered space and equipment beyond the scale of private households, wider discussion suggested the importance of grouped facilities (seating, cooking, playing equipment, shade trees) for inter-generational and social activities. Several interviewees expressed concern about a lack of public recreational provision for teenagers, although concern expressed about the behaviour of other young people at venues such as skate parks suggests this concern might also be understood in terms of the lack of self-management in such places and/or the absence of any external authority. Perhaps the core issue here is not one of authority, but ownership. Stoll (2002) instances youth participation in facility design and management, that is, a governance role, that appears to have been a successful tactic in encouraging socially appropriate behaviour and care for the public asset. Again, this draws attention to our theme of the tension between proprietorship and public goods that has received little policy attention.

Some of the data suggest that the unstructured and unprogrammed nature of walking as a form of recreation is compatible with sociality (in contrast to

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[240] Veitch et al's research on the child-friendly nature of culs-de-sac calls up a central principle of early 20th century garden suburb planning, see Hall 1988:127.
[241] Veitch et al (2006) asked survey respondents if they had a dog, pointing to the significance of dog ownership for exercise.

programmed activities such as gym routines), although this appears from the data to have a gender inflection. That is, women are more likely to walk with friends than men (and, perhaps, more likely to walk than men), a finding supported in a US study by Krenichyn (2004). Research discussed in another study by Krenichyn (2005) suggests that perceptions of trust and perceiving neighbours as physically active was positively correlated with personal levels of physical activity, but other research findings, she observes, point to class, race and geographic variables related to exercise. This discussion cannot be conclusive. As Krenichyn observes

> [b]ecause social environment variables have… been found to be less reliably measured than physical environment ones…, and because all places are in some ways a mix of social and physical environment, perceptions of the social environment and their relation to physical activity deserve further attention. (2005:12)

The interviews highlighted personal safety as a significant concern and constraint on the use of public open space. Some interviewees expressed concern that threats to personal safety had increased in the past few years, and some interviewees had ceased to use some public open space areas in response. Proportionally more women from the southern suburbs (principally Flemington and Ascot Vale) discussed this issue, and reported feeling insecure, than men. Women residing in other suburbs of the municipality also reported feelings of insecurity in public open space, but no men did. The data suggest that perceptions of security were influenced by the configuration and appearance of public open space. A greater feeling of insecurity is, from the data, likely to be associated with linear spaces such as walking/cycling tracks, especially when these have an enclosed aspect. This finding has clear implications for the trend in urban open space policy to make greater use of linear open space. Perceptions of vandalised, poorly maintained or poorly used public space were also associated with a heightened sense of insecurity. The interviews were conducted during a period of time when local or "community" newspapers were regularly reporting incidents of inter-personal crime in the municipality's southern suburbs

[242]. The interview data suggest local newspapers are widely read and an important source of local news [243]. The two major community newspapers feature relatively predictable subject coverage with similar editorial positions. Council bureaucracy and crime feature as recurrent topics (see figure plate 8). Statistical evidence of a decline of interpersonal crime in these suburbs in recent years [244] might be qualified by the evidence of one interviewee that he considered his English too poor to report to police an incident of menace and theft at the Newmarket (Flemington) railway station. Other interviewees detailed witnessing interpersonal crime in the recent past. The objective and subjective concern over personal security was for interviewees a significant consideration in the use of public open space, a finding that contributes to a long-standing literature in this area (Burgess, Harrisson et al. 1988).

The concern expressed by interviewees about personal security in public places is an issue that cuts across place and facility management, justice, and public health domains. Remarkably, the MVCC Open Space Strategy (Jan Bruce and Associates and Murphy Design Group 2000; 2002) contains *no* discussion of personal security issues in using open space. The benefits of walking for personal well-being, and of "walkable" neighbourhoods for the accumulation of social capital, is well documented (Leydon 2003). Curtailment of such an activity, then, through concerns for personal safety, could be viewed as having a negative impact on well-being and social cohesion, and may concentrate demand on indoor recreation facilities such as leisure centres. The latter outcome may be associated with other negative outcomes such as the environmental impact of

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[242] The two major community papers are owned by major media corporations - *the Moonee Valley Community News* (Fairfax Pty Ltd) and the *Moonee Valley Leader* (News Ltd), and distributed across the municipality, although in the observation of the author they are noteworthy for their sporadic delivery patterns to residences and constant soliciting of delivery 'walkers'. The Flemington-Kensington News is independently produced and distributed in those suburbs only.

[243] Several interviewees criticised the non-delivery of one local paper in the period before the November 2005 local elections as effectively limiting the availability of electoral information. The possible impact of this delivery failure on the outcome of one electoral ward featured in an appeal by an unsuccessful candidate.

[244] See Victoria Police - Offences Recorded by Postcode 2002-06, and Region, Division, PSA Statistics 2005-07, http://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?Document_ID=782 , last accessed 18 December 2007.

MOONEE VALLEY Community NEWS

Fairfax Community Network

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Traffic moves afoot

By Goya Bennett

PARENTS dropping off children at Essendon Keilor College will be re-routed by plans to close McCracken Street and make Buckley Street a clearway.

The moves are proposed under the revised Buckley Park traffic management plan, now out for public comment after the Moonee Valley Council gave it the green light last week.

The plan covers Essendon's exclusive Mar Lodge estate and surrounding precinct, bounded by Buckley Street, and Lincoln, Keilor and Hoffmans roads.

A petition signed by 121 residents who support traffic improvements but oppose the McCracken Street closure was tabled at last week's council meeting. Another petition, signed by 86, supports the plan.

The plan's protagonist, Ramsay Ward councillor and McCracken Street resident Paul Giuliano, said McCracken Street would be fully closed south of the Thomson Street roundabout.

"It stops the school traffic from coming up our street ... not just our street, but it stops it filtering out to side streets."

Buckley Park plan gets the green light

'When you implement a measure on one street you've got to think of the flow-on effect to other streets.'

Paul Giuliano

McCracken Street is the school's only entry and exit point.

Although it is not shown on the plans, right-turn bans are also proposed for most streets on the north side of Buckley Street during peak times.

A peak-hour, left-turn ban has also been flagged for McCarron Street, which runs parallel to McCracken, east of the college.

Partial road closures are also proposed for Hedderwick Street at Spencer Street and Roberts Street between Keilor Road and Market Street — routes often used by those heading to Buckley Park SC or the adjacent

tennis, bowls and other sports clubs. There would be no entry into Braemar and Williams Street from Lincoln Road.

Peak-hour, right-turn bans would also be implemented in nine out of 10 streets (except Cooper) on the south side of Keilor Road, which is poised to become a clearway. The possibility has also been raised for Deakin, Ogilvie, Bradshaw, Graves and Gilbertston to be turned into one-way streets.

Right-turn bans have been proposed for streets to the east of Hoffmans Road. After bans were trialled for three months in 2004, the council vowed they would not be reinstated.

Cr Giuliano said the moves were necessary to control the direction and distribution of traffic.

"When you implement a measure on one street you've got to think of the flow-on effect to other streets."

The second and third stages of the plan will target Keilor East and Aberfeldie respectively.

Daylight robbery

Not a policeman stirred when this masked 'bandit', dripping with blood, ran down a Flemington laneway on Friday. But a nearby camera crew were kept on their toes as they captured the action. Full story, page 3.

■ TIMBER PLAYGROUNDS REPLACED — PAGE 3   ■ CHILDREN BRIDGE RELIGIOUS DIVIDE — PAGE 7   ■ SPORT — PAGE 102

Plate 8: The 'crime' report details the filming of a documentary about a bank robbery in Flemington two years earlier.

increased use of motor vehicles. The costs and benefits, tangible and intangible, of co-located and re-scaled facilities versus dispersal and configuration at neighbourhood-level is an important question that requires policy attention.

Environmental values

The Maribyrnong River corridor featured prominently in the interviews, valued as a place for recreation, scenic amenity, and wildlife habitat. Some interviewees reflected on the changing perception of the river, which is now in places such a popular recreation venue that interviewees reported congestion on riverside paths. The historical bias towards the creation of open space along the Yarra River, informed by assumptions about the eastern spread of the metropolitan population, the marginal status of eastern suburb electorates, and long-standing views of the industrial nature of the western suburbs, has been closely analysed in an unpublished paper by Gough (1997; also see Otto 2005). In recent years tensions over the use of the Maribyrnong foreshores have heightened, due to the sale of riverside land formerly used for Commonwealth defence purposes to the private housing market, development policies effectively limiting foreshore access, increased recreational and cycle-commuting use of the river foreshores, and increased awareness of and support for the river's ecology. A new planning framework for the river environs seeks to reconcile competing uses and values, its inter-jurisdictional approach acknowledging the limits of municipal planning and the complex mixture of public good, private amenity and commercial interests associated with the river (Townsend, Herbert et al. 2006). Importantly, the design framework conceptualises the river as both a single linear space and ecology, and a series of distinct social and physical environments. This echoes interviewee perceptions of the river. The value of the less-developed part of the river, around West Essendon and Avondale Heights in the north west of the municipality, was discussed by several interviewees, as a wildlife habitat and chance for residents to easily experience a natural or semi-natural landscape. In both regards, planning policy that permitted development to the river foreshores

was harshly criticised, for its impact on the habitat corridor and removal of land from the public realm. There is no compelling reason why the river foreshores should have been approved for development (it would, for example, make a negligible impact on 'urban sprawl', and there is no public ferry service to effect transport efficiencies). However, interviewees articulated environmental and equity reasons why such approval should not be given. An additional ecological perspective was articulated by several residents of the southern, more densely urban end of the municipality, especially with regard to the 'informal' open space of the Moonee Ponds Creek. This area was valued not in terms of its capacity to offer an escape from the urban environment, or restorative experience arising from a connection with nature or wildness: the built-up setting hardly permits this. It was, rather, seen as an integral part of urbanism, valued for its capacity to remind urban dwellers of the wider habitat and natural system in which they live.

A major concern of interviewees discussing public open space was urban consolidation and change to neighbourhood character. There was widespread concern about further urban consolidation and increasing traffic levels, especially in northern and north-western part of the municipality, and perceived loss of local level sovereignty over planning matters. This can be connected to the articulation by some respondents of the health and aesthetic benefits of private open space. Some residents also expressed concern that they know increasingly fewer of their neighbours, associating higher-density development with increasing anonymity. The interviews suggest that there is by no means a broad or willing acceptance of an urban future involving continued infill development and higher density living. On the contrary, many respondents expressed concern over the loss of amenity and what they perceive to be the wider public benefits of conventional suburban design. While it can be argued that the weighting of the interview sample may have contributed to the dominance of this view, the force and consistency with which the arguments were put is noteworthy. The salience of this issue is also suggested by its longevity - Mercer (1980:17) lists urban

consolidation and traffic/roads as amongst the major points of land-use conflict in the 1970s.

The public realm

As noted earlier in this chapter, current local and state policy takes a narrow view of public open space, emphasising its service and environmental attributes but giving limited attention to its public realm aspect. In addition to information about utilitarian aspects of public open space, the interview data also show recognition and valuing of two qualities of public open space that suggest its contribution to the public realm should be given greater policy emphasis. These qualities are equity and (drawing on Kohn 2004) intersubjectivity.

The use of public open space for social gatherings, particularly large or composite groups, points to its equity value. As one interviewee observed, it is not so much that no members of the group have private space that can accommodate such gatherings, but that *not all do*. People of different socio-economic circumstances meet on roughly equal terms in public space. This quality is not confined to public open space or even publicly owned space – one interviewee reported hiring a church meeting space to continue a mothers' group when their ration of meetings at the local Maternal and Child Health Centre was used up – but it is characteristic of public open space.

The agency of public places in facilitating encounters with difference was described by one interviewee as "community exchange opportunities" (R2). However, while intersubjectivity was associated with community facilities by many interviewees, several specifically qualified their views in this area by distinguishing between *public* and *community*, alluding to the construction of the former in democratic politics, and more exclusive and at times contrived elements of the latter. Is a preference for 'public' over 'community' of anything more than semantic interest here? As Kohn (2004) argues, it is entirely possible to be

committed to the concept of the public realm without wishing to experience its delights or discomforts at first hand. However, strengthening the understandings of public open space and other public facilities as an element of the public realm makes good policy sense. It would, as Kohn argues, assist in clarifying and debating current divergent approaches to protecting and revitalizing public space. "Some commentators call for more civility and vigorous enforcement of community norms…" says Kohn, while others "…take the opposite tack, arguing that the vitality of public space comes from its diversity, heterogeneity, and even its disruptive quality" (p.3). The interview data, though, suggest public support for the mobilisation of both concepts of community and public in policy, the former for its normative associations with belonging and trust, and the latter for its emphasis on citizenship and common ownership. This discussion connects with wider issues about local authority policy and performance and resident-council interface that are discussed in chapter 8.

