



Learning as a Driver for Change



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Acknowledgements

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Preface

One of the most important objectives of the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG) is to support informed debate on key policy issues. We recognise that many councils and other local government organisations are not always able to undertake sufficient background research to underpin and develop sound, evidence-based policy. ACELG's Research Paper Series seeks to address this deficit.

This report, Learning as Driver for Change, and the companion document, Learning Community Framework, makes an important contribution to learning within local government and to new ways of supporting community wellbeing and social inclusion.

The research draws on the experience of the Hume City Council and Gwydir Shire who have partnered with other organisations to develop a culture of learning which supports educational, social and economic benefits for all citizens of their communities. The case studies included in the report illustrate the tangible benefits that have resulted from taking a broader view of learning.

Evaluation of these two learning partnerships, and the literature reviewed for the research, was used to develop the Learning Community Framework. Local governments across the country are encouraged to adapt and apply the Learning Community Framework to their own circumstances.

ACELG and its research partners the Australian Learning Community Network, Hume City Council and Gywdir Shire welcome feedback on this paper.

For more information, or to provide feedback to a member of the research team, please contact Stefanie Pillora, ACELG Program Manager, Research: stefanie.pillora@acelg.org.au.

Executive Summary

Aim of the Research

This research relates to the key components of *Learning as a Driver for Change* research project. It explores how learning partnerships can help improve social outcomes, build community capability and strengthen community governance. In particular, it examines the outcomes of the Hume Global Learning Village (HGLV) partnership in Hume City from 2003–2012 and the Gwydir Learning Region (GLR) partnership from 2004–2012. It reviews the elements of a learning community framework as a catalyst for change, and considers how those elements could be applied to other local government areas across Australia. Outputs of the research include this report incorporating a literature review and case study analysis, as well as a *Learning Communities Framework* publication.

Methodology

The methodology used for this project involved:

1. Preparation (which included RMIT University ethics clearance) and development of the questions, and the preliminary development of a framework of the common elements of learning community partnerships (version 1).
2. Four streams of data gathering:
 - a) A review of the literature to explore how learning partnerships can help improve social outcomes, build community capability and strengthen community governance.
 - b) A testing of the framework of common elements of learning community partnerships with the project steering group and participants attending the Australian Learning Community Network Conference (ALCN) 23–25 September 2012.
 - c) Desktop analysis of key strategic documents from the HGLV and GLR against the framework.
 - d) Individual and focus group interviews with 20 stakeholders from the HGLV, and 21 stakeholders from GLR as follows:
 - i. The Hume Global Learning Village
 - 15 members of the HGLV operational committee, representing Hume City Council (5), secondary school (1), primary school (1), not for profit (1), local learning and employment network (1), TAFE institute (1), community member (1), LearnLocal (ACE) (1), public housing estate (1), industry (1) and the chair (1)
 - 2 senior managers within Hume City Council
 - 3 members of the HGLV Advisory Board
 - ii. Gwydir Learning Region
 - 11 learners who took part in GLR programs
 - Two senior managers from Gwydir Shire Council
 - Principal and two teachers from local secondary college
 - Industry partners (3)
 - Director of Educational Operations – TAFE New England
 - The Mayor of Gwydir Shire Council
 - MP, Federal Member for Parks.

3. Case Studies:
 - a) Gwydir Learning Region
 - b) The Hume Global Learning Village.
4. Conclusion.

Summary of key findings

Hume City Council, Gywdir Shire and their strategic partners have been successful in developing a culture of learning within their communities, and this has built a solid foundation for future development. These communities found that learning is a driver for change and is a method of addressing low socio-economic status. The HGLV and GLR are collaborative frameworks for efficient planning and development of a learning community approach. The principles and core elements can be adapted for any community, whether it is rural, regional, remote or metropolitan. Leadership can be provided by local government, and any municipality will benefit by valuing learning.

Stakeholders from Gwydir Shire who were interviewed said that for this rural community, it has meant:

1. The development of a culture of learning within the Shire and the celebration of success through initiatives such as the awards night.
2. GLR has provided a framework for building the skill base within organisations, and within communities.
3. Gwydir Shire Council playing a leading role in driving the learning agenda within the Shire. This is evident in the way that the Shire has added value to a number of programs. It also led the planning and development of social and learning infrastructure such as the Roxy Theatre complex and the Living Classroom.
4. Individualised support for learners backed by the resources of strategic partners such as local secondary schools and the Shire.
5. Taking a broad view of learning that incorporates more than skills training for employment outcomes, and includes building the 'cultural mortar' of the community.

Stakeholders from the outer metropolitan area of Hume City Council said the important changes were:

1. The building of social and learning infrastructure, in particular the original Hume Global Learning Centre at Broadmeadows. This has been a catalyst for change on a range of levels.
2. The positive language used helping to highlight the opportunities that come from diverse communities, rather than focusing on deficits.
3. The view that this is a long-term strategy. The evidence of this is the development of a 20-year strategic plan for learning (Learning Together 2030).
4. The evolution in council planning so that now several areas within the organisation align with employment and learning goals.
5. Over a period of time the incremental small successes, programs, awards, recognition that count towards the long-term goal.

Challenges

The main challenge has been the effective measurement of the outcomes of the collaborative approach taken by both the HGLV and GLR. Because learning communities work through partnerships it becomes difficult to attribute particular outcomes directly to learning community activities. Another issue is that the timeframe for learning community initiatives is long term, usually spanning 5 to 20 years, however, evaluation is often tied to funding over one to three years.

Stakeholders interviewed noted that sometimes it was difficult to explain the concepts, but they were getting better at it. They were better at using practical on-the-ground messages that residents could relate to such as raising aspirations, pathways to learning and employment, active citizenship, adding value to existing education and training provision, and having a 'can do' attitude.

There was some frustration at also not being able to deal with social issues on the ground in a timely manner, for example, youth disengagement. Too often a level of bureaucracy from other levels of government hindered progress.

Lessons for other local governments

Learning as a driver for change in communities is worthwhile. There are lessons that can be learnt from over 10 years of experience in Hume City and Gwydir Shire. The underlying philosophy, goals and commitment are transferable to

Any local government anywhere would benefit from strategies and mechanisms which build partnerships and certainly every municipality region benefits from valuing learning (Wilson 2012b).

other communities. It is important to harness the energy of local champions; have a long-term commitment to work collaboratively to achieve long-term goals which address current community challenges; adapt programs from other communities and also innovate and invent for local conditions; harness the energy of young people and encourage cultural diversity and intergenerational learning activities; consider appropriate governance structures; and above all celebrate success!

1. Section A: Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

Learning as a driver for change in communities is not something normally associated with local government. However, in Australia today there are a number of geographic areas (towns, shires, cities, regions) that are using learning partnerships approaches as part of economic development, social inclusion, and health and well-being strategies (LCC 2008; Arden, McLachland et al. 2009; BCC 2010; HCC 2010a; FCC 2011; Shire of Melton 2011; GLR 2012). Influenced by national and international learning community developments, some communities have been undertaking this work for over 10 years (Longworth 1999; Kearns 2001; Longworth 2006; Kearns 2012a). Other communities view this work as part of the community strengthening and community development work (Beilharz 2002; Mathie & Cunningham 2008).

The word ‘learning’ within local government can have multiple meanings. It is most often associated with the concept of learning organisations and the field of human resource development (Senge 1990; Argyris 1999; Smith & Sadler-Smith 2006). ‘Learning’ as a term is contested (Schuller & Watson 2009, p. 1), but as Foley (2004, p. 4) points out ‘learning is central to human life – as essential as work or friendship’. Further, the term ‘lifelong learning’ can have different meanings and ‘is often used as a slogan, open to multiple interpretations’ (OECD 2004, p. 1). However, there is a growing body of evidence that adult learning, in particular, does impact positively on individual health, employability, social relationships, and the likelihood of participating in voluntary work (Wilkinson & Pickett 2010; Fujiwara & Campbell 2011; Fujiwara 2012).

Schuller and Watson (2009, p. 1) discuss a vision of a society in which ‘learning plays its full role in personal growth and emancipation, prosperity, solidarity and global responsibility.’ Learning has a broader role to do with ‘achievement of freedom of choice, control over individual and group destinies, health and well-being, cultural identity and culture tolerance.’ It begins with the premise that the right to learn throughout life is a human right. It is on this basis that the two case study learning communities investigated as part of this research – Hume Global Learning Village and Gwydir Learning Region (hereafter the HGLV and GLR) – are using learning as a strategy for change within their communities.

Researchers in community development also refer to an asset or strengths-based approach (Kretzman & McKnight 1997; Beilharz 2002; Mathie & Cunningham 2008). Beilharz (2002, p. 4) defines this as ‘a way of working with people, based on social justice values, that recognises people’s and communities’ strengths and facilitates their application to achieve self-determined goals.’ She further elaborates to indicate that a ‘strengths-based practice is a philosophy or world view that recognises that justice, fairness and equality are essential components of healthy human society.’ Learning communities such as the HGLV and the GLR use positive language to describe the challenges faced and how these can be turned to opportunities for the future (HCC 2010a; Mitchell 2006).

1.2 Why should learning matter to local government?

Despite the high levels of economic growth recorded in Australia over the last decade, too many Australians are still excluded from the opportunities they need to create the life they want. They can be trapped in a spiral of disadvantage caused by family circumstances, low expectations, community poverty, a lack of suitable and affordable housing, illness or discrimination – often leading to early school leaving, long-term unemployment and chronic ill-health.

Some people are at greater risk of multiple disadvantages, such as jobless families, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability and mental illness, vulnerable new migrants and refugees, people with low incomes and people experiencing homelessness (Barca 2009; Commonwealth of Australia 2009).

The costs of this social disadvantage are high, to individuals, communities and the nation. In order to address this, policies and programs are needed that work together to deal with the different problems people face, rather than working on single issues in isolation (Commonwealth of Australia 2009, p. 1).

Social connection is vital for the wellbeing of individuals, communities and society as a whole. Communities are strengthened when social capital is improved, as it builds civic and community engagement, networks and a sense of trust and belonging (Pomagalska et al. 2009, p. 7; Pope 2001, p. 18).

The CEO of the Gwydir Shire points to regulation which states that local government has a role to exercise community leadership and engage in long-term strategic planning on behalf of the community, which takes into account social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights (*Local Government Act 1993*):

From the point of view of local government, the Gwydir Learning Region demonstrates the importance and value of Council involvement in new partnerships and Council involvement with the social infrastructure of rural and remote communities, where those communities want to build social capital and create their own positive options for the future (Eastcott 2011, p. 3).

1.3 Learning as a driver for change in community

Schuller and Watson (2009) suggest that if they were to sum up lifelong learning in a single phrase, it would be ‘that it should enable people to take control of their lives.’ For communities, this translates into having some control over rapid changes or challenges in a range of areas, including economic, social, and environmental within a local context (Faris & Peterson 2000; Wilson 2012a). Schuller and Watson (2009) citing Williams (1990) argue that the broader function of education is to understand, adapt to and shape change, while Faris notes:

We need to invent a new learning model for business, education, healthcare, government and the family. This intervention will come from patient, concerted efforts of communities of people invoking aspiration and wonder (Faris 2008, p. 3).

Watson discusses a distinctive feature of the lifelong learning policy literature, which is a commitment to universal participation in education and training. In advocating ‘lifelong learning for all’ the OECD argues that universal participation is necessary for meeting the economic demands of the 21st century. The concept of universal participation includes both informal and formal learning for all purposes – social, economic and personal (Watson 2003, p. 3).

The concept of ‘lifelong learning for all’ is further explored in a UNESCO report which argues the necessity of social cohesion in a time of rapid economic and social change (Delors 1996). Table 1 adapted from Faris (2008) provides a broad framework of the four pillars of learning, which includes foundation skills and role performance. Practitioners in the field speak of these concepts in terms such as raising aspirations, employability skills and building a learning culture.

Table 1. Four pillars of learning

Four pillars of learning	Learning to know (acquiring understanding)	Learning to do (acquiring and applying skills, including life skills)	Learning to live together (participating and cooperating)	Learning to be (promoting creativity and personal fulfilment)
Foundation skills	Learning how to learn (an approach to learning that is flexible, critical and capable)	Transforming knowledge into innovation (developing employability skills)	Active citizenship (celebrating diversity and communities working together)	Empowering individuals (raising aspirations and hope)
Role performance	+Active learners	+Creative, productive workers	+Active family and community members, democratic and global citizens	+ Humane beings

Adapted by Wheeler and Wong from Faris (2008)

While the current emphasis in the Australian education system is placed on learning to learn and skills development, which is critical for educational attainment leading to employment opportunities, learning community approaches also place emphasis on learning to live together and learning to be, that is, the social nature of human learning of individuals, groups and organisations within communities, or as Wilson (2012a) says: 'collective learning'. This is especially important in terms of community resilience and adaptability to change and is also in line with an integrated community development approach. Ife (2002, p. 160) points out that one-dimensional community development is likely to fail and advocates the adoption of a holistic approach that allows for the 'richness and complexity of human life and experience of the community.' This research is focused on collective learning, through collaboration or learning partnerships. This has also been labelled as learning communities, learning shires, learning towns, learning cities and learning regions.

Following on from the publication of the Report of the International Commission on Education in the 21st Century (Delors 1996) and earlier international developments in learning cities and communities, the learning community approach emerged because of a shift in focus of policy makers and analysts from learning as an individual activity to learning as a social activity, with learning embedded in everyday settings – the family, the community, the school and the workplace. (Sheed & Bottrell 2001, p. 67; Kilpatrick, Barrett et al. 2003; Faris 2006; Yang & Valdes-Cotera 2011) Rubenson and Beddie (2004, p. 165) note that learning community developments in Australia were also based on the idea that 'learning is an intrinsic part of sustainable development and an essential element in improving the quality of life of an individual and a community.' At the individual level there is an idea that learning – the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values – is a natural everyday process that occurs throughout one's life. There is also a life-wide dimension, that is, that systematic learning occurs and is promoted in not only the formal sector of education for credentials but also in the non-formal sector (Faris 2005). This is consistent with a broad definition of learning where the skills and knowledge attained should add significantly to the learner's understanding of life. Other conditions include:

- Learning can be undertaken at any age
- Learning can be supplied from a number of sources, including self-learning, but excluding incidental learning
- Learning is dependent on all kinds of technology from the formal classroom to the internet and mobile devices
- Learning is financed by all kinds of funding bodies (Smith & Spurling 2001).

Foley (2004, p. 4) says that all human activity has a learning dimension: 'People learning, continually, informally and formally, in many different settings: in workplaces, in families, through leisure activities, through community activities, and in political action.'

Kilpatrick et al. (2006) note that the concept of learning communities draws on a wide body of theory related to learning and sociology, and argue that the philosophy underpinning learning communities is commonly attributed to Dewey and Vygotsky, which recognises the importance of the social nature of all human learning (Dewey 1938; Vygotsky 1978).

1.4 Learning community approaches to place-based partnerships

The main focus of this research is the learning community approaches to place-based learning partnerships. The case study sites, the HVLG and GLR, have used these approaches since the early 2000s. Internationally, the concept of learning communities, cities and towns has been around since the 1970s but gained traction in the 1990s (Longworth 1999; Kearns 2001; Longworth 2006; Kearns 2012a). Learning communities were first developed in Australia in the 1990s in the state of Victoria (Kearns 2001; Kearns, Longworth et al. 2008). A key stimulus was the development of 10 learning communities in Victoria in 2000 and a further 10 communities funded as part of a National Learning Communities Project in 2001. Since then several major learning community initiatives have developed (Rubenson & Beddie 2004, p. 165) and the Australian Learning Communities Network has expanded to forty five members.

Learning communities have varied from initiatives in major regional cities such as Geelong Learning City, to outer metropolitan areas such as Hume City, Melton City, Brimbank City to small rural communities such as Gwydir Learning Region and Buloke Learning Towns.

Cavaye et al. (2013) notes that in Australia (BCC 2010; HCC 2010a; FCC 2011; Shire of Melton 2011; GLR 2012) further initiatives have also depended on a positive policy environment, where qualitative concepts such as learning have been accepted as priorities for fostering employment, economic development and long-term community improvement.

Galbally and Wong (2008, p. 13) identify that the concept has been particularly useful for local governments in the designated Urban Growth Zones of outer Melbourne, including Hume City, with four out of five of those areas having Community Learning Plans with 'action plans for planned community development'. It has also been useful as a community development strategy in rural and regional communities (Mitchell 2006; Arden, McLachland et al. 2009). Peter Kearns, with over 15 years of writing about learning communities in Australia and internationally, shares his thoughts on the evolution of learning community approaches:

I first became aware of learning communities in 1999 when working on a report about the implications of lifelong learning for vocational education and training in Australia (Kearns, McDonald et al. 1999). The report developed a framework for individual learning, learning in organisations, learning in communities as steps towards building a learning society. This thinking was further developed in *Achieving Australia as an Inclusive Learning Society* (Kearns 2005). In 2011 I undertook work in Taipei which led to dialogue within the PASCAL International Exchanges Project (PIE) and a term they coined “EcCo-Well” (PIE 2013). This is a broader concept where the learning community or city is seen as an overarching concept which reaches out to areas like health and wellbeing, culture and environment. I saw three stages in the development of my thinking over that period. (Kearns 2012b)

Terms such as learning cities, learning towns, learning regions and learning communities are terms now in common use throughout the developed and developing world and increasingly becoming commonplace in the European lifelong learning debate (Longworth 2006; Hamilton & Jordon 2010). However, while many cities in the UK adopted a learning city tag, Hamilton and Jordon (2010, p. 7) note it is unclear what was meant by the concept and ‘simply branding oneself as such was unlikely to achieve anything without the strategies and resources required for realising the potential for lifelong learning.’ Yarnit (2011) challenged the very use of the term ‘The Learning City’ which he suggests is ‘as Dead as a Dodo’, stating that the use of such labels suggests that it ‘will be of interest to educationalists alone’ and city administrators will push on regardless, working on key challenges of carbon dependency, urbanisation and so forth. Wilson (2012a) argues that careful discussion of what he terms ‘learning city-regions’ has been undermined by the inherent fuzziness of the key concepts and about who is doing the learning – the places, key firms, organisations or individuals. However, McNulty (2012) argues that while such terms as ‘learning community’ have lost currency in the UK, the fundamentals that underpin the term are still important, in particular:

To work through key stakeholders, to achieve long term outcomes which are shared with and delivered in the particular communities that are meant to benefit from them. Learning is the basis of a strategy that can shape economic development in a way that is fair and benefits all citizens within a region.

While the challenge ahead still remains to clearly articulate the nature of learning communities and other similar terms, what is clear is that learning is being used as a driver for change in communities. Kearns notes the positive learning community developments in East Asian Countries with ‘4,000 or so initiatives in China, about seventy eight in Korea, and growing in Taiwan.’ He puts this down to the impact of things like ‘Confucianism – the neo-Confucianism – ethic of looking up to authority and family and so on. These societies are less individualistic than is found in the Western world now (Kearns 2012b).’

Hamilton and Jordon (2010) say that those learning cities that appear to be more sustainable in the UK have made lifelong learning central to a local government strategy. Longworth has for a long time argued the importance of local government in a learning community development, stating that city administrators recognise that in order to achieve a more prosperous future, human capital and social capital within a region must be developed (Longworth 2006). This is the approach that is used within the HGLV and GLR initiatives.

1.4.1 Benefits of working in partnership

Working in active partnership towards creating a positive and welcoming community is a strategy that has been fundamental to increasing community capacity, social capital and social cohesion through inclusion, locally and internationally, over the last two decades.

In a socially cohesive community, the networks of social relations are characterised by norms of trust and reciprocity that facilitate cooperative behaviour (Putnam 2000; Stone 2001, p. 38) and build a cohesive society (Winter 2000).

A partnership can be usefully defined as a relationship where two or more parties having common and compatible goals agree to work together for a particular purpose for some period of time (Collaboration Roundtable 2001, p. 2).

‘If partnerships are to be successful, however, they must have a clear purpose, add value to the work of the partners, and be carefully planned and monitored’ (VicHealth 2011, p. 1).

The major challenge to the formation of partnerships according to many of the case studies is the time required to build a shared understanding across stakeholders with differing priorities. Joint work with other organisations is inherently difficult and resource heavy (Huxham & Vangen 2005, p. 37). However, it is widely accepted that the beneficial outcomes for communities make the time and effort to build partnerships worth it (Banfield, Wright et al. 2010, p. 3; Kyrkilis 2012, p. 11).

The long experience of South Australia’s commitment to social inclusion has led to recent work which builds on the widely used Victorian Health Promotion Foundation *Partnership Analysis Tool* (VicHealth 2011), which describes four different types of partnerships.¹ To assist organisations in determining which type of partnership is most effective for them, *Successful partnerships: A brief guide* has, for each of the four partnership types identified by VicHealth, drawn on the findings of the social inclusion initiatives to provide useful guidelines. These describe the characteristics of the different types of partnerships, give explanations of the situations in which each type is useful, provide examples of how the different types are being used, and outline the benefits they offer (Government of South Australia 2008, p. 4).

There are many studies documenting the benefits of working in partnership with other organisations that are well summarised by these findings from VCOSS:

- partnerships can allow for diverse thinking and values leading to better outcomes
- partnerships provide opportunity to share workload and resources
- partnerships build capacity of their members
- partnerships can create the environment for taking risks in developing new service models
- partnerships create the motivation for people to pull together, which in turn drives and sustains the partnership (VCOSS Guide 1 n.d., p. 3).

¹ The VicHealth Partnership Mapping suggests partnerships in health promotion may range on a continuum working from Networking to Coordinating, Cooperating and Collaborating (VicHealth 2011, p. 6) This analysis tool has been adapted to other sectors including education and the community.

One of the drivers for partnerships between government, business and community has been their capacity to overcome the barriers presented by traditional economic and political structures which perpetuate a competitive environment, and can deny access by small players to the channels of power and influence, identified as a social exclusion mechanism by Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1979). Bringing stakeholders together increases the pool of resources in terms of funding, knowledge and experience, and creates the conditions to provide a coordinated and comprehensive response. An example of how this worked in practice using a learning community approach was the Victorian *Learning Towns program*, which required that community stakeholders learn to be partners while working on learning endeavors. The Learning Towns were able to develop more inclusive community partnerships characterised by creative and innovative approaches based on equality of participation and emphasising cooperation rather than conflict.

The requirement for Learning Towns to develop partnerships across sectors recognises that different community sectors have varying levels of access to resources and people of influence. Learning Towns proved to be an effective catalyst for bringing together people and organisations from all sectors, allowing the voices of all to be heard. By focusing on links with all sectors, this partnership model increased community capacity to attract and mobilise resources through the development of new relationships (Galbally & Wong 2008, p. 18).

1.5 Learning partnership governance – the role of the strategic partnership²

There is growing awareness that the major challenges of public policy today play out in local places. ‘A characteristic of place-based development is moving from a notion of government to governance processes that find ways to leverage diverse ideas, coordinate collective resources, and use new tools and techniques to inspire decision making’ (Barca 2009). These tools and techniques add value to the traditional ‘government’ through representative democracy which international literature argues is becoming increasingly inadequate in achieving accountability and ‘needs to be supplemented by more participatory forms’ (A M Kjaer in Pillora & McKinley 2011, p. 5). A refinement of this move to a ‘participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive’ governance model (OECD 2001 cited in Pillora & McKinley 2011, p. 5) is the concept of ‘place-shaping’: identifying the special characteristics of local places ‘and taking action on a number of fronts – economic, social and environmental – to enhance the quality of the place and the quality of life of its people’ (McKinlay, Pillora et al. 2012, p. 4).

So rather than acting independently or in sector silos, ‘governments work with one another, and through civil society partnerships, for joint problem solving’ (Barca 2009). *Consequently, governance and process needs to engage key stakeholders to agree on strategies and solutions that will make a positive difference to the community. It is responsible for ensuring that:*

- *the complex issues that are articulated through enhanced community participation and consultation are identified*
- *integrated planning to address the issues is actualised from the partnerships that result from the activation of the project, and*
- *a way forward is established that monitors progress systematically.*

² Acknowledgement: Much of the information in this section was sourced from the literature review conducted for the Armstrong Creek Coordinated Community Infrastructure Delivery Project (Henry, Edwards et al. 2011).

1.5.1 Principles of good governance

Typically, effective learning communities provide the required community governance structure that will deliver the 'broader associational and community networks' (Department for Victorian Communities 2006, p. 4) recognised by the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) as building communities through increased participation in employment, education or public life (Galbally & Wong 2008, p. 4).

Effective governance networks link:

...individuals to institutions and therefore to power, resources and Ideas through these networks, communities can turn their assets into specific outcomes such as employment, increased economic opportunity or improved services and facilities. (Department for Victorian Communities 2006, p. 6)

Such networks, competently developed and managed by learning community strategic partnerships, assist in the achievement of giving 'communities a greater say in how services are used to solve local problems' (Victorian Government 2005, p. 12). Such partnerships are charged with overseeing the work of the learning community initiatives to increase community participation, using a community strengthening methodology that in time deepens community engagement and delivers robust plans for building sustainable community capacity. Where local government has adopted a more collaborative approach, local communities have been empowered to make decisions about their place and to play a direct role in delivering services and undertaking projects in order to achieve their desired outcomes (McKinlay, Pillora et al. 2012, p. 4). As an example, the Gwydir Learning Region Review Panel commits to doing 'what is necessary to ensure high quality education and training is available, accessible, affordable, adaptable and acceptable for people of all ages and stages of life who live in or are associated with the Gwydir Shire.' Similarly, Hume City Council acknowledges that 'The ambition to be a dynamic "*Learning Community*" requires a collective and continuous commitment. The HGLV, together with Hume City Council (HCC) share this ambition and collectively accept the responsibility to meet the Hume City vision for learning' (HCC 2010a, p. 3). To this end, good governance is required to provide consistent management and a cohesive approach to policies, processes and decision-making (City of Greater Geelong 2009, p. 44).

The desktop analysis of the HGLV and GLR documents summarised in Appendix One indicates an awareness of and commitment to principles of good governance by the Strategic Partnerships such as those published by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) in its 2007 review, *Shared Facility Partnerships, A Guide to Good Governance for Schools and the Community*:

1. **Transparency** – decisions are based on clear criteria and are able to be scrutinised
2. **Accountability** – responsibilities are clearly allocated to each partner
3. **Participation** – each partner and other stakeholders should have input into the operation of the partnership
4. **Consensus-oriented** – there should be a shared understanding of the objectives and management of the partnership
5. **Responsiveness** – the partnership should be able to respond to new circumstances
6. **Effectiveness and efficiency** – the project should match the available resources and achieve the best possible result
7. **Integrity and stewardship** – the project must be delivered legally and ethically
8. **Leadership** – all partners are responsible for the leadership and delivery of the project (DEECD 2007b, p. 5)

Another example from the UK is the revised good governance code for the voluntary and community sector, published in 2010, which outlined what it claimed as six good governance features:

An effective board will provide good governance and leadership by:

1. understanding their role
2. ensuring delivery of organisational purpose
3. working effectively both as individuals and a team
4. exercising effective control
5. behaving with integrity
6. being open and accountable (Charity Commission UK 2010, p. 11).

The six principles are explained in considerable detail. Some useful extracts of the principles in action include, for example, under principle two – ensuring delivery of organisational purpose – one of the actions required is ‘evaluating results, assessing outcomes and impact’ (ibid, p. 14). Similarly, under principle six – being open and accountable – ‘listening and responding to the views of supporters, funders, beneficiaries, service users and others with an interest in the organisation’s work’ (ibid, p. 22). As a final example principle four – exercising effective control – one action is ‘recognising and maximising the value of diversity within the board as a means of identifying and managing risks, especially as a way of challenging institutional assumptions and thinking’ (ibid, p. 19).

1.5.2 Engaged governance

The ‘given’ of community consultation and involvement aside, the experience in Australia of engaged governance has shown there is no ‘best’ way for governments to engage with their communities, nor one governance structure that fits all projects (DEECD 2007b). In a review of federal, state and local initiatives to engage with communities, Cavaye (2004, p. 15) argues that new approaches have been used since the late 1990s which cast government as not just providers but also ‘enablers of vibrant communities’. As with the UK Charity Commission’s principles, Cavaye recommends that governance with such communities needs to operate with a ‘diverse flexible set of principles, structures and methods that can help government and community members manage dilemmas, cope with risks, experiment, and implement tailor-made approaches’ (ibid, p. 13). Such an approach will provide a buffer against the ‘short-term’ approaches to funding, articulated by Faris (2002) and the risks imposed by unexpected changes in the external environment, such as changes in government. Cavaye presents a chart illustrating the components of government-community engagement synthesised from his work and others – Table 2 (Cavaye 2004, p. 10).

Table 2. The components of government: Community engagement (Cavaye 2004)

Elements of good government-community engagement	Factors that support elements of community engagement
'Will', genuine motivation	Motivation to engage and achieve an outcome Negotiated expectations and limits
Relationships and Trust	Accessibility Reciprocity Communication Consistency Continuity of contact
Leadership	Shared leadership Collaborative focus for leaders Attitudes and skills of leaders
Decision-making	Legitimacy to influence decisions A decision-making purpose for engagement Appropriate
Inclusiveness	Diversity of community included Equity of opportunity to participate Processes that allow broad participation Information and awareness
Structures, procedures	Organisational arrangements Protocols Techniques and methods
Accountability	Engagement processes accountable as good practice Government accountability for outcomes from engagement Government and community with mutual obligations
Skills	Ability to manage conflict, include diversity, maintain quality communication
Satisfaction	Gauging the extent of satisfaction with engagement Managing expectations and distinguishing the process from the outcome
Follow Up, sustainability	Appropriate ongoing engagement

In Table 2, the 'Elements of good government-community engagement' are a succinct expression of good governance principles in community engagement with the exposition of these in the second column of the Table.

1.5.3 Benefits to individuals and communities

In a review of the literature on community governance and related concepts, Totikidis, Armstrong and Francis et al. (2005, p. 3) offered a definition of community governance as 'community level management and decision-making that is undertaken by, with, or on behalf of a community, by a group of community stakeholders. The focus on "community" rather than on a corporation, organisation, local government or the public sector is the distinguishing feature of community governance vis-à-vis these other forms of governance'.

The Australian Government's Principles for Social Inclusion in Australia recognise that social inclusion creates 'an environment where all people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives' (Commonwealth of Australia 2011, p. 3). Local governance structures provide an effective mechanism for coordinating services delivered by a range of providers but also, importantly, they are capable of 'representing the community and driving local engagement' (Commonwealth of Australia 2011, p. 6).

The Victorian DPCD's *Building Social Inclusion* policy also reflects this view, stating that 'The engagement of local community members in planning, policy development and priority setting is vital' (DPCD 2008, p. 10). It further states that 'Participation also gives some individuals the skills and confidence to take on decision-making roles in their communities which ensures that communities are represented in planning and policy-making' (ibid, p. 10). Such participation has been alternatively described as participatory governance, engagement governance, collaborative governance or 'grassroots' engagement (McGee, Bazaara et al. 2003; Gaventa 2006) and recognises the effectiveness of 'creative solutions' in meeting community needs beyond specific service delivery (Pillora & McKinlay 2011, p. 14).

This builds on the DPCD's earlier report *Indicators of Community Strength: A Framework and Evidence*, where governance networks at the local level are defined as 'networks that link close personal or associational and community networks to institutions and therefore to power, resources and ideas' and include 'all levels of government and all other organisations that make decisions in, or about, communities' (DPCD 2006, p. 14).

1.5.4 Empowered participatory governance – four international examples

Much of the literature on community governance has come from the United Kingdom with programs initiated under New Labour in the 1990s, but with ongoing findings that conventional service delivery was proving ineffective because of poor connections at the community level. Like the UK, Australia faces the reality 'that effective social services design and delivery requires the ability to tap into unique local knowledge, networks and understandings for which community governance is an appropriate means' (Pillora & McKinlay 2011, p. 10).

In reporting on four initiatives (two in the US, one in Brazil and one in India) to deepen community participation in resolving particular community problems, Fung and Wright (2003) found three general principles that were fundamental to all these initiatives:

1. a focus on specific, tangible problems
2. involvement of ordinary people affected by these problems and officials close to them
3. the deliberative development of solutions to these problems (Fung & Wright 2003, p. 15).

They identify the following distinguishing features of the empowered participatory governance which all four initiatives exhibited:

1. the devolution of public decision authority to empowered local units
2. the creation of formal linkages of responsibility, resource distribution, and communication that connect these units to each other and to centralized authorities
3. the use and generation of new state institutions to support and guide these devolved problem-solving efforts
4. governance structures geared to quite concrete concerns

5. new channels for those most directly affected by targeted problems – typically ordinary citizens and officials in the field – to apply their knowledge, intelligence, and interest to the formulation of solutions
6. deliberative decision-making where participants listen to each other’s positions and generate group choices after due consideration (Fung & Wright 2003, pp. 15–17).

1.5.5 The Hume City Council Community Engagement Framework (scale 1-5)

In Victoria, the Hume City Council’s approach to community engagement has been developed using the International Association for Public Participation’s (IAP2) Spectrum for Public Participation. The spectrum outlines five levels of community engagement, with the lowest level being ‘inform’, while ‘empower’ involves the greatest level of public participation in decision making processes (HCC, n.d.). Table 3 below shows the spectrum of community roles in decision-making at the local level.

Table 3. Levels of public engagement and empowerment

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Objective				
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Examples				
Fact sheets, websites, information sessions.	Written submissions, focus groups, surveys, public meetings.	Workshops, deliberative polling, expert panels.	Advisory committees, participatory decision making.	Citizen juries, ballots, delegated decisions.
Role of communities				
Communities are passive receivers of information, don’t have the ability to influence decisions or make changes to existing services or structures. They are ‘told’ what is happening.	Communities have an opportunity to provide their feedback and respond to proposed activities or decisions. But there are no ‘guarantees’ that their input will make a difference to the decisions made.	Communities have an opportunity to be involved in an ongoing way, and to provide their perspective and identify alternatives. There is some influence on final outcomes.	Communities are invited to provide their perspectives and solutions, and this input has an influence over final decisions made.	Communities have the final say in decisions that affect their lives.

(©IAP2)

The spectrum runs from communities being passive, inactive receivers of information to final decision-makers on issues affecting their lives. The report cautions that the table should not be read as a bad to good spectrum – inform to empower – and that engagement can lead in fact to engagement and consultation exhaustion in local communities. What the table does suggest is the value of adopting a flexible approach when engagement with communities is being planned. One issue might be better served by using a consultative approach while another might be best done through a collaborative approach. It is for this reason that many of these studies find that governance models need to be flexible and creative.

A recent example of this framework operating in practice is the development of Hume City Council's *Learning Together 2030* and action plan – *Learning Together 3 (LT3) 2010-2013*. To develop these documents, workshops were held across the City including an education round table discussion hosted by the Mayor involving teachers, Council officers, career advisors, educational planners, community development workers, service agencies, local learning networks, tertiary providers, neighbourhood house coordinators, students, parents and interested residents. They were all linked together by a common goal of enhancing opportunities for the community through lifelong learning, and throughout the process, demonstrated commitment, dedication and collaboration to develop a long term strategy that will benefit generations today and into the future (HCC 2010b). This strategy was implemented in recognition of the importance of engaging residents as partners to the planning process. The strategy was successful because the process empowered and inspired residents to work together. It developed a sense of community spirit and an interest in contributing to the future of the community.

As a small regional community, Gwydir has necessarily taken a less structured approach to governance. While it does have a formally constituted governance body, its consultation processes are more organic and rely on the strong communication networks operating in the community. For example, GLR supports a Shire-wide band based at Warialdra High School. The Shire pays for the uniform, subsidises the salary of a music teacher and provides other support as required. The Principal told of cultural exchange program with a select Sydney High School, and at short notice the GLR paid for a teacher from Sydney to visit Gwydir to help plan the visit, so that the city students would be better informed about the region (GLR, stakeholder interview, 2013).

The other side of this equation, however, is that accountability is also strong because of the same rapid communication processes conducted by this community networking.

The strong trend towards increased community engagement has seen community governance evolve to the point where it is foreseeable that local communities challenge the right of councils to deliver particular services (such as libraries, learning centres or sports centres) which will in turn, impact on the role of local government. In communities with highly empowered community governance structures, such as Hume and Gwydir, the 'newly emerging role for councils of working with their communities to determine what their needs are and how they can best be met' is overtaking service delivery in its importance (McKinlay, Pillora et al. 2012, p. 7). As community governance evolves however, new challenges arise, including how to extend empowered community engagement beyond the confines of the usually narrow spheres in which it operates. In addition, the evaluations of the various Victorian community building initiatives of the last decade present a mixed picture of effectiveness, 'although on balance the experience...has been seen as positive by both councils and communities (Pillora and McKinlay 2011, p. 27).

1.5.6 Principles of engaged community governance

From the above examples and the literature on community governance, effective principles can be summarised as:

- Responsiveness to local circumstances by civic authorities
- Early delivery of social infrastructure
- Harnessing local community influence to achieve common goals
- Alignment of community issues with government goals
- Strong strategic and operational community plans
- Clear accountability structures
- Advocacy of local issues
- Authorising body has the final say on objectives and evaluation
- Evaluation processes
- Strong and close support from local government
- Broad diversity of representation possessing forms of authority and decision-making
- Deeply collaborative networks of public, private, not-for-profit and non-government agencies and local communities
- Practical, flexible and creative governance structures
- Cross-sectoral community partnerships for economic and social development.

1.6 Impact and outcomes

The HGLV, GLR and other communities use a learning community approach to address what Vinson (2004) identifies as individual and household disadvantages which can become entrenched within certain localities within Australia. The argument is that learning can be used as a strategy to address economic and social outcomes (HCC 2010a). Wilkinson and Pickett (2010, p. 103) note:

People with more education earn more, are more satisfied with their work and leisure time, are less likely to be unemployed, more likely to be healthy, less likely to be criminals, more likely to volunteer their time and vote in elections.

Buddelmeyer and Leung et al. (2012) conducted an extensive study on the impact of education and training, in particular, the lack of post-school qualifications, on the level of social exclusion. Not surprisingly they found there is a clear link between education and social inclusion. They identified that ‘the biggest impact on social inclusion through education is expected to come from efforts to increase Year 12 completion rates and/or the completion of Certificate III qualifications rather than from efforts to increase the proportion of people with even higher levels of qualifications.’ (Buddelmeyer, Leung et al. 2012, p. 8).

Since the establishment of GLR, major challenges are low incomes and low educational outcomes:

I don’t think it was too much of a leap of faith to decide that there was a definite correlation between those two statistics for our community. That if you wanted to address the low household income, you really needed to address the level of educational achievement (Eastcott 2012).

The council led the way by focusing on its own organisation, initially putting in place literacy, numeracy and other training to ensure that all employees had a minimum education level of Certificate III. The CEO says they have well and truly exceeded their vision of becoming a learning organisation, with 97% of council staff

holding a Certificate III or above. A study on the impact of adult learning was recently undertaken in the United Kingdom as part of a wider national discussion on identifying evidence needed to prove the impact of adult learning for decision-making at a local and national level. Fujiwara and Campbell (2011) found that adult learning, in the form of participating in part-time courses, had a positive effect in the four areas of life that were studied; health, employment, social relationships and volunteering. They were able to estimate a monetary value on any positive effect using the Well-being Valuation (WV) technique. While they recommend against aggregating the results because there are other domains or areas of life that were not investigated, it is nevertheless helpful as a way of comparing the different areas. The study found that, for adults, participating in a part-time course led to:

- Improvements in health (+12% value to the individual)
- A greater likelihood of finding a job and/or staying in a job (+19% to an individual)
- Better social relationships (+57% value to the individual)
- A greater likelihood that people volunteer on a regular basis (+11% of a total \$ amount to an individual).

In Victoria a longitudinal study of adult learners who have undertaken pre-accredited (or non-formal) courses was commissioned by The Adult, Community and Further Education Board (ACFE). Almost 6,000 learners across Victoria have taken part in the initial survey. While final results will be available later in 2013, preliminary analysis found that learners' motives for undertaking the pre-accredited courses were complex but included cultural benefits, greater self-confidence, personal organisation, better communication skills and work-related motives such as improving job skills and/or changing jobs (ACFE 2012).

The challenge for learning communities is how to effectively measure the impacts and outcomes of learning community approaches.

1.6.1 Program logic evaluation

The health promotion field offers useful insights on the ways to measure the impact and outcomes of particular health promotion interventions using a program logic approach, and this has been adapted to evaluate learning community programs (DHS 2003; Hughes, Black et al. 2008; Wheeler, Wong et al. 2012, p. 93). While there are differing views on the term's impact and output, particularly with reference to different interventions, the following provided by the Victorian Government Department of Human Services is particularly useful and relevant for evaluating learning communities. There are three key levels of evaluation for health promotion which are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4. Levels of evaluation

Levels of evaluation	Focus	Data examples
Process	Delivery of programs.	Number of participants from target groups and variety of programs undertaken.
Impact	Immediate impact programs have on people, stakeholders and settings to influence the determinants of education and health.	Improved knowledge taken away from the program by the participants. Increased knowledge of local learning opportunities and skills training. Changes to action and behaviour in relation to learning and health.
Outcome	Long-term benefits or outcomes. Could be for individual and/or cohorts and/or community.	Case studies and longitudinal data. For example, census data on educational attainment, youth disengagement, quality of life.

Typical components of a program logic evaluation are covered comprehensively in practical booklets such as those the Victorian Government's Department of Human Services or the Queensland Government's Department of Communities (DHS 2003; Queensland Government 2004). These reports and other guides such as partnership analysis tools (VicHealth 2011; VCOSS n.d.) are good starting points for practitioners to think about evaluating their work in this area.

1.6.2 Measuring impact and outcomes in social research

This discipline of measuring impact and outcomes of research in applied social science work, which includes intervention such as a learning community approaches, needs to be pragmatic and realistic (Stanwick & Hargreaves 2012). Many learning partnership programs have applied evaluation and an action learning process to measure progress along the way (Wheeler, Phillips et al. 2005; Mitchell 2006; Galbally & Wong 2008).

Evaluating these approaches has evolved over time. Cavaye and Wheeler et al. (2013) identify a number of challenges involved in developing rigorous frameworks and methodologies to assess the inherently qualitative, complex and long-term nature of learning and community change. These include:

- Evaluation frameworks need to measure impacts at the individual, organisation and community levels and also contend with long-term changes and variables that are difficult to measure such as attitude change, development of relationships and the extent of collaboration. At the same time it needs to be pragmatic and realistic (Stanwick & Hargreaves 2012).
- Government, funders and policy developers have shown an enduring preference for definitive quantitative measures and there is a tendency to devalue qualitative indicators and social outcomes. 'Learning communities' has been a difficult concept for some potential supporters and community members to understand and support in a climate of greatly increased competition for public funds.
- While learning communities must have clear outcomes for funders and community participants, it has been challenging to have evaluation seen and used as a tool for continuous improvement rather than a 'report card' for funders.

- The measurement of community change involves some fundamental limitations that need to be understood prior to measuring variables. Some of these issues are:
 - Isolating effects and attribution. Because learning communities work through partnerships it becomes difficult to attribute particular outcomes to learning community activities.
 - Establishing a baseline. Traditional evaluation involves measuring the absolute level of a variable at one point in time and establishing a baseline or benchmark (Macneil et al. 1994; Craig 2002; Salvaris et al. 2000). This is compared with absolute measures of the same variable at a later time to assess change. This lends itself to variables that can be measured in a community absolutely such as income, median age, volunteering, and health status. In contrast, many learning community outcomes are subjective and difficult to measure across a community to form a baseline. For example, the level of social capital or feelings of empowerment across a community.
 - Direct and indirect effects. There are direct programs and activities with specific stakeholders such as learning providers and local government. Stakeholders also act to embed learning and empower other stakeholders such as local businesses and community organisations. The indirect influences are much more difficult to attribute to learning community projects.
 - Establishing a suitable timeframe. The timeframe for learning community initiatives is long term – five to twenty years. However, evaluation is often tied to funding for one to three years. Therefore the bias is often the number of activities rather than outcomes.

All of these challenges and issues have been faced by the HGLV and GLR. There is recognition of the complexity of the learning community initiatives and an increasing understanding of the importance of tackling evaluation as providing an evidence base. For example, at a recent meeting of the HGLV Advisory Board the Council discussed moving towards strengthening quantitative analysis of the benefits of the HGLV. It is proposed that this would be teamed up with initiatives by the HGLV operational members to develop a template to collect stories of how learning has made a difference in the lives of individuals and organisations within the City of Hume.

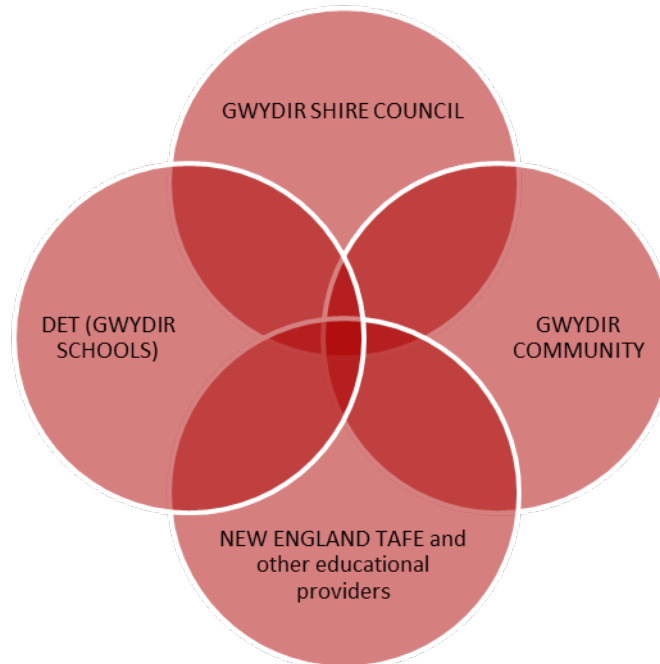
There is a growing interest in measuring the collective impact of partnerships to address a range of social issues, including education. Kania and Kramer (2011) discuss examples from the US where long term commitments were made by strategic partners from different sectors to set a common agenda to solve a specific social problem. They highlight examples where actions are supported by a 'shared measurement system, mutually reinforcing activities, and ongoing communication'. They have documented some success, especially in Cincinnati where community leaders decided to 'abandon their individual agenda in favour of a collective approach towards improving student achievement.' Community leaders 'realized that fixing one point of the educational continuum – such as better after-school programs – wouldn't make much difference unless all parts of the continuum improved at the same time (Kania & Kramer p. 36).' This is also the central idea behind the HGLV and GLR.

2. Section B: Case Studies

2.1 Gwydir Learning Region

I think we're about genuinely looking at the individual, whether he/she is a student at school or an older person within the community, and trying to tailor something that improves their life – CEO, Gwydir Shire

Figure 1: Gwydir Learning Region



Source: Cuskelly 2009

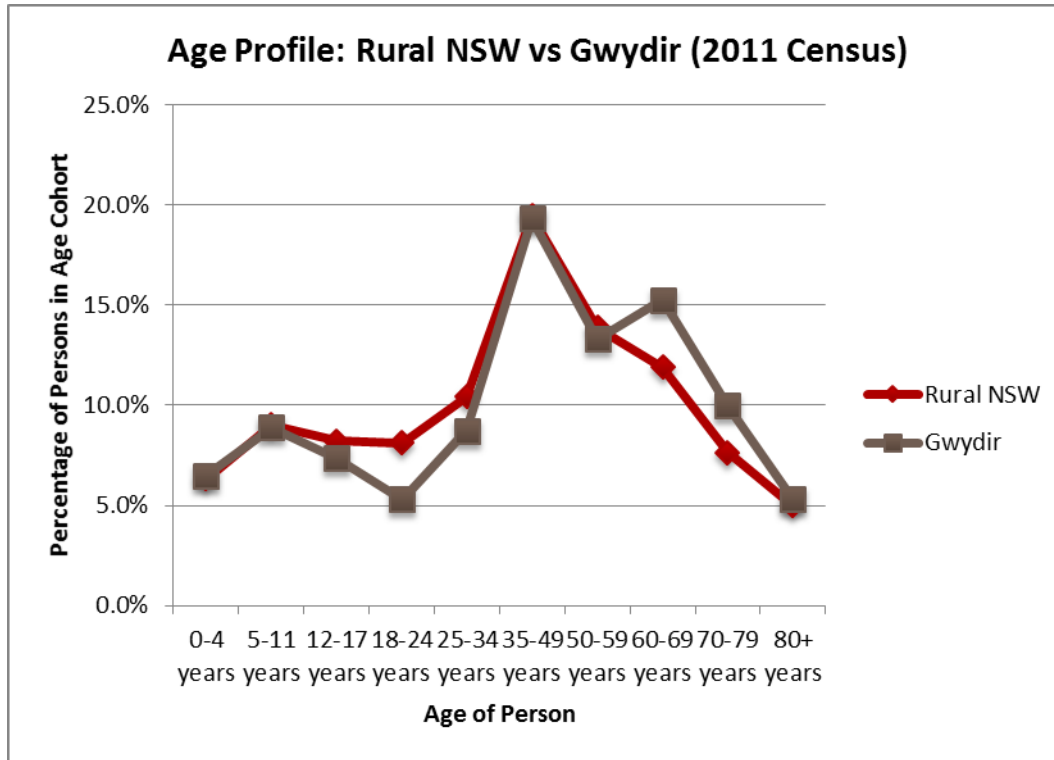
The Gwydir Learning Region (GLR) is a strategic partnership consisting of the various local educational providers and the Gwydir Shire Council.

Gwydir Shire is located in Northwest NSW and covers an area of 9,000km². It consists of a number of small towns and villages – Warialda, Bingara, Gravesend, North Star, Croppa Creek, Coolatai, Cobbadah and Upper Horton.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census for 2011, there were 4,965 people in Gwydir (A) (Local Government Area). Of these, 50.6% were male and 49.4% were female. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 3.8% of the population. The vast majority of people were born in Australia (92.8%), higher than for New South Wales (NSW) (83.8%), and the most common ancestries being Australian (37.4%), English (35.2%), Irish (8.3%) and Scottish (8%). The Shire has an aging population with 30.5% of people sixty years or over, compared with 20.5% for New South Wales (see Figure 2). 25% of people were aged 24 or

younger, lower than the NSW average of 28.1%. The most common responses for religion were Anglican (43.9%), Catholic (21.3%), no religion (11.9%), Presbyterian and Reformed (7.4%) and Uniting Church (4.7%).

Figure 2. Gwydir (Gwydir (A) LGA 13660) and rest of New South Wales (1RNSW) Age Profile



Source: ABS, 2011 Census of Population and Housing Basic Community Profile, Cat. No. 2001.0

2.1.1 Drivers to become a learning community

The key challenges were low levels of household income and very low levels of educational attainment. There was a belief that to address low household income you needed to address educational attainment. There was a need to expand the engagement of post-school workers into additional training. It was also important to expand pathways for young people, especially vocational options.

In 2003, the newly formed Gwydir Shire Council established the Gwydir Learning Region (GLR) as a partnership framework by which key stakeholders from across sectors could address these challenges.

The GLR mission ‘to do what is necessary to ensure high quality education and training is available, accessible, affordable, adaptable and acceptable for people of all ages and stages of life who live in or are associated with the Gwydir Shire (Gwydir Shire 2012).’

From the beginning, GLR has been about providing focused leadership from across sectors – Federal, State and local government, as well as from the education sector including schools, vocational education, adult education and universities to form a regional learning hub.

Gwydir Shire continues to work with these challenges but is making progress. A comparison of census data identifies that the population has declined from 5,310 in 2006 to 4,965 in 2011. Tables 5 and 6 show that median weekly incomes have increased but are below rural NSW figures. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate that there

has been an increase in the number of people in Gwydir with non-school qualifications, especially at the Certificate level, but this is below rural NSW figures.

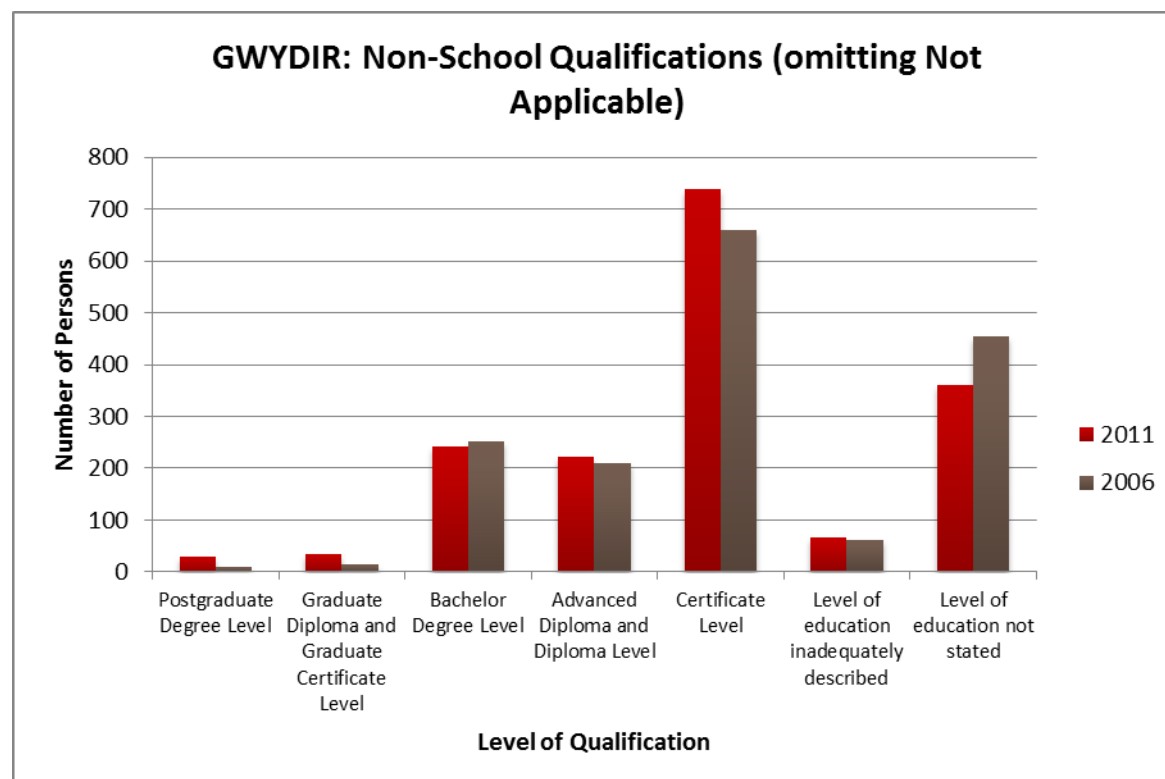
	2011	2006
Median total personal income (\$/weekly)	387	328
Median total family income (\$/weekly)	907	731
Median total household income (\$/weekly)	726	612

Source: ABS Census 2006 and 2011

	Rural NSW	Gwydir
Median total personal income (\$/weekly)	490	387
Median total family income (\$/weekly)	1,215	907
Median total household income (\$/weekly)	961	726

Source: ABS Census 2011

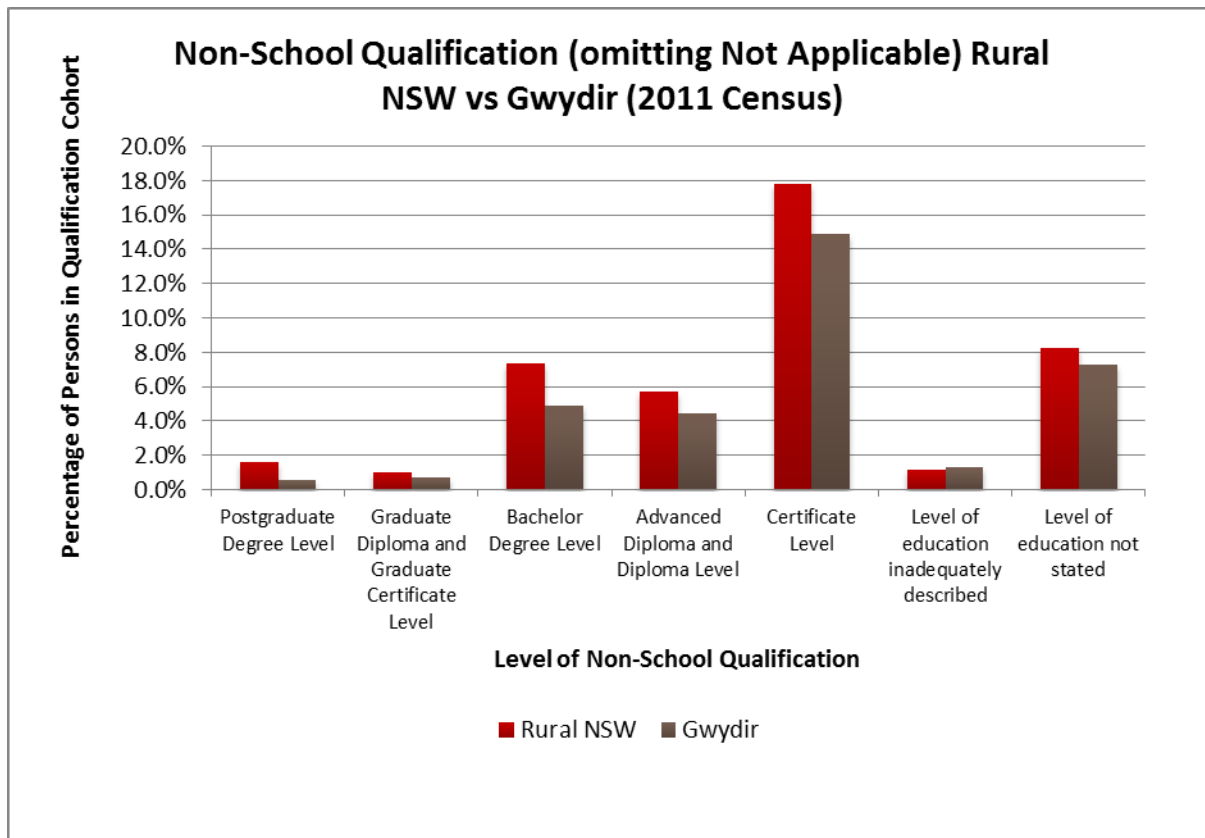
Figure 3. Non-school qualifications (omitting not applicable)



Source: ABS, 2006 and 2011 Census of Population and Housing Basic Community Profile, Cat. No. 2001.0

Note: in the chart above the 'not applicable' category has been omitted in order to provide time series analysis between 2006 and 2011.

Figure 4: Non-school qualification (omitting not applicable) Rural NSW vs Gwydir (2011 census) – over 15 year olds



Source: ABS, 2011 Census of Population and Housing Basic Community Profile, Cat. No. 2001.0

2.1.2 Significant changes as identified by key stakeholders

The following changes are themed and identified through personal interviews with ten stakeholders and eleven former learners who participated in GLR programs. Stakeholders included the local Federal MP for Parkes, the Mayor of Gwydir Shire and other representatives from local government (CEO, Training and Development Coordinator) and TAFE (Director of Educational Operations), the Secondary School Principal and Secondary School teachers (2), and industry partners (2).

i. There has been significant movement towards building a culture of learning within the Shire

The majority of the stakeholders spoke of the building of a culture of learning which had also developed a sense of community. The Mayor, the Federal MP for Parkes and the Training and Development Officer for Gwydir Shire perceived a whole of community change and think that the community now sees the importance of education. The CEO says it has been a staged development to build this culture, first building a model of a learning organisation within council and then developing a coalition of stakeholders from across community, business and education.

One of the biggest nights of the year is now the annual awards night, where awards are presented to trainees and students, employees and employers –Mayor

The secondary school Principal thought that ‘GLR thinks outside the square – it tends to offer students alternatives to the normal curriculum patterns.’

There was also evidence that the work of the GLR had brought the two main towns in Gwydir Shire, Warialda and Bingara, closer together. The TAFE Director thought that there had ‘been more of a uniting of thinking in Warialda and Bingara’ and others identified that common timetabling of trade training centre activity between the two towns will continue to help in this regard.

ii. There is evidence of building of a skill base within organisations, and within communities

Very early in the development of the GLR, the Shire Council declared itself a learning community. The CEO thought he could make an immediate impact by addressing the lack of literacy, numeracy and educational achievement within his own staff. This has had a ripple effect into the community. The Mayor noted that this has given people ‘a sense of the future and knowledge that you can climb the ladder within the organisation.’

Also identified were the success in building the aged care workforce, with 160 mainly mature age students having undertaken an aged care course in partnership with a local community college.

The importance of the work to build capacity in the residents of the Shire is summed up by one of the learners:

People have learnt and got employment in the area, in the Gwydir area, and it’s helped with the hostel, hospital, and all the Shire work, some of the trainees and even in the community. They’ve helped with all the learning, and it’s kept the younger ones in the community, and some of the older ones that haven’t moved away. – Learner

iii. Local government plays an important role in driving the learning agenda

A major success factor is by having GLR as part of the local government, which is outside of education per se, people such as the Mayor or the General Manager can take up issues and, irrespective of the provider, shop around or have those discussions so that it’s not seen as being driven by TAFE versus university versus school. – TAFE Director

iv. The focus on contributing to community change through personal support for individuals involved in training and learning

A key feature of the GLR is the personalised learning support given to learners of all ages within the Shire. Community members gave numerous examples of how the support given at a local level, by the careers teacher(s) at the local high school and backed up by the support of the local council had changed their lives. Very often the student was at risk of leaving school early. The careers teacher would intervene and genuinely take an interest in the learner and their future employment/career goals. Creative solutions were

They pushed and pushed and pushed and a few rules were bent and broken and twisted around which enabled me to complete my Cert III in Children’s Services while I was still at school – Learner, now a social services assistant employed by Gwydir Shire Council

sought that often involved looking for ways around the ‘red tape’ and the bureaucracy. If possible this would be backed up with practical support from the Shire Council under the auspices of the GLR.

Examples include:

- A young woman undertook a school-based apprenticeship as a chef in a commercial cookery and hospitality and is now working full time in the industry.
- A young man found it hard to settle at school. The careers teacher organised a traineeship on a property and now, several years later, he successfully works on the farm.
- A young man was guided into a week's work experience in auto electronics and went on to complete a computer electronics course at school and then an apprenticeship. He now runs a successful auto electronics business in Moree which has grown considerably over the last three years. He has won awards, including best auto-electrician under 25 in Australia. He now employs a number of apprentices including former students from Warialda High School.
- A young man was supported to get a traineeship at McMaster Research Station when he was in Years 11 and 12 and this, combined with good results, enabled him to get a place in a Bachelor of Agriculture in Armadale.
- A young woman had just finished a traineeship in accountancy with a local firm and from that was offered a cadetship which included funding and studying for an accountancy degree.

At any age you can go to the careers teachers and ask advice about a pathway and it might be a pathway that you have not even thought about – Learner

v. It builds the 'cultural mortar' of a community

The Shire and its partners have worked hard to ensure that the message gets out that GLR has a broader focus beyond skills training for employment. Examples of this include cultural music exchanges with a Sydney-based school and support for a Gwydir Shire-wide music program that links different schools and has opportunities for community members to be involved:

If you look at Warialda there is no music apart from the music at the high school and this is done through the Gwydir Learning Region so we have community members who come in and are part of the band. Some parents come and learn with their children. It is one area where we can come in and say that the community is participating in continuous learning. – Music teacher

Another example is a Centre of Excellence based at a local secondary school, linked to a university, aimed at improving teacher quality. The Shire also funds the accommodation of visiting student teachers on placement.

It also makes a difference to families, as this former adult learner attests:

My husband is on a disability pension... and now with me having a job we can go places and do lots of things that we hadn't been able to do for years. – Former adult learner who is now a VET Nurse Manager

2.1.3 Challenges

There was a genuine voice of frustration coming through in some of the interviews – especially from those stakeholders who had been involved in the GLR for a long time. It arose from the issue that even though much had been achieved, there were still significant social issues, especially in relation to youth disengagement, making the stakeholders believe that the job was not yet complete. Census data from 2006 and 2011 also shows an increase in youth disengagement – especially in the 15–19 years old category. There is a perceived lack of responsiveness of the ‘bureaucracy’ to help support locals dealing with social issues on the ground in a timely manner.

There is a Catch-22 here with the social side of the community and the educational side. Some would say it’s only through education we’re going to change the social side of things and I would argue if we don’t fix up the social issues then I’m not getting effective learning in the classroom –
Principal

In a submission to a State Government inquiry into rural and regional NSW, the Gwydir Shire Council pushed strongly that more government functions should be devolved down to local government, especially in regional and rural areas, for example NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS), especially in terms of children services issues.

The CEO of Gwydir Shire talked about the complexity in using the term ‘learning community’. There has been a level of difficulty in explaining the concept to people within State Government Departments.

A majority of stakeholders also talked about the problems created by changes in personnel. This is hugely important in leadership roles, for example the Principal of Warialda High School or a key role within Gwydir Shire Council. For example, ‘what happens to GLR when the CEO leaves?’ was one comment. Succession planning is an important consideration for the future.

2.1.4 Outcomes

- Awards and recognition:
 - Recognition of GLR by the Director-General of Education and Assistant Director of Education (Schools) as an exemplar for rural education in 2005 and 2006
 - Recognition of Gwydir Shire Council as an exemplar for local government administration with the AR Bluett Award in 2006
 - Recognition by the national training awards committee (Adelaide) in 2006.
- The local business awards dinner has been very important for recognising businesses and learners and also linking initiatives in Bingara and Warialda.
- Investment in learning and social infrastructure which adds value and is an innovative approach to training and employment:
 - Roxy Theatre is now a beautifully restored art deco theatre in the town of Bingara. It also incorporates a hospitality Trade Training Centre. People who undertake the training also have the opportunity to cater for functions at the Theatre.
 - The Living Classroom in Bingara. This is under development but incorporates a primary industry trade training and research centre and is located on 150 hectares of degraded town Common

- and will be turned into a highly productive food forest – combining a wide range of agricultural activities with horticulture, aquaculture and forestry.
- Warialda High School incorporates a new automotive trade training centre.
 - Council’s involvement in the GLR is a significant cornerstone in its Sustainability Strategy for the area and its community and is incorporated into the *Gwydir Shire Council Community Strategic Plan 2013 to 2023*.
 - In 2013 the Shire Council is applying to become a Registered Training Organisation in its own right. This will enable it to be more strategic and flexible in meeting the training needs of residents in Gwydir.

2.1.5 Lessons for other learning communities

The lessons for other rural communities are well summarised by the following recommendations from the eleven former learners of GLR:

1. Give everyone an opportunity – ‘no is not always the answer’. Give a career path a go, it is always better to try something out.
2. It is great to have the backing of initiatives such as GLR. It gives reassurance that if a person wanted to go back to study as a mature-age student, the opportunities are still there.
3. Get employers on board so that they are willing to take on trainees or volunteers to get some experience.
4. Have innovative ways of delivering training, especially when in a rural community, for example use technology to deliver lectures, but have local mentors so that learners get a personal touch as well.

As local entrepreneur Ross Hutton says, it is hugely important to harness the enthusiasm of young people for GLR. ‘You won’t have succeeded no matter how many awards you win and how big chested you feel you are until your next generation is just as enthusiastic’ (Hutton 2012).

Learning community author and commentator, Peter Kearns (2012b), thinks the main lesson to learn from GLR is about harnessing local enterprise and leadership at the council level:

Max and his companions have done a wonderful job in a country area with very poor resources – in the past – affected by the drought and rural poverty. They’ve really shown what self-help initiative, collaboration could do. An example is the Roxy Theatre which was a rundown cinema. They restored it as a collaborative partnership. It is a splendid initiative.

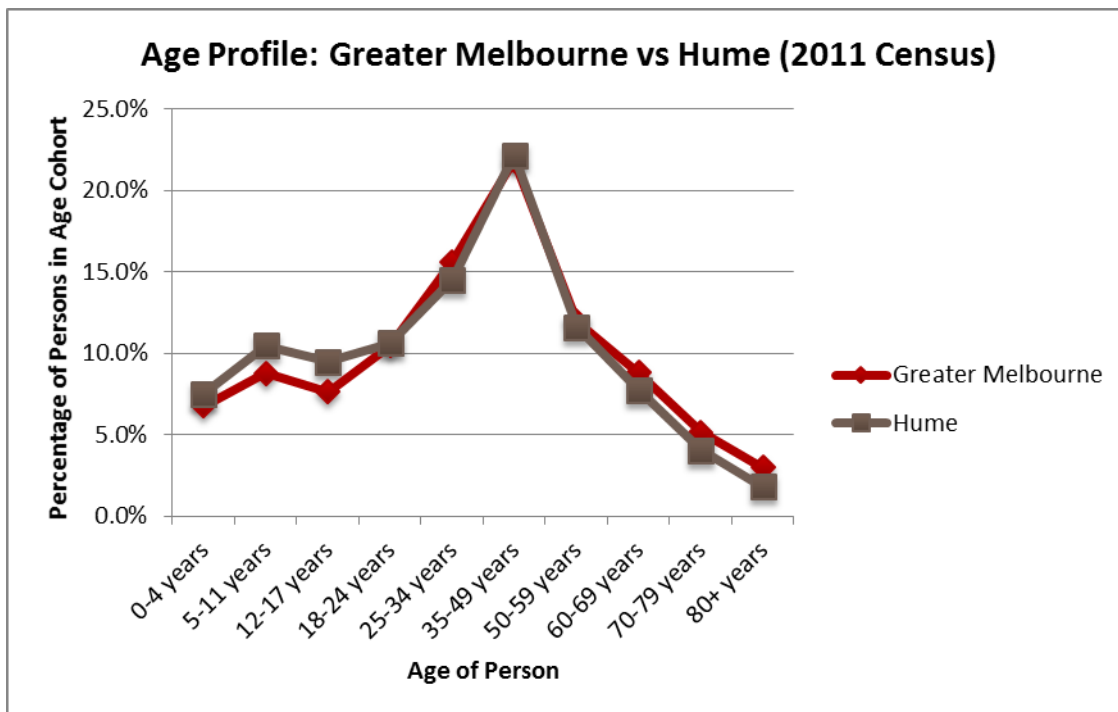
2.2 The Hume Global Learning Village

The driving principle is that it takes a village to raise a child, in the 21st Century that child will need to be globally connected (McGuire 2012).

Hume City is located on the urban-rural fringe, just twenty kilometres Northwest of Melbourne, Victoria. Its 504km² comprise approximately 65% rural land, 25% urban land and 10% occupied by the Melbourne Airport. It covers the Statistical Local Areas (SLA) of older established areas such as Broadmeadows and Sunbury and newer areas such as Roxburgh Park and Craigieburn. Within those regions there are a number of industries including Melbourne International Airport, freight, engineering, automotive manufacturing, steel, plastics, electronics, communications and tourism.

Hume City is a growing population. The 2011 census estimated the population at 167,560. The 2006 census had the population at 147,781. It has a very culturally diverse population with over 140 nationalities speaking 125 languages other than English at home, with 32.2% of the population being born overseas. In addition, the Indigenous community is 0.6% of the population which is higher than the Melbourne average (ABS Census 2011). The City has a large number of young people, with 38.1% of its residents aged twenty four years or younger, greater than the Melbourne average of 32.3%. Those residents aged sixty years and above is 13.6%, which is lower than the Melbourne Average of 18.2%. It is also a multi-faith community and a much lower proportion of residents identifying as ‘no religion’ when compared to the Melbourne average.

Figure 5: Hume (Hume (C) LGA 23270) and Greater Melbourne (2GMEL) – Age profile



Source: ABS, 2011 Census of Population and Housing Basic Community Profile, Cat. No. 2001.0

2.2.1 Drivers to develop and maintain the learning community

Broadmeadows and surrounding suburbs lacked a library and also had few community education opportunities. In particular, the Broadmeadows SLA had significantly lower levels of educational attainment when compared to the metropolitan Melbourne Statistical Division (MSD). McGuire noted the lack of coordination by various levels of government and a growing number of young people who were marginalised and socially isolated (McGuire 2000). The state's response was 'build a bigger police station and a grander court house. However, this was addressing the symptoms, not the causes (McGuire 2012).'

In the mid-90s Hume City Council's Safe City Task Force chaired by Frank McGuire took a radical and positive approach to community building by focusing on learning as the key to social and economic wellbeing for all citizens, and the concept of the Hume Global Learning Village (HGLV) was born. The idea was to shift away from a *punitive* model to a *preventative* model. A founding feature of the HGLV was the establishment in 2003 of the first public library in Broadmeadows, known as the Hume Global Learning Centre (HGLC). McGuire thought the municipality had to be global in its outlook and aspiration, learning lifelong, the village established as a sense of place and a connector.

Hume remains one of the most disadvantaged local government authorities in Victoria according to the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas. Some areas of Hume City are more disadvantaged than others, for example Broadmeadows. The index reflects disadvantage such as low income, low educational attainment, high unemployment and jobs in relatively unskilled occupations. Some progress has been made. Tables 7 and 8 demonstrate that median weekly incomes in Hume City have increased in absolute terms but are below those for Greater Melbourne. Figure 6 and 7 illustrate non-school qualifications for those over 15 years of age. Non-school qualifications remain below those of Greater Melbourne apart from Certificate level qualifications.

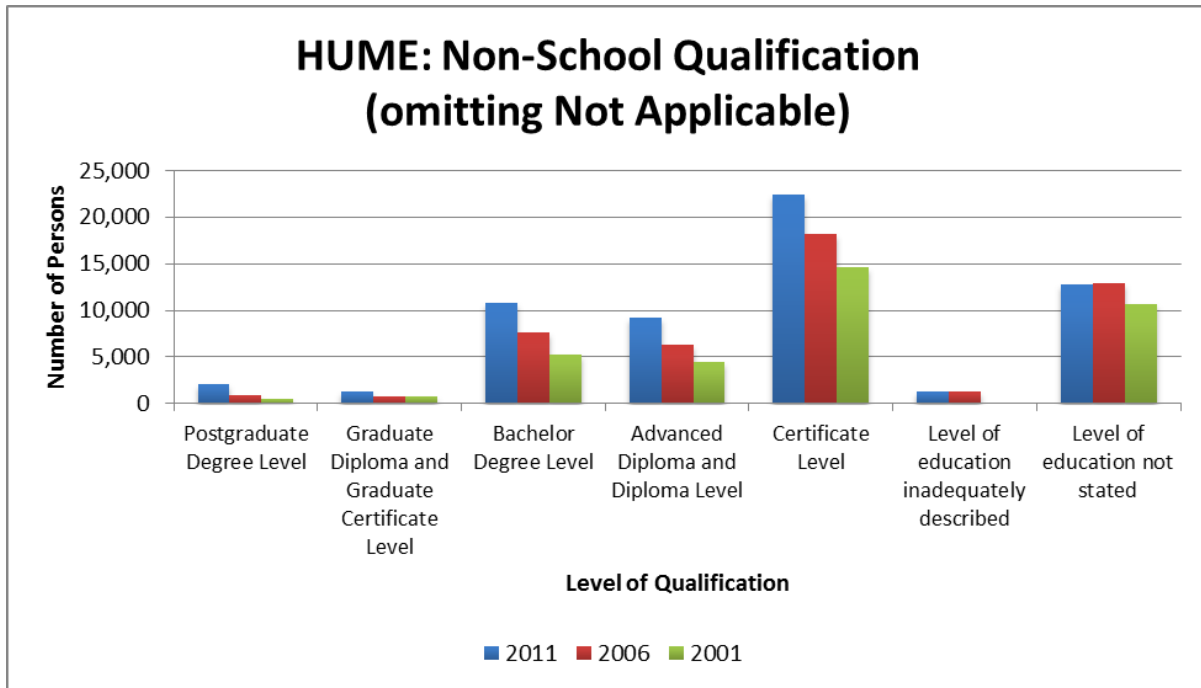
Table 7. Hume: Median weekly incomes - 15 year olds and over	2011	2006
Median total personal income (\$/weekly)	477	403
Median total family income (\$/weekly)	1,309	1,002
Median total household income (\$/weekly)	1,214	1,030

Source: ABS census 2006 and 2011

Table 8. Greater Melbourne vs Hume: Median weekly incomes - 15 years old and over	Greater Melbourne	Hume
Median total personal income (\$/weekly)	591	477
Median total family income (\$/weekly)	1,576	1,309
Median total household income (\$/weekly)	1,333	1,214

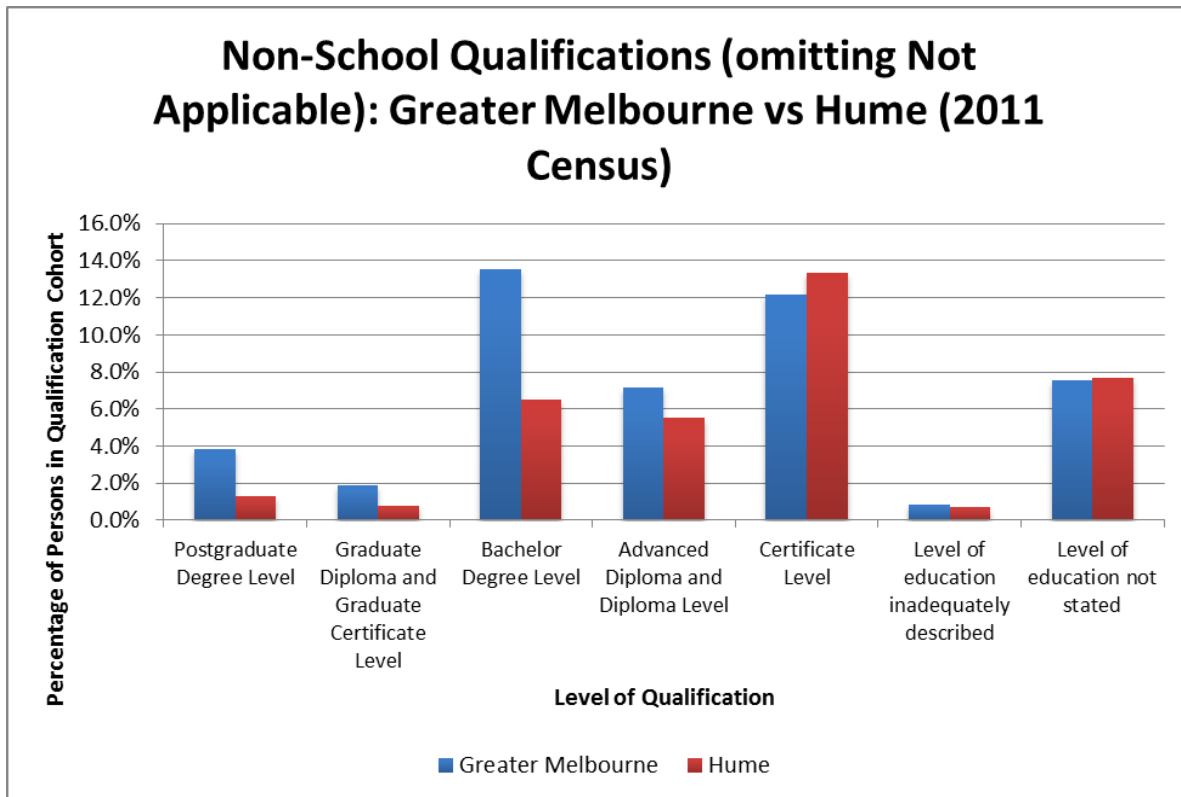
Source: ABS census 2011

Figure 6. Hume non-school qualifications – over 15 year olds (omitting not applicable)



Source: ABS 2001, 2006 and 2011 Census of Population and Housing Basic Community Profile, Cat. No. 2001.0. Note: In the chart above the Not Applicable category has been omitted in order to provide time series analysis between 2006 and 2011.

Figure 7. Hume Non-School Qualifications – over 15 years olds (omitting Not Applicable)



Source: ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing Basic Community Profile, Cat. No. 2001.0

2.2.2 Significant changes as identified by stakeholders

Twenty stakeholders were interviewed including one focus group of 14 members of the HGLV operational committee, representing Hume City Council (5), secondary school (1), primary school (1), not for profit (1), local learning and employment network (1), TAFE institute (1), community member (1), LearnLocal (ACE) (1), public housing estate (1), and industry (1). Individual interviews were held with the chair of the HGLV committee and the chair of the HGLV, two senior managers within Hume City Council and three members of the HGLV Advisory Board.

The following significant changes are based on these interviews and themed accordingly.

i. The building of the Global Learning Centre at Broadmeadows

The investment in social and learning infrastructure in Hume City such as the original HGLC at Broadmeadows, the Visycare Centre at Meadow Heights, the new HGLC Craigieburn, the Schools Regeneration Program, the learning hubs, and a proposed HGLC at Sunbury is immensely important in the development of the learning community.

The HGLC at Broadmeadows was identified as a catalyst for change at a whole range of levels.

The buildings are important. They are learning hubs and people come in to learn different things – to meet and talk and read. They will evolve over time. The way they are now will not be the way they are in five years' time (HGLV Committee).

It's been a story that can be told, it's been a promotional opportunity for visiting politicians. It's provided the community with a level of opportunity and focus that it's not had before. It's provided most importantly library facilities or for people to come and sit and read and include them socially, provide them with free internet access. It's probably for about the last seven years since it's been opened, been a physical presence that you cannot ignore, that has contributed to people thinking about learning at the forefront of what takes place – Manager, Economic Development, 2012

The HGLV committee members thought of the HGLV at Broadmeadows as a central meeting place. A 'microcosm', a 'connecting point', and 'even though Broadmeadows is not the centre of Hume it is somewhere everyone knows where to come to.' The building is 'not too expensive' nor 'too imposing'. Community people feel free to move around the building and staff are always willing to pitch in and help.

ii. The ability of people within Hume City to turn a deficit into a challenge

The Chair of the HGLV said the use of optimistic language highlights opportunities. Others spoke of what is possible rather than talking about deficits. The sense of optimism came through in a number of interviews.

Stakeholders such as Frank McGuire, the first person to grow up in Broadmeadows to become its elected member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly, has written extensively about the challenges and how they were overcome (McGuire 2000; McGuire 2009).

The critical thing is that it is there. It lives. It works. No is not the answer! That is the proposition (McGuire 2012).

The Director of Organisation and Community Learning said that it ‘took enormous leadership to step into a space that was not traditionally a council role,’ and ‘I am very proud of the council and the courage it has demonstrated in moving into this role.’

iii. The 20- year strategic plan and innovative practices of the HGLV (14 HGLV members)

There has been an evolution in the development of the HGLV and also the strategy that underpins this. *Learning Together 2030* is the third strategic plan and as one partner says, ‘it moved from “we are going to do all these things” to a set of aims. It has really grown over time.’

I would select the 20-year strategic plan because it provides a framework for all sorts of things and gives us three-year action plans – TAFE

iv. The routinisation of the Village and evolution in the alignment of council planning

The HGLV is a robust model that has stood up to changes in key personnel:

The Village has gone through two phases of generational change and the concept continues and adds value despite the changes in leadership. The generational change has been accompanied by continuing strength of council commitment (Wilson 2012b).

The alignment of council planning has also evolved. There is now close alignment of the plans of the Learning Communities Department with those of the Economic Development Department. The Council Plan contains a learning objective and employment objectives. The Economic Development Manager and the Learning Community Department Manager also have actions to achieve under the headings of learning and employment. This flows down to actions to be achieved through the Village and hence the 2030 strategy and Learning Together action plans.

Alignment of the Council Community Plan with Learning Plans

The council has a 2030 community plan, a Social Justice Charter and a Council Plan (2009-2013) which is revised every 4 years. The current learning strategy – *Learning Together 2030* is directly aligned to these. LT3- Learning Together Action Plan 2010–2013 aligns to the Council Plan and hence the next learning together action plan will be LT4 – from 2013 to 2017. The next council plan will also be from 2013 to 2017. There are now very clear connections about what happens in the council community plan and the learning strategy. There was significant consultation to develop LT3. The actions, milestones and LT4 will build on LT3.

Over time the Council has become smarter at developing actions, milestones and strategic indicators. The Council learnt from the development of LT2. In LT2 there were many key performance indicators (KPIs) that looked good at the time but were difficult to measure.

We spent a lot of time with LT3 making sure that we could actually understand what we were trying to measure, understand why we were wanting to measure it, and then making sure that we had the right things to be able to measure.

Indicators developed for LT3 are seen as a baseline so that Council can actually track success over time. One of the challenges has been that the Village partnership has not measured as well as they could have, so from an evaluation perspective Council is trying to improve on that. Evaluation measures are now embedded into Council strategies and relevant Council staff have performance objectives linked to the Council Plan, and in turn LT3 and the development of LT4 (Director of Organisation and Community Learning).

2.3.2 Challenges

Hume City as a learning community continues to face challenges.

Kearns (2012b) talked of the nature of the community, the ethnic composition, the number of migrants, people born overseas, people who often come here with fairly limited English and sense of being a citizen of Australia and of the Hume community. Kearns is very keen on ensuring that the intercultural program in the current learning plan continues to be a central theme. He identifies this as ‘learning about other cultures, learning to value them, learning to live together and coming to what I see as a higher concept of Australian citizenship.’

Wilson (2012b) noted that Hume City is a highly transitory municipality. ‘Even though there are new housing estates that will provide greater stability, Hume City is a first point of movement for refugees and other transient groups who will move through the municipality rather than stay there.’ This makes it challenging to interpret quantitative data such as education participation rates, youth unemployment, and labour force participation rates.

It has been recognised by stakeholders that the effective measurement of outcomes is complex and the Village partnership has not measured outcomes as well as they would have liked. However, the Council and Village members are working to improve on that. In 2012 evaluation measures were embedded into Council strategies and relevant Council staff have performance objectives linked to the Council Plan.

The HGLV Advisory Board and the HGLV Committee consist of professional stakeholder organisations rather than engaging residents directly. However, stakeholder organisations do engage with residents in learning programs and festivals. A challenge for the HGLV is to consider how to engage citizens in the decision-making process of the Village.

As Kearns (2012b) notes, the HGLV is an unfinished journey. ‘There’s been a great deal of achievement and learning is very visible in the community.’

2.2.4 Outcomes

i. Over a long time the incremental small successes that count towards the long-term goal

The success of various learning programs; visiting delegations from overseas and interstate; teachers’ scholarship program; early childhood programs (bilingual story time); the work of numerous partners who introduce new programs for their students; introducing the Duke of Edinburgh Awards to schools that otherwise were not thinking about it; the learning forums and the promotion of learning throughout the community; the annual research and learning days.

ii. Increased library membership

Library membership in Broadmeadows also reinforced the impact of learning. In the period 2005 to 2006, 40.9% of Hume City residents belonged to the library. In the period 2011 to 2012, this increased to 55.8% and is higher than the Victorian average of 44.2%.

iii. Development of learning and social infrastructure:

- Meadow Heights – Visycare Learning Centre – opened in 2003
- Hume Global Learning Centre – Broadmeadows – opened in 2003
- Hume Global Learning Centre – Craigieburn – opened in 2012
- Schools Regeneration Program
- A plan in place to build a Hume Global Learning Centre in Sunbury.

iv. Awards

The HGLV members and Hume City Council has been widely recognised at state and national awards, including the 2005 Prime Ministers Awards, for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships (HCC 2010a). The Prime Minister of Australia and his successor launched the Australian Government’s Social Inclusion Board from the Hume Global Learning Centre in 2008. Other awards include:

- Victorian Education Excellence Award for Partnerships with Families and Communities (2012) for Dallas Brooks Community Primary School – ‘Connecting Community – Local to Global’. The school developed strategies and established programs to assist in increasing attendance rates at kindergarten, improved literacy standards in children entering Prep, linked families in with a range of allied health services, and promoted participation and engagement within the school and kindergarten community (DEECD 2012a).
- Hume City Council was a winner in the State Government’s Victorian Early Years Awards. The Boorais in Hume program won the ‘Improvements in Parents Capacity, Confidence and Enjoyment of Family Life’ category (2011). The Hume Early Years Partnership was also a finalist in the ‘Communities that are more Child and Family Friendly’ category (Hume Leader 2011).
- Hume City Councils Hume Global Learning Centre Craigieburn was a finalist in the ‘Community Assets and Infrastructure – over one million dollars’ category at the 2013 LG Pro Awards for Excellence

The Supporting Parents Developing Children program won a 2013 National Award for Local Government in the 'Strength and Diversity' category.

2.25 Lessons for other Learning Communities

Reflections from the Director of Organisation and Community Learning:

1. A community should be very clear about what they want to achieve and why. Without this clear vision the journey would be very hard and the sell will be even more difficult.
2. Ensure that you get buy in from across council. Spend the time building the relationships and the collective desire for this to happen across the organisation.
3. Have advocates for the idea, so that it is just not one person trying to drive a change agenda.
4. It is important to have a very strong council who is committed to the learning agenda.
5. Ensure everything is aligned – ‘what I call a line of sight’, so you can very easily see the linkages between what one area does versus a divisional plan for 12 months.

3. Section C: Concluding Comments from the Literature Review, Case Studies and Document Analysis

For the HGLV and GLR, the learning community approach is based on sophisticated concepts such as innovation, collective creativity, lifelong learning, personalised learning, active citizenship, cultural ‘mortar’, social infrastructure, social justice and sustainable rural development (HCC 2004; Mitchell 2006; HCC 2007; Eastcott 2008; HCC 2010a). Social learning theories and collective learning approaches guide the work. The African proverb ‘it takes a village to raise a child’ is used to emphasise the importance of collaboration to achieve long-term outcomes (Eastcott 2008; McGuire 2012). As McGuire (2012) points out, this is not easy:

‘All you have to do to get this is to defeat the silo mentality, the turf war, institutional ego, bureaucratic inertia and the political cycle!’

Three of the stakeholders interviewed noted that labelling the work as a Learning Community approach did mean it was complex to explain. However, stakeholders are getting better at describing the work and adjusting the message to suit the audience. An analysis of the documents (Appendix One) shows practical on-the-ground messages are used that residents can relate to, for example pathways to learning and employment, raising aspirations, active citizenship, enhancing existing education and training provision, and having a ‘can-do’ attitude.

In an attempt to unravel the complexity and move towards a common language, we developed a framework tool which identifies a number of key criteria for a learning community approach (Wheeler & Wong 2013). This framework is based on our own work as practitioners; the literature review, responses to interviews for this project, and a document analysis of the HGLV and GLR (Appendix One). It provides a diagnostic planning tool for local government and other groups which are considering this approach. It is also useful to develop or review a community learning plan.

The criteria used in the framework include long-term vision and goals, leadership, strategic partnerships, lifelong learning, innovation, building community capacity, connecting community, social infrastructure and integrated community governance.

Appendix One provides an analysis of the key documents of the HGLV and GLR in relation to these key elements. Each community identified a need, understood the importance of collaboration with strategic partners, and set about identifying long-term goals. Local government played a strategic leadership role and invested in the idea that learning is a strategy that can improve social outcomes and build community capacity.

Stakeholders gave some valuable pointers about lessons to be learnt for other regions. The following summarises those views:

Wilson (2012b) advises that key stakeholders in different kinds of communities (outer metropolitan, regional, rural, remote or metropolitan) should articulate ‘the kinds of immediate challenges and

If you wanted me to come up with a strapline for the Hume Global Learning Village, it’s a mechanism for aspirational change in learning, a mechanism to achieve aspiration, to influence aspirational change in learning – Manager, Economic Development, HCC).

priorities they have. Explore the underlying questions about learning and knowledge. How is learning and knowledge best mobilised to address their local circumstances?’

It is important to understand the resources that communities are willing and able to invest in. Resources are usually tight and there are competing priorities.

Unless there is a key local champion who gets the message about learning and is prepared to be an advocate for that to be a key element of local thinking, there are always going to be competitors who want to divert resources in other directions (Wilson 2012b).

Finally, the lessons for other local government areas are summed up by the following recommendations from the HGLV and GLR stakeholders:

1. The underlying philosophy, the goals, and commitment to working together are absolutely transferable to other communities.
2. The core beliefs that form the basis of the HGLV and the GLR are transferable. It is most important to have a long-term commitment to building relationships and working together towards a common goal.
3. At the program level, there will be differences from place to place about what is suitable and what is going to be most productive for people, so it is not a ‘one size fits all’ concept.
4. Governance and committee structures will also differ from community to community. The HGLV has a hierarchical governance structure with a strategic Advisory Board and operational Village committee. GLR has a model linked to Shire planning documents, and is flexible and responsive to the needs of a rural community.

‘Some ideas will also be transferable, some will need adaption and some ideas need to be home grown’ (Thompson 2012).

Conclusion

Hume City Council, Gywdir Shire and their strategic partners have been successful in developing a culture of learning within their communities, and this has built a solid foundation for future development. These communities found that learning is a driver for change and is a method of addressing low socio-economic status. The HGLV and GLR are collaborative frameworks for efficient planning and development of a learning community approach. The principles and core elements can be adapted for any community, whether it is rural, regional, remote or metropolitan. Leadership can be provided by local government, and any municipality will benefit by valuing learning.

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Appendix One: Desktop analysis of the Hume Global Learning Village and Gwydir Learning Region against common elements of effective learning partnerships.

Criteria	HGLV	Comments – HGLV	Gwydir LC	Comments - Gwydir LC
Drivers for Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No library in Broadmeadows Perceived lack of community education opportunities Lower levels of educational attainment compared to the MSD (2001 Census data) Issues identified by Social Justice and Safe City Taskforce. 	<p>The response included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning Together Strategy and the HGLV concept responds to Hume City Plan 2030 and Social Justice Charter A 2030 Council Plan that contained a vision for Lifelong Learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Declining population Economic Drivers Low educational achievement Low household income Youth leaving the region No formal TAFE or University presence within Gwydir's boundaries. 	<p>The response included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Co-operative of Schools, TAFE, UNE, ACE and Community within the Framework of the Cunningham Learning Region. Establishment of the Gwydir Learning Region (after amalgamation).
Goals and Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Learning Together 2030</i> <i>Learning Together 3 Action Plan 2010–2013</i> <i>Learning Together 2 2007–2010</i> <i>Learning Together 1 2004–2008.</i> 	<p>'This third generation strategy reflects the maturing of partnerships and positions <i>learning</i> as a strategic driver in the development of Hume City, as it builds on the bold ambitions of LT1 and LT2 to further extend the impact of learning.'</p> <p>Three goals clearly stated:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To embed a culture of learning within the Hume community To strengthen pathways to learning, employment and shared prosperity for the Hume community To strengthen the Hume Global Learning Village by expanding and consolidating the commitment of its 	<p>Gwydir Shire Council <i>Community Strategic Plan 2012–2023.</i></p>	<p>'Council's involvement in the Gwydir Learning Region is a significant cornerstone in its Sustainability Strategy for this area and its community.'</p> <p>Four goals clearly stated:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To create a management structure that will support the organisation in its pursuit of its vision To encourage each member of our community to fully participate in our learning community To enhance the existing education and training provision within our communities

Criteria	HGLV	Comments – HGLV	Gwydir LC	Comments - Gwydir LC
		partners through collaborative planning, community engagement and advocacy for learning.		4. To ensure that the region's future employment training needs are being met through competent planning.
	<i>Hume City Plan 2030</i> , 2009 update, p. 8.	The vision: To enhance life experience, employment opportunities and contributions to the community by inspiring and facilitating the participation of Hume residents in lifelong learning, regardless of age, ability or ethnicity, resulting in reduced disadvantage and improved quality of life.		An explicit vision statement is not stated. However, Gwydir Shire Council's Vision Statement is: 'To be the recognised leader in Local Government through continuous learning and sustainability'.
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hume City Council has continued to support and fund the HGLV The CEO of Hume City is a key supporter of the HGLV concept (Isola 2007) Local and Federal politicians have also actively supported the HGLV. 	The HGLV is clearly valued by council and seen as an important ingredient in the provision of services to the community.	Gwydir Shire Council has continued to support the development of GLR and fund its development.	Gwydir Shire Council has identified its main role to provide a <i>space of engagement</i> in terms of physical space and an encouragement of the 'meeting of the minds' to explore new ways of achieving social outcomes. The CEO of the Shire has been a key person in the development of GLR. Local and Federal politicians have actively supported the GLR.
	<i>Hume City Plan 2030</i> .	Integrated into Council's plan for the future. See Goals and Vision.	Gwydir Shire Council <i>2012–2023 Community Strategic Plan</i> .	Integrated into the shire's plan for the future (see Goals and Vision). The Community Strategic Plan states that 'Gwydir Shire Council acts as a full participant in the process and is an 'honest broker' between the GLR participants. The Council's only motivation is seeking a positive outcome for the community that it serves. Trust is the prerequisite to blurring the

Criteria	HGLV	Comments – HGLV	Gwydir LC	Comments - Gwydir LC
				boundaries of the structural silos that work against active engagement between service providers. The Council actively facilitates the ‘cross-silo’ communication required to achieve the desired outcomes. The Gwydir Learning Region Committee is a Committee of the Council. It acts as the catalyst for cooperation.’
Strategic Partnerships	Strategic partners identified by board and invited to join the HGLV.	Partnership sub-committee has been established. Ensures coverage of key stakeholders in the area.	The Gwydir Learning Region Committee is a Committee of Council (Gwydir Shire Council 2012–2023 Community Strategic Plan).	The GLR is a partnership between local government, education, business and community stakeholders in the Northwest area of New South Wales. ‘GLR is managed by a Coordinating committee chaired by the Mayor... The collaborative structure of the GLR is built on the trust, passion and goodwill of stakeholders, not on rules or meeting procedures’ (Mitchell 2006).
	Membership of the HGLV is open to individual members of the community as well as representatives of key organisations.	Encourages public involvement / partnership.	The Gwydir Learning Region Review Panel (GLRRP) is currently being established to formulate ‘workable outcomes to address the causes of disengagement’. Strategic members are being identified and invited to join by Gwydir Learning Shire.	GLRRP’s mission is ‘to do what is necessary to ensure high quality education and training is available, accessible, affordable, adaptable and acceptable for people of all ages and stages of life who live in or are associated with the Gwydir Shire.’
	<i>Village Voice</i> web page	Emailed to members (only) of the HGLV on a monthly basis.	GLR website < http://gwydirlearningregion.nsw.edu.au >.	Contains a blog with a last entry of March 2009. It does not appear that the public have posted comments. Processes to

Criteria	HGLV	Comments – HGLV	Gwydir LC	Comments - Gwydir LC
		Informs what's going on in the HGLV.		interact with the community would appear to be limited. There does not appear to be a community newsletter.
Lifelong Learning	<i>Learning Together 2030</i> is subtitled 'Shaping Lifelong Learning in Hume City to 2030'	The forward states that 'Learning Together 2030 is a Hume-wide strategy reflecting the importance of lifelong learning while committing Hume City Council and the HGLV to driving the continuity of lifelong learning in Hume City.' See 'Building Community Capacity'.	The GLR overview (2009 & 2012) note that GLR is 'lifelong learning in action', and further states that GLR values all residents, values all students, values all learning. Promotes the concept of 'Active Citizenship' (GSC 2008).	Mitchell (2006) notes the role of learning is seen as 'a way to improve the social environment (for older and socially isolated residents) and life chances of individuals and to create a desire for lifelong learning within our community.' 'Learning' as a concept has been embedded in Council's strategic documents and informal notes and presentations from the beginning.
Building community capacity	<i>Learning Together 3 (LT3) Action Plan 2010–2013.</i>	The key challenges that have been identified as a high priority encompass the development of human, social and economic capital and are as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supporting parents to develop their preschool aged children to confidently commence primary school 2. Improving the participation and retention rates of students to year 12 or equivalent program 3. Providing clear pathways for young people moving from 'school to employment' 4. Aligning available training courses with employment opportunities 5. Improving access to education and training programs at all levels 6. Improving access to both formal and 	Gwydir Shire Council <i>Delivery Plan 2012–2017 and Beyond.</i>	The plan is a 10-year action plan with key components of: A healthy and cohesive community (Social): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building the business base (Economy) • An environmentally responsible shire (Environment) • A proactive, financially sustainable customer-oriented organisation (Organisation) • Regional and local leadership (Organisation). Strategies are identified for each component with actions to achieve each strategy. These are categorised as actions up to 2016/17 and ongoing over the 10-year life of the plan.

Criteria	HGLV	Comments – HGLV	Gwydir LC	Comments - Gwydir LC
		<p>informal learning opportunities</p> <p>7. Increasing opportunities and participation in learning by those most at risk</p> <p>8. Developing and delivering learning programs that help develop generic life skills</p> <p>9. Developing successful local learning programs and strengthening the HGLV.</p>		
	Supporting Parents – Developing Children (SPDC) project.	<p>Includes the development of the Primary School/Community Early Years Hubs. Community hubs are places usually located at primary schools, where families can access information about education, training services and other support programs. Activities at these hubs include playgroup and bilingual storytime sessions, computer classes and English language classes. Currently being evaluated.</p>	<p>A Healthy and Cohesive Community (Social) is a key component of the <i>Delivery Plan 2012–2017 and Beyond</i>.</p>	<p>Strategies are identified for each component with actions to achieve each strategy. These are categorised as actions up to 2016/17 and ongoing over the 10-year life of the plan.</p>
	Youth Projects	<p>Aims to develop a culture of community engagement and productivity by providing young people in Hume with opportunities for enhanced learning, e.g. the Kitchen Academy Project (KAP).</p>	<p>Through partnership with schools, TAFE, Adult Community Education (ACE) and Universities, Council promotes the concept of personalised learning for each student (Mitchell 2006). Extends now to any member of the community (Eastcott 2011).</p>	<p>Warialda High School can verify that every student who completes year 12 moves on to further study or employment (100% success). TAFE annual enrolments increased by 30% from 2001–2005. ACE activity is above the average compared to other parts of NSW (Mitchell 2006).</p>
	The Hume Career Development Network.	<p>Launched in February 2012, enabling school leaders and career practitioners who work</p>	<p>Innovative programs, ideas and delivery modes have</p>	<p>Reference made to individual case management; linking the Shire's economic</p>

Criteria	HGLV	Comments – HGLV	Gwydir LC	Comments - Gwydir LC
		with young people in Hume to network, share their expertise and develop their skills.	contributed to improved student outcomes.	and social strategic planning in identifying training and employment needs to target interested students, which leads to training in Aged Care, early childhood care, visual literacy, and pathways in agricultural science (Begley 2006).
	Bilingual community literacy and engagement program.	Aims to develop early years learners and their parents.		
Connect community and social infrastructure	Investment in learning and social infrastructure has been an important catalyst for change.	HGLC – Broadmeadows and Craigieburn, Visycare learning centre, Schools regeneration program, Ideas Lab, School Community Hubs.	Investment in learning and social infrastructure adds value to training and employment.	Roxy Theatre a restored art deco theatre in Bingara incorporates a hospitality trade training centre. The Living Classroom in Bingara under development but incorporates a primary industry trade training and research centre. Warialda High School incorporates an automotive trade training centre.
	<i>Imagine, Explore, Discover</i> magazine.	Published quarterly. Informs the general public and seeks input from the community. Reader surveys conducted with results and subsequent actions reported.		A connection is implied in the <i>Delivery Plan 2012–2017 and Beyond</i> .
	Community encouraged to use HLC.	Community members can book the Learning Centre online. Members of the HGLV committee have organised six annual research and learning days.	Practical help is given on an as needs basis.	Stakeholder interviews demonstrated that the Shire provides a range of financial and other assistance to connect the community, for example a Shire wide music program.
	Hume Volunteer Gateway program.	Coordinated by Hume City, is a free community service that connects people who want to volunteer with organisations that need volunteers.		
	Connecting Hume program.	Includes a number of IT based learning		

Criteria	HGLV	Comments – HGLV	Gwydir LC	Comments - Gwydir LC
		programs, for example Net.Help and computer clubs, as well as awards programs such as Connecting Hume PC Awards, and TechQuest awards.		
	Community events.	Evidence of a wide range of community events, e.g. Refugee Week, Hume Sings, Fresh Fruit and Vege Swap, Harmony Day.		
Integrated governance structures and evaluation	Hume Global Learning Village Advisory Board and Terms of Reference (May 2009).	Details governance structures for board.	The Gwydir Learning Region Committee is a Committee of Council (Gwydir Shire Council 2012–2023 Community Strategic Plan).	The Strategic Plan notes that GLR is a partnership between local government and education, business and community stakeholders in the north-west area of New South Wales.
	Quarterly Reports to Hume Global Learning Village Advisory Board.	Reports on progress of the HGLV activities including statistics on HLC usage, Learning Programs, Volunteer Programs and Bilingual Community Literacy and Engagement programs.	Broad actions are outlined in the <i>Gwydir Shire Council Delivery Plan 2012–2017</i> .	Learning is a strategic issue under the section on Regional and Local Leadership. Also embedded in actions under Youth where the strategy is to engender a positive youth culture. No indication of how actions against performance will be measured.
	<i>Hume Global Learning Village Learning Together Strategy 2004/2008 Evaluation: A report on progress to Date.</i>	This evaluation conducted in August 2005 was detailed and comprehensive. Major finding was that there were too many projects to report on and collection of data was difficult.	The Gwydir Learning Region Model: An independent evaluation (2006).	This evaluation conducted in 2006 was detailed and comprehensive.
	<i>Learning Together 2 2007–2010 KPI Reference Document.</i> Document recording recommendations regarding collection of KPI data from	KPIs embedded within LT2 document. Decisions about how and what to collect made by Hume City Council Research Department in partnership with the HGLV research sub-committee. Resulted in KPI reference document and the collection of two residents' surveys on	The Gwydir Learning Region Review Panel (GLRRP) is currently being established	Too early to say whether this will include the quantifying of targets and ongoing evaluation.

Criteria	HGLV	Comments – HGLV	Gwydir LC	Comments - Gwydir LC
	LT2.	learning (2008 and 2010) and reports on learning in Hume City and a HGLV membership survey (2009).		
	<i>Learning Together 3 (LT3) Action Plan 2010–2013.</i>	The quantifying of targets in Learning Together 2030 implies ongoing evaluation throughout.		The strategies and goals do not have specified targets for improvement. This could make evaluation of success difficult.

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Appendix Two: Census Data for Gwydir and Hume

The data in the charts below is sourced from the Basic Community Profile for each census.

GWYDIR (Gwydir (A) LGA 13660)

Figure 8. Gwydir: Age Profile (2011 Census)

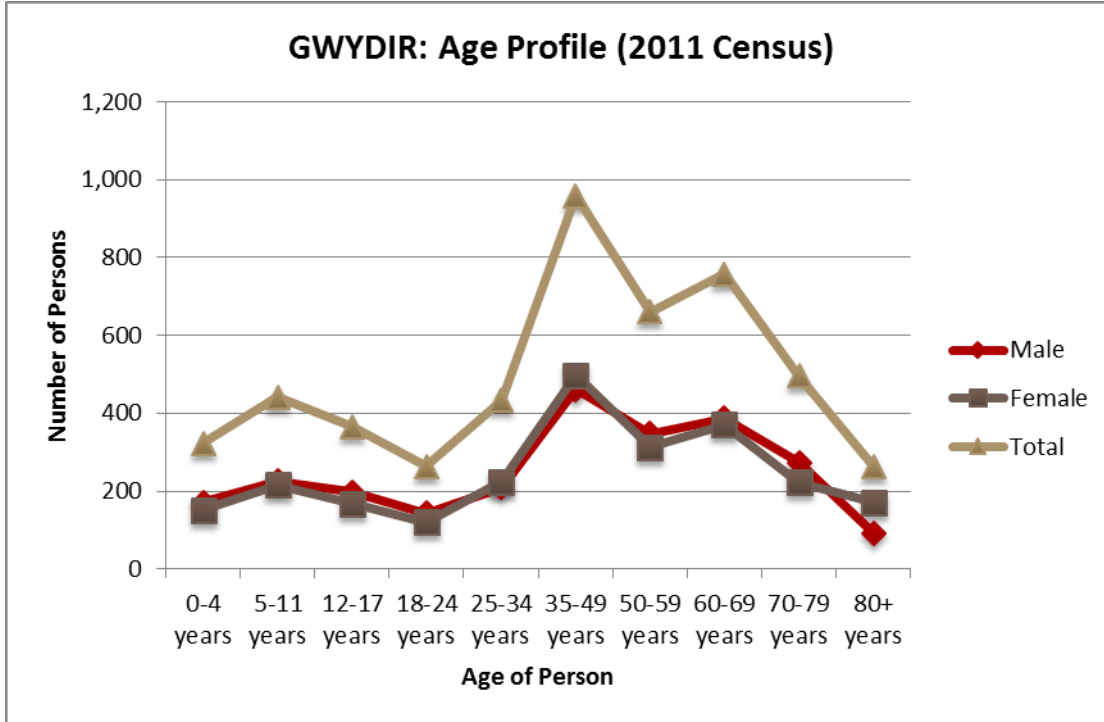


Figure 9. Gwydir Age Profile – 2006 and 2011 Census Data

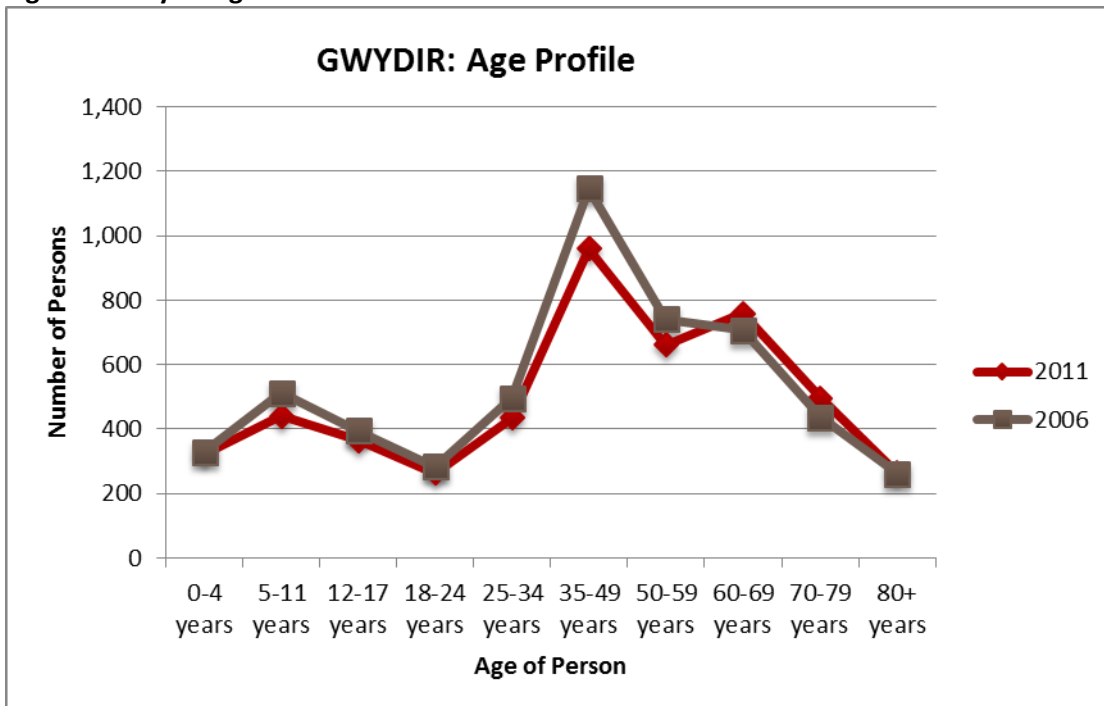
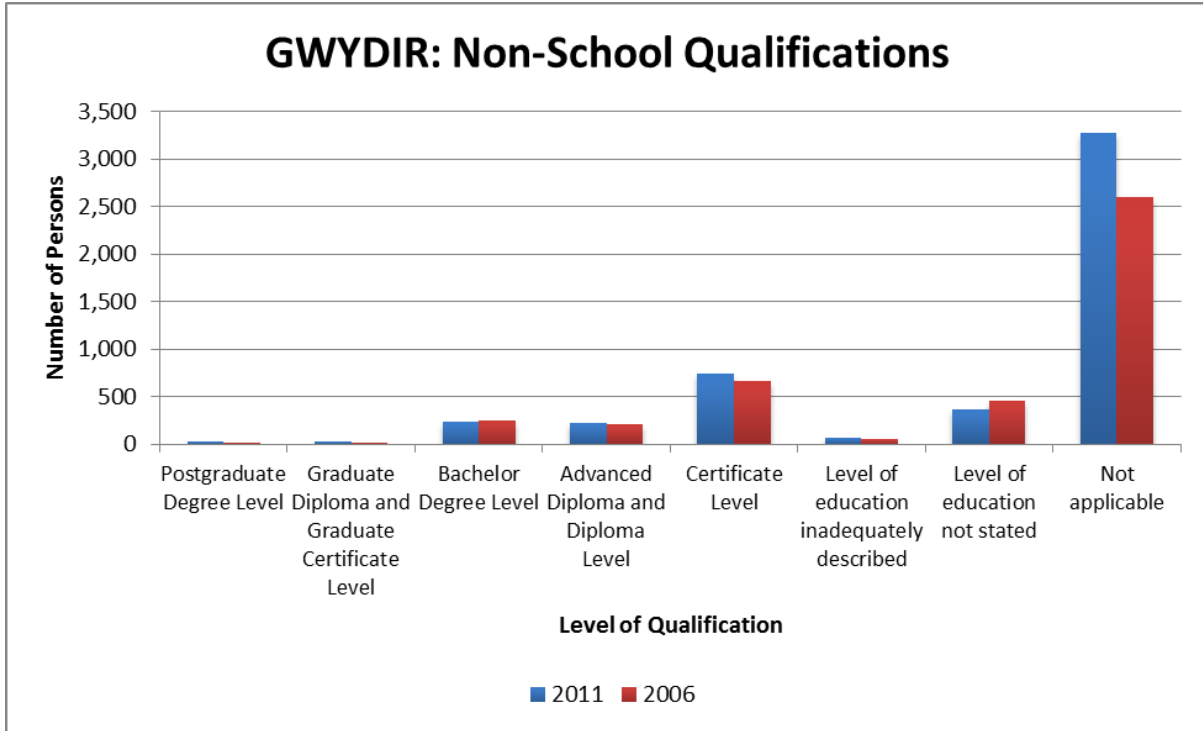


Figure 10. Gwydir: Non School Qualifications – 2011 and 2006 Census data



LABOUR FORCE STATUS

Figure 11. Gwydir: Labour Force Status (2011 Census), 15 years old and over

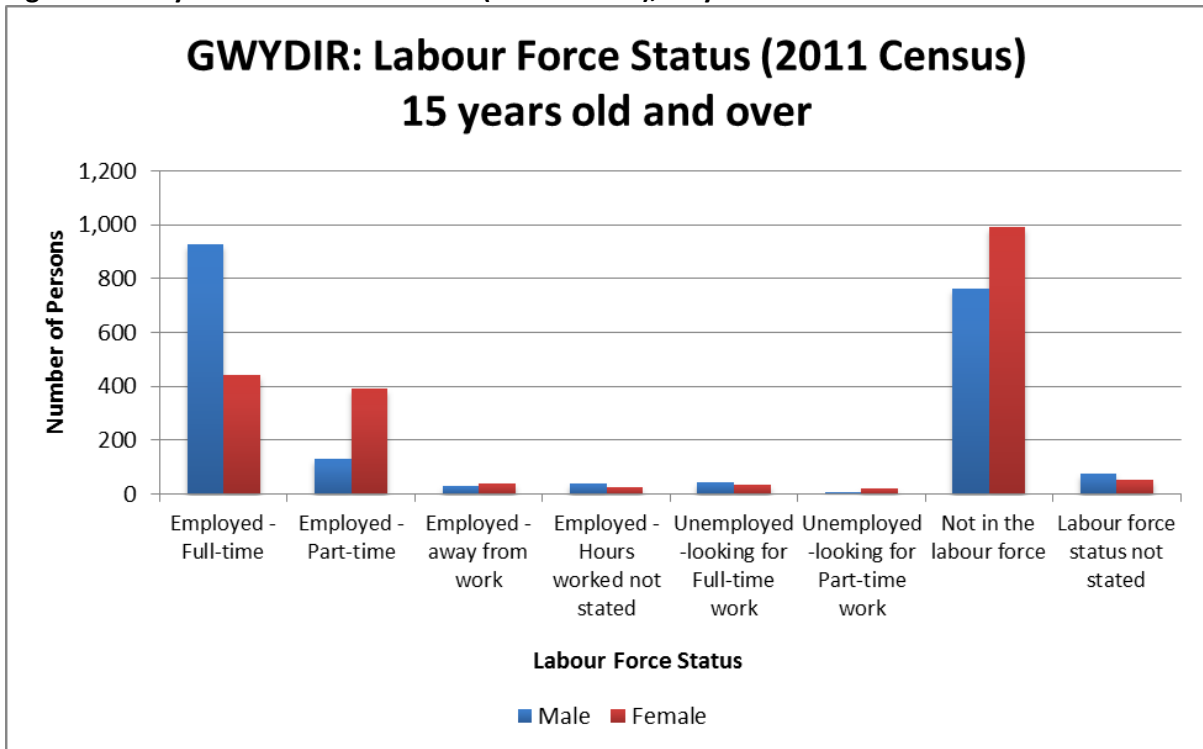


Figure 12. Gwydir Labour Force Status (2006 Census)

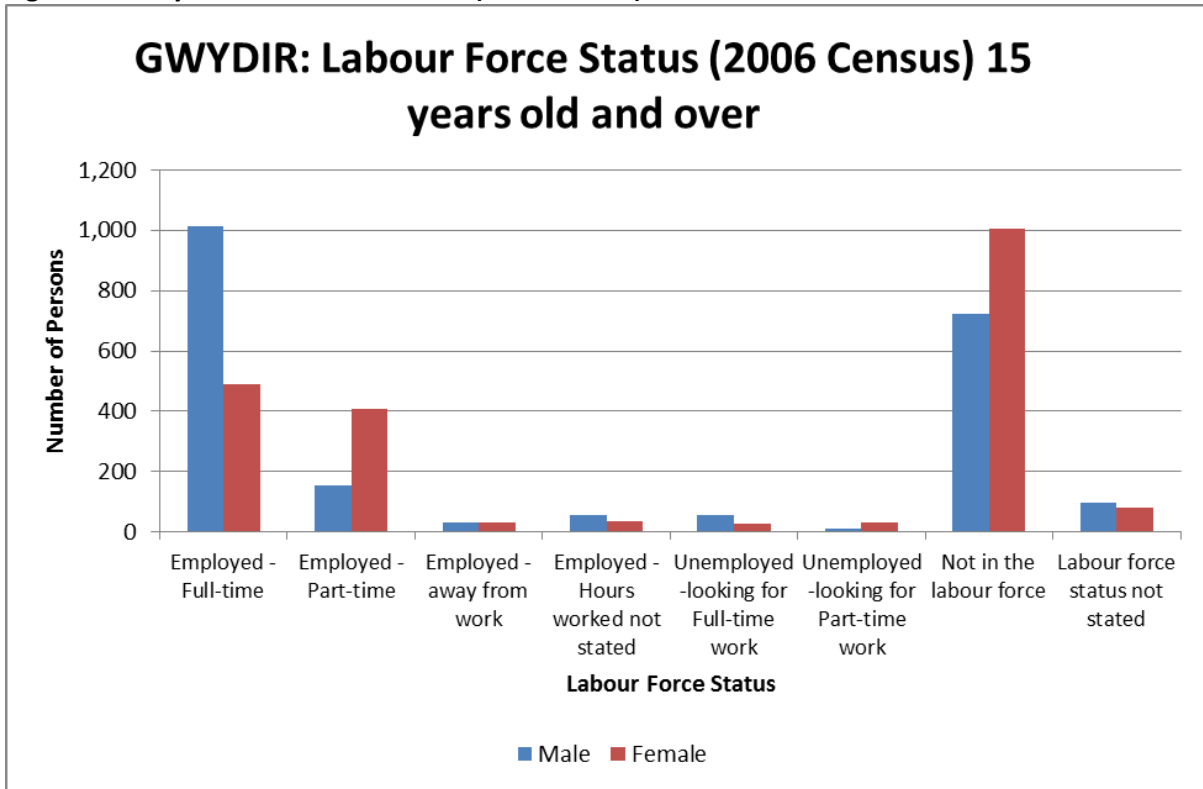


Figure 13. Gwydir: Labour Force Status 15 years old and over (2011 and 2006 Census)

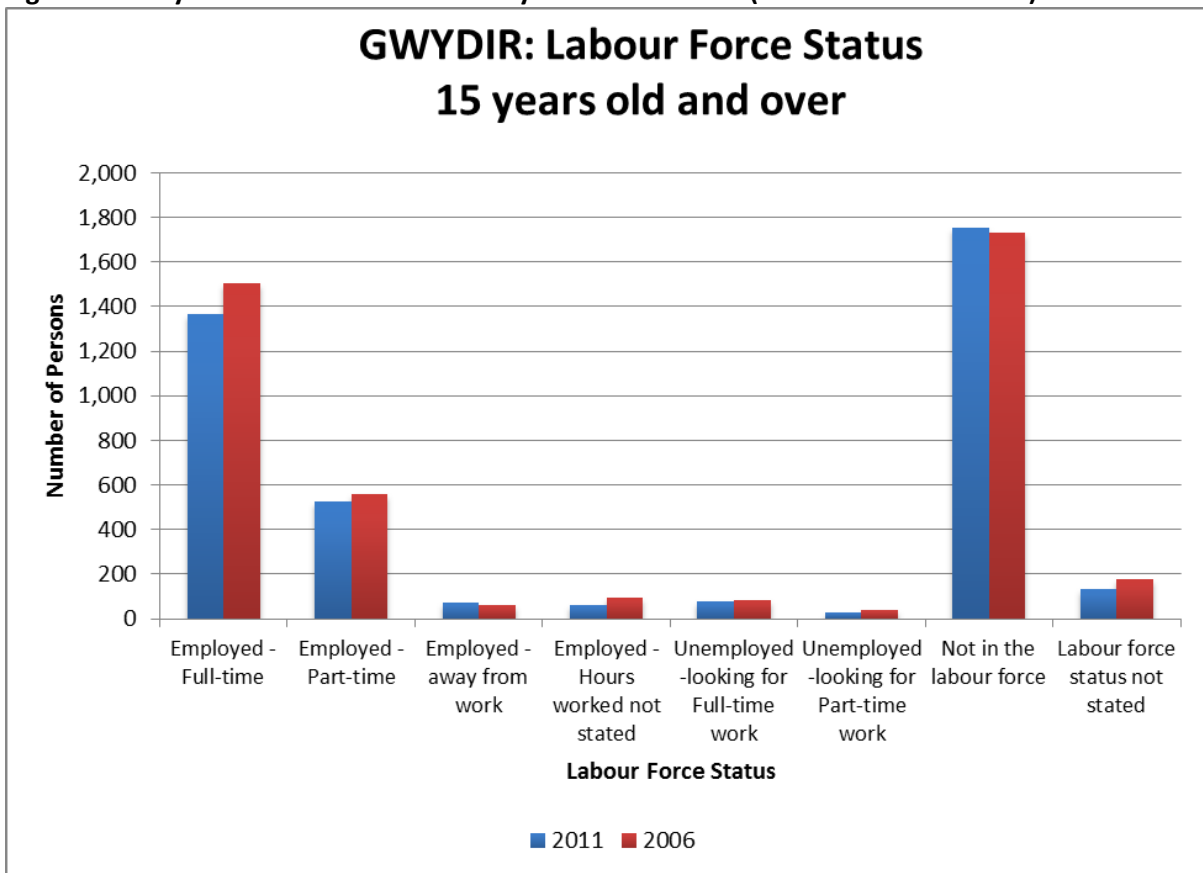


Table 9. Gwydir – Youth Disengagement 2006

Youth Disengagement	Male		Female		Total	
	#	% of age cohort	#	% of age cohort	#	% of age cohort
15 to 19 years	11	8.3%	11	8.0%	22	8.2%
20 to 24 years	20	18.9%	30	34.5%	50	25.9%

Data Source: ABS, 2006 Census of Population and Housing, Table Builder Pro

Further Information: Youth Disengagement refers to young people who are not in paid employment (Unemployed or Not In Labour Force) and not enrolled in education

Table 10. Gwydir Youth Disengagement – 2011 Census

Gwydir (A)

Youth Disengagement	Male		Female		Total	
	#	% of age cohort	#	% of age cohort	#	% of age cohort
15 to 19 years	23	15.4%	23	18.4%	46	16.8%
20 to 24 years	21	21.9%	19	25.0%	40	23.3%

Data Source: ABS, 2011 Census of Population and Housing, TableBuilder Pro

HUME (Hume (C) LGA 23270)

AGE PROFILE

Figure 14. Hume: Age Profile (2011 Census)

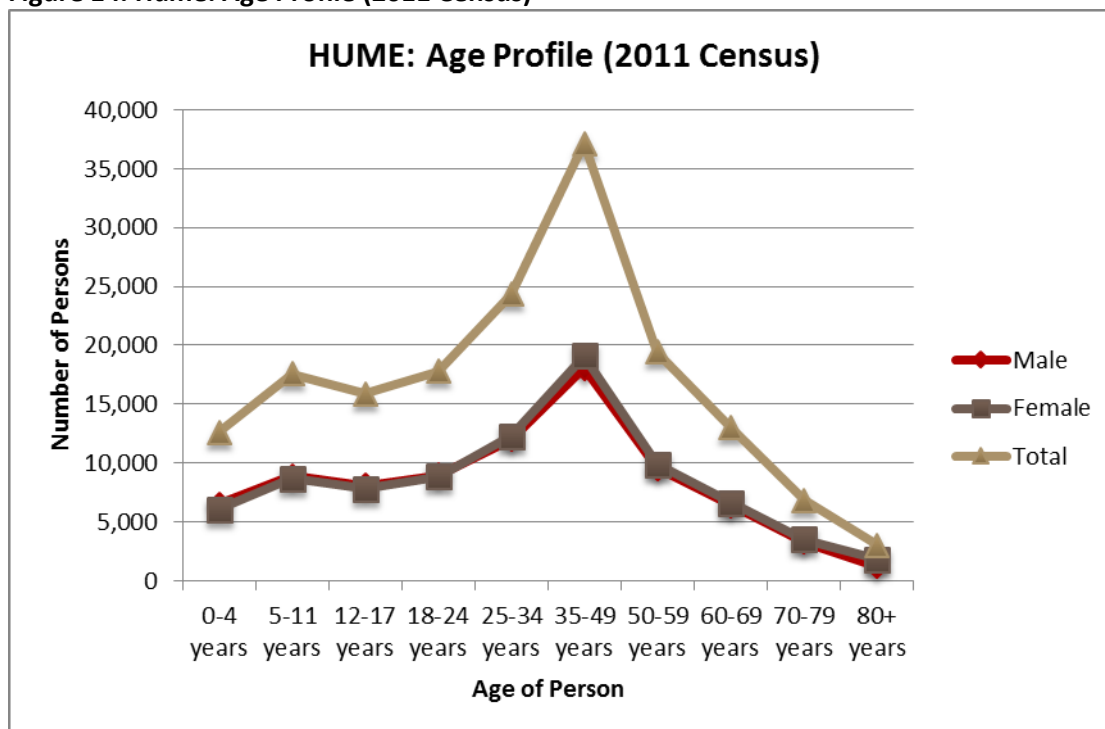
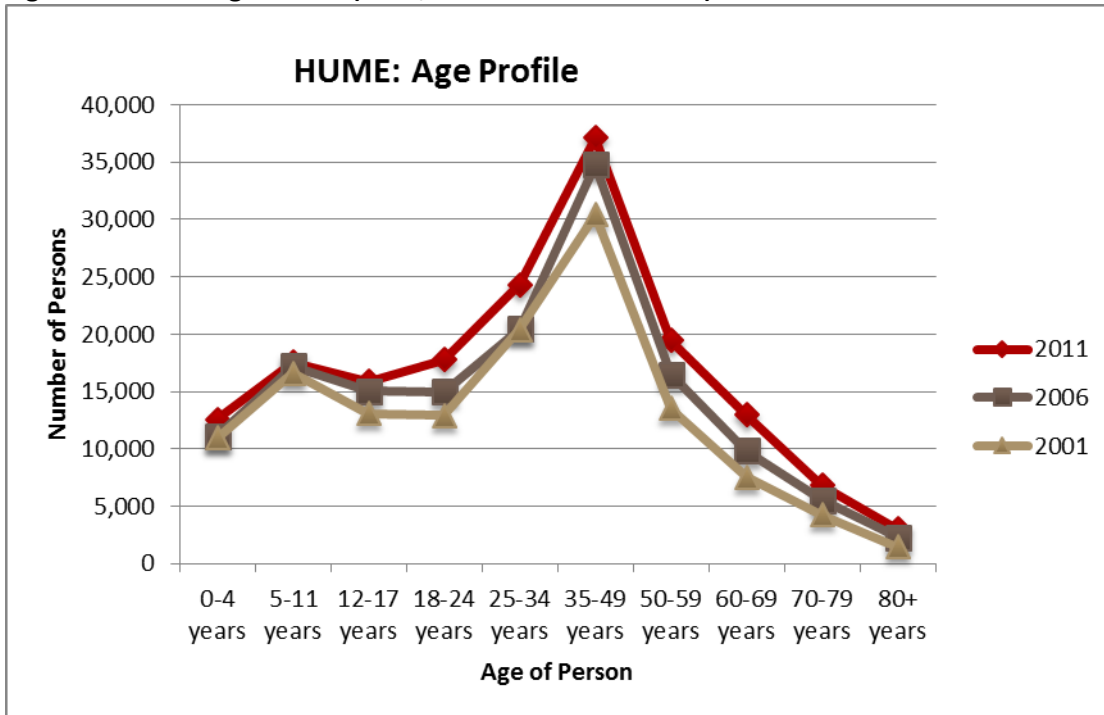


Figure 15. Hume Age Profile (2011, 2006 and 2001 Census)



NON-SCHOOL QUALIFICATIONS

Figure 16. Hume Non-School Qualification (2011 Census)

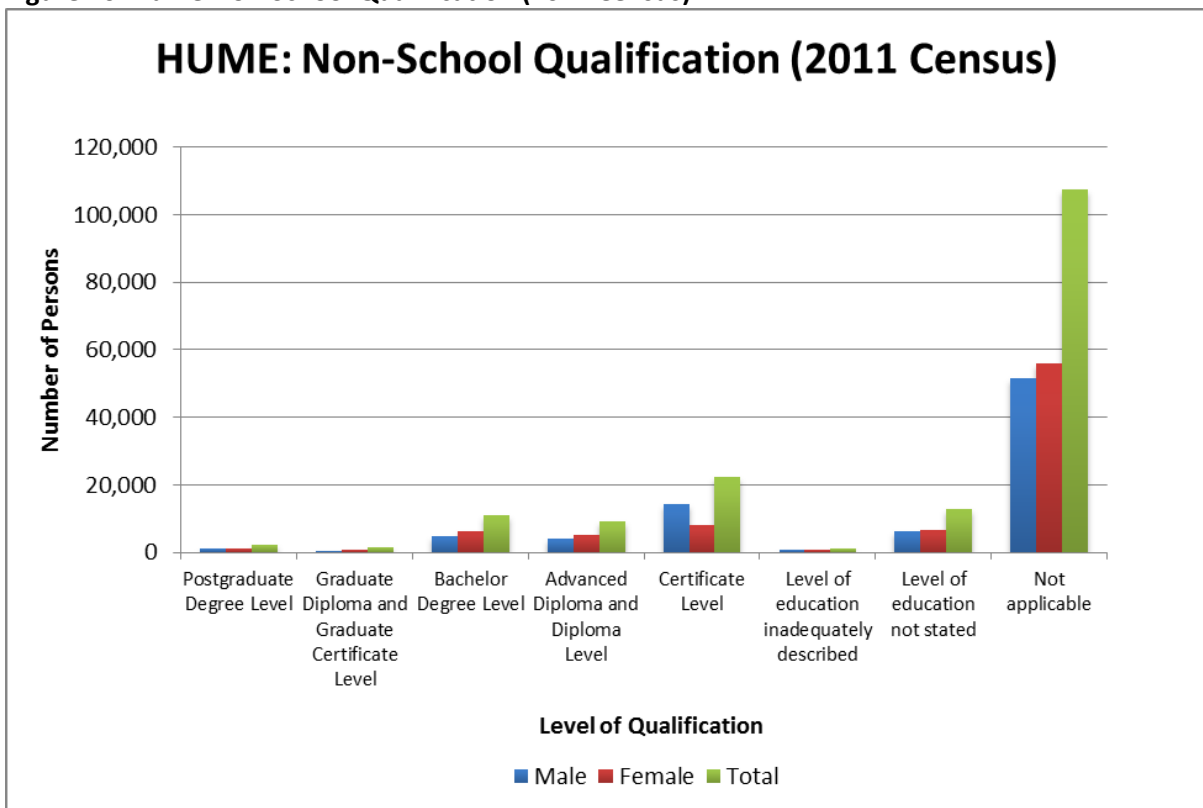
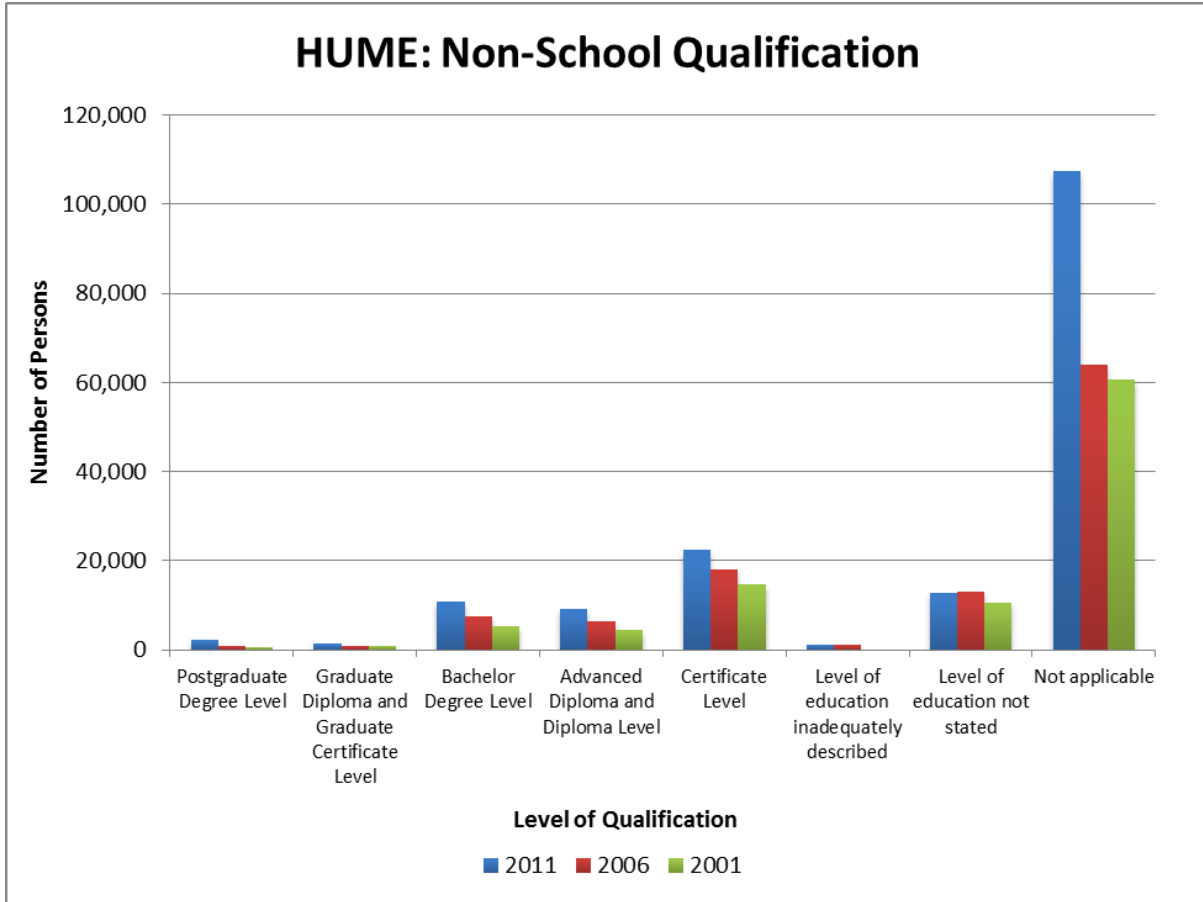


Figure 17. Hume: Non-School Qualification (2011, 2006, 2001 Census)



LABOUR FORCE STATUS

Figure 18. Hume: Labour Force Status (2011 Census) 15 years old and over

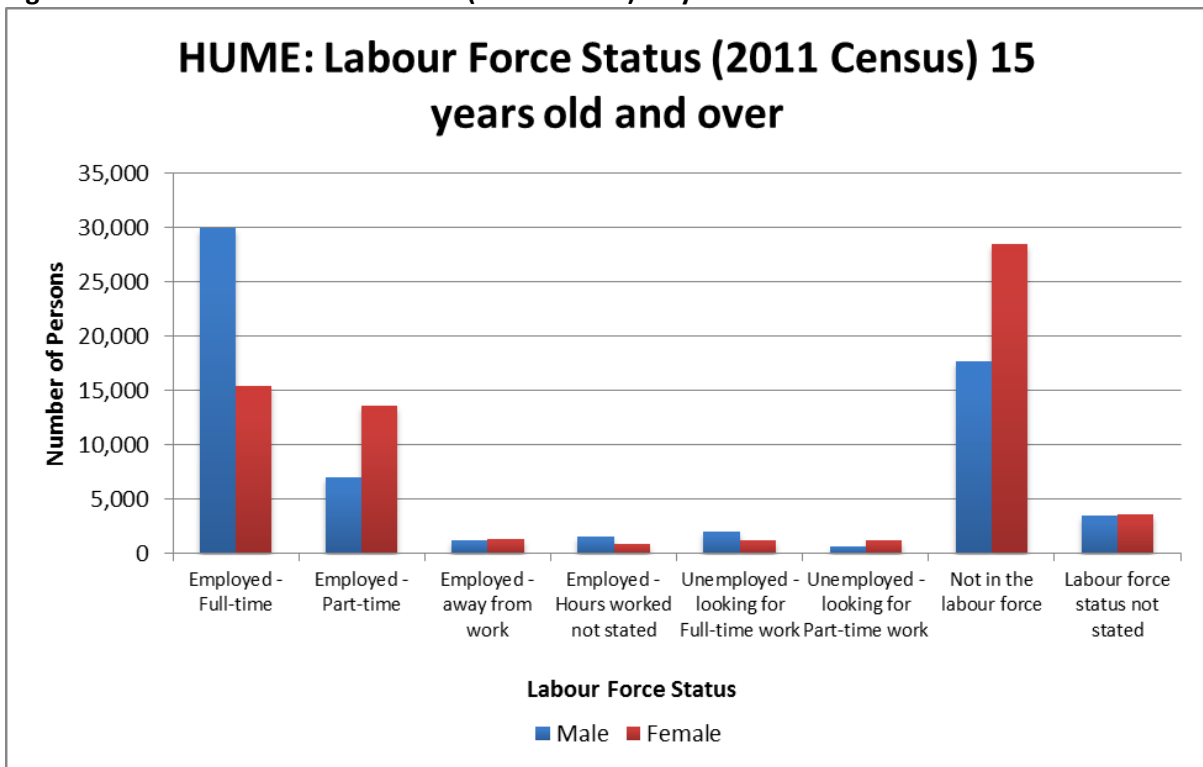


Figure 19. Hume: Labour Force Status (2011, 2006, 2001 Census) 15 years old and over

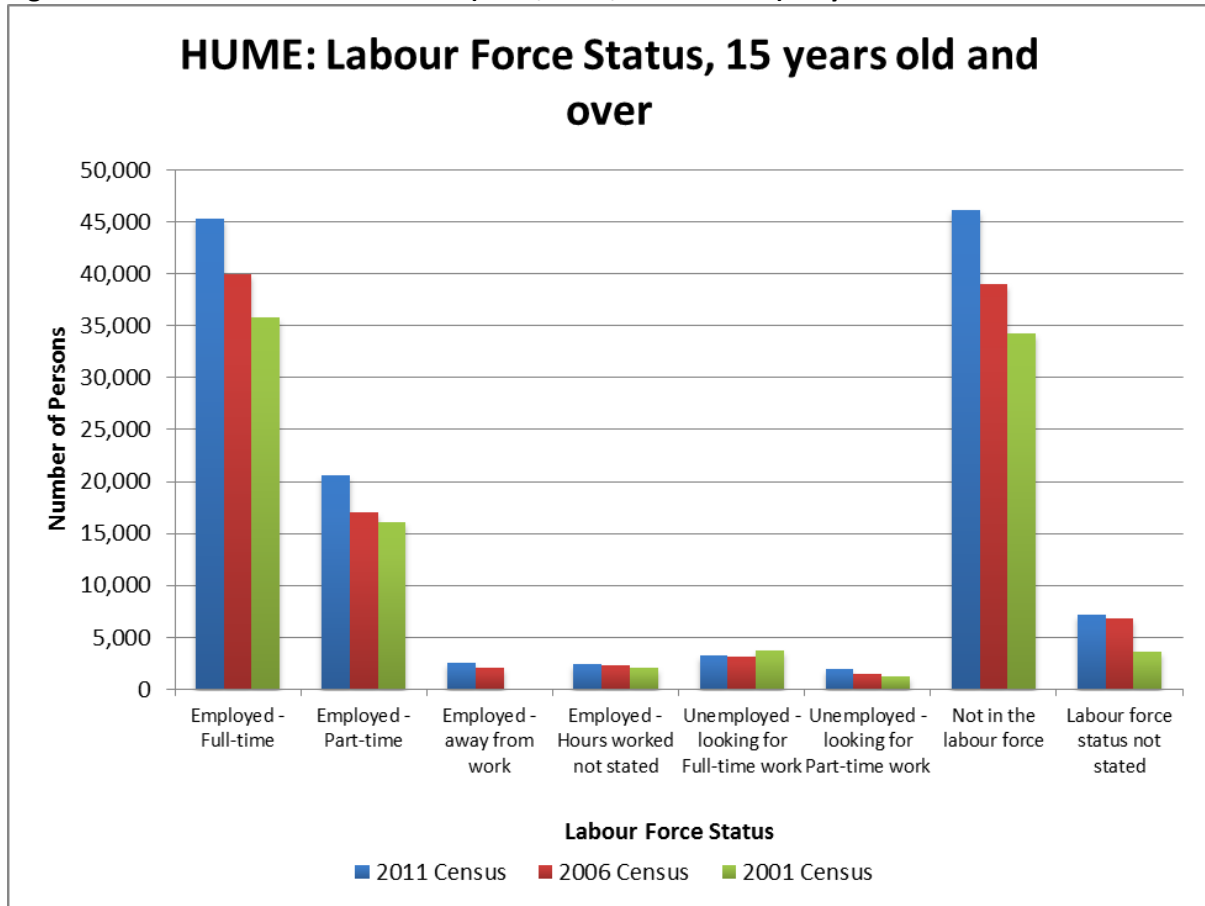


Table 11. Hume Youth Disengagement – 2006 Census

Hume (C)

Youth Disengagement	Male		Female		Total	
	#	% of age cohort	#	% of age cohort	#	% of age cohort
15 to 19 years	514	8.4%	433	7.2%	947	7.8%
20 to 24 years	662	12.9%	1061	20.3%	1723	16.6%

Data Source: ABS, 2011 Census of Population and Housing, TableBuilder Pro.

Further Information: Youth Disengagement refers to young people who are not in paid employment (Unemployed or Not In Labour Force) and not enrolled in education

Table 12. Hume Youth Disengagement – 2011 Census

Hume (C)

Youth Disengagement	Male		Female		Total	
	#	% of age cohort	#	% of age cohort	#	% of age cohort
15 to 19 years	541	8.1%	414	6.4%	955	7.3%
20 to 24 years	882	13.9%	1144	18.3%	2026	16.1%

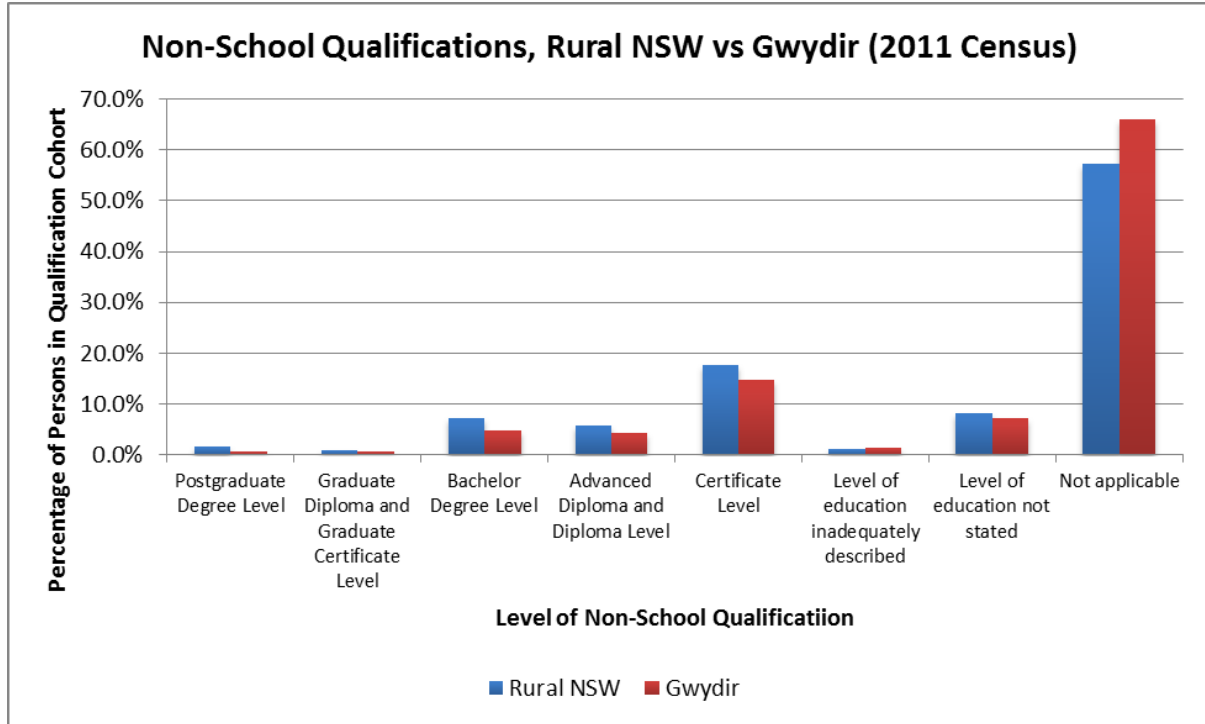
Data Source: ABS, 2011 Census of Population and Housing, TableBuilder Pro.

Appendix Three: Comparative Census Statistics for Gwydir and Hume

The data in the charts below is sourced from the Basic Community Profile, 2011 census. **GWYDIR (Gwydir (A) LGA 13660) and REST of New South Wales (1RNSW)**

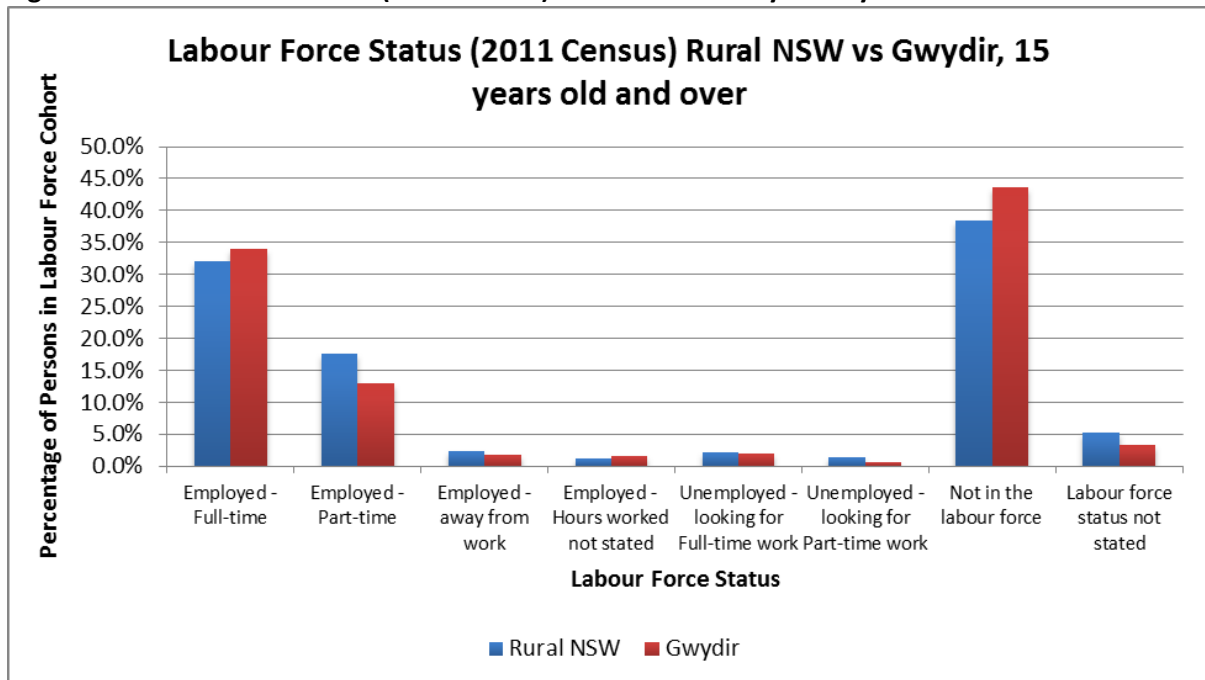
NON-SCHOOL QUALIFICATIONS

Figure 20. Non-School Qualifications Rural NSW vs Gwydir (2011 Census)



LABOUR FORCE STATUS

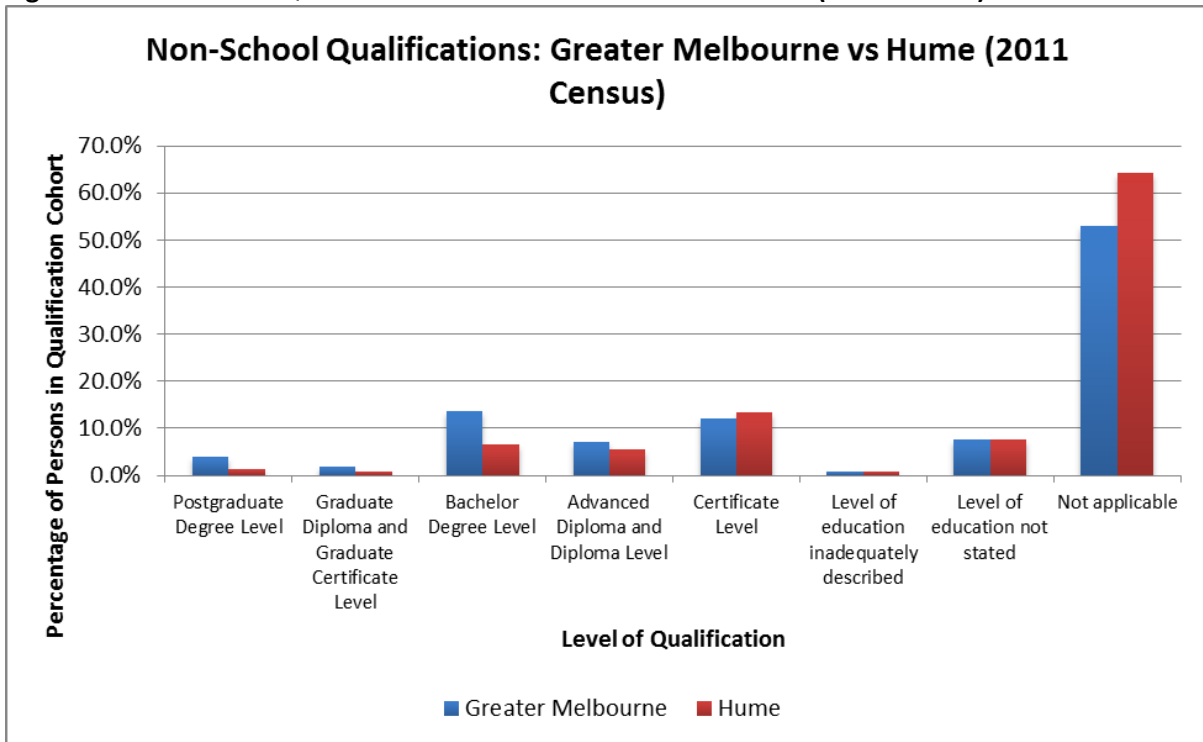
Figure 21. Labour Force Status (2011 Census) Rural NSW vs Gwydir 15 years old and over



HUME (Hume (C) LGA 23270) and Greater Melbourne (2GMEL)

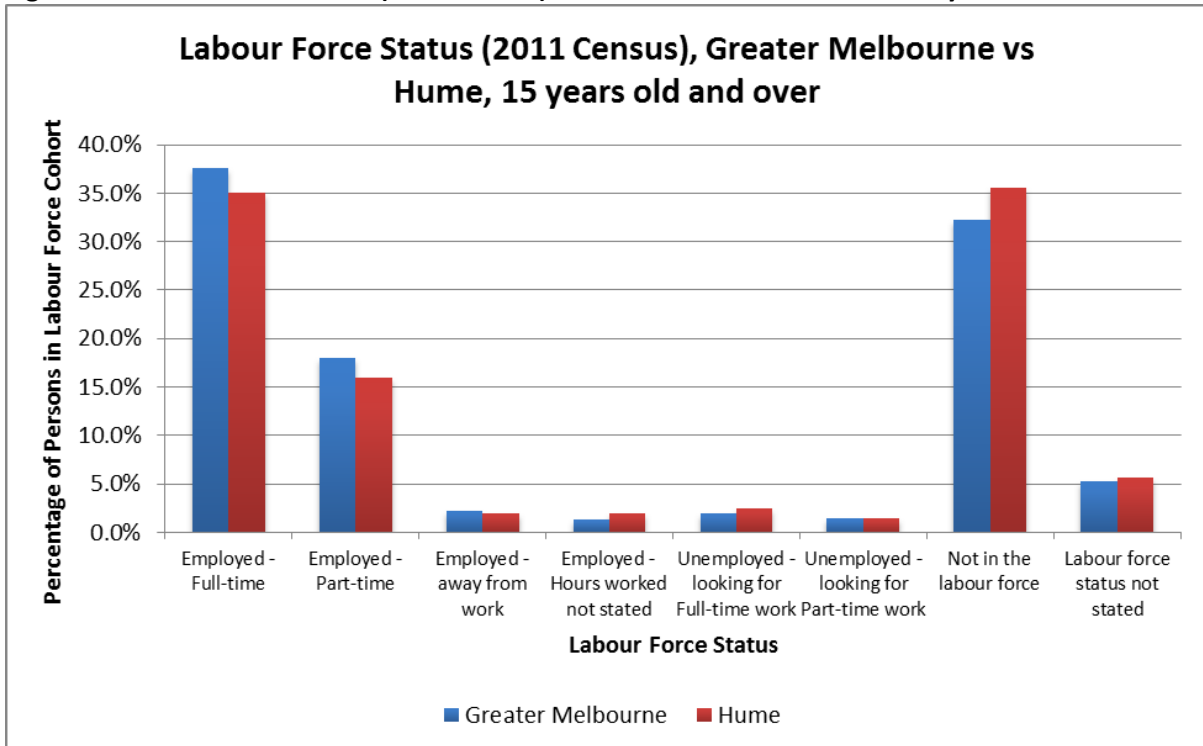
NON-SCHOOL QUALIFICATIONS

Figure 22. Non-School Qualifications: Greater Melbourne vs Hume (2011 Census)



LABOUR FORCE STATUS

Figure 23. Labour Force Status (2011 Census) Greater Melbourne vs Hume 15 years old and over



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