

**Philosophy, People and Process:
A Case-Study of Australian Vocational Education
& Training (V.E.T.) in a Community Development
Context**

Rob Townsend

(B.SW, Grad Cert Comm, Grad Cert Training)

School of Education

Faculty of Human Development

Victoria University

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Abstract

In 1994 the Commonwealth Government allocated funds for the design and development of a number of Rural Access Community Training Centres throughout Australia. This program derives from the strategic plan, '*A Bridge to the Future: Australia's National Strategy for V.E.T. 1998 – 2003*' and specifically, objective number three (3); achieving equitable outcomes in V.E.T. The key question for this thesis is:

How successful has vocational education and training (V.E.T.) reform been in empowering one local community to plan for, manage and deliver new education and training services?

The focus of this thesis is a case-study of how one community is coping with vocational education and training (V.E.T.) reform and an analysis of the critical factors involved in facilitating change within communities, community organisations and the Australian vocational education and training system.

A case-study approach was utilised to research Glassy Waters, a small rural community with a population of some 650 residents situated on a system of rivers and lakes in Victoria. The methodology utilised in gathering information for the case-study is mixed-mode relying on some of the principles of participatory action research and specifically the participant observations of the researcher. The research also relies on interviews with key stakeholders to ascertain information, views and experiences of a community in the process of creating a new vocational education and training centre.

This thesis reveals that Glassy Waters Advisory Corporation (G.W.A.C.), a community managed organisation, has been successful in meeting the primary objectives of Commonwealth policy to establish a Rural Access Community Training Centre and increase access to V.E.T. programs for some disadvantaged groups living in the local community.

However, both the policy and the implementation process has had limited impact on the prevailing management and employment culture and practices within the Glassy Waters community. The Glassy Waters case-study provides indicators that certain factors act as barriers to the implementation of a new learning culture within the community and therefore act as barriers to disadvantaged people accessing V.E.T. programs.

The need for a new learning culture within the community was identified by government representatives as crucial to the success of the new training centre and the development of new learning cultures has been identified by a policy mix implied by Commonwealth and State/Territory governments as central to the V.E.T. reform process in Australia.

The Glassy Waters case-study reflects that although change is occurring on the edges of the vocational education and training (V.E.T.) sector in terms of the key tenets of national vocational education and training (V.E.T.) reform, the actual communities that are the target of these new services are a long way from being receptive of new learning cultures in either a theoretical or practical sense. The concepts of learning communities/regions and learning organisations are still just concepts and many individuals, communities and organisations are struggling to

implement new principles of learning within long established community structures.

Therefore, there is evidence that it is timely for governments and local communities to review the philosophy, people and processes of national vocational education and training (V.E.T.) reform to ensure that all stakeholders, including governments, industries and communities are on the same track.

There is also evidence that communities want government resources to be allocated toward the kinds of community development projects and programs that address the philosophy, people and process of vocational education and training and not just products and outcomes.

Declaration

The work contained in this Minor Thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other Higher Education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the dissertation contains no material previously submitted or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signed: *Rob Townsend*

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Glossary of Acronyms

ACMP Australian Competency Management Program

ACTU Australian Council of Trade Unions

ANTA Australian National Training Authority

AQTF Australian Quality Training Framework

ATSI Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

CBT Competency Based Training

ITAB Industry Training Advisory Board

NFRT National Framework for the Recognition of Training

NLT Learning Network Theory

NSDC National Staff Development Committee

NTF National Training Framework

RTO Registered Training Organisation

TAFE Technical and Further Education

Sch Student Contact Hours

VET Vocational Education and Training

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the research

In early 2001 the researcher was employed by a rural community organisation to manage a project aimed at developing and implementing operational policies and procedures for a new community access education and training facility in their small rural town in north eastern Victoria.

In 1994 the Commonwealth Government allocated funds for the design and development of a number of Rural Access Community Training Centres throughout Australia. It was planned for projects to occur in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Victoria.

This allocation of funds was part of the implementation of Commonwealth Vocational Education and Training (V.E.T.) policy aimed at providing increased access to vocational education and training (V.E.T.) programs for communities that have traditionally demonstrated low levels of participation in both secondary and tertiary education and training.

Australian national V.E.T. policies, strategic initiatives and resource allocation are set out in a key document agreed to by Commonwealth and State V.E.T. ministers every five (5) years. This account of one rural community access training centre stems from the strategic planning document; *'A Bridge to the Future: Australia's National Strategy for V.E.T. 1998 – 2003'* (A.N.T.A.: 1998).

From this strategic planning document, the A.N.T.A. Ministerial Council identified five (5) objectives to underpin Australian V.E.T., these being:

- equipping Australians for the world of work
- enhancing mobility in the labour market
- achieving equitable outcomes in vocational education and training
- increasing investment in training
- maximising the value of public vocational education and training expenditure. (A.N.T.A.: 1998)

The key question for this thesis is:

How successful has vocational education and training (V.E.T.) reform been in empowering one local community to plan for, manage and deliver new education and training services?

The sub-questions of the research are as follows:

- Is there a set of prescribed management factors relevant to managing change within communities leading to increased participation in V.E.T. programs?
- How can government, and does government, facilitate change within communities to increase participation in V.E.T. programs?
- How can government, and does government, facilitate new V.E.T. programs and processes within communities?
- Are Commonwealth V.E.T. reform processes supporting local communities enough to enable them to cope with change management in the V.E.T. sector?

This thesis will focus on the third objective of A.N.T.A.'s policy, "achieving equitable outcomes in V.E.T.". This particular objective is supported by the policy paper; *'Achieving Equitable Outcomes: A Supporting Paper to Australia's National Strategy for V.E.T. 1998 – 2003'* (A.N.T.A.: 1998)

This A.N.T.A. paper establishes broad policy initiatives for implementation during the period 1998 to 2003 under a policy umbrella of "*an equitable vocational education and training system able to offer inclusive and appropriate products and services for a full range of client and potential clients.*" (A.N.T.A.: 1998: 3) This policy framework is influenced by conceptual frameworks of social justice and managing diversity meaning that the aim of a national V.E.T. system is to recognise that "*economic, social, attitudinal, legislative and administrative factors may constitute impediments to equitable participation in vocational education and training ...*" (A.N.T.A.: 1998: 4)

The implementation of community based Rural Access Community Training Centres is linked to this strategic approach outlined in A.N.T.A.'s supporting paper and aims to overcome or remove structural inequities such as geographical isolation.

