

Making International Best Practice Work in Australian Communities: Visioning, Community Panels and Measuring Progress

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Abstract

There are many models around the world for engaging communities. Many are relevant to Australia, but few can be successful unless they are adapted to suit the Australian context.

Wyndham's Community Plan has been running for nine years. Wyndham's community visioning, its Household Panel and its Community Report Card are all based on a uniquely Australian governance model. Elements of Wyndham's program have attracted a national award and international attention. Comparison and support from international best practice models shows that community capacity building in Australia can — and must — build on the unique strengths of Australian communities. This requires some changes from what is considered 'best practice' overseas.

Now elements of the visioning, household panel and community report card are being adapted for use in Australia's regional and remote regions. Significant new challenges are emerging. Both challenges and successes will be covered in the presentation, which will focus on how to adapt 'best practice' models for use in Australian communities.

Introduction

I am a practitioner rather than an academic, and I will be speaking today about the lessons I have learned in adapting international best practice in community engagement to local Australian contexts.

I am also going to be speaking as a person working within government. After working for years with communities in Canada and Australia from within the non-government sector, or as a consultant, I have learned that government consultations provide a new set of challenges — and also a new set of opportunities.

My government experience has come in two Australian jurisdictions, and they could hardly be more different.

The local government of Wyndham, in Victoria, is an interface council. Interface councils deal with both rural and urban issues. At least 70 per cent of their land surface is rural, but most of their residents live within their urban pockets.

Governments in interface areas face special challenges, and Wyndham is no exception. Lying on the western shore of Port Phillip Bay, halfway between Geelong and Melbourne CBD, it has one of Australia's fastest population growth rates. Wyndham also contains remnant native grasslands, one of the longest undeveloped coastlines remaining on Port Phillip Bay, and one of the few rivers entering the bay. It has important market gardens; vegetables grown in Wyndham stock many Victorian supermarkets and also go to Asia. The local winery has won international awards. Wyndham contains a Technology Precinct, a special zoned industrial area and major tourist attractions. Its sewage treatment facilities have become part of its image and now present opportunities for water recycling.

Wyndham contains almost 115,000 people in its 542 square kilometres, and its population is expected to grow to approximately 165,000 over the next decade. Its major challenges include managing its growth and building the infrastructure it requires, protecting its unique environmental features in this period of rapid growth, making sure that there are local employment opportunities so that it does not become a 'bedroom suburb', and building social capital in an area where thousands of new strangers arrive each year.

In 2004 I moved from Wyndham to the Northern Territory where I work in the Community Engagement Division, which sits within the Chief Minister's department.

The Territory extends over one-sixth of Australia's land mass, but contains only 1 per cent of its population. There are local governments in Victoria with larger populations than the Territory. However, it must still conduct the same range of responsibilities for its citizens as the larger states, and it faces unique challenges in doing so.

There are urban centres within the Territory, such as Darwin and Alice Springs, but much of the Territory looks now as it has for thousands of years. The climate ranges from desert to tropical savannah with distinct wet and dry seasons. Climatic extremes, great distances and remote communities pose challenges for transport and communication infrastructure, and for delivering services.

The Territory has Australia's highest proportion of people speaking a language other than English at home. Unlike other areas of Australia, where European or Asian languages are more common, Indigenous Australian languages are most often found in the Territory. Approximately 30 per cent of the population is Aboriginal, many living in remote communities and leading relatively traditional lifestyles.

In contrast to Wyndham, which is struggling to manage its rapid growth, the Territory is seeking to increase its population, actively promoting itself as a place to live and work. Recruiting and retaining skilled workers is a serious issue in the Territory.

The two jurisdictions do share a few characteristics, and one is that both have made a commitment to more closely engage with their citizens. The Northern Territory has recently launched a new Community Engagement Framework. On the other hand, Wyndham has its Household Panel, Quality Community Plan and Community Report Card in addition to a wide range of more traditional community engagement techniques.

I have been involved with community engagement in both jurisdictions. I have used a wide range of methods — some home-grown and others adapted from overseas models. I am going to focus on three, which have the potential to add real value to standard 'community consultation' techniques, but also pose special challenges.

Traditional methods such as surveys and focus groups provide a snapshot of stakeholders' views on issues and are useful in informing policy and practice, but they do not necessarily demand a new way for government to conduct its business. The three techniques I am talking about today do demand a new approach from government, including a sustained commitment over time.

Community panels

There are many types of panels in the world. More popular in Europe than in Australia or North America, they exist in many different guises and under a wide variety of names. Some contain only randomly selected members; others solicit interested volunteers. Some focus on qualitative information, others on quantitative. Some meet only once; others go on for years. Some focus on a particular topic, e.g. service provision in a single hospital; others cover almost any topic you can imagine.

What they all have in common is that they require more time than traditional focus groups and surveys.

Typically, panels that meet only once engage in deliberative processes — often over a period of days — to problem solve, reach a consensus or simply to reach an informed view that can then be communicated back to decision-makers. One example is a community jury, where participants may also call on experts for special presentations, and challenge them as it forms its views.

On the other hand, some types of community panels rely on the non-deliberative, 'tip of the tongue' responses used in traditional surveys and focus groups. In such cases, community members are recruited to a panel where they can be repeatedly consulted over a period of months or years.

Panels of this type can offer substantial benefits. A panel enables guaranteed responses, short time loops and indicative information. Panel surveys may be over 30 per cent cheaper than a typical one-off random survey. If responses are managed through effective data mining of the panel database, the

cost of each response drops further, so that the information may be up to 90 per cent cheaper than random survey data.

A panel maintained over time also has the capacity to provide information that cannot be sourced from a series of random surveys. Informant codes allow us to cross-tabulate responses between surveys and identify linked patterns of response, in addition to tracking individuals' changing views over time, resulting in extraordinarily rich data.

In the late 1990s, when Wyndham began to consider establishing a community panel, there were a number of panels in the UK that consisted of willing volunteers. Wyndham had reservations about this, in view of the intended functions of the Household Panel.

Although Wyndham has a commitment to deliberative processes and to engaging with active community stakeholders, there are other local processes that address these needs, some of which I'll discuss. What Wyndham needed was a technique that would enable council to balance the views of actively engaged stakeholders (or 'squeaky wheels' as they are sometimes known) against the views of the population as a whole.

The council therefore took steps to ensure that the attitudes of the Household Panel reflected those of the municipality's residents as a whole. Two major random surveys were conducted, one mailed out and another conducted by telephone. Each had similar key questions, and each had the same final question.

"Some people don't like receiving surveys and feel that they get surveyed too often. Other people like the chance to offer their perspective. The council is setting up a panel of residents who are willing to do a short survey every few weeks — written or over the telephone. Would you be interested?"

Respondents willing to be surveyed on a regular basis were invited to join the panel. To ensure that the original panel was representative, for every question on the survey we analysed the responses of people who joined the panel and people who refused.

When the Household Panel became a key element of Wyndham City Council's core research program late in 1999, it consisted of over 300 Wyndham households who agreed to be surveyed every four to six weeks. Panel members — as a group — were within a one to three per cent range of non-panel responses for every question. Compared to other respondents, panel members were less likely to respond 'don't know' and had somewhat stronger views, but the relative proportion of positive and negative views mirrored the community's very closely.

To maintain its representative status, the panel has been retested over time against a large random sample to enable targeted recruiting. Each year a survey is distributed to panel members and to at least 1000 randomly selected members of the community. Survey questions deal with more than governance and service satisfaction, also addressing broader aspects of life in Wyndham, such as relationships with neighbours.

How has Wyndham used the panel? Panel members have provided responses on a wide range of topics in Wyndham, from substance abuse issues to shopping patterns, and from home-based business growth to satisfaction with council services.

In addition, the intention was for panel residents to do an annual 'life events' survey which would look at changes in their own lives over the year — in jobs and income, family structure, home ownership, community activities, etc. This would enable council to build up a longitudinal picture of life in Wyndham, focussing on social capital, family breakdown, and paths into and out of poverty. The potential for intensive tracking and predictive modelling is obvious, but as yet untapped, due partly to resourcing issues.

It takes significant resources to maintain a panel that is representative of the wider community — in attitudes as well as in socio-demographic factors such as age and ethnicity. It is much easier to solicit volunteers who wish to provide input.

One year, we decided to see if it was worth the effort required to maintain a representative panel. That year we prepared three survey formats for the Annual Community Survey, each with identical questions. One set was sent to panel members, as usual. One thousand were sent to randomly selected households, as usual. A third set, differing only in the colour of ink used, was placed in locations around the municipality, including libraries and council offices. People who wished to have a say were invited to fill out a survey.

The results, somewhat to our regret, convinced us that it was worthwhile to take the effort to maintain a representative panel. Surveys by self-selected respondents showed different patterns of responses from the randomly selected respondents. The panel responses were closer to the randomly selected respondents.

On the other hand, responses indicated some areas of bias compared to randomly selected respondents. Although Wyndham's Household Panel members were originally chosen to match community attitudes, the experience of being on the panel affected their responses. Over time, members became more positive about council, and also became more aware of local issues than the average resident. Some questions (e.g. awareness of the council's initiatives) now have to be avoided in panel consultations, and restricted to random sample surveys. Staff also found that measures which

reduced members' turnover, e.g. newsletters and making members feel 'special' for being on the panel, also made them less representative of the community as a whole.

Wyndham has been asked to set up panels in a number of other jurisdictions; Whitehorse City Council responded to this issue by having time-limited membership, with residents remaining on the panel for a maximum of two years. Wyndham has sought to address changing attitudes through targeted recruitment of new members to restore balance to the panel.

One of the greatest challenges for governments and panels is that models such as Wyndham's require a long-term commitment to maintain resources. With changing resources available to the Research Unit at Wyndham, a rationalisation of the panel has been required. It remains to be seen how these changes will affect the way the panel functions.

What about a panel in the Northern Territory?

At this point, in the Northern Territory, Wyndham's model of a representative, long term panel does not seem a viable method. If panels are to be used in the Northern Territory, they are likely to be temporary groups brought together for a limited time, a deliberative process on a specific issue, or set of related issues.

We are looking at examining such options in the near future, but need to be careful that we do not duplicate or vitiate the work of the many community committees, advisory councils, citizen forums, etc. that already meet regularly in the Territory and inform public policy and practice.

Community visioning

I mentioned that Wyndham already had processes for deliberative consultation with actively engaged stakeholders. Much of this is achieved through its commitment to community visioning, which has been a feature of community engagement at Wyndham for almost a decade, since 1996.

What is community visioning?

Community members come together, using a wide variety of consultation, information-sharing and future planning techniques to identify what sort of community they (or their children and grandchildren) would like to live in years or decades into the future, and identify the steps required to take them there.

One of the reasons that visioning works is that it is easier to agree about the distant future than about the near future. Many people will disagree about what actions should be taken tomorrow, or next week — but will agree about the kind of community they want to have in 20 years. Often the most successful outcomes occur when people envision their community at a 'safe' period in the future, beyond the reach of immediate interests and current turf battles. Once agreement on the desired end-point is

reached, the visioning process gradually extends the areas of common agreement backwards, eventually reaching the near future and then the present.

As with panels, there are many types of community visions. Depending on the jurisdiction, community visions can range from flowery statements of an ideal future to action plans with detailed project plans and timelines. Some have a five or ten-year timeline, others define targets for decades into the future.

In many cases, these visions challenge traditional community consultation approaches, which can be completed in a matter of weeks and implemented within a political term. If a vision is to be successfully implemented, it needs bipartisan (or multi-partisan) political support as well as strong community ownership.

This may be one of the reasons why local governments often sponsor community visions; elections at this level are less likely to result in wholesale changes. However, visioning has occurred at the state level (Tasmania Together) and at a national level (East Timor).

In Australia, although community visions are becoming more popular, they are still the exception rather than the rule. Their outcomes and development processes also differ from some well-regarded visions in other jurisdictions.

One possible reason has been identified by Steven Ames, a prominent futurist. Steven lives in the American state of Oregon, where visioning is particularly widespread, but he has worked with community visions in four countries — Canada, America, New Zealand and Australia.

Steven believes that America has more of a ‘grassroots’ participatory tradition than Australia. For example, there are few Australian equivalents to the American town hall meeting.

When I worked with Steven in Victoria, he was struck by the ‘corporate’ language used there. (Victorian local governments have CEOs and, until recently, legislatively mandated corporate plans.) These terms seemed natural to me when I worked in Wyndham, which has had an active community vision for almost a decade.

Almost 600 residents and local stakeholders worked together in 1996 and 1997 to produce *Our Vision of Wyndham in 2015 — the Quality Community Plan*.

Over 2000 residents, business operators and local stakeholders contributed to *Our Vision for Wyndham’s Future, 2002 updated version*.

The community plan, which now extends past 2020, contains 15 areas identified by the community as priorities for action, from ‘transport’ to ‘protecting the natural environment’ and ‘managing urban

growth'. Each contains a vision for the future, guiding principles, strategies to achieve the vision, milestone dates for achieving elements of it, and key performance indicators to track progress towards achievement.

This is not a vision that can be owned and led by council. For one thing, it includes areas for which local governments in Victoria have limited responsibility, such as education. Even more importantly, Wyndham's community vision — and the process in which it is developed and implemented — requires genuine community/government partnership.

In traditional paradigms, government provides a safety net for the community, providing services to those who need them with funds provided through the taxed contributions of the wider community. In this paradigm, community consultations are not uncommon, but respondents are often treated primarily as service consumers or clients, and questions tend to focus on service quality and changing requirements for service.

The new paradigm, as it is evolving at Wyndham, is much more of a partnership than a provider/consumer model.

- The community is an active partner in defining its desired future, and it identifies opportunities as well as needs and problems.
- Government makes a commitment to listen to the community and to work *with* citizens, rather than *for* them, to achieve future outcomes.
- Community members have a responsibility — not just to define what actions they would like government to take, but to contribute to the desired future through their own contributions of time and energy.

Community members, as well as government staff and elected officials, can find this challenging.

In this paradigm, government staff have to move outside of their traditional roles to identify what role they can usefully play in improving areas for which they have no direct responsibility, e.g. local education. They also need to share responsibility in areas such as urban design where, traditionally, only 'experts' have played a role. This may require government to take on a new role, in building community skills and capacity to successfully take on these new roles. Even the way that budgets and business plans are developed has to change.

On the other hand, community members have to donate the time and energy it requires to make a real contribution. They no longer have the luxury of simply asking for more services, but have to be deliberative in considering the hard choices that have to be made to achieve the outcomes they want.

Elected representatives in this paradigm still are accountable for decisions, and do not cede their governance responsibilities. The role of politicians in the new paradigm is a complex topic and, again,

I won't deal with it in depth today — except to say that at Wyndham, this paradigm was only able to make inroads because council had made a commitment to be future-focussed and community-responsive, putting these values ahead of personal power and ambition.

When Wyndham looked at international models to improve its visioning processes and outcomes, it looked at Hillsboro, Oregon as a model of excellence. Visits and email contacts led to a number of improvements in Wyndham's Vision, but only after adapting some American traditions to the Australian context.

In Hillsboro, action plans are developed by teams of 12 people, with four government representatives, four from the community group auspicing the vision and four experts in the area under discussion, typically nominated by government staff.

The Hillsboro model was felt to be too government-dominated for Wyndham where community members are more used to greater independence and a community-led approach. In Wyndham, a taskforce of community members monitors progress towards achievement of the plan. The mayor and the CEO sit on the taskforce, with equal rights to other members, but the bulk of the group consists of community members. Different elements of the community are represented, including youth and older people, members from rural areas and from the rapidly growing urban areas of Wyndham.

The annual 'town hall' meeting of Hillsboro became a 'future planning and reporting workshop' in Wyndham, although elements of a more American-style town hall meeting are being considered for future years.

In Hillsboro, local business is second only to government in its involvement. The role of businesses and commercial organisations is an area where America is quite different from Australia. In Wyndham, local business has expressed an interest in involvement, and its links to the community vision is increasing, but not yet to the level found in Hillsboro.

On the other hand, the link between Wyndham's Vision and council's corporate planning and reporting processes was considered an improvement on the American model. Each year, council adopts portions of the Vision to implement through its budget and business planning processes, with the remainder becoming the responsibility of community members to achieve. The council's Corporate Planner is responsible for communicating this each year to the Vision's community steering committee.

What about the Northern Territory?

Community visioning appears to have real potential in the Northern Territory, although the Territory poses a whole new set of challenges for the international model.

The potential for community visions is being explored through two projects, and I will provide an update in August. Both focus on Aboriginal communities.

One of the questions that has to be asked in these communities is “who will ‘own’ the vision?”

To some degree, the term ‘traditional Aboriginal community’ is an oxymoron. Living in settled, multi-family communities is not a traditional lifestyle. Even in remote areas where people live relatively traditional lifestyles, there is a distinction between traditional owners and those whose presence is due to changes imposed by European settlement.

In Hillsboro, Wyndham, Flagstaff, Yarra Ranges and other areas of the world where visioning has occurred, it would be considered discriminatory to make a distinction between recent arrivals and land ‘owners’. In Aboriginal Australia, the situation is not as clear, and we are still working through participants’ roles.

We are also learning the cultural constraints and opportunities for visioning in Indigenous communities, where it is useful, and where it should be avoided. Even at this early stage, one thing is clear — the international model will have to be modified substantially for it to be effective in this new cultural area.

Measuring progress

So many jurisdictions are now using sets of indicators to mark progress that the concept of a community ‘report card’ hardly needs an introduction. Australia has a number of excellent examples, including Onkaparinga and Newcastle.

Some ‘report cards’ provide a very detailed snapshot of situations such as women’s participation or sustainability issues, and contain a great deal of data and information. Others are primarily directional, ie they show whether situations are improving, remaining stable, or slipping backwards, often by using a small set of agreed indicators.

Measures can focus on outputs/actions, such as ‘number of hospital beds added’ and ‘number of police officers recruited’ or on outcomes such as reduced waiting times for surgery or crime rate reductions. Measures may be ‘lead’ indicators, indicating what is likely to happen, or ‘lag’ indicators, indicating what has already occurred. (A classic example is cigarette sales vs. cancer deaths.)

In many jurisdictions, academics and statistical experts develop indicators, seeking to provide a basis for evidence-based action on issues. Typically, in these cases, experts’ opinion of what is important to measure carries most weight.

On the other hand, there are jurisdictions, even within Australia, where report cards reflect more of a citizen's worldview. For example, the City of Port Phillip in Melbourne changed its indicators for reporting pollution from 'amount of particulate matter in the atmosphere' to number of days that people had a clear view of a local landmark vs. the days that it was obscured by pollution.

Although there are many types of 'report cards', only some challenge traditional practices.

'Directional' report cards, which focus on whether or not situations are genuinely improving, present significant challenges for some jurisdictions, as they can provide an uncomfortable degree of accountability. Many governments — like most private sector organisations — tend in their reporting to focus on achievements.

Another style of reporting used in some jurisdictions overseas presents even greater challenges for traditional reporting practices.

In Florida, Jacksonville Community Council Inc. has been monitoring local quality of life for over 20 years. Citizens have taken responsibility for identifying issues to be monitored, determining indicators, collecting and publishing information.

Wyndham was interested in this concept of a 'self-monitoring' community, but has proceeded towards it step by step.

The council determined that it would support the development of a 'community report card' which would sit outside council's regular reporting responsibilities. It would not be a report card of council's performance, but would focus on important trends in the community — many of them largely outside the council's core responsibilities.

The community vision became the basis for the report card, with measures against each of the 15 themes in it, including health and wellbeing, local employment and business prosperity.

Community representatives were asked to identify what they believed would be signs of success, or show that we were making progress. Some of the measures that resulted from community input have been non-traditional.

For example, community members were interested in improving access to health services, but how to quantify access to service? After consultation with the community, a measure was developed showing how long it took people to reach a general medical practitioner (GP) or the local hospital, particularly if they did not have a car. The measure was chosen to be sensitive to a number of improvements — including increased hours of service, greater number of local GPs and/or improved public transport routes and services.

Six reference points were chosen within the municipality and, to measure annual change, a person with a pram times how long it takes to reach the closest GP and the hospital from each of the six addresses at different times of day during the week and on the weekend.

To build up a complete picture, the Quality Community Plan Taskforce, the community group that sponsors the Wyndham Community Report Card, measures progress through three types of measures. Each of the 15 themes in the community vision has at least one indicator from each group.

1. Some performance measures relate to *actions*, focussing on whether commitments that have been made are completed within the promised timeframe, such as a new aquatic centre and police station, or improved lighting in areas identified as high risk. Not all of the commitments are for local and state government action; community commitments are also included.

2. Some measures relate to *perception outcomes*, e.g. setting a target of 85 per cent satisfaction with Wyndham's parks and playgrounds, or identifying whether people feel safer in public places than they felt before new lighting was installed.

Most of these measures are based directly on community input. The community has also played a role in identifying what should be measured. Terms such as 'accountability' (which many community members found problematic to understand and assess) have been replaced by terms and concepts identified by participants as being more user-friendly.

3. Some measures relate to *non-perception outcomes*, such as crime statistics, number of car and pedestrian accidents on local roads, or level of infrastructure provision.

Community input has helped to identify data within this category that would most clearly show progress as understood by the community.

Each year, a report card is produced that sets out the community's vision for each area, summarises major initiatives and outcomes during the year and shows whether in the past 12 months Wyndham has made substantial progress in that area towards achieving its vision for the future, or has just remained stable or even slipped backwards. A graphic is used of a dashboard, with an arrow that can be positioned at various points to the left (for negative results) or to the right (for positive results). Copies of the report card are made available to all of the city's residents. Three editions of the report card have been published to date.

Wyndham wanted to go past even this level of involvement, and move a step closer to the concept of a self-monitoring community.

One of the greatest challenges for this type of report card, which is both holistic and directional, is that measures of different types can point in different directions. Even within a single category, such as non-perception outcomes, there can be conflicting results. For example, class size and educational achievement rates in reading may have improved, but school retention rates for teenagers may have gone down. Should the education arrow point to the left or to the right — or should it be in the middle, pointing straight up?

Increasingly, Wyndham community members are answering such questions. For example, a group of stakeholders including primary and secondary school teachers and principals, parents, tertiary education and employer representatives, libraries and other community learning organisations gather to review the different types of evidence measuring change in education and lifelong learning. Members of this group recommend the position of the arrow in the community report card.

This approach is being extended, and the report card is always finalised by members of the community-based Quality Community Plan Taskforce.

Developing and implementing this type of approach has been challenging. It requires resources to do it properly, and also a commitment to identify genuine trends rather than trying to put a positive 'spin' on local developments. Every year, there are disappointments to record as well as achievements.

As with panels and community visions, report cards require a long-term commitment. Progress has to be measured year after year using consistent measures.

We are now looking at what aspects of this process could be applicable within the Northern Territory. It is unlikely that anything similar to the Jacksonville model could work in this jurisdiction, at least not in the near future.

One of the projects we are trialling, with support from both the Territory and the commonwealth, is community self-monitoring in family violence in small remote communities. This is an area where hard data is difficult to identify and new approaches are required to document the impacts of potential local interventions. We are now conducting preliminary trials for culturally appropriate ways to monitor changing levels of local violence.

Conclusion

There are many models of consultation, both overseas and within Australia. All of us should challenge ourselves to review developments in the field and incorporate useful aspects into our own practice, and also acknowledge that international best practice may require substantial revision to work in local Australian conditions.

All of the approaches I have dwelt on in this paper have required a long-term commitment by both government and community members, unlike other types of one-off community engagement initiatives. I have described some of the challenges posed by approaches which require a multi-year commitment from stakeholders.

Two other challenges I find of particular interest are the evolving community/government relationship, and community capacity building.

I have sometimes speculated — and this may just be my personal view — that Australia's compulsory voting has helped to drive a political mindset which thinks in terms of total community accountability rather than responding primarily to interest groups. Even though I cited Steven Ames' view, above, on the participatory element in American politics, it is also true that a very high percentage of Americans have *no* political involvement — not even a vote every four years. There seems to me to be fewer extremes in Australian engagement, and fewer rewards for politicians who appeal to a narrow set of interest groups.

(I would be very happy to hear from others on this issue, and engage in some robust debate on the topic.)

The relationship between representative democracy and participatory democracy is too big for me to address here, but I have observed that the intersection differs considerably from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In Wyndham, we developed a number of protocols to try to ensure that each complemented the other, but we drew a distinction between them and believed both were necessary.

As regards community capacity building, I believe that it is vital to achieve best outcomes from community engagement. In Wyndham, the council has begun to set up improved mechanisms for this, including public lectures and interactive sessions where citizens can learn more about issues, enabling them to make more informed decisions and contribute better to achieving the community's desired future. Topics have included water conservation and recycling, and options for improving local educational performance.

Again, this is a process that places demands on both government and community. Although government takes on the task of developing the opportunities, it is citizens who must go out in the evening, before work, or on weekends to improve their ability to contribute to their community.

We are now looking for culturally appropriate equivalents in Northern Territory remote communities, still seeking to mould best practice from elsewhere into the local context.

There will be continue to be a push for improved community engagement in Australia. Both as practitioners or as citizens, we have a right and a duty to test these new ideas and shape them so that they are useful for our local situations.