7.5 Conclusion

If the management of public open space serves as a proxy for local authority performance, as suggested above, the management task has become increasingly complex through new demands of urban development and ecological stewardship. Local authorities are both committed to upgrading the service standards and amenity of public open space, and at risk of losing their sovereignty over the spatial configuration of suburbs to a combination of aggressive property development, and state-level planning policy and administrative law. Local authorities find themselves in the conflicted position – at least in the minds of some residents – of a sector of government that has responsibility but not necessarily sole authority for the 'local'.

As both the historical record and the interview data from Moonee Valley indicate, local residents care deeply about public open space, as ratepayers seeking amenity and service, and as owners of a public resource seeking accountable

public management. Public open space holds complex values that call for attention not only to the terms of its use but, increasingly, over its preservation and contribution to wider social and physical ecologies. Controversy over public open space indicates that local authorities need to make a strong case for the disposal of land to find majority resident support. It would be reading too much into the evidence presented in this chapter to call up Castell's (1983) claim that the defence of space is the foundation of urban political movements. Rather, MMBW's more modest suggestion, cited above, that local authorities should not dispose of public open space without providing equivalent service and amenity levels elsewhere seems a useful minimal condition to adopt. The analysis offered in this chapter suggests that current policy settings for the management of public open space may give insufficient recognition to its public realm dimension. Local residents are not simply consumers of a scarce resource, albeit a public good whose provision and use is to be optimised. They are members of a body politic with powerfully held views on the ownership, use and management of a public commons. They are also community members whose civic interactions often take place in public open space. As the *Don't Bowl Us Over* episode indicates, their views on public open space as part of the public realm provide an empirical grounding and resource for policy-makers and managers.

The fieldwork analysis of this thesis has identified ways of understanding and evaluating the social value of three classes of local authority facilities, through historical analysis, review of critical literature, and discussion of data from resident interviews. The following chapter summarises the discussion of social value, and looks at policy and operational implications that the analysis raises.

8. Bringing in the Public – Reframing the Renewal Challenge

8.1 Introduction

This chapter examines policy and operational implications of managing community facilities for long-term social value. The chapter makes a case for reframing policy to emphasise community facilities as physical and social assets. Viewed historically, as this thesis has shown, this is a conventional perspective - facilities have in the past been well recognised for their utilitarian and community-building aspects. However, such a perspective requires restatement as both the physical stock of community facilities ages and the appeal of new public management moderates, and new policy interests in regeneration, partnerships and local governance signal an emergent post-competitive, post-bureaucratic public management context.

The chapter is structured around a discussion of Moore's (1994; 1995) concept of public value as a way of framing the objectives and accountabilities of public sector work that is, it is argued, especially applicable to the local government environment. Infrastructure analysts discussed in chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis put a case for viewing the first decades of the twenty-first century in terms of a 'renewal challenge'. Discussion in these chapters points to the convergence of causal factors that support this analysis – the life-cycle of post-World War 2 infrastructure, public disinvestment, poor asset and property management processes, and wider rationalisation and amalgamation policies applied to the Victorian local government sector. This thesis has critiqued the emphasis on financial and service efficiencies in Victorian state infrastructure policy developed in response to this challenge. It has been argued in this thesis that a narrative of political misjudgement and administrative mismanagement, while containing a kernel of truth, principally serves a disciplinary purpose, offering little in the way of a framework for evaluating complex and often competing objectives of public

infrastructure provision typical of the task of public management (Kanter and Summers 1994:222).

Although a better understanding of the social value of community facilities is important for achieving social policy objectives in fields such as social cohesion, well-being and civic engagement, it is argued that refinement and application of a social value metric to facility performance will not of itself achieve these objectives. A more effective response requires attention to the structural and institutional settings of community facility management that have been identified in this thesis. Evidence of the substantial contribution of past state and Commonwealth policy to an emerging infrastructure 'problem', the financial pressures on local authorities exerted by downward cost-shifting, the declining popularity of debt financing, and the discounting of public good aspects of community facilities associated with a shift to user-pays principles suggest the importance of understanding the policy history of this area and the significance of structural factors. However, as the Moonee Valley resident interview data (which this chapter discusses in detail) indicate, resident support for investment in community facilities is qualified by concerns about the efficiency of local authorities and trust in processes and outcomes of infrastructure renewal. The interview data contribute to an understanding of the composite roles and identity of local residents and the different perspectives from which they assess facility value and local authority performance that influence their support of policy. Finally, questions of the operational capacity of local authorities are brought into critical view. Do local administrations have the organisational frameworks, expertise and dispositions to optimise the social value of community infrastructure? Is the 'renewal challenge' also concerned with the renewal of governance models, organisational alignments and knowledge? These are institutional factors that require careful attention to obtain resident participation and consent, promote accountability and administrative effectiveness, and optimise social outcomes.

Chapter Structure

Building on the discussion of current infrastructure policy and analysis of the social value of community facilities contained in earlier chapters, this chapter focuses on Moore's public value "strategic triangle", or what he identifies as three interdependent elements of effective public management – the production of substantive value, political and legal support, and administrative capability. The applicability of the strategic triangle to the local government sector has been recognized by several UK analysts (Goss 2001; Blaug, Horner et al. 2006; Stoker 2006), but no major studies of Australian local government have taken a critical interest in the concept. Section **8.2** examines Moore's work, and commentary on it, and shows its relevance to some of the strategic dilemmas that confront community facilities in Victoria and elsewhere. The three points of Moore's triangle effectively summarise three central policy questions surrounding community facility planning and management that have been identified in this study: value, financial sustainability, and governance. The significance of each of these concepts is examined in detail in subsequent sections. Section **8.3** summarises the interview data to re-state the case for social value as a substantive outcome of community facilities. This section identifies the priorities articulated by residents from the menu of social value outcomes in the heuristic model in chapter 3. Section **8.4** looks at the authorising environment of community facilities, in terms of political legitimacy and allocative processes. Formal authority has two dimensions at local government – conferred by residents through electoral processes and agreement of elected representatives to local authority budgets, and granted by higher governments through statutory and policy frameworks. This section looks at resident perceptions of local authority performance to show a degree of scepticism of communitarian policy rhetoric and community-driven decision-making, yet concern over the council's responsiveness and knowledge of local circumstances. This discussion concludes with a call for more formal recognition of previous community contributions to facility provision and management, as a way of reconciling this

tension. This section also examines inter-jurisdictional relationships through questions of public finance, especially as they relate to the funding of public goods. Current critical analysis and policy discussion, it is argued, draws on classical public finance theory to critique cost-shifting and the drift to user-pays principles. This section argues for the benefits of re-positioning community facilities, or expanding perceptions of their activities from transaction-driven (the service exchange between providers and clients) to a focus on the higher value social outcomes sought by all levels of government that result from facility provision and use. The final section of the chapter, **8.5,** returns to an observation that has been made at several points in this thesis – the hybrid nature of community facilities – to analyse the concept of hybridity and its application in local government policy. This section argues for the re-conceptualisation of asset, to recognise the mutually supportive relationship between physical and social assets, the latter understood as the knowledge, skills and social networks that exist in local communities. This section also argues that the long-term social value of local facilities can be enhanced by re-conceptualising them as hybrid institutions – neither fully public nor fully private, but adaptable organisations able to deal with challenges of change management and sustainability that are central to the renewal challenge. This section argues for a broadening of the current focus of sustainability to include institutional factors, especially the skills and structures required to operate successfully in a governance mode.

8.2 Managing for Public Value

Concern to bring coherence to two decades of discontinuous public sector reform has brought critical interest in the Australian application of public value as a new paradigm of public management (Smith 2004; O'Flynn 2007). The concept has its most authoritative and contentious exposition in the work of Mark H Moore (Moore 1994; 1995). Moore's key idea is that public agencies should be more responsive to both individual and collective aspirations. Value, he argues, "is rooted in the desires and perceptions of individuals – not necessarily in physical

transformations, and not in abstractions called societies" (p.52). Moore observes that "things produced by public organizations…are (more or less imperfect) reflections of the desires that citizens express through the institutions of representative government". These are the central concerns of public managers. Moore argues that citizens' desires take two forms:

> One type concerns collective things that are individually desired and consumed but cannot be provided through market mechanisms because the product cannot be divided up and sold to individual consumers. A second type involves political aspirations that attach to aggregate social conditions such as a proper distribution of rights and responsibilities between public and private organizations, a fair distribution of economic opportunities or social obligations, and a suitable desire to economize on the use of tax monies invested in public sector organizations. (p.52-3)

Moore argues that the value of public enterprises is judged against citizens' expectations of efficiency and effectiveness as well as justice and fairness. Public managers create value by public sector production – the provision of services and programs – and the establishment and effective operation of public institutions. Moore uses a private sector analogy to make this point: private enterprises produce goods and services that customers will buy at a price that returns a sustainable profit, and the enterprises must convince shareholders and creditors of their ongoing capacity to produce valuable products (pp.53-4). He argues that citizens (as opposed to clients and beneficiaries) 'buy' accounts or stories of public enterprise in the form of policies – the public equivalent of a company prospectus – thus authorising the allocation of taxation revenue.

> If public managers are to create value over the long run, then, an important part of their job consists of strengthening the policies that are sold to their authorizers. Specifically, the policies that guide an organisation's activities must reflect the proper interests and concerns of the citizens and their representatives; the story about the value to be produced must be rooted in accurate reasoning and real experience; and the real operating experience of the organization must be available to the political overseers through the development of appropriate accounting systems that measure the performance and costs of the organization's performance. (p.55)

Considerable attention has been given to Moore's contention that public enterprises must tell and sell their story to the authorisers of public expenditure. Smith (2004) argues that the concept of public value unites disparate reform goals to improve the responsiveness and quality of public services, and the participation of citizens in allocative processes. Smith points to the uptake of public value as a normative description of government in the United Kingdom, whilst noting its relative neglect in Australia. To Smith's catalogue can be added recent application of the concept in the arts and culture sector (Jowell 2004; Moore and Moore 2005) and the wider not-for-profit sector (Moore 2003) - areas that have lacked traction in allocative arguments and sought ways to convey the intrinsic value of their activities.

Lynn (2006:27) locates Moore's work within a "craft" perspective developed by US public management scholars from the 1970s. For Lynn, the replacement of the term administration with management signalled the intention of these scholars to shift the perspective of public officials from a custodial to a strategic approach. Moore's statement that public management is concerned with "conceiving and implementing public policies that realize the potential of a given political and institutional setting" (cited in Lynn, p.27) is an apt description of the craft of public management, and Moore's typical use of case-studies, often drawn from his students' experience as public sector managers, an example of the "actor-focussed" orientation of the American craft literature (Lynn p.27). Lynn places the craft perspective in the wider context of American constitutional arrangements, jurisprudence, and tradition of administrative pragmatism:

> These institutions tend to highlight the importance accorded to public managers as individuals in their own right rather than as the embodiment of the state as an instrument of the popular will. Further, these institutions reinforce the importance of the individual case and its precedential value…more than the deductive formality of *Rechtsstaat* regimes [Weberian bureaucracies typified by Germany and France] or the unifying conventions of Westminster regimes. (Lynn p.28)

Thus, summarising Lynn's argument, criticism of the American craft school as an embodiment of 'reinvented government' has focussed on its lack of attention to institutionalised values, countered in turn by accusations of the anti-democratic values of empowered bureaucrats. Additionally, analysts writing within the 'reinvented government' mode have been criticised for a reliance on market-normative models of public provision, assuming that the unit of critical analysis is the individual and the transaction, rather than the system as a whole (Lynn 2006:130). Moore's response to this criticism is the development of a "strategic triangle", or three tests of the purpose and sustainability of public agencies:

- public value (does it produce things of value to clients, overseers and beneficiaries?)
- political and legal support (will it attract authority and money from the political authorising environment to which it is accountable?)
- administrative and operational feasibility (can valuable, authorised activities be accomplished by the organisation and others that contribute to that organisation's goal?) (adapted from Moore 1995:71).

Local government scholars and administrators beyond the United State have found the concept of public value useful in critiquing corporatist approaches to local service delivery (Goss 2001) and explaining the objectives and operating principles of networked governance (Stoker 2006). While Rhodes and Wanna (2007) suggest the content and application of public value are inconsistent, O'Flynn (2007) seeks to clarify its core normative and operational objectives. The former, outlined in an influential study prepared for the UK Cabinet Office in 2002 identifies three core public value aspirations: fairness and equity in the distribution of public services, the achievement of higher order aspirations (such as security, health or poverty reduction) through public services, and the building of trust, legitimacy and confidence in government (O'Flynn, p.359). Stoker's more empirically-focussed analysis associates public value with a rejection of standard

market failure justifications for government activity, a commitment to consultation and collaboration, a new pragmatism in service delivery, and experimentation with networks and adaptation (O'Flynn, p.359).

Moore's work provides a useful way to construct an infrastructure management model that moves beyond simple public/private or citizen/consumer binaries and their reliance on a single and static relationship. As chapter 2 indicated, much critical analysis of NPM in Anglophone countries has been predicated on market-normative models (purchaser/provider, service provider/consumer, agency/client and so on) that are not easily maintained in the composite service and community-oriented local government sector. The Moonee Valley interview data stress the importance of recognising a similarly composite character of local residents and the multiple perspectives with which they judge local authority actions: as ratepayers, service consumers, citizens, members of place, interest and identity communities, members of a public. This insight corresponds with recent UK-based research aimed at understanding the limits of the "citizen-consumer" who is a centrepiece of the (UK) Blair Labor administrative reform (Clarke, Newman et al. 2007), and research in the infrastructure field that examines the role of citizen-consumers in the management of infrastructure provision formerly organised along 'top-down', universalist and mass consumption principles (van Vliet, Chappells et al. 2005) [245]. Each of these studies argues for a more dynamic and complex relationship between citizens and governments in the areas of infrastructure and service provision. Models of co-provision, once a centrepiece of community facility policy, are receiving renewed attention.

The following sections of this chapter outline the implications of locating community facility management within a public value framework. The discussion cites several case-study examples, from Moonee Valley and beyond, to give

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[245] Examples are electricity co-generation through domestic solar energy plants and consumer compliance with water restrictions.

empirical support to the arguments. The diversity of the local government sector cautions against assumptions of the universal relevance of the examples, but they illuminate key policy and operational aspects of the renewal challenge.

8.3   Social Value as Substantive Value

This section returns to the resident interview data to locate social value as a substantively valuable outcome of community facilities. Chapter 3 of this thesis proposed a heuristic model of the social value of community facilities consisting of the following elements:

- civic engagement
- identity and sense of place
- diversity
- publicness
- social connectedness
- sustainability
- well-being

Chapters 5 to 7 of this thesis provided evidence of broad agreement in the research and policy literature, and amongst residents, of the instrumental role of community facilities in encouraging social outcomes. The Moonee Valley interview data give general support for the proposition that community facilities provide social value beyond their formal service provision, with four of the above criteria dominant. The first was the physical and psychological well-being that comes from the use and existence values of public open space. The degree of participation in physical recreation, especially walking, and consciousness of health maintenance by interviewees is described in earlier chapters. The existential quality of public open space for some residents is captured in the following statement:

People need space to feel some sort of freedom. (R7)

The variation of public open space was also significant, instanced in the value placed by some urban dwellers on comparatively wild places such as Afton Park or natural systems such as the Maribyrnong River. The resident focus on public open space taps deeper concerns about preferred suburban configurations and loss of local sovereignty in this policy area. Environmentally-based arguments for urban consolidation are perceived by some residents as spurious when faced with lack of compensatory action, such as the provision of additional public transport services. Additionally, the distinctions between private and public open space tend to dissolve when residents appraise the value of suburbs dominated by detached housing in terms of aesthetics, environmental benefits (obtained, for example, by private tree plantings and 'soft' landscaping), and the flexible uses offered by a mixture of privacy and security, on the one hand, and access to larger public spaces on the other. The removal of public open space in the face of urban consolidation processes, public property entrepreneurship or political deal-making is, on the basis of the historical evidence and the primary research undertaken for this thesis, incipiently controversial.

The second dominant social value was social connectedness. Facility types appear from the data to vary in their promotion of social connectedness. Both programmed recreation services, such as swimming or gymnasium classes, and the personal recreational use of public space were perceived to promote social capital, evidenced in recognition of other people engaging in similar activities, and the trust, affirmation and greater feeling of personal security this produced. The example of walking dogs, especially in off-lead parks, in promoting social recognition and occasional social exchanges is particularly apt. Facility use, in this regard, can be understood as promoting relatively large numbers of 'weak' social and inter-personal links that for Szreter (2002) characterises communities with high social capital. The physical configuration of recreation facilities also featured as an environmental variable of social behaviour. In this regard, the

garden aspect of the Queen's Park outdoor seasonal pool encouraged a blend of recreational and social behaviours, whereas the more program oriented and physically constrained AVSFC was not viewed in this light. A contrasting perspective on the social instrumentality of facilities is offered by the use of meeting rooms. A number of interviewees, and representatives of social groups contacted outside the formal interview sample, pointed to their reliance on the availability of public meeting facilities for the functioning of their group. In two cases, these groups were formed to support new parents and recently bereaved people – groups with a propensity for social isolation. Social connectedness was, then, the primary purpose of the group, and several stories of the difficulty of finding available and suitable facilities suggested the requirement for more co-ordinated council responses to matching social groups and meeting places.

The third dominant social value ascribed to community facilities by interviewed residents was their contribution to identity and a sense of place. Most interviewees rejected the notion of a Moonee Valley community but gave evidence of stronger identity formation at more localised levels. Extrapolating from interviewee data, civic buildings and places make important functional, aesthetic and symbolic contributions to neighbourhoods or localities. One of the grounds made out against the closure of the Queen's Park pool by the interviewee and member of SQPP discussed in chapter 7 was that it had "always been there", part of her social and spatial memory. This is a deceptively simple rendering of a complex sentiment. In this instance, the pool did not only represent a service, nor a physical landmark or Achibaldian 'memory anchor'. The pool also represented local government as an institution, with qualities of permanence and trust made visible and concrete in the pool structure and enacted by the council-employed pool attendants. This discussion should not be understood as an endorsement of reflexive opposition to change, but to signal the dimensions with which the loss of physical services or facilities can be perceived.

The fourth dominant social value ascribed to community facilities by interviewed residents was publicness – the equity objectives of community facilities and their encouragement of inter-subjective contact. Most interviewees endorsed the proposition that use of community facilities should be both reasonably priced (where a fee is charged) and widely accessible. While the data suggest broad support of reasonable user charges for recreation facilities, one concern of residents is that renewal will bring higher user charges and differentiated terms of access [246]. A number of interviewees expressed concern about a perceived widening of the socio-economic spectrum and hardening social divisions, arguing for the significance of community facilities where people meet as equals. Taken together, these two observations chime with elaborations of the concept of 'top' and 'bottom' social exclusion (Giddens 2000:105), the capacity of the wealthy to purchase parallel services in a private market on one hand, and the disenfranchisement of the lowest socio-economic stratum on the other.

This summary of resident interviews clarifies the social value model described above and gives some indication of local resident prioritisation of its constituent elements. The interview data, it is argued, give strong resident support for the proposition that these outcomes produced by community facilities are 'things of value' in Moore's terms. What are the terms in which authority is given for this activity? This question is examined in the following section

8.4   The Authorising Environment

A second point of Moore's triangle relates to the political and legal context in which authority is given for the production of public value. This has two dimensions at local authority level, which structure this discussion. The first is the resident-council interface, understood here in formal terms as electoral

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[246] Higher use charges and introduction of differentiated access through memberships prompted vigorous protest action that marred the otherwise successful 2004 redevelopment of the Warrnambool seasonal pool through the addition of an indoor pool, gymnasium and program room. Pers. comm, Russell Lineham, Executive Manager, Recreation and Cultural Services, Warrnambool City Council, 12 January 2006.

processes and approval of policy direction and annual budgets by elected representatives. The second dimension is the interface between local authorities and higher governments, most directly the state government.

The Visible is Accountable - Local Residents on Local Government Politics and Performance

Moore's emphasis on securing the authority, through consent and funding, to sustain publicly valuable activities has, as this thesis demonstrates, been a particular concern for local authorities with regard to community facilities. Divergent views on the value of community facilities have encouraged both open debate and backroom manoeuvres to achieve preferred futures for facilities and public assets. The interview data suggest a high level of vigilance of local residents around facility and service provision, especially public open space, supporting Jan Bruce and Associates et al's (2002:31) view that the condition of facilities (in this case, public open space) is used as a proxy measure for local authority performance. The visible is accountable, at least for some local residents. Some interviewees commented that the overall condition and appearance of parks and public open space in Moonee Valley had improved over the past few years, a comment that broadly reflects trends in the annual survey of residents conducted by the Victorian government [247]. Alternatively, some residents of the northern and southern ends of the municipality suggested their neighbourhoods are neglected in different ways, compared to the middle suburbs, placing this sentiment within a wider scepticism about a shared Moonee Valley identity. This point connects with a concern expressed by several interviewees that the local authority has paid insufficient attention to local knowledge in developing facility maintenance or renewal regimes. On the basis of the interview data, some residents' perceptions of the use, condition and

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[247] Department of Victorian Communities: *Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey – State-wide Research Results Summary*, May 2006, p.1. However, reporting of the survey results (responses are aggregated into a category of "excellent, good and adequate") suggests caution in using this source.

constraints of facilities is substantial. This may come from original involvement in facility acquisition and/or a long-term association (Kenny 2005). The interview data, though, suggest a degree of information assymetry between local residents and the local authority. Some local residents consider that the local authority does not have sufficient access or due regard for local-level knowledge, while wider allocative processes, statutory requirements and planning rationales may not be well understood at community level.

> The council is disengaged. (R1)
> They never get back to you. (R10)
> Consultation is thin. (R17)
> Where does [consultation] go? (R27)

The equation of visibility and accountability holds some dangers, such as discounting the significance of administrative actions or policy work that takes place away from public view. Alternatively, this thesis has cited several examples where the legitimacy or de-facto ownership associated with community contributions to facilities has been overlooked in decisions over facility futures.

More subtle challenges are highlighted by the diachronic aspects of public property entrepreneurship and local volunteer commitment. For example, over the past few years the Moonee Valley council has attempted to broker an extensive property deal in North Melbourne, including the sale of land, to assist with the replacement of the North Melbourne community centre, inherited in poor condition from the City of Melbourne in 1993 [248]. The deal involves the closure and sale of an aged person's centre built with community contributions and named in honour of a local community worker. The community worker, now in her 80s, continues to volunteer at the centre. The proposed sale may be an appropriate way to upgrade current facilities, but it would be prudent to acknowledge such community commitment in the change process.

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[248] "Land Sale to fund $1.65m centre", *Moonee Valley Leader*, 16 February 2004, p.16.

Concerns over a different form of visibility were articulated by residents in relation to formal electoral processes. The interviews were held in the first few months after the November, 2005 local government elections. A number of interviewees were highly critical of candidates and electoral processes. Lack of knowledge of local candidates, 'dummy' candidates organized to secure voting preferences, and the subordination of local interests to the concerns of party headquarters were highlighted.

> The 2005 election made me ropeable. Compulsory voting for candidates we know nothing about. (R4)
> Local councillors are visible but not available (R5).

Several interviewees advocated the removal of party influence from local politics, preferring a corporate relationship between government and citizen.

> The City of Moonee Valley is a business, every resident is a shareholder. (R29)
> Local government is no place for party politics – run it like a business. (R30)

The service orientation of local authorities was particularly suited to such a model, asserted several interviewees. Uniting divergent views in this area was a significant consensus over efforts to achieve administrative efficiencies and economy, particularly through the use of out-sourcing for local service provision. While some interviewees were cautious about the loss of a care ethic and welfare role of public employees, most supported outsourcing to obtain specialist expertise, yield cost savings and introduce innovation. However, there was a similar level of consensus over opposition to asset sales. The core sentiment expressed on this topic was that asset sales are directed to bolster a short-term bottom line, but retention of public assets has long-term benefit.

> Money disappears, the asset can benefit many people, assets belong to the people. (R2)
> Privatisation can look good on the books, but we need to take a long-term view (R11)
> Are you selling the Crown Jewels to make the bottom line look good? (R24)

Several interviewees qualified an agnostic view on asset sales by stating that public open space should not be disposed of, further supporting the controversial nature of this facility class.

Seeking Consent – Rate Payment and "Good Projects"

Authorisation is engaged, in Moore's terms, when citizens "buy" a policy prospectus through, inter alia, the approval of local budgets. There has been a lively debate about whether property rates are set at a level that realistically reflects current service provision and positions local authorities for a sustainable future. Residential rates are the largest single source of revenue for the local government sector, currently comprising around 37% of total revenue (Johnson 2003:51). Rates are subject to micro- and macro-level influences. Ratepayer resistance is encouraged by the extractive nature of payment (that is, rates are paid in the form of an account rather than pay-as-you-go taxation), populist electoral campaigns against rate increases, and a poor reputation of councils as efficient managers. Revenue potential may be also constrained by state government 'pegging' of increases. Johnson (2003:52) points to a self-serving aspect of rate pegging – state governments, he argues, have acted to exploit such arrangements by increasing state taxes, especially in the area of land tax, a revenue source that is traditionally part of the local government tax base. Crase and Dollery (2005) argue that the reluctance of local authorities to impose a sustainable rating level, together with the impact of cost-shifting, has led to an increasing reliance on user-pays service provision and an imbalance in funding contributions derived from personal service consumption (rates) and wider public good aspects (general taxation) of community facilities. Sansom (2006) has observed that property rates in Australia have grown less than land tax and property values, little more than the consumer price index, and only in Western Australia and Victoria have they grown faster than gross domestic product over the past decade. Residential rates are, he observes, lower than many other household bills, and by world standards the burden of rates in Australia is not

particularly heavy. The level and form of local government revenue sources have been discussed by many Australian commentators, with suggestions for betterment taxes on unearned increases in land value, a more diversified rate base, and wider options for rates payment canvassed (Troy 1996).

The sensitivity of local residents to the physical condition of the public realm and their demand for quality services seems at odds with the above discussion on rate trends. In the terms of Moore's analysis, citizen-authorisers appear reluctant to endorse rating levels to enable sustainability. The no- or low-rate increase is a popular campaign theme in local government election campaigns and in recent years has been set against the backdrop of cuts in the rate of income and company taxation collected by the Commonwealth government [249]. Major capital works or facility upgrades can also act as a lightning rod for such campaigns. Criticising aspects of the 2006-07 Moonee Valley budget, the deputy mayor, whose north-western ward contains a relatively high number of retirees and who campaigned in the November 2006 election against increasing property rates, commented that 4% of a proposed 6% rise in annual property rates would go to service the loan for the AVSFC upgrade [250].

What do the data from the Moonee Valley interviews reveal on this point? In overview, the interview sample was divided on the current level and trajectory of property rates. Interviewees currently in the workforce, especially younger parents, expressed a higher degree of satisfaction with rate levels and value for money. Retirees expressed concern over rate increases, particularly in areas where property values have risen significantly in recent years. Rate increases signalled for older interviewees with adult children problems associated with unaffordable housing, specifically the diminished likelihood of their children

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[249] Perhaps the most prominent example of such a campaign is Melbourne Mayor John So's pledge in the 2004 Melbourne City Council elections to keep rate increases below increases in the Consumer Price Index. A consultancy report in 2006 on MCC finances argued that, on the basis of current expenditure, the council would be "broke" in a decade. The MCC chief executive responded to the report with the immediate retrenchment of twelve executives with more than 100 staff expected to lose their jobs in 2006. (*The Age*, 31 May 2007, p.2)
[250] Cr Vince Andricciola, Executive Council Meeting, Moonee Valley City Council, 6 June 2006.

buying a house near them. However, there was a high level of congruence within the interview sample on the use of debt financing as an appropriate instrument to renew or develop facilities. This was imagined by a number of interviewees in terms of the management of household debt – necessary for large capital purchases, but requiring prudent oversight to ensure other obligations continued to be met. Several interviewees, none with a specialist background in public finance, spoke about the use of debt financing as a vehicle through which future users of facilities would contribute to capital costs. The depth of understanding of public finance matters by some interviewees challenges an assumption that local residents may be unable to make informed judgements on infrastructure issues, or view local authority expenditure solely in 'homevoter' terms.

Informed consent involves dialogue, even if in minimal form. Enthusiasm for citizen consultation in decision-making at local level, beyond formal democratic processes, has waxed and waned in Australia (Munro-Clark 1991; Cuthill 2001). The devolution of strategic planning functions in Victoria from state to local level in the 1970s saw the gradual development of neighbourhood-based and service-based planning (Logan 1986). The profile of community-based cultural planning, which has conventionally placed greater emphasis on participatory processes, has grown over the past fifteen years, and is now mandated by the New South Wales government for local authorities in that state. Alternatively, the focus on economic efficiency and market logic that dominated public administration in Victoria in the 1990s saw forced municipal amalgamations, suspension of local democratic processes, and a general retreat of community participation and integrated planning in favour of more strategic forms of consultation emblematic of neo-liberal governance. In 1999, introduction by the Bracks government of a "best value" regime at local authority level signalled the adoption of a more consultative approach to local authority service provision. As in the United Kingdom, the hasty mobilisation of this concept found many local authorities ill-prepared for implementation (Entwhistle and Laffin 2005), and its association with concepts of service reinforced what is described in chapter 2 as a clientalist

relationship of residents with their local authority. Asset and property areas of local government have generally not engaged in more broadly-based community consultation, perceived as the domain of social policy or of land-use planning. Additionally, as chapter 2 observes, the dominance of networked infrastructure such as roads and utilities in public asset portfolios has contributed to a persistent view of the technical and operational focus of this field that is beyond the grasp of local residents.

While Birch's (2002) extensive survey of consultation trends at local authority level in the United Kingdom has no Australian equivalent, a search of Victorian council websites provides ample evidence of new interest in discursive and deliberative forms of consultation – web-based, neighbourhood meeting, citizen panels and so on. A large international literature explores the limits of deliberative or participatory processes, measured against liberal democratic requirements (for example see Meadowcroft 2001). Zwart (2003) questions the capacity of such processes to transform individual preferences to wider expressions of public interest. Nonetheless, participation processes that meet tests of citizenship are broadly endorsed as vehicles that encourage greater engagement with governance processes and enhanced responsiveness of public agencies (Alford 2002a). Theoretical models for strengthening participation draw on a range of interpretations of human behaviour, but recent analysis which blends individualistic and collective motivations (Alford 2002a; Alford 2002b; Simmons and Burchall 2005) is consistent with the subjective modelling of local residents developed in this thesis.

The interview data in this area suggest that commitment to community consultation is welcomed, especially at local or neighbourhood level, and in face-to-face mode. Some interviewees asserted that extremes of community governance and top-down government should be moderated by expert facilitation of community meetings and formal requirements for council responses and

information provision to individual residents. A number of interviewees discussed their concerns about 'decibel' democracy at community-level consultation.

> I want to know what their agenda is. (R4)
> The same people turn up all the time. (R10)
> Decision-making should be slightly better than a referendum but not a free-for-all. (R26)

The analytical problem, then, is not simply one of expanding sources of legitimacy, but of understanding competing forms of legitimacy and the relationship of established forms of power on its mobilisation. Does this analysis offer any clues to the disposition of local residents to authorise infrastructure expenditure? Despite emphasis in the asset management literature on service-level consultation, there are few available Australian-based examples on consultative or participative processes directly associated with local authority infrastructure expenditure (outside election campaigns). However, analysis of public opinion polling on taxpayer preferences offers some insights to opinion trends on public expenditure that may assist in framing more localised understandings and strategies. Analyses of two decades of polling concludes that from the mid-1990s taxpayer preference for reduction in overall taxation burdens, a dominant view expressed in opinion polling since the early 1980s, was overtaken by support for additional government expenditure on social services (Wilson and Breusch 2003; Grant 2004). This shift is evident in other OECD countries, argue Wilson and Breusch (p.39), notwithstanding an elite consensus for small government. However, these studies point to the significance of connecting taxation and service outcomes in gaining taxpayer approval, challenging conventional arguments that governments are likely to encounter less resistance to higher taxation if they mask those increases through the "fiscal illusion" of indirect taxation (Dollery and Worthington 1999).

A further qualification of the above discussion of relevance for local authorities is the equivocal information on whether taxpayers are more willing to fund utilitarian over non-utilitarian goods. Public opinion polling by the New South Wales

government in 1993 suggested this was the case [251], while Withers et al (1993) found that taxpayers were willing to weigh up the merits of public expenditure and endorse funding for "good projects". Grant's (2004:16) data show a drop in support between 1992 and 2000 for spending on the arts, and increased support over the same period for spending on health and hospitals, roads and education. This suggests that closer attention to Crompton's argument (examined in chapter 7) for 're-positioning' community facilities, or articulating their higher-level outcomes. Social value outcomes in areas such as well-being, connectedness and social cohesion, for example, have a demonstrated capacity to reduce public expenditure on more expensive interventions in justice and health care. In this regard, the case for conceptualising community facilities as social assets, as framed by D B Copland in 1947 (see chapter 4) merits reconsideration.

An interesting, but isolated example of direct consultation on the funding of local government services and facilities in response to concerns over infrastructure decline and wider fiscal sustainability is offered by a 2002 campaign for a rate increase by the City of Glen Eira, an inner-south Melbourne municipality. This campaign shows evidence that discussion of the financial position of local authorities and its impact on local facilities can be readily comprehended by local residents. The City of Glen Eira has a representative range of public recreational, cultural, educational and civic assets, with cyclical renewal challenges (seasonal pools), compliance upgrades (child-care facilities), maintenance tasks (especially drainage in low-lying areas) and rationalisation programs (duplicate works depots) that are typical of older municipalities enlarged by later amalgamation. The City of Caulfield, the original 'core' municipality, was a comparatively low-rating and efficient council which reduced its rates by 9% in 1993 in an unsuccessful effort to thwart amalgamation plans of the Kennett government. Obliged to shoulder the burden of a further across-the-board rate reduction and rate caps legislated by the Kennett government, the new amalgamated

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[251] Reark Research: *Public Attitude Towards the State Budget*, August 1993, prepared for the New South Wales government, copy provided to the author by Percy Allen, former Head of Cabinet Office, New South Wales Government.

municipality calculated that its rates were 22% below those of comparable councils in a period of sharply rising property values. The Council supplemented its finances for a time through the sale of surplus assets and cost containment, but could make no provision for facility capital works or maintenance. In 2002 the Council released a lengthy and cogent discussion paper on the sustainable funding of infrastructure assets (Glen Eira City Council 2002). Following a round of consultations, local residents agreed to a substantial (17%) property rate increase to fund local infrastructure. The campaign took place against local-level political instability (the elected council was dismissed by the Victorian government in 2005 for misconduct, see (Whelan 2005)) and a wider public policy environment favouring tax cuts and reductions in public outlays. Trust in administrative leadership (perhaps encouraged by the poor performance of the elected representatives), open communication and positive local media coverage were significant factors in achieving this outcome [252]. The discussion paper is sensitive to local resident subjectivity, neatly drawing together arguments for the community-building role of public places with a Tiebout-style appeal to the basket of goods provided by local authorities:

> Quality of life in this community depends to a large extent on shared assets and public places...We need to strike a balance between the safety and sustainability of our public places and the amount that we are prepared to pay…(p.2)

> If Council said to you: "You keep your $668 – but you provide our own roads, your own footpaths, your own 200,000 book library service, your own senior citizen centres, you immunise our children, you check the safety of food shops, you take waste to recycling companies or the tip, you tend the parks, you provide maternal and child health for 400 babies a week, you deliver home care to 3,000 people, provide meals to 400 people, you operate 50 school crossings every morning and afternoon, you light the streets and fund the Fire Brigade" you would say "But I could not do any of that for $13 per week!". And you would be right. It is because we share our resources – come together as a Community – that we make all this possible. (p.20)

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[252] Pers comm, Andrew Newton, Chief Executive Officer, Glen Eira City Council, 22 Nov 2005

The campaign can be seen as an effective instance of social marketing, a technique developed half a century ago which used the then novel technique of mass marketing for the promotion of policy messages (Wiebe 1952). However, the limited public discussion of infrastructure issues at local authority level – the level of government putatively closest to 'the community' - is noteworthy. The desire for expert or rational planning of community facilities can be contrasted with perceptions of government as a process of 'muddling through' or 'satisficing', where path-dependency, limited information, and dominance by the powerful or articulate produce sub-optimal results. However, the prospect of rapid social and economic change ensuing from transition to a carbon-constrained economy may require new combinations of technocratic and community planning that question current assumptions about efficiency and service aggregation.

Public Goods and Public Finance

The argument that local authorities must live within their resources, as advanced by state governments, has merit as a principle of sound public management and, as Moonee Valley interview series suggests, is broadly supported by residents. However, in its current talismanic form, this argument can deflect critical scrutiny of the basis on which public goods are funded, and whether the renewal challenge requires new and innovative funding forms or, alternatively, a more precise application of established public finance principles.

As a prominent advocate for more investment in local-level infrastructure the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) has relied on public good and cost-shifting arguments in its campaign for the allocation of a minimum 1% of general taxation revenue to the local government sector. Citing evidence produced for the Hawker 'cost-shifting' report and a commissioned review on local government finances (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2006) ALGA has argued that new regulatory burdens and withdrawal of support by higher governments have imposed costs on local authorities that should be met from central revenue

sources. The cost of human and facility compliance with disability access and child protection legislation is a frequently cited example. The effective withdrawal of support is most apparent in the human services area, where local authority expenditure growth has been driven by rising property costs, de-institutionalisation, an ageing population and stringent state and federal provision in areas such as migrant settlement services, social security and community health (see Appendix A for expenditure trends in Essendon/Moonee Valley).

Concerns about local authority financial sustainability are shared by state and local governments. In 2007 Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) consultations with local authorities across the state identified financial sustainability as the principal sectoral concern [253]. MAV's viability index, a composite analysis of income, debt and infrastructure renewal statistics, suggests that 10% of local authorities are operating in financially unsustainable conditions (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2006:3). Studies of local authority sustainability undertaken in three other states indicate the percentage of unsustainable councils in Western Australia and Queensland, though, is significantly higher than in Victoria. A meta-analysis conducted for ALGA argues that the single consultant engaged for these studies relied on a formula that overstated the financial difficulties of the local government sector. At issue was the consultant's exclusion of capital grants, which PricewaterhouseCoopers (2006:6) viewed as "an ongoing and important revenue source". The history of facility funding provided in this thesis supports the PricewaterhouseCoopers argument: capital grants, either matched or unconditional, have contributed in significant part to financing local level infrastructure, and thus played a part in shaping the contours of local authority finances. The exclusion of capital grants when assessing local authority sustainability masks the nature and degree of higher government intervention in local authority infrastructure matters. This logic has two outcomes: it discounts the public good aspect of facilities and the conventional public finance wisdom that such externalities are paid out of central taxation revenue;

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[253] Municipal Association of Victoria: Strategic Work Plan 2007-08, pp 1-5.

and it supports a pattern of downward cost-shifting by implying that local authorities are solely responsible for the condition of local finances. The penalty imposed on local authorities by such a logic is magnified by two structural factors: vertical fiscal imbalance (the disproportionate amount of taxation revenue raised by the Commonwealth and, to a lesser extent, state government), and the relatively high proportion of non-financial assets (that is, physical properties) that comprise the total asset pool of the local government sector. If the provision of community facilities has a public good component that extends beyond private service consumption and municipal boundaries, and the evidence provided in earlier chapters suggests it has, there is a strongly arguable case for at least some of that component to be paid for by those governments with access to central taxation revenue. In effect, the funding of public goods and the promotion of horizontal equity within the local government sector is pursued through fiscal transfer arrangements of the Victorian Grants Commission. ALGA's view, though, is that the complex financial formulae used to calculate grants have been overtaken by the cumulative impact of downward cost-shifting (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2006).

Beyond this standard public finance framework, with its reliance on welfare economics and the re-positioning of community facilities to emphasise their higher level outcomes, examined in chapter 7, a second argument, developed in chapter 6, can be advanced that locates community facilities within an innovation economic model. This model stresses the reliance of innovation and creativity on social networks and the physical (and virtual) environments that sustain them. These arguments connect aspects of nineteenth century liberal thought on the person-forming role of civic institutions with neo-liberal theorisation of social markets (the reliance of markets on surrounding social institutions, see Gamble 2006), underscoring both the endurance and currency of this ensemble of ideas. Significantly, each of these outlooks calls for funding to be viewed in terms of investment, an attitude that governments have, with the unpopularity of debt-financing and favouring of public-private partnerships or private finance initiatives

(Osborne 2000; Hodge 2004; Hodge and Greve 2005), largely abandoned as a rationale to the private sector. There is much analytical work to be done in order shift the focus away from local authority management and connect the disparate policy strands in this field.

8.5 Beyond Public/Private – Hybridity, Governance and Sustainability

The third point of Moore's triangle concerns administrative and operational feasibility, or the capability of public organisations and institutions to effectively undertake valuable, authorised activities. In recent years, the most significant institutional factor bearing on this dimension of public work at local government level is a re-orientation of philosophical and operational logics from government to governance.

The shift from government to governance - Goss (2001:1) accepts this as practice rather than theory – adds complexity to the tasks of securing legitimacy and organising administrative actions. Goss observes that the concept of governance expands the sources of legitimacy beyond democratic legitimacy to include expert and citizen knowledge, role-centred legitimacy (such as the authority of public officials), and legitimacy derived from community leadership or pressure groups:

> The emergence of relationships of governance makes it clearer that we are in an era of
> multiple legitimacies, all of which are relevant and important, and therefore effective
> governance requires both that all actors are able to recognise the legitimacy of other
> actors, and that they are able to negotiate shared legitimacy on a continual basis. (p.23)

Critics of local-level governance point to the continued importance of vertical structures in local governance environments, evidence of both a reluctance to cede power, sometimes hard-won, and as a strategy for channelling and negotiating the multiple inputs to decision-making processes (Geddes 2003; Diamond 2004). New policy emphasis on partnerships and community co-

production brings lengthening chains of delegation and more complex processes of accountability and coordination, which Lynn (2006:178) sees as a "significant vulnerability" of public management reform. Controversy over the extent to which governments have obtained value-for-money and effectively transferred risk in the privatisation of public enterprises, most notably public transport, has added to accountability concerns.

In Victoria, the policy injunction for good financial housekeeping by local authorities has made little concession to the 'messiness' of partnership arrangements (Lowndes cited in Goss 2001:4) and the costs to administrative efficiency of patching together funding sources, maintaining dialogue and goal convergence, and ensuring service continuity and equity. As discussion of the field research noted at a number of points, the management of community facilities has been an area where 'governance' has long been practiced, for utilitarian and instrumental purposes. This history suggests that emphasis on the government-governance vector overlooks changes over time to the concept of governance itself. The change from club-based administration of single-use facilities to broader, less proprietorial participation in facility decision-making through processes such as surveys, consultation and participatory planning is evident in the Moonee Valley region and elsewhere. This change is not uniform, with facility type and the size and location of the local authority contingent factors. However, governance arrangements for community facilities have, as earlier chapters have demonstrated, been sensitive to policy changes in areas such as risk management, equity and access, funding, and competition. While the concept of public property entrepreneurship has been used throughout this thesis to characterise recent policy settings in which local government physical assets are managed, public entrepreneurship in its wider form is a quality much admired by Moore and other advocates of the USAmerican tradition of 'reinvented government' (see for example, Osborne and Gaebler 1993:18-20). The history of local institutions in Australia suggests that public entrepreneurship was a much

earlier 'invention' that might be critically appraised for lessons on survival and sustainability.

Linear Policy and Hybridity

One way to consider the merits of local entrepreneurship is to look at the linear or path dependent character of community facility policy, especially in its rationalist mode. The re-instatement of community facilities once a decision to close or dispose has been enacted is rare. Scarcely a handful of examples in Melbourne over the past decade can be identified, including two pools (Fitzroy and North Melbourne) and one high school (Fitzroy). This step is qualitatively different to decisions to re-model facilities, which focus on issues of change management, discussed below. State and local authorities are skilled at interrogating demographic data and undertaking service needs analysis to predict future demand for community services. There has been less demonstrated capacity or commitment to imagine flexible ways to use facilities that retain them in service and public hands through demographic cycles. This is especially the case for local schools, which remain the outstanding example of local facility under-utilisation and inter-jurisdictional incompatibility. As evidenced in chapter 4, the history of community facilities points to the fluid boundaries between the categories of public, civic and private, giving a contingent character to debates over public entrepreneurship. What has been seen as evidence of poor forward planning and budgeting by local authorities can in another light be understood as a commitment to co-provision and a balancing of financial risk with the benefits of community engagement. Following this line of argument, while the dominant interpretation of local authority asset and facility management has focused on lack of budget and strategic planning, an alternative view might find in this field early combinations of entrepreneurship and governance. Notwithstanding objections that the erosion of the public/private distinction has the effect of positioning the public sector as an incomplete version of its private counterpart (du Gay 2000), both the tradition of community facility funding and management,

and the continued force of policy ideas sourced from new public management, calls for a new way of theorizing or modelling community facility management, to moderate a neo-liberal policy focus on economic efficiency with emphasis on the positive aspects of liberal governance. This would then permit greater attention to questions of ownership and ethics, and the skills and resources required to effectively manage facilities in a governance mode.

Schuster's (1998) study of the funding and management of cultural institutions develops the concept of hybridity to look beyond public/private distinctions that seem incapable of explaining institutional arrangements similar to those outlined above. Hybrid organisations operate in the expanding zone between fully public and fully private models, resonating with the concept of public entrepreneurship. Schuster models the concept of hybridity as a spectrum, reflecting the diverse range of institutional responses to declining public funding from government sources and the influences of public choice theory on organisational structures and outputs. The concept of hybridity has been used by Goss (2001:esp Chap 4) to chart changes to governance structures over the past two decades at local authority level in the UK. However, there is no apparent interest by Australian-focused scholars in this subject, despite the long Australian history of such institutional arrangements.

Schuster's approach to hybridity is generally critical. No fan of public choice theory, it is clear his preference falls towards increased subsidy for public institutions rather than compulsion, either directly as policy mandate or indirectly by cutting budget outlays, to seek own-source revenue. While this thesis has argued for a closer consideration of public good aspects of community facilities and the matrix of funding responsibility this entails, the days when public institutions were largely or fully funded by governments out of public interest or public good considerations are not only 'gone' for the foreseeable future (barring a successful assault on neo-liberalism), at local authority level they had not necessarily 'arrived' in the first place. The concept of hybridity, seen for example

in local fund-raising endeavours and community management committees, is both empirically accurate and conceptually supple as a governance model for community facilities. This is an arena where scale generally precludes the formalities of public/private partnerships, and institutional survival requires adaptation and changing service and management alignments. The model endorses entrepreneurial and vernacular approaches to facility funding and changes in their use to respond to the challenge of institutional sustainability.

To support the promise of adaptability offered by the concept of hybridity requires a strong underpinning framework that deals with concepts of ownership, equity and rights. The increasing use of contracts to define user responsibilities has not been matched with similar attention to equity or rights that flow from volunteer contributions to facilities, especially to their construction. The example of the local share financing of the 1st Moonee Ponds scout hall, discussed in chapter 4, seems anachronistic, but the formality of such an approach has much to recommend it. Objections might be raised against the increasingly contractarian nature of citizen-local authority relationship. However, this thesis has provided evidence of conflict and lack of trust arising from a lack of formal documentation regarding facility construction, where an earlier social contract between residents and the council has subsequently broken down or been overlooked. It also seems contradictory for the contract to be recommended as the principle instrument for the management of local heritage places, but not for community assets. Closer attention to documentation and formal recognition can also assist with the successful management of change. This is discussed below.

Managing Change

Change is a major theme in current community facility policy and practice, impelled by local budget, regulatory and physical life-cycle factors, as well as state-level regeneration policy. The history of resident involvement with specific facilities and current emphasis on governance points to ethical and policy

requirements to consult effectively on facility change. However, consultation has not always, perhaps not often yielded optimum physical, service or financial solutions. Where change is compelled by safety or environmental laws, or because facilities are unable to reasonably meet public value tests of equity or accessibility, attention to democratic decision-making may recede in favour of change management. The significance of change management receives little written-down recognition in local infrastructure policies, perhaps from fear of resident backlash, although there is no evidence that open discussion necessarily hardens into political conflict and intransigence in the absence of other critical factors such as lack of trust.

By contrast, an example of the productive outcomes of sound change management is the successful redevelopment of the Vasey Park community hall and kindergarten in outer suburban Melbourne suburb of Lalor. The facility, located in a suburban park, was built in the late 1940s by residents of the then new suburb, many with young children. After fifty years or so of service as a meeting place, function room and kindergarten, the facility began to fail compliance standards, particularly in the children's services area. The original structure was of limited architectural, aesthetic or scientific value, to engage three principal categories of significance used in the assessment of heritage places (Pearson and Sullivan 1995:16ff). Its social and cultural value, as a civic project in a region with a strong co-operative tradition, and as a community and educational resource, was acknowledged by the local council to be high. The council was anxious to upgrade the structure but equally sensitive to the history of the site and the real and symbolic equity of the now ageing 'pioneers'. Council staff, too, were concerned that the former and current users of the kindergarten had limited contact with each other, indicative of changing social and demographic structures of the suburb. When the structure was built, the kindergarten played a secondary role to the social environment of the hall. In the intervening years, the professionalisation of pre-school education and a more exacting regulatory climate effectively reversed this order, and planning for the

new facility focused on the kindergarten function. The 'pioneer' residents were involved in the facility planning process, which sought to accommodate the earlier tradition of a neighbourhood community centre with new requirements for pre-school education, and which brought together former and current facility users. An agreement between the 'owners' of the original building and the council set out the formal terms under which control was transferred to the council. A plaque at the new facility recognised the history of the site and the community contribution (see plate 9). The process, with its mixture of symbolic and substantive actions, was overseen by the council manager of children's services. Locally-raised, her knowledge of the facility's history and the surrounding community was initially co-incidental. Notwithstanding her evident managerial skill, this knowledge became a key project resource and was perceived by local residents as indicating the council's commitment to the process and attention to the local context. The process has become a model for further regeneration projects by that council [254].

Reframing Assets

The example of the Vasey Park Pre-school redevelopment yields further analytical value if examined from an asset-based perspective which has been articulated in community development and planning literature (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993; Lerner and Benson 2003; Arefi 2004). The concept of asset-based development informs community and capacity-building policy, an especially vigorous policy discussion in Victoria, although the lineage of this concept is obscured. A brief sketch is given below, to contextualise and support an argument for a re-conceptualisation of the concept of 'asset' in local administration.

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[254] This section is based on discussions with Mary Agostino, Director, Childrens Services, City of Whittlesea, documents associated with the Vasey Park pre-school redevelopment, and site inspection.

Plate 9: Vasey Park, Lalor hall and kindergarten c.1949 and replacement. The plaque bordering the path records the history of community involvement in the original facility. (top image courtesy Mary Agostino, City of Whittlesea)

The connection between the social and physical assets of neighbourhoods is articulated by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), in a work that serves as a foundation text for the asset-based community development (ABCD) movement. Kretzmann and McKnight argue that "deficiency-oriented" policies and programs sanction expert interventions and create welfare-dependent neighbourhoods ("environments of service"), where residents use their creativity and resources to negotiate or bypass welfare systems. Data produced by the needs surveys of human service agencies and problem-oriented approaches by social scientists produce a "needs map", internalised by residents and projected to the world in the form of overwhelmingly negative stereotypes. Kretzmann and McKnight argue:

> [c]reative neighbourhood leaders across the country…are discovering that wherever there are effective community development efforts, those efforts are based upon an understanding, or map, of the community's assets, capacities and abilities. For it is clear that even the poorest neighbourhood is a place where individuals and organizations represent resources upon which to build. The key to neighbourhood regeneration, then, is to locate all of the available local assets, to begin connecting them with one another in ways that multiply their power and effectiveness, and to being harnessing those local institutions that are not yet available for local development purposes. (pp.3-4).

Kretzmann and McKnight argue for an asset map, charting individual skills, civic associations and institutions. The latter include community facilities as defined in this thesis, along with private businesses and social service agencies. They are, argue Kretzmann and McKnight,

> the most visible and formal part of a community's fabric. Accounting for them in full, and enlisting them in the process of community development, is essential to the success of the project. For community builders, the process of mapping the institutional assets of the community will often be much simpler than that of making an inventory involving individuals and associations. But, establishing within each institution a sense of responsibility for the health of the local community, along with mechanisms that allow communities to influence and even control some aspects of the institution's relationships with its local neighbourhood, can prove much more difficult. Nevertheless, a community

> that has located and mobilized its entire base of assets will clearly feature heavily
> involved and invested local institutions. (p.4)

Kretzmann and McKnight's reliance on negative stereotypes to make the case for their alternative view ("[n]o one can doubt that most American cities are deeply troubled places" (p.1)), locates ABCD within a long US sociological tradition concerned with urban disorder, focussed particularly around race and poverty, that has had limited direct impact on Australian research and policy action. However, ABCD has attracted recent interest in Victoria. In 2006 the Municipal Association of Victoria gauged the interest of local authorities in undertaking ABCD training, provided out of Kretzmann and McKnight's academic base of Northeastern University. The concept of asset mapping can be seen in a current research project to collate and analyse information on social and physical infrastructure – including community groups as well as community facilities - in select postcode areas [255]. In 2006 the Ministerial Advisory Committee for Victorian Communities (2006:136) recommended local audits of community infrastructure assets, as a basis for policy determination in regeneration, use and governance. Kretzmann and McKnight's concept of asset mapping is synthetic – echoing Lynch's (1960) concept of cognitive mapping and the emphasis of USAmerican cultural planners on the physical public realm – but their work is a significant argument for recognising the intermediation of the social and physical in the public realm.

A second argument for the reconceptualisation of local assets that engages directly with the field of physical services, infrastructure management and city planning is offered by Arefi (2004). Influenced, like Kretzmann and McKnight, by the work of development economist Amartya Sen, Arefi theorises that community assets have physical and social components, his formulation of the latter influenced by social capital theory. Arefi is critical of regeneration projects that

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[255] http://www.mav.asn.au/CA256C2B000B597A/ListMaker?ReadForm&1=55-Policy+&+Projects~&2=35-Economic+and+Community+Development~&3=10-Community+Building~&V=Listing~&K=TOC+Com+Build~&REFUNID=FB090B4894B5F965CA25729200393FA0~&Count=10~ , accessed 15 May 2007

promise to improve local physical environments but disrupt social networks through displacement of local populations, pointing to the physical determinism that underpins such endeavours. Arefi's empirical research on urban renewal identifies two criteria of successful regeneration activities: 1) cohesion (through the preservation and enhancement of social networks), and 2) interconnectedness (through local authority-citizen consultation and participation). This provides a generalised model for facility regeneration or development that can be usefully applied in Australia.

Governance and Facility Management

The case studies outlined above, with their inclusion of local residents in the authorising process, indicate a widening of decision-making co-ordinates at local level, where top-down government is supplemented by horizontal forms of governance. Changing outlooks on local governance raise significant policy and operational questions for community facility managers. The concept of governance is broad and in many ways ill-defined. Considine and Lewis (2005:206) argue that governance includes citizen participation, partnerships with government, private or third sector organisations, and local innovation. A number of local authorities in Victoria prefer the more limited term *engagement* to characterise their changing relationship with residents. Within this rubric, a tripartite distinction between information, consultation and participation (or close variants) suggests an emphasis on the resources required by councils and citizens at each level, and a new concern to manage citizen expectations.

Participation has been a long-standing feature of community facility management. Commonly, this has been formally structured through management committees appointed by local and state governments, particularly to oversee complex and contested sites such as parks and recreation reserves. Such mechanisms risk domination by the articulate, organised or well-connected. However they reinforce the position of community facilities within the public

sphere and mediate conflict over the use of public places, through formal agreement and informal trust-building processes of committee participation. Committee structures also serve an important if under-recognised educative function, in giving members experience in consultation, advocacy, debate and meeting procedures (Considine 2004).

While theoretical literature on governance has found a receptive audience amongst Australian academics and policy-makers (Smyth, Reddell et al. 2005), there has been little on-the-ground experimentation with administrative or governance structures for community facilities. The survival of the nineteenth century model of management committees is a testament to its adaptability, but there are no available studies that examine their democratic claims or administrative effectiveness. The 1980s saw some diversification with the development of public-choice style recreation vouchers by the South Barwon council in the Victorian regional city of Geelong, styled by Crompton (1983) as an exercise in "citizen participation". The Manningham Recreation Association (MRA) [256], a not-for-profit organisation was also established in the 1980s, and is worthy of closer attention. Influenced by community development principles, MRA now manages seven recreation facilities and community centres in outer-eastern Melbourne, with the local council and state department of education as its clients. Its board of management consists of elected residents and several nominees from the local authority. MRA's record as a facility manager providing services to both local and state government authorities is noteworthy. Over the years MRA board membership has provided a springboard for involvement in local council politics. MRA's success has been partly attributed to a stable relationship with and strong support of the local authority [257]. This contrasts with the views of other managers and community volunteers across a range of community organisations on the perceived complexity of institutional processes - an unstable mix of regulation and devolution - that underpin such initiatives. Staff changes at local

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[256] www.manninghamrecreation.com.au
[257] Cliff Wood, CEO, Manningham Recreation Association, pers comm, 28 February 2006.

authority level and lack of goal agreement between council and community organisations, onerous state-level regulatory regimes, concerns that governance roles were transforming into private-sector style directorships with regard to personal risk (especially financial and the consequences of employment decisions), and lack of time to properly undertake governance roles were common responses. One respondent who served a term on the management committee of a pre-school detailed the difficulty in finding her replacement, frankly admitting that she chose not to disclose the extent of the role to facilitate recruitment [258]. Other factors qualify this perception. The demographic profile of localities is an important influence on the extent and orientation of volunteering. The level and quality of organisational support is also a significant variable. The conclusion that can be drawn from this discussion is that a policy environment favouring co-provision models of community facility management must be equally attentive to the sustainability of community-level expertise and commitment as to the financial and service aspects of physical structures. As Jones (2000) observes, a commitment to community governance may require facility managers to develop new skills, in areas such as networking, relationship management and community consultation.

Moonee PONS? Rethinking Scale

Questions of scale connect competing theoretical and policy positions on local governance that alternatively give primacy to democratic, economic, planning or environmental interests. Goss (2001:27) has argued that the re-organisation of British local authorities into larger units has brought concerns that the scale of local government is "at the same time too small for strategic decision-making and too large for local engagement", resulting in the emergence of two additional levels of governance – regional and neighbourhood.

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[258] This section is based on discussions with the coordinator of a neighbourhood house in Moonee Valley and members of pre-school boards of management from two Melbourne municipalities.

Environmental concerns give additional significance to questions of scale. The weight of scientific evidence of human impact on global climate, and the increasing political profile of this subject in recent years, has exposed the restricted outlook of state and local governments on sustainability at local authority level. The efficacy of local interventions to counter global climate change, promote well-being, build social capital and prevent crime stands in tension with the drive to achieve economies of scale through local authority amalgamation, asset rationalisation, and facility enlargement. While the promotion of interdependent 'capitals' as an overarching policy framework is capable of registering the significance of this argument, attention to environmental impacts associated with community facilities have been generally concerned with regulatory compliance and facility performance. Emphasis on the efficiency of multi-purpose facilities routinely ignores negative 'externalities' such as increased car use, reduced local accessibility, loss of local heritage, and the loss of the local public realm.

Environmental management theory has informed new, if contested, views on the scale of local governance. In Australia, Brunckhorst has argued for the introduction of ecological criteria as a new determinant of local authority boundaries, in place of earlier criteria of place and interest communities, however rigorously these were applied (Barton; Brunckhorst, Coop et al. 2006; Brunckhorst and Reeve 2006). Arguments for the place of community facilities in promoting neighbourhood-level sustainability have been advocated by Barton (1997). The concept of integrated local planning, discussed in chapter 6, is exerting new influence, impelled by new legislative requirements for community consultation and policy interest in theories of co-provision and governance (for example see: Queensland Health 2001; Schools Resources Division and Strategic Planning Division 2005). The convergent interests of analysts, planners and administrators are neatly illustrated by the acronym PONS – People Oriented Neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood planning literature emphasises transport, service accessibility, aesthetics, personal health and community cohesion. The

more comprehensive PONS-based planning guides for new and regenerated neighbourhoods give attention to both 'hard' and 'soft' infrastructure. While the master planning focus of this literature specifies community facility provision, accompanied by arguments for the well-being and social capital benefits of such provision, it pays little attention to the detail of facility planning. Grant and Barton (2002) are among few commentators who inform neighbourhood planning with analysis of trends in facility planning:

> The general long-term pattern of decline of local facilities – caused by falling population densities as well as consumer choice and car use – is matched by increasing unit size of facilities. The result is longer trips and poorer local accessibility. In some outlying estates and rural settlements this trend has effectively disenfranchised whole sections of the population who do not possess individual mobility. It is therefore vital to have a clear and flexible strategy for reversing the trends and for taking best advantage of opportunities that present themselves. (p.97)

Grant and Barton emphasise the importance of flexibility and adaptability in land use planning and facility design and use to assist "future-proofing". This involves the generous provision of public open space, to enable opportunistic infill – the authors use the example of retrofitting tram tracks in a road centre. It also involves the physical adaptability of public buildings and co-operative use between tenants. The authors argue for a planning scale of 25 years – a period that is roughly congruent with the timeframes set by asset management policy - to adequately deal with inter-generational issues.

The UK context of Grant and Barton's work requires critical appraisal in the Australian context. Insofar as it is possible to identify an emergent Australian practice in this field, the area of flexible design and shared use is receiving increased attention, especially in the area of community use of school facilities (Lynn 2006). Chapter 4 of this thesis noted the persistence of schools, especially primary (elementary) schools, as referents in spatially-oriented definitions of the local, and sociologically-oriented notions of neighbourhood and community.

Chapter 7 detailed unsuccessful attempts of the Essendon council to develop agreements on the shared use of school outdoor space. Current Moonee Valley council engagement with local schools occurs around specific projects, such as the walking school bus, and formally agreed responsibilities such as the provision of road crossing guards, but there is little formal linkage in wider physical and service planning. It is deeply ironic, in the face of state government lectures over local-level facility acquisition and maintenance, local authority fiscal stress, local resident concerns over facilities and the efficiency of local authorities, and analysis of the significance of public places to well-being and social cohesion, to observe the limited attention that has thus far been given to the issue of school facility use in Victoria and Australia generally. Stripped of the ideological over-burden that has to this point favoured government-market and government-community alignments, attention to a different form of PPP – public-public or inter-jurisdictional partnerships – remains the most promising and least explored territory for hybridity and entrepreneurship to be applied to community facility provision and management.

8.6   Conclusion

This chapter has argued for a reframing of the 'return of scarcity' argument of local service demand management that underpins current Victorian government policy on local-level public infrastructure and has a dominant influence on how the social outcomes of community facilities are understood and prioritised in policy. Responding to Lynn's criticism of the more "hyperbolic" judgements of new public management as dismissive of its positive elements and local nuances, the chapter has argued that Moore's public value strategic triangle is a useful analytical model for understanding the social value objectives of public provision in the field of community facilities, and emphasising the significance of the authorising environment and administrative feasibility for the achievement of those objectives. The data from interviews with Moonee Valley residents discussed in the chapter suggest broad agreement over the social value of

community facilities and support for their funding from a mixture of public and private sources. The data suggest that residents are open to contracting out local authority service provision, while cautious about the loss of wider public service attributes that such moves may entail. However, the significant opposition to asset sales, especially the disposal of public land, elicited in the interviews suggests the development of a new perspective on public property entrepreneurship, favouring re-use where possible, and attention to change management strategies. The chapter suggests that consultation and trust are key principles that underpin the successful management of local infrastructure, and provides evidence of successful strategic outcomes built on these principles.

The cross-cutting nature of infrastructure renewal issues points to the limits of privileging community building as a rationale for community facilities.
The current policy focus on community is only one input to a wider assessment of the public value of facilities that is ultimately decided in the political arena. The current financial difficulties faced by many Victorian local authorities will not necessarily be remedied by rhetorical engagement with community. The Moonee Valley resident interviews indicated a range of views on the concept of community as a focus of local-level policy, from support, to caution, to outright scepticism. This scepticism appeared to be located in perceptions of a rhetorical rather than substantive use of the term in policy. For some interviewees, the notion of publicness – understood in both its physical sense as a commons and its political and sociological dimensions as a social aggregate – was seen as a more solid foundation for local-level policy than rhetorical appeals to community.

The chapter suggests that new attention to the concept of community facilities as social assets, counterpoising the current emphasis on their financial and service status, is required to bring the disparate elements associated with facility management and use, and community-focused social policy, into alignment. Victorian local authorities have substantially improved their knowledge of physical assets in recent years, pushed by the state government and professional

associations, and aided by advances in technical knowledge and data management. However, there appears to have been no systematic attempt to map cultural or social assets, beyond inventories of historic places. There are a range of reasons for this disparity, including the conventional focus of local government on physical services, the locus of power and resources in local administrations, functionally-aligned organisational structures, and the absence of policy leadership at higher government level. The conceptual and methodological difficulties that lie behind the mapping of social assets are significant. However, such a project may assist in augmenting the uneven information base that currently informs local authority assessment of the value of physical infrastructure, and its contribution to community strengthening.

9. Conclusion

This chapter summarises the main arguments and findings of this thesis. The central aim of this thesis has been to analyse the social value of community facilities, to inform policy in this field, and in the wider field of local infrastructure provision, in a period of dynamic change at local government level. This thesis is the first major Australian study of the historical, sociological and political dimensions of community facilities, indicative of a wider scholarly neglect of the local government sector, but also a neglect of the significance of facilities to social and civic life in Australia. Overlooked in scholarly discussion, their ordinariness also renders them invisible to some in the physical landscape. However the evidence presented in this thesis mounts a strong case for them to be imagined as our civic wetlands, places which sustain a rich and diverse social and public life. But like the ecology of the natural world, this environment needs careful stewardship in order for it to thrive and flourish over generations.

The thesis has discussed a current policy emphasis on the management of infrastructure assets, and its attendant focus on service, as exerting a strong influence on the conceptualisation and management of community facilities. According to conventional asset management theory, infrastructure assets are the long-lived replaceable components of larger infrastructure networks, and careful inventory processes and planning are required to ensure their management for service efficiency. The thesis has pointed to the significance of developments in local authority asset management, especially in a period in which many local authorities are experiencing the compounding effects of ageing infrastructure and fiscal stress. However, the thesis has argued that the emphasis of current policy on physical and financial aspects of asset management does not provide policy resources to assist local authorities to comprehend the significance or optimise the contribution of community facilities to social policy goals. Nor does it assist local authorities to engage local

communities in productive change management processes where existing facilities no longer meet regulatory or service needs.

Chapter one of the thesis observed that infrastructure asset management, with its emphasis on service life and long-term planning, gives considerable weight to time as a management analytic. This was contrasted with the limited attention in current policy to the historical contexts surrounding the provision of community facilities – that is, temporal factors that bear on these aspects of facility management have been largely overlooked. The thesis has sought to highlight the early objectives and processes through which community facilities were provided, the ways in which they were configured, and the changing contexts in which they have been analysed, especially in a period of vigorous public sector reform over the past two decades. Chapter one also argued for the analytical value of a case-study focus, to develop a fine-grained picture of the relationship between community facilities and civic and social life, and track the physical consequences of policy interventions. The case study focussed on the City of Moonee Valley in Melbourne, formed in 1994 from an amalgamation of four existing municipalities. In addition to the characteristic enlargement of the political and administrative unit of local government through amalgamation, Moonee Valley also shares features with other inner-city municipalities that give the analysis a wider application – a significant range of asset types and ages, varied urban forms (inner-city, suburban, industrial) a culturally diverse population, development pressure (especially for medium-density housing), and the impact of state-level infrastructure decisions, especially in transport.

Chapters one and two of the thesis set out the study context by outlining the growing awareness of infrastructure questions in recent public policy, as the consequences of public disinvestment and new risks and regulatory complexities arising from privatisation of utilities were highlighted by episodes of major networked infrastructure failure. This chapter outlined what it terms a fragmented policy environment surrounding local-level infrastructure, especially in Victoria as

the underlying philosophy of successive state governments moved along a continuum of neo-liberal governance, from the laissez-faire philosophy of the Kennett government (1992-1999) to the social market orientation of the Bracks government (1999-2007). The former oversaw a round of local authority amalgamations that was underpinned by a quest for economic efficiency. In addition to the achievement of wider rationalist goals through facility closures, the amalgamations highlighted the question of redundant civic assets. Building on earlier public sector accounting reforms and new national competition policy, Victorian state government policy attention was turned to the question of local government asset management. Chapter two located the rationalising impulse of the Kennett government within wider public sector management reform, particularly the development of public choice theory and its emphasis on service consumers. This, it was argued, provided a policy context within which the focus on the physical service provided by infrastructure assets could be neatly conflated with the consumption of services by citizen-clients. This chapter described the development of a 'return of scarcity' narrative that structured emergent local infrastructure policy. This holds that local authorities and their residents acquired, especially in the decades of suburban expansion after World War 2, a level of service through major infrastructure items such as seasonal pools, which can no longer be sustained. While such a proposition offered rich analytical possibilities (such as examining the impacts of national financial de-regulation, a widespread embrace of low tax-low debt government, and the rise of private consumption), the blame was principally attributed to undisciplined local politics and poor financial and administrative practices. The Bracks government sought to moderate its predecessor's emphasis on economic efficiency through engaging citizens in discussion over allocative choice and values, and expanding the civic or third sector role in public sector service delivery. However, the terms of the local government infrastructure management policy set by the Kennett government, informed by a 1998 consultancy report *Facing the Renewal Challenge*, were essentially embraced by the Bracks government. The new Department for Victorian Communities (its portfolio

responsibility for local government highlighting a renewed association in policy between local government and community) issued a series of local authority asset management policies from 2003 flowing from the consultancy report, and the reliance of new 'Best Value' consultation on satisfaction ratings showed little departure from the public choice logic of Kennett.

Chapter three set out arguments for renewed attention to the social value of community facilities, in a policy environment that makes increasing and indiscriminate use of the term 'value'. These arguments have policy, statutory and strategic components. The chapter noted the current statutory requirement of local authorities to consider the financial, environmental and social consequences of decisions; and argued that awareness of the social value of community facilities can shed light on the strategic and tactical considerations of local authorities in relation to regeneration and change management. This chapter analysed the development of evaluative frameworks, arguing against the possibility of a high degree of commensurability in public sector evaluation. Rather, it is the existence of complex and competing public policy objectives that stresses the value or choice role of evaluation. Notwithstanding this, the chapter tracked the rise of triple-bottom-line reporting and its deployment as a central policy narrative by the Bracks government. The 'social' component was then given extended analysis, through an outline of its conceptual lineage and a discussion of how it can be 'emplaced' in the physical setting of community facilities. Chapter three ended by summarising the analytical literature reviewed therein as a social value heuristic to assist the analysis contained in the field research in later chapters. The heuristic includes personal or individual characteristics (wellbeing, identity), environmental goals (sustainability), social objectives (connectedness), and civic or public aspirations (engagement, diversity, publicness). However, the chapter stressed the long-term nature of social value outcomes, arguing for a de-coupling of their evaluation from short-term electoral and budget cycles.

Chapter four introduced the fieldwork and site analysis component of the thesis with an analysis of the human geography and civic history of the Moonee Valley region. This chapter stressed change as a theme – in the physical configuration of the municipality, the diverse population structure, and the nature of community identity and civic engagement. The chapter showed that civic initiatives focussed on the construction of facilities, encouraged by public commentary on and policy support for the community building capacities of these actions and places. This chapter also outlined the significance of state and national government decisions on local-level provision, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century, as higher tiers of government directed housing, employment and migration policy, that required local-level physical and service responses. The chapter concluded with an analysis of a recent audit of the physical assets owned by the City of Moonee Valley, to outline the dimensions of the 'renewal challenge', but also emphasise the increasing attention to physical assets over what is conceptualised in the thesis as social assets.

Chapter five is the first of three chapters that focussed on particular classes of facilities, in this instance, the municipal swimming pool. An analysis of Australia's cultural and sporting affinity with the beach and aquatic recreation contextualised the rise of the swimming pool as an emblematic local facility. The history of municipal pools evidences a high level of state government policy influence or intervention in this field: the influence of the 1956 Olympic Games, advocacy of indoor leisure centres, support of rural pools in drought-stricken country towns. Less obvious is the impact of wider changes to the public sector policy environment that influenced local authorities to focus on pools as loss-making enterprises rather than subsidised public goods. This chapter focussed on the Queen's Park seasonal pool in the City of Moonee Valley to highlight this trajectory, and its influence on a decision by the council to close the facility. The chapter argued that a feature of public protest over attempts by several local authorities to close seasonal pools in the 1990s was a perceived lack of transparency of council decision-making, combined with resident concern over

leveraging and deal-making involving private sector organisations. The chapter predicted a bleak future for stand-alone seasonal pools, but the analysis points to the high social value of these structures and future political dilemmas they present. The chapter also highlighted the inconsistency of state government policy in this area, with its reliance on some local authorities to manage the political risk associated with the 2006 Commonwealth games running counter to its disciplinary infrastructure policy. The analysis of the Ascot Vale Sports and Fitness Centre acts as a counterpoint to the discussion of the Queen's Park pool in this chapter, with its contrast in infrastructure type and planning objectives. This section argued that the same council concern over subsidised public goods that almost brought the demise of the Queen's Park pool set a for-profit development course for AVSFC. Early plans for its development with community centre components, and the potential revival of that component in its 2006/07 redevelopment, were thwarted by its orientation to a recreation market. This section identified the dilemmas around the allocation of an insufficient capital works budget for such projects, and the price exacted in later political and financial costs of initial budget decisions.

Chapter six examined the issue of the redundancy of municipal buildings by analysing the conversion of a waste incinerator to an arts centre. As with AVSFC, the funding and priorities of the project were influenced by wider local and state government policy contexts, especially the use of municipal capital works projects to provide local employment. This project enables the development of heritage policy and cultural planning in Australia to be tracked, and analysed the influence of each on the Essendon and Moonee Valley councils. Heritage policy, overseen by statutory support at state level and a strong professional sector, was successfully integrated in the council's administrative and project work. Cultural planning, with wider ambitions to provide a unifying focus for council planning and community consultation, was unable to force reform in a climate favouring economic efficiency rather than local preference. This chapter argued that the heritage significance of the Incinerator Arts Centre building raises several

questions about the downward cost-shifting effects of state heritage policy, and the threat that escalating building costs may pose to resident support for an innovative project. The chapter discussed recent changes to Australian heritage policy that reinforce subsidiarity as a policy framework, and that argue for the replacement of a statutory management regime with a contractual one. It is argued that this is further evidence of an increasingly contractarian dimension to local authority-resident relations that is emblematic of neo-liberalism, but may also assist with identifying and assigning responsibility for future costs of the site. Sustainability is, the chapter argued, a key concern for cultural programs perceived as subsidised public goods, and this chapter put forward an argument for re-positioning IAC by highlighting its cultural, civic and economic attributes.

Chapter seven expanded the analysis from buildings to public open space, contrasting standard references to open space as 'undeveloped' with the high degree of policy intervention, user conflicts and political sensitivity associated with this facility. The chapter is framed around a dispute over the conversion of a bowling club site, notionally held in community trusteeship, to medium-density development; the concern about community as an organising logic of local administration was similarly reflected in resident interviews. This episode raised questions about the fragility of the normative concept of community as an institutional mechanism for resource allocation, and the complex relationship between public and private open space, public interest and private amenity. The chapter tracked municipal policy and use of public open space through a history of iconic Queen's Park, identifying alternative bouts of incremental change and centralised planning that have resulted in its current configuration. This chapter also analysed recent Moonee Valley policy on public open space to show the efficiency rationale behind a 'fewer, better parks' policy, and the expansion of management arrangements beyond a standard facility user-council alignment to include suburban and municipal-level consultation. A major point of discussion in this chapter was the use by residents of streets and footpaths for recreation and socialising, calling for a re-consideration of conventional conceptual and

management divisions between 'green' (parks) and 'grey' (streets) public open space, and between stand-alone facilities and infrastructure networks. New environmental and user demands on public open space are, this chapter noted, calling attention to opportunistic use of linear space and utility easements. However, as the resident interview data indicate, there is significant concern about personal security in this type of space, an issue that cuts across concerns of wellbeing, justice and infrastructure management. The chapter noted that public open space was nominated most frequently by residents interviewed as part of the thesis research for discussion. The empirical data from these discussions builds a convincing case for the social value of public open space, including personal well-being, social connectedness, environmental value and equity. However, many of the resident discussions of use and value of public open space were framed by a larger concern about its loss, and the loss of wider amenity through urban consolidation. As chapters two and seven note, the erosion of the service value of public open space through increased population density supports these more individualised concerns of residents, and poses a counter-argument to the 'return of scarcity' thesis that residents are choosing a service future they cannot maintain.

Each of the site-based chapters argued a case for the social value of the facilities they examined and the case for managing these facilities as places as well as services. Chapter eight looked at the policy and operational implications that arise from the analysis presented in earlier chapters, through a discussion of Mark H Moore's public value strategic triangle. Beginning with a re-statement of social value as a substantively valuable goal of facility planning and management, the chapter discussed two other points of Moore's strategic triangle – legitimacy and authority, and operational feasibility – necessary in Moore's view to achieve the 'public value' task that is set. A public value perspective locates this analysis within a post-bureaucratic, post-competitive public management paradigm, enabling important features of each earlier phase (the equity and fairness of the former; the efficiency and user-focus of the latter) to be

incorporated in a 'new' story of governance. A new story? The thesis argued that the history of community facility provision and use consistently foreshadows debates around the dynamics of public and private provision, the virtues and limitations of community as a social and political institution, the use of neo-liberal strategies of governance such as third sector involvement, and the long-held conviction of the social returns from investment in community facilities. Connecting this history with current policy concerns over local government sustainability, this chapter argued for three policy actions to promote the vitality and sustainability of community facilities. The first is recognition. Endorsing local community contributions through symbolic and substantive actions such as recognition, formal documentation, and trust-building are, it is argued, central to encourage commitment and, where necessary, implement effective change management. Instances where the real equity of community groups in facilities has been ignored by local and state authorities in closing or selling structures can amount to a form of silent theft (Bollier 2002). The thesis argues that it is ethically and strategically compromised to both seek a revival of community in local governance and deny the earlier forms it has taken. Alternatively, examples of imaginative and productive facility redevelopments and change processes deserve wider publicity. The second action is repositioning community facilities to emphasise their higher, public value outcomes, such as contribution to minimising expenditure by governments on more expensive policy interventions in justice and health. Additionally, new economic modelling that emphasises the importance of social networks, vibrant public spaces and a local vernacular for a creative or innovation economy can re-position community facilities from a subsidy to an investment perspective. The third action is to reconceptualise 'asset' to encompass both physical and social assets and examine the interplay between the two. The intermediation of the physical and the social is a minor interest in the more fashionable area of social capital, and virtually neglected by analysts of on-line communities. Asset management processes systematically inventory physical systems; much less emphasis has been placed on auditing

social networks, less still on thinking about how the physical and social together constitute a civic ecology.

This thesis has covered substantial conceptual and empirical ground in setting out an argument for greater attention to the social value of community facilities in current policy. As noted in chapter one, the research output in the physical management and economics of local-level infrastructure, despite concerns discussed in this thesis over its conceptual limitations, contrasts with the lack of attention from social researchers or public management analysts to the field. This thesis has attempted to bring together both social and historical analysis and a public management perspective to emphasise the significance of the inter-relationship. Above all, though, the thesis has attempted to instil a renewed regard for community facilities, those often neglected or underestimated places, as vital to a vibrant, democratic public realm, in a state and a nation whose forms and character have been substantially fashioned by public institutions.

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Analysis of ECC Expenditure and Income 1947-1992

Table 1: Percentage Increase (Decrease) in Expenditure Categories - Sample Years 1947-92

(Source: City of Essendon Annual Statements, City of Moonee Valley Annual Financial Statements 1947-92) [259]

	Admin	Health	Properties	Roads	Grants [260]	Debt Servicing
1947-82	884	686	343	330	382	416

	Admin	Laws & public safety	Education	Health	Welfare	Housing	Community amenities	Recreation & culture	Economic services	Capital Expenditure	Debt services
1984-92	39	84	(16)	90	154	(21)	124	104	130	158	44

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[259] Reporting categories changed in 1984.
[260] Refers to grants made by council to community organisations or donations to fund-raising projects such as the Essendon Hospital campaign. This category was also used for council contributions to superannuation liabilities, levies to the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and Country Fire Authority, and funding to support the regional library service.

Discussion

These data provide what appears to be the first longitudinal analysis of income and expenditure trends for ECC/MVCC. The conventional form taken by the council in its financial planning has been to focus on comparisons with the recent past, rather than longer-term analysis [261]. This discussion outlines methodological issues associated with gathering and analysis of these data, and identifies the significance of the data for this thesis.

Chapter One of this thesis discussed the difficulties of analysing long-term budget trends in the local government sector. This point is underscored by the change in reporting categories as indicated in table 1 and the lack of ready access to data for some years. Interpretation and use of the categories also shows some variation within reporting periods. The time period of the data was chosen because the period of approximately half a century from the end of World War 2 is a period of substantial community facility acquisition and the focus of Victorian government infrastructure analysis, and corresponds with the most complete set of available ECC/MVCC records. Thus, these data contextualise the state-level problematisation of local infrastructure, inter-governmental discussions of cost-shifting, and local-level infrastructure policy and expenditure patterns. The summary tables above, and the annual budget figures used to compile these, enable comment on three key issues that provide further empirical support for arguments developed in this thesis concerning council policy on community facilities, the use of debt, and the impact of cost shifting.

Council Policy on Community Facilities

The ECC's policy of supporting local organisation co-provision of infrastructure is most evident in the Grants category for the period 1947-1965. The council used this category to provide funds for local sporting and civic organisations, the Essendon Hospital appeal, and to support the establishment of a regional library service. On occasion, contributions to meeting the council's growing superannuation debt are included in this category. The data show a complex local civic and recreational economy that for much of the data series relied on notional financial transactions rather than the apportionment of real economic costs or capacity to pay. This appeared increasingly untenable as major sporting codes professionalised. For example the lease of recreation facilities to local clubs varied widely, sometimes with indefinite lease periods for, in the case of scouting organisations and the angling club, an annual fee of 10 cents. At the opposite end of

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[261] Ed Small, Director, Corporate Services, 28 June 2006.

institutional financial capacity, Essendon Football Club took out a 21 year lease of the Essendon Recreation Reserve for an annual fee of $10, and benefitted from ECC's guarantorship of a major loan [262].

Observations about the declining state of parks and built facilities, made by Kerley in 1988 and the Moonee Valley Commissioners in 1996 (cited in chapter 7) find some support in the data. Expenditure on properties, which included parks, showed the second-lowest increase (behind local roads) of any expenditure category between 1947 and 1982, with relative expenditure within this period falling markedly between 1966 and 1982. However, the reliance of the council on physical assets to meet social policy objectives is indicated by increases in the categories of recreation and community services, capital expenditure and debt servicing. The last category is discussed in further detail in the following section.

Income and Debt

The financial statements show a long-term decline of rates as a proportion of total council revenue from 71% in 1961 to 51% in 1989, confirming a trend observed by Dollery et al (2006:chap 2). While the data show an increased proportion of income from grants from higher level governments and the Victorian Grants Commission (VGC), MVCC's submission to the Hawker 'cost shifting' inquiry suggest that taxation transfers via the VGC have fallen as a proportion of transfers to the sector and as a proportion of government taxation revenue [263]. The data do not disclose specific details of changes to revenue from user-pays services.

The figures point to the council's reliance on debt as a finance instrument for new capital works, supplemented by increased opportunities for special purpose grants from the 1970s. A typical approach to capital works finance was for the council to establish a sinking fund or trust account several years prior to planned expenditure, transfer an annual portion of current revenue to the fund over successive years, and enter into a loan agreement (with banks or state government authorities) for the balance. By the late 1980s the Essendon council had entered into 75 separate loan agreements. The rising cost of debt financing in a de-regulatory environment and inflationary pressures, discussed in Chapter Two, is reflected in the pattern of loan agreements. Interest charged on loans rises from 3.5% in the early post-war years to

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[262] City of Essendon: *Annual Report for the Year Ending 30 September 1992*, pp. 64-7. Details of the Essendon Recreation Reserve lease are at City of Essendon: *Annual Report for the Year Ending 30 September 1993*, p. 26. The loan to EFC guaranteed by ECC had a balance of $2,840,000 in 1993.

[263] Moonee Valley City Council: *Cost Shifting to Local Government – Inquiry by the House of Representatives Economic Standing Committee: Submission*, 2002, p.18.

17.5% in 1984. This trend pushed up the cost of major facility constructions in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, the new Civic Centre constructed opposite Queen's Park in Moonee Ponds in 1974 was part financed by a loan of $100,000 at 8.9%. The development of the Ascot Vale public golf course in 1984 was financed by a $268,000 loan at 17.5%. Rising interest rates also meant an increasing cost for replacing existing capital items, seen in a loan of $385,000 at 17.5 % for the replacement of road plant in 1984. The cost of debt servicing appears to have peaked in 1989 at around 15% of total council revenue. In 1993, though, the Council's unfunded superannuation liability – not reported in debt servicing figures - was over $3,000,000.

Cost Shifting

The growth of expenditure in welfare categories, especially in the period 1982-1992, supports the arguments of the Hawker inquiry and ALGA on the cost-shifting effects of higher government policies in the last few decades of the twentieth century. Expenditure growth in this category reflects a broadening of service provision and dependency on physical infrastructure for delivery. For example, in 1969 the reporting category of Health (which was mainly concerned with municipal public health services such as inspection of food premises, pest control, and monitoring of communicable diseases) became Health and Welfare. By 1974 the category included dental services, elderly citizens programs, family planning, garbage, immunization, infant welfare, meals on wheels, home help (including domiciliary services for "retarded citizens", pre-natal clinic, pre-schools, play groups, social welfare advisory services, the salary for a community officer, and a contribution to the Western Region Council for Social Development. Welfare services continued to grow, including, in later years, services to meet the complex needs of migrants from humanitarian and refugee streams settling in the municipality.

Accompanying the expansion in service delivery, especially in welfare services, is a significant growth in administrative expenditure. Although there is no single causal link between the two, the increased provision of grants by higher level governments for the provision of welfare services increased the administrative burden on the council.

Community Facilities and Social Value - Interviews

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Introduction

Australian local government authorities provide around 80% of community facilities, such as local parks or environmental features, leisure centres, and cultural facilities. Many of these facilities were built or upgraded in the years of rapid population growth following the Second World War. Many are now ageing and need renewal, some may no longer cater for the needs of a more diverse, older population, and some do not meet current regulatory standards. While there has been considerable research into the financial and service aspects of community facilities, less is known about their social role. In what way do they contribute to community identity or the development of social networks, for example. What weight should be given to this role in decisions about the future of facilities? The interviews are intended to gather qualitative data on the use and value of community facilities.

Discussion Points

Facility use

Do you have or have you had any formal connection with a community facility or place (for example, are you a member of a Friends of…group, a volunteer or a staff member?). If so, please describe your involvement.

Which community facilities do you visit or use most frequently?

How would you describe your use of this/these facilities? (For example, to access services, for personal enjoyment or recreation, for social purposes, other uses, or a combination of uses.)

If your use of the facility/ies has a social purpose, please describe in more detail the nature of this use. How does the facility, as a physical place, contribute to this use?

How would you describe the value of these facilities? Or, put another way, what do you consider their benefits? Is there anything special or important about them? (You may wish to choose one facility to focus your answer.)

Would you say this value was mainly local, or do the facilities have a wider community value?

Do you think the facilities could be changed or improved? If so, in what ways?

Community Assets

Looking more broadly at your municipality, what do you consider to be your municipality's key public or community assets?

How would you describe the value of this/these assets?

Do you think there are public assets in the municipality that are unrecognised, under-valued or neglected?

What do you consider to be the negative aspects of your municipality's physical environment, if any?

Are there sectors of the community that are not well catered for through the provision of community facilities?

Funding and Operating Facilities

Do you think your local council spends too little/ about right/ too much on community facilities across the municipality? And in your neighbourhood?

Australian local governments have become increasingly concerned about their ability to fund the range of facilities, assets and services for which they are responsible. Local government revenue mostly comes from rates, user fees and charges, and grants from Federal and state governments. Do you think local governments should have more funding? If so, where do think funds should come from?

In the past two decades or so there has been considerable debate over what is loosely called privatisation. During this period local governments have looked increasingly to private contractors to provide services and operate facilities. Do you have any views or comments on this change?

Do you think there is a role for greater community involvement in the management of community facilities, or decision-making about their future? If so, how is this best achieved? What forms of community consultation, if any, should take place around future decision-making about facilities?

Wider Issues in Local Government

What were the major issues for you in the recent (2005) local government elections?

What are the key issues for your neighbourhood over the next 5-10 years?