This A.N.T.A. paper also outlines the implementation of targeted responses to equity based on 'workable solutions' (e.g. solutions supported by local communities) and the introduction of resource allocation strategies (e.g. capital as well as program expenditure) and incentives that encourage responsiveness to client needs (e.g. local programs delivered by local people for local people). (A.N.T.A.: 1998: 9)

A.N.T.A. in partnership with State and Territory V.E.T. authorities has been working since 1994 to establish at least six (6) Rural Access Community Training Centres in various rural and remote locations in Victoria, New South Wales, Northern Territory and Western Australia.

This specific initiative and expenditure of funds aims to overcome specific barriers as outlined in A.N.T.A.'s strategic policy and planning documents:

The most significant barrier experienced by people in rural and remote communities concerns their isolation from a range of training and support services. The narrow range of vocational education and training programs available is further compounded by the difficulty in obtaining the minimum class sizes required by service providers and other issues of economies of scale. Constraints on finance, time and support mechanisms make relocation to a metropolitan area for training a difficult, and sometimes untenable alternative for people in rural and isolated areas. (A.N.T.A.: 1998: 15)

This policy is aimed at specific communities and target groups including women, Indigenous communities, the disabled, early school leavers, adults with low levels of literacy and numeracy and people disadvantaged because of their geographical location.

Rural Access Community Training Projects in Australia have been funded and ultimately managed by the Commonwealth Government through the Australian National Training Authority (A.N.T.A.) in partnership with relevant State/Territory education and training authorities.

There are no specific evaluations currently available on this specific initiative, however, it is understood by the researcher that six Rural Access Community Training Centres had been established up to the end of 2002, including; two in Victoria, two in Northern Territory and one each in New South Wales and Western Australia.

Although coordination of these projects was carried out by local community organisations, all project processes and funds allocated were subject to approval by A.N.T.A. and the relevant State/Territory V.E.T. authority. This imposed various regulations and restrictions on the projects including State/Territory policies and processes regarding R.T.O. status plus the implementation of new Commonwealth policy, namely the Australian Quality Training Framework (A.Q.T.F.). (A.N.T.A.: 2001)

In the absence of any formal evaluation or analysis of this specific initiative, this thesis seeks to link an account of one community based rural access training centre to principles of access and equity and community development.

The elements of Commonwealth V.E.T. policy implemented by the Rural Access Community Training Projects are as follows. *Access and equity* policies and practices are aimed at increasing participation in V.E.T. by disadvantaged groups such as women, disabled, A.T.S.I. people and people in rural and remote regions.

User choice policies promote the principle that consumers of V.E.T. services have the right to choose the type, venue, process and content of their learning. *Literacy and numeracy* development services for people with low levels of literacy and numeracy provide access bridging/pathway programs leading to increased entry in and completion rates of disadvantaged groups in V.E.T. and higher education courses.

New policy structures within V.E.T. reform impacting on these projects includes the implementation of both National Training Packages and the Australian Quality Training Framework (A.Q.T.F.). The A.Q.T.F., implemented fully in 2002, has initiated national registration standards for all R.T.O.s, national qualifications, individual learning pathways and aims to enhance a culture of lifelong learning within communities and industries.

The overarching focus of the A.Q.T.F. is to provide standards by which the provision of quality, consumer driven V.E.T. services by a variety (in size and location) of R.T.O.s throughout the country can be managed and evaluated on an annual basis through organisational audits conducted either internal to an organisation and by State/Territory appointed A.Q.T.F. auditors.

The ongoing implementation of *work-based staff and organisational development* within organisations coordinating V.E.T. services recognises that the people actually delivering V.E.T. services are vital to the process of reform and to creating access and equity outcomes. Work-based staff and organisational development programs are particularly important to existing organisations and communities who need work-based development

resources to assist them to cope with the change management processes required to implement the A.Q.T.F.

The Glassy Waters case-study involved the appointment of a firm of architects to design and manage the process of construction of a new facility to house the services of the community access training centre.

The researcher was employed to liaise with the community to research and resource relevant education and training programs and to manage the appointment of new staff for the facility. This process occurred throughout 2001 and 2002 with the new Rural Access Community Training Centre commencing full operation in mid 2002.

Glassy Waters Advisory Corporation (G.W.A.C.) operates from three sites within Glassy Waters, an administration building, an environmental education and tourist centre and the new vocational education and training facility.

The researcher gained the permission of the local community for the documentation and account of the Glassy Waters Rural Access Community Training Centre as a case-study providing a snapshot of how national vocation, education and training (V.E.T.) reform is progressing in Australia and its impact on communities identified as being in need of greater access to education and training resources and services. Whilst wanting to maintain their privacy the Glassy Waters community wished for others to learn from its recent experiences.

1.2 The Genesis of Vocational Education and Training (V.E.T.) Reform in Australia

The Australian vocational education and training (V.E.T.) system was reviewed in the early 1990's with a policy shift away from the State/Territory based curriculum system. The result was a white paper developed by the Keating Government and released in 1992/1993. (White Paper on V.E.T. in Australia: 1993)

The Allen Consulting Group, (A.N.T.A.: 1994) detailed the key turning points for the implementation of this white paper and policy reform of Vocational Education and Training (V.E.T.) in Australia.

The fundamental concepts underpinning the national training reforms evolved between 1982 and 1989, and were given firmer shape in Australia Reconstructed, a report by the ACTU/TDC Mission to Western Europe published in 1987(written by Laurie Carmichael). By April 1989 they had become sufficiently developed to underpin the Report on Improving Australia's Training System issued by Minister Dawkins and to form the agenda for the Special Ministerial Conference on Training in the same year. (A.N.T.A.:1994: p.3.)

It was evident by the actions of the Industrial Relations Commission that there was broad acceptance of the link between training, work and economic productivity in Australia. This was also the case in the international arena. In the UK and Europe during the 1980's, research and policy development had commenced on developing the concept of a

qualification for the achievement of workplace competencies. (Rutherford, 1994)

The Keating Labor Government white paper (1988) outlined the main aims of a new national V.E.T. reform agenda, these were:

- Formation of the Australian National Training Authority (A.N.T.A.) to coordinate reforms
- Creation of a nationally consistent V.E.T. system with nationally recognised qualifications
- Development of links between V.E.T. providers, industry and the community
- Increasing participation in the V.E.T. sectors by disadvantaged groups such as women, A.T.S.I. people and people with disabilities. (A.N.T.A.: 1994)

The focus of this thesis is to link the broad policy reform that occurred during the 1990's to specific strategic initiatives outlined in A.N.T.A.'s policy papers for the period 1998 – 2003. The case-study in this thesis demonstrates how one community (Glassy Waters) is coping with V.E.T. reform in Australia and the thesis also provides an analysis of the critical factors involved in facilitating change within communities contributing to the development of flexible learning processes and increased social, economic and community development.

This one example of local level implementation of V.E.T. reform initiatives will provide some insight into how the specific objectives of V.E.T. reform, in this case access and equity, are being managed and leads to asking the

following question: are these strategic initiatives actually achieving the desired outcomes?

2 Literature Review: The Policy Framework for Establishing V.E.T. services within Rural and Regional Communities

2.1 Elements of Australian Vocational Education and Training Reform that Impact on Communities

The main plank of V.E.T. reform in Australia was the introduction of a competency based framework for training planning, delivery, assessment and review. This was a radical shift from the curriculum and learning outcomes based framework traditionally utilised in Australia since at least the 1950's. A competency describes the knowledge, skills and personal attributes needed for an area of work.

Competency Standards are the alignment of skills, knowledge and attributes to a National Standards Framework. Therefore, Competency Based Training (C.B.T.) is training designed to provide learners with the workplace skills and knowledge identified by industry as essential to that industry. The direction of vocational training reform policy in Australia and in Europe during the 1980's was based on this concept. (A.N.T.A.: 1994)

During the 1990's, the Federal Labor Government in partnership with the union movement saw national competency based training as not only necessary to reform vocational training and work in Australia but as an integral part of their social justice strategy. The labour movement in this country believed that a National Training Scheme underpinned by acknowledging worker skills and knowledge in a more flexible and user friendly training environment would have the ability to attract a wider range of participants.

Women, disadvantaged young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and rural and isolated communities could be encouraged, it was believed, to participate in this new vocational training system. More importantly their skills and knowledge and the subsequent qualification gained would be recognised throughout Australia. (A.N.T.A.: 1994)

The policy reform that established the Australian National Training Authority (A.N.T.A.) in 1992 and the National Framework for the Recognition of Training (N.F.R.T.) was given the metaphor of 'a bridge' for all industries to become a part of training reform. It was the belief of Federal Labor Government that training reform could deliver employment flexibility, greater participation in training by a wide range of groups and future growth and wealth in Australia. (A.N.T.A.: 1994)

The Australian National Training Authority (A.N.T.A.) is the Commonwealth statutory authority that advises Commonwealth, State and Territory ministers on achieving a national focus for the vocational education and training system. The A.N.T.A. Board advises the A.N.T.A. Ministerial Council on decisions relating to strategic policy and planning including funding and national priorities.

State and Territory training authorities address industry and community training needs within their jurisdiction. In consultation with key stakeholders, A.N.T.A. develops 5 year national strategic plans for the V.E.T. sector. Each State and Territory training authority produces a yearly plan covering their proposed profile for vocational education and training for the coming year. A.N.T.A. allocates Commonwealth funds to the States and Territories on the basis of these plans and the States and Territories

contribute funding where they see gaps or to fund specific projects and programs. (A.N.T.A.: 1994)

A.N.T.A. provides funding for a range of program areas other than the delivery of training and education including:

- Capital infrastructure
- Staff development programs
- V.E.T. research and evaluation
- Leadership and advocacy programs increasing access and equity processes for Indigenous people, women, people with disabilities plus regional and remote communities.

Training reform projects such as workforce mapping and training needs analyses, competency development and curriculum review projects began in earnest in the 1990s as Australia embarked on the most radical changes to our post secondary education and training system.

During the early years of reform there was much confusion and resistance to proposed changes from a State/Territory based curriculum education and training system to a national system of competency based training packages. It was identified by A.N.T.A. that a culture of change and development needed to be fostered within training institutions, industry and government. (A.N.T.A.: 1996)

In the end governments have attempted a “two prong” approach by reforming current V.E.T. providers (e.g. TAFE) as well as resourcing new V.E.T. providers within industry and local communities. Both of these approaches have resulted in problems with existing providers such as

TAFE Institutes still struggling to cope with change management (Schofield: 2001) and with new providers struggling to meet required standards of operation and service delivery. (A.N.T.A.: 2002)

This thesis provides one example of how a new ‘player’ in the V.E.T. system, a rural community organisation has coped with implementing new V.E.T. services within one small geographic area in Australia. There are certain to be many more examples of communities, urban, regional, rural and remote, attempting to implement this new policy framework.

2.2 The Learning Community as an Incubator for Training and Education Reform

One of the main components of the case study presented in this thesis is the fact that the context is a small rural community. The term community is often used and misused as a term referring to groups of people, however, its meaning and use in the 21st Century is now very broad, for example, a community can be:

- A rural community – a group of people who live in a rural geographic setting (geographic community) (Kenny: 1994)
- A community of artists – a group of people who communicate and work together (community of interest) (Kenny: 1994)
- A community of practice – a group of people who share common values and purpose. (Wenger: 1998a)

The current Federal Liberal Government has overtly stated in recent times that it wants the Australian V.E.T. system to deliver services “*according to the need of local communities*” and that V.E.T. should be integrated into the fabric of local and regional planning and development. (A.N.T.A.: 2002: 10)

Various authors (Boyle: 1981, Cervero & Wilson: 1994a, 1994b, Dore: 1998 in A.N.T.A.: 2002) cited in the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia (CRLRA) report, *'Learning Communities in Education and Training'* agree that local communities need to be involved in the planning and provision of training and education services for these services to have meaning.

Also, that participation and inclusion are important concepts when planning new and existing V.E.T. services within communities whether they be urban, regional or rural contexts.

...there are significant reasons underlying the need for V.E.T. and regional and community development to work closely together and are, in fact, based on the same reasons that underlie the Kangan (1974) reforms: to fill the needs of the society of the day.

(A.N.T.A.: 2002: 11)

Two relevant issues to this thesis include the specifics of how communities are involved in planning V.E.T. services and whether local communities have the motivation, skills, personnel and social/political stability to participate in the planning and development of V.E.T. programs.

Community development is a discipline of the social sciences that has its origins in the USA and UK in the 1960's and 1970's aimed at transforming poor and disadvantaged communities within urban contexts in large metropolitan cities. (Kenny: 1994)

Community development has a complex history leading to the recent expansion of theoretical and practical frameworks, for example, Cavaye (2001) advocates a broad approach to rural community development (emphasizing this is different from urban community development) which encompasses very specific challenges.

These challenges include the following aspects to working with and within communities, Cavaye (2001) states that community development agencies and practitioners need to act on the existing motivations of communities to create change and build on the natural enthusiasm and confidence of people within communities. Community development processes can also be used to challenge traditional and failed (or at least failing) community attitudes and perceptions as well as support those people who do not necessarily stand out as leaders.

Rural practitioners need to constantly review what people see as needs and assets within the community to ensure that planning and service provision is based on need rather than assumptions of need. Community members also need to be encouraged to reach out to gain access to resources, information and technology and spend time, energy and resources building relationships within the community and from the community to other communities, government and industry, that is, develop long lasting networks. (Cavaye: 2001)

This also requires community development agencies and practitioners to evaluate the (cap)ability of a local community to cope with and manage the rigours of change and development via community based management structures.

Cavaye (2001) challenges traditional notions of community development that specify that community development agencies or practitioner(s) should be cautious about being too active within a community, that is, they should 'enable' development rather than actively making it happen.

Cavaye (2001) also points out that governments need to be accountable in new ways to communities about the programs they initiate:

New forms of accountability are needed to allow agencies to not only account for tangible outcomes and efficient delivery of services, but also for their contribution to community organization, cooperation and attitudinal change, accountability – for the process of interaction with communities, and for community capacity outcomes. (Cavaye: 2001: 120)

If V.E.T. reform in Australia should be based on integrating V.E.T. provision with community development programs and processes, this and other case-studies should reveal if in fact we are anywhere near the point of an integration of such complex systems.

2.3 Communities Coping with Social and Economic Change

Community life and development processes depend on the maintenance of a range of complex factors such as; economic opportunities, access to resources and services plus maintaining and creating community based infrastructure. (Collitis: 1999, Macgregor: 2000, Pepperdine: 2000)

The indicators of community life and development are broad and sometimes difficult to measure. However, Collitis (1999) in his research of regional development states that population growth, economic activity, income and skill levels, access to services, degree of dependence on government income schemes, the health of residents and access to new technologies all reveal the status of a community.

Some researchers (Pepperdine: 1999, Macgregor: 1999) examine social and environmental indicators of the survival and coping mechanisms of small rural and regional towns throughout Australia. The outcome of this recent research on the overall health of regional and rural communities reveals what might appear to be obvious, that is, social, economic and environmental factors all need to be taken into account when planning new initiatives in rural Australia.

This relates to the development of V.E.T. because formal education and training processes within rural and regional communities require physical capital (buildings, computers, tools and resources) as well as human and social capital, these being access to processes of interaction with other people such as teachers, students and community networks. (Falk: 2000)

Learning derives from all these aspects of the provision of education and training resources, therefore the planning and development of any education and training programs/centres needs to combine all three aspects of 'capital' investment.

The context for learning in rural and remote areas, is the communities where the learning is situated, that is, communities are where social capital exists. The components of social capital being community norms, community networks and the trust processes in place, all these incubate learning programs which then impact on individuals and organisations which in turn assist in social and economic development. (Falk: 2000)

One of the key features of these programmes that appears to underlie their success is the manner in which they develop trust, confidence and supporting networks among their adult students, as well as the integrity of the continuity of learning. (Falk: 2000: 11)

A new education and development project such as the one in Glassy Waters can then be evaluated based on the extent to which physical, human and social capital are invested in and combined to provide a holistic framework for the development of learning within a community or region of communities.

A regional focus on education, training and life-long learning provides a geographic (and demographic) framework to examine the implementation of effective education and training programs. Important issues to consider in examining regional education and training projects include the development of processes that involve local planning for local needs and outcomes, securing a considerable commitment by local people and organisations to produce these long-term and successful outcomes for individuals, organisations and communities. (Falk & Kilpatrick: 1999)

Another issue to consider is accepting the existence of a diversity of people and needs within a community and region, meaning that education and training programs need to acknowledge and cater for individuals and small sub-groups within communities rather than catering for generic groups of people like the 'unemployed', 'youth' and 'women'. An aim of regional, rural and remote education and training programs/centres should be to increase participation in education and training across the community.

Extrapolating from various scenarios of education and training in regional contexts, Falk and Kilpatrick (1999) offer various policy and resource provision issues and solutions for governments, industries and communities to consider during any processes of planning and implementing community based education and training programs/centres.

Some of the policy issues that need to be considered include:

- 1. Policy must reflect and encourage strength and growth through the diversity of regional needs – one hat cannot fit all;*
- 2. Education, training and lifelong learning must be tailored to fit three sometimes competing sets of needs – individual, regional and national;*
- 3. There are 'walls' around education, training and lifelong learning and other areas (eg, communities, industries) in policy and practical terms (e.g., Jargon, rules and procedures) that impede cooperation;*

4. *Matching resources to needs: how best to provide education, training and lifelong learning opportunities for regions and communities.* (Falk & Kilpatrick: 1999: 10)

The question then remains as to how to provide practical, workable solutions to these complex policy issues when actually implementing education and training programs in regional areas of the country.

Falk and Kilpatrick (1999) offer the following as possible solutions:

1. *Encouraging networks and partnerships (strategic learning) within regions, between regions and the nation, between educational institutions and these institutions and communities, and between policy makers as well as between policy makers and regions and communities;*
2. *Local planning – policy formation should include strong regional and community input and involvement;*
3. *Education, training and learning provision needs to occur through purpose-related cooperatively planned mechanisms, brokers who work across policy silos at the grass roots level, including training brokers who identify needs and arrange appropriate education and training or learning programs, effective use of information technology and other flexible learning methods.* (Falk and Kilpatrick: 1999: 12)

These authors conclude from their evaluation (Falk & Kilpatrick: 1999) that good practice community development within the education and training context results in “strong and resilient communities”. Good practices in

community development as they relate to implementing new education and training programs/centres in regional areas of Australia include the following:

- Building relationships within communities across genders, socio-economic classes and ages that seek to locate common interests and activities;
- Developing processes based on shared norms and trust between all stakeholders as well as resourcing networks and social interactions that foster trust;
- Identifying knowledge, skills and strengths within communities through constant interactions between people and organisations;
- Using interactions between people and organisations to plan future activities and resource provision;
- Planning short and long term goals and then revising these goals through events, networks and interactions across the community;
- Celebrating successes throughout the community and evaluating failures and quickly moving forward through planning. (Falk & Kilpatrick: 1999)

The research summarised above clearly reveals that community development processes are integral to all planning, implementation and evaluation processes in remote, rural and regional contexts in Australia. Case studies like the one presented in this thesis of a specific rural community organisation attempting to implement new education and training opportunities provides some insight into the connection between community development policy and processes and the implementation of V.E.T. programs.

2.4 Community and Organisational Management Processes Impacting on Communities

Learning and development within communities occurs in the context of a regional network of organisations or individual organisations whose aim or mission is to create transforming processes and outcomes in the community. These organisations are often community based and not industry or government organisations.

It could be assumed that V.E.T. organisations with their basis in industry and/or government do not have the structures and cultures to in fact manage the change within communities required by V.E.T. policy reform. (McCullough & Potter: 2000, A.N.T.A.: 2002)

Ascertaining and evaluating the existence and strength of community based structures such as management committees and other participatory opportunities is essential to community development processes (Kenny: 1994) and should be essential to planning new V.E.T. programs in rural and remote communities.

Bawden and Zuber-Skerritt (1991) in their work reveal the impact of action learning frameworks in Australia throughout the past decade of continued government sponsored reform and community and industry reaction to these reform agendas.

They state that:

It has taken a while, but a new management style is beginning to pervade Australian businesses and higher education institutions. From our obsession with products and commodities, we have come to recognise at last that the issue of the day is the underlying process. The emerging style of management is oriented towards processes. (1991:77)

These authors considered that Australian industry and higher education were experiencing substantial periods of radical change leading to greater efficiency and effectiveness. These policy and practice changes required process and change management to an extent not yet seen in this country and required a framework that *“is only possible if the old hierarchical structures are replaced by more democratic and humanitarian principles ...empowering people and trusting their ability to learn and develop through their own experience and action”* (1991:84)

Various researchers also explore concepts associated with the development of capable regions and organisations in their examination of capability, work and training as an alternative and/or extension of ‘competence’ as the basis of education and training systems. (Stephenson & Cairns: 1999, Malloch & Cairns: 1999)

The UK Blair Labour Government in part has attempted to address regional sustainability and capability via a white paper from the UK Department of Technology & Innovation (2001), *‘A White Paper on Enterprise, Skills and Innovation: Opportunity for all in a world of change’*, stating the

governments have the responsibility to be an enabling force, providing support for individuals, communities and industries.

This is a new approach to regional policy which develops a range of strategies aimed at strengthening “the building blocks for economic success which are the key to innovation in a knowledge economy.’ (DTI: 2001: 3)

Some of these new strategies include establishing university innovation centres and new technology institutes in all the regions, promoting the growth of successful industry clusters through Regional Development Agencies, removing the constraints to economic growth by allowing local agencies to develop local strategies and by making planning systems more efficient by improving regional skills bases as well as regional and community transport infrastructure.

The U.K. White Paper states:

Strong regions and communities are a vital component of a strong national economy and open up greater opportunity for individual entrepreneurs and existing businesses. The new approach will be based on putting greater emphasis on growth within all regions and strengthening the building blocks for economic success by boosting regional capacity for innovation, enterprise and skills development. (DTI: 2001: 1)

These broad statements mark the commencement of strategic development in the UK that moves away from a purely national approach to education, skills development and small business incubation and one which recognises that regional capacity and capability building is the essence to national economic success.

The White Paper also provides many examples of regional capacity and capability building which not only implements the government's agenda but also reacts to earlier evaluations of capability building completed in the UK. Several scenarios outlined in the U.K. journal, *Capability* (1995) revealed certain weaknesses in the processes of educating for capability in the U.K prior to the development of the new White Paper, including the development of a pedagogy of capability based on three concepts, the construction of meaning through education and training, developing disciplined inquiry and encouraging value beyond education where an individual's education has aesthetic, utilitarian and personal value connected to the real world. (Note: the specific author(s) of the article were not cited in the journal)

This journal article also points out that processes such as mentoring and skills networks are crucial to localised and regional capacity and capability development. (*Capability*: 1995) These ideas and concepts have indeed been captured in the White Paper through the establishment of Regional Development Agencies, Local Skills Councils and localised Employment Services. (DTI: 2001)

Capability, as it can be applied to individuals, communities, regions and organisations has been described as:

*Capability is an **integration** of knowledge, skills, personal qualities and understanding **used appropriately and effectively** – not just in familiar and highly focused specialist contexts but in response to **new and changing circumstances**.*

(Stephenson 1998 in Stephenson & Cairns: 1999:2)

The key elements of capability that can extrapolate to change management within education and training networks and organisations include:

- The *Ability* of an organisation to carry out tasks as a collective both in familiar and potential situations
- The confidence or *Self-efficacy* of the collective within an organisation, to perform tasks
- The organisational *Values* that provide a framework within which education and training services are delivered, values such as; integrity, trust and responsibility. (Stephenson: 1998)

These elements of capability are useful as a tool for evaluating the processes used by communities and community based organisations that have been chosen as sites or “arenas” for the implementation of policy reform strategies and initiatives such as Rural Access Community Training Centres. Governments at Federal and State Territory levels have clearly articulated that it is capable organisations and communities that provide the key to the implementation of V.E.T. reform initiatives. (A.N.T.A.: 2002; DE&T: 2002)

The contextual features of organisations and communities which relate to this research and further assist in the description of ‘capable organisations’ and ‘capable communities’ include being:

- able to facilitate learner-managed learning, that is, assisting individuals to manage their own learning rather than being passive recipients of knowledge and skill development
- open to change, that is, being aware of change, the need for change and the systems or frameworks required to manage change
- able to manage unfamiliar problems and the processes required to manage problem solving. (Stephenson: 1998)

Without entering into the broader debate about the concept of ‘capability’ being a more sound approach to developing education and training systems, it can be said that communities and community based organisations (as well as industry enterprises) in Australia need to be more than just ‘competent’ in delivering education and training services. They must be capable of engaging in the processes outlined above.

Facilitating learner-centred learning, being open to change and managing problem-solving are all key tenets of change management within communities and organisations and to some extent have been missing within education and training policy and reform in Australia. (Malloch & Cairns: 1999)

In order to improve the services they provide, communities and V.E.T. organisations need to effectively manage processes of adaptability such as innovation, creativity and imagination. More importantly, change management requires a high level of capturing ideas and navigating work teams in such a way that change equates to individual and group learning focusing on attitudes and behaviours within a specific context. (Bawden & Zuber-Skerritt: 1991)

At this point it can be argued that the notion of management *capability* versus management *competence* is relevant in that the Australian education and training reform agenda has implemented a competency-based framework which assumes that individual skills can be demonstrated, measured and assessed against agreed standards.

Throughout the late 1980's and early 1990's much research and development occurred in Australia on the core competencies required for organisational managers within private corporations/businesses and government agencies. The Australian Institute of Management developed the Australian Competent Management Program (A.C.M.P.), this program then led to the review and development of new management courses as a graduate level throughout the country. (A.I.M.: 1997)

The management of Registered Training Organisations (R.T.O.s) throughout Australia has been subjected to intense scrutiny over the past two decades by government agencies which fund training and education services. This scrutiny has relied not on management competency or capability but on Quality Assurance frameworks which stress the examination and continuous improvement of organisational processes as a means of providing "quality" services to consumers or customers. (A.N.T.A.: 2001)

These issues are relevant to this thesis in that the establishment and development of new V.E.T. providers are audited or evaluated by governments within the current theoretical or policy framework of management of education and training services. In the case of the recently established Rural Access Community Training Centres, the Australian Quality Training Framework (A.Q.T.F.) outlines the 'standards' for organisational (and therefore, individual) performance with the V.E.T. sector. Quality frameworks as they exist in Australia for V.E.T. services are business management based concepts rather than concepts of 'competence' or 'capability'.

Abrahamson (1999) examines the influence of fashions and fads on the management of organisations compared to reform within organisations based on evidence for the need for change plus evidence of the impact of change. He states that researchers and theorists in the field of organisational change management -

may fail to focus on why a small minority of fashions becomes institutionalized, whereas a majority do not, why knowledge entrepreneurs seek to deinstitutionalize institutions and replace them with a transient series of lucrative fashions, and why, therefore, temporal instability and cross-sectorial diversity caused by constant transience characterise the use of management techniques and organizational forms. (Abrahamson: 1999, p 2).

Throughout the 1970's to 1990's within western democratic economies, certain employee-management fashions emerged and waned, four that are relevant to Australia include, job enrichment, quality circles, total quality management and business process re-engineering.

There has now been a significant history of quality management processes as a fashion within Australian education and training organisations, the when, how and where of we are now in the lifecycle of this 'fashion' could be the subject of further research and is not the focus of this thesis. (Abrahamson: 1999)

The notion of 'management capability' can now be contrasted against the notions of 'management competence' and 'quality management'.

Stephenson and Cairns (1999) describe individual capability as:

an all round human quality, an integration of knowledge, skills and personal qualities used effectively and appropriately in response to varied, familiar and unfamiliar circumstances. A capability approach develops the present and imagines the future based on human potential and aims for fitness of purpose. (Stephenson and Cairns: 1999: 7)

There is sufficient evidence (ETTE: 2001, Schofield: 1999, 2000, 2001) that management processes and individual management teams within education and training organisations in Australia are entrenched within the "fashions" of management competence and quality management processes. These management frameworks concentrate on process and outcomes, not on philosophies, people and communities.

2.5 The People in Vocational, Education and Training Impacting on Communities

During this period of vocational education and training (V.E.T.) policy and operational reform, there has been much discussion regarding the value of creating learning cultures within the education and training sector as incubators for implementing specific education and training reform agendas such as flexible learning and life-long learning.

Even though it was not the stated, specific aim of the Federal Government policy that established Rural Access Community Training Centres to create 'learning organisations' or 'learning communities', it could be argued that other policy frameworks that juxtapose access and equity policy, such as, A.Q.T.F. policies and processes and staff development policies and processes do in fact encourage these concepts within the V.E.T. sector.

The case study of Glassy Waters in this thesis was subject to A.Q.T.F. processes via audits, it was also actively encouraged to accept staff development funding for projects aimed at creating a 'culture of learning' within the Glassy Waters Advisory Corporation and the community.

The creation of learning cultures within communities and within organisations ultimately means the creation of 'new people and processes' within these communities and organisations. A.N.T.A. (1998) identified very early on in the process of reform via its National Staff Development Committee that providing programs for the people who are going to manage and deliver new V.E.T. programs was going to be crucial to the success of V.E.T. reform.

Therefore, a range of staff development initiatives have been considered by governments as a means of promoting the values, structures and processes required for the creation of new education and training organisations such as private industry and community based Registered Training Organisations and the transformation of existing education and training organisations such as TAFE Institutes and Universities. (A.N.T.A.: 1995)

Henry (2000:2) clearly articulates the approach associated with professional development in the V.E.T. sector aimed at supporting the implementation of the reformed NTF:

The 1995 NSDC discussion paper asserted that its staff development framework must be consistent with both the training demands of an increasingly complex public and private organisational context and the national training policy of A.N.T.A.. The implication here is that if staff development programs for NV.E.T.S personnel were to reflect best practice for learning in the post-industrial workplace then NV.E.T.S staff would not only undergo professional change, they would also come to appreciate, from their first hand experiences, the key elements of A.N.T.A.'s training reform policies.

Henry (2000) reveals that professional development for V.E.T. staff and work-based learning coordinators throughout the country needed to reflect the changes advocated by national V.E.T. policy for all education and training programs, that is: staff development should be formed by industry interests, be workplace based, focus on learning strategies that provide structure and flexibility and promote behavioural, attitudinal and organisational workplace change.

As a result of years of piloting several models of staff development (e.g. CBT-in-Action Scheme), *Framing the Future* was the major staff development initiative implemented by A.N.T.A. in the period 1997 – 2000 providing funding to approximately 340 professional development projects involving over 13,000 participants. (A.N.T.A.: 2000)

An evaluation report by Mitchell (2000) provides an in-depth analysis of areas in which the Framing the Future program has had an impact within and on V.E.T. and industry organisations.

His research concluded that:

Framing the Future was designed to help meet the challenges of the NTF by developing a model of staff development that could accommodate the increasingly complex pedagogical, organisational and industry demands of the NTF. Framing the Future has sought to transfer its model for staff development to participating organisations; to assist with the larger change management programs required to underpin the NTF. (Mitchell: 2000:3)

The major findings of this evaluation process were that Framing the Future had met its objectives, however, it was timely to consider new processes and projects. It was found that the Framing the Future national project team positively influences the long-term impact of specific staff development program, however, internal organisational factors impinged on the impact of staff development.

This comprehensive evaluation of the A.N.T.A. preferred model of staff development sponsored by government and engaged in by hundreds of education and training organisations provides some insight into the notion that reform of the Australian V.E.T. system is not yet complete.

Recently, A.N.T.A. through the reconstructed Reframing the Future staff development program, established funding for projects aiming to establish 'Communities of Practice' within V.E.T. organizations. This new program is based on the work of Wenger et al (2002) relating to how organizations deal with knowledge management within a V.E.T. context. Reframing the Future also still provides funds for more general staff development processes aimed at organisations coping with the implementation of V.E.T. reform.

Communities of practice has been defined as "*groups of people who share a common concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis*". (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002)

Wenger et al (2002) identifies a range of factors that impede individual and organization change management and knowledge management, these are:

- Knowledge imperialism (*control*)
- *Marginalization* of people and information
- *Factionalism* within management and staff teams
- *Cliques* within organizations that control information, knowledge and resources

- The *philosophy* of egalitarianism versus the practice of authority
- Organizational *dependence* on a leader or leader(s) rather than the whole
- *Stratification* within task groups leading to any or all of the above
- *Disconnectedness* within organizations, that is, groups are too large or diffused or dispersed.

Wenger et al (2002) also describes the elements required for creating a Community of Practice within a large organization or within a geographic region, including; a domain of knowledge, which *creates common ground* and a sense of common knowledge in the organization or community.

Wenger et al (2002) points out that community creates the social fabric of learning, a strong community fosters interactions and relationships based on *mutual respect and trust*, the practice is a set of frameworks, ideas, tools, information, styles, language, stories and documents that community/organizational members *share*.

This new element to the A.N.T.A. staff development program explicitly creates opportunities for V.E.T. organizations and clusters of organizations to challenge current practices of change management via information and knowledge management processes. (A.N.T.A.: 2001) It does seem that in 2002, A.N.T.A. had begun to embrace the notion of ‘community’ rather than just the ‘individual’ and the ‘organisation’ in it’s development of services to V.E.T. organisations and practitioners.

These new frameworks for development within V.E.T. have come about by A.N.T.A. adhering to one of the principles of community development being, never assuming what people (and organisations) want and to continually review the needs of individuals, organisations and communities. (Cavaye: 2001)

This new approach then, acknowledges that networks within communities and organisations need to be supported and developed to ensure that the 'whole' community/organisation are included in V.E.T. needs analysis and planning of program delivery.

2.6 Summary

This literature review of the policy framework for establishing V.E.T. services within rural and regional communities has revealed that a number of Federal government policy initiatives impact on communities and organisations.

This policy 'mix' is not only daunting for communities, it is also untested in that it is only in recent years that research has begun to emerge that evaluates the effectiveness of current V.E.T. policies in Australia and particularly the effectiveness in regional and rural communities. (A.N.T.A.: 2002, 2003, Dunbrell: 2000, Falk & Kilpatrick: 1999, Mitchell & Young: 2002)

This section of the thesis has also revealed that in the U.K. and other overseas contexts the notion of regional development, capacity building and capability have emerged as policy agendas that are facilitating the linking of education and training within communities and regions with small business development, innovation, technology and regional physical infrastructure.

The case study in this thesis explores how access and equity policy, A.Q.T.F. policy and staff development policy all interact to apply certain theoretical and practical pressures to regional and rural communities who are establishing new V.E.T. services.

3 Research Design

3.1 Background to the research

Since 1990, the researcher has been employed by various vocational education and training (V.E.T.) providers as a trainer and program coordinator. The researcher was employed in 2001 as a project manager to assist a rural community build and operate a new community access training centre. This involved extensive research and consultation with the local community about education and training needs and consultation with Commonwealth and State/Territory governments regarding statutory regulations and requirements for the project.

Following consultation, there was the provision of education and training services to the management and potential operational staff regarding work-based and flexible training and assessment processes and methods, research and production of a strategic plan for the centre for the period 2001–2004 and mentoring management and operational staff for a period of eighteen months to ensure that knowledge and skills were transferred into actual operational processes for the centre.

During this project the researcher became aware that there was a lack of information about how communities across Australia were coping with national training reform and more specifically, how organisations were managing the transition to competency and work-based training and assessment services.

3.2 Key Research Question(s)

The key question for this research was:

How successful has vocational education and training (V.E.T.) reform been in empowering one local community to plan for, manage and deliver new education and training services?

The sub-questions of the research were:

- Is there a set of prescribed management factors relevant to managing change within communities leading to increased participation in V.E.T. programs?
- How can government, and does government, facilitate change within communities to increase participation in V.E.T. programs?
- How can government, and does government, facilitate new V.E.T. programs and processes within communities?
- Are Commonwealth V.E.T. reform processes supporting local communities enough to enable them to cope with change management in the V.E.T. sector?

3.3 Case Study Research Methodology

The approach decided on for this research was a case-study of one community, outlining and analysing how it managed the process of creating a new Registered Training Organisation (R.T.O.) as part of vocational education and training (V.E.T.) reform in Australia.

The case-study approach derives from the principles of participatory action research utilised in the management of the project as well as the process of documenting the project by the researcher.

The researcher in this case was acting as manager, change agent and researcher for the project, the performance of all these roles lent itself to the documentation of the research in case-study format via participant observations and interviews with key stakeholders.

More recently, A.N.T.A. through Framing the Future has funded research via project case-studies on the Australian V.E.T. system as a means of identifying how specific project groups and organisations are managing change within the context of V.E.T. reform. (A.N.T.A.: 1999, 2000, 2002)

The research methodology of this specific case-study relates to the collection and presentation of detailed information about the development of new education and training services in small community group in rural Victoria. It is the qualitative, descriptive research of a small participant group, drawing conclusions about a specific context.

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and multiple sources of evidence are used. (Yin: 1989) A case study is also a detailed examination of an event, or a series of related events, which the analyst believes exhibits some identified theoretical principles(s).

In the context of evaluation, case studies can provide us with learning about the 'how' and 'why' of particular events, that is provide explanations of events over time rather than the frequency or incidence of behaviours. (Merriam: 1998)

The strengths of case study design include;

- Flexibility in project design, emphasising exploration which begins with broad questions and narrows its focus as the project progresses,
- The focus on a very specific context exploring information quite minutely with descriptions being able to give a more human face to events.

The weaknesses of case study design include;

- The existence of inherent subjectivity relating to the personal (rather than 'objective') interpretation of information with generalised inferences difficult to test for validity,
- The high investment of time to participate fully in a project or series of events, to observe all that is going on and to interview participants as they interact within the project.

The ethical considerations for this kind of research design can also be considered a weakness depending on a point of view. Conflicts of interests, personal integrity and prejudices all need to be considered when designing and conducting the research. It is also considered that another weakness of case study methodology is that researchers change the focus of research during the project and need to revise their investigations by reporting preliminary findings reviewing them against the original aim of the research (Merriam:1998)

This specific case study of Glassy Waters is a holistic single unit of analysis (Yin: 1994), that is, it studies the implementation of one program area within one community group in a rural community context. It is revelatory in that it studies a specific situation (the Glassy Waters community) within a time limited context (the implementation of a new education and training centre), both of which have not been researched before.

The theoretical considerations relevant to this qualitative, descriptive study are two-fold:

- Organisational theories which focus on the aims of bureaucracies, institutions and organisational structure as well the ability of these to achieve their aims.
- Social theories which focus on urban and community development as well as group behaviours, cultural institutional functions and how groups mature in these contexts.

Participant observation was the main method of information collection incorporating the work of the researcher. Participant observation is an accepted method of documenting and reflecting on our own perceptions, views and experiences of participating in a process. (Chein, Cook & Harding: 1948, in Kemmis & McTaggart: 1988)

The researcher in this case was able to draw upon his experiences not only of managing a substantial project for this community organisation but also the experiences of managing change and staff development processes for larger and smaller V.E.T. providers in the past both in an urban and regional environment.

Bruyn (1996) reveals that the phenomenological approach to participant observation encompasses understanding and empathy and an awareness of four distinct elements:

- Awareness of the time processes involved in the researcher's involvement with a community
- Awareness of the physical environment as people experience it
- Awareness of contrasting experiences by people in communities via their own contexts
- Awareness of social openings and barriers as they affect all participants.

The researcher attempted the difficult task of participating in a project in conjunction with observing the actions of other participants and recording all the details. The recording of details was via reports, minutes of meetings and a research journal completed by the researcher during the course of the project.

Laurier (2001) warns about the interplay between being participant and observer; *“it is the case that far too many of its researchers are only commentators and have never played. The point that is being reiterated here is that the best participant-observation is generally done by those who have been involved in and tried to do and/or be a part of the things they are observing.”*

In this case-study the researcher immersed himself within the organisation and community firstly as a part of the project and then as a colleague to some people and a friend to others within the community. Rapport was established, yet the researcher was able to remove himself everyday to then

intellectualise, analyse and write up his observations mainly because he did not reside and/or socialise within this community.

Participant observations were supplemented by semi-structured interviews involving questions asked within the interviews of key players in the project including:

- Four (4) members of the advisory and management committees of the community organisation regarding their perceptions, views and experiences of managing change in a community context. (These are referred to as Interviews A, B and D and were conducted in February 2002)
- Two (2) members of the relevant State/Territory education and training authority regarding their perceptions, views and experiences of V.E.T. reform at a government level and their views on the success of this community organisation incorporating V.E.T. regulations and processes into an existing organisational context.

(These are referred to as Interviews C and E and were conducted in October 2001)

The first stage of the research process involved contacting members of the management committee of the community organisation to gain consent for the research process and permission to access advisory, management and staff members as well as previously published information about the organisation and the specific project and negotiating time and dates for the informal interviews.

The interview process involved negotiating with specific individuals to conduct semi-structured interviews which aimed to draw on the experiences and opinions of these individuals.

It was important to preserve the privacy and confidentiality of the individuals to firstly, ensure their participation and secondly to protect their privacy. Interviews were conducted at a site selected by the interviewees to ensure they were comfortable about their privacy being protected.

The research incorporated a review and documentary analysis of past and current government policy papers regarding V.E.T. reform including the history of V.E.T. reform in Australia, the current status of V.E.T. reform and key reform projects that have been funded over the past few years, specifically those in small regional and rural communities. The literature and policy documentation were accessed through A.N.T.A. and relevant State/ Territory libraries and on-line publications.

The research also included a review of literature on community and organisational change management including the theory and practice of managing change with a range of regional and organisational contexts here in Australian and overseas. This literature was accessed through the Victoria University library, various V.E.T. research websites and various international research data-bases.

The documentation of the policy and organisational context required the following information collection processes:

1. *Interviews* with managers within government authorities who are managing the implementation of participation policy in a V.E.T. context, exploring their perceptions of the nature and effectiveness of management processes associated with a variety of V.E.T. programs and projects.

2. Summarising the *participant observations* of the researcher, who had managed the project.
3. Conducting the actual *Interviews* with key personnel within the organisation to gather relevant information.

As mentioned previously, the community, its organisations, people and actual positions have not been identified in this research report to preserve confidentiality and privacy. Subjects were assured that the information they provided would be kept confidential unless they deemed it appropriate to do otherwise. All participants stipulated that they required their privacy to be protected.

Interviews were conducted over a period of time from 2001 to early 2002 and were recorded in private via audio-tape and/or taking notes as negotiated with individual subjects. The tapes/notes do not identify subjects as individuals and the records of interview have been stored in a locked cabinet after they had been transcribed and/or summarised.

Data specifically collected for the purpose of this research included:

- Transcripts of information collected during interviews with community members and government representatives.
- The researcher's own journal and notes of information collected during the project.
- Notes derived from minutes of meetings held throughout the project.
- Notes from researching government reports and policy documents.

The data collected during the project was analysed via the following methods:

1. Interview notes were transcribed with specific themes highlighted.
2. The researcher's journal notes were summarised with specific themes highlighted.
3. Notes from meeting minutes were analysed to also highlight specific themes
4. A framework of themes and issues was developed from researching government policy documents and other literature explored in Section 2 of this thesis.
5. A thematic analysis was then completed on all the notes taken by the researcher from interviews, journals and meeting minutes to connect to the framework of analysis.
6. Subjects were also asked to participate in summarising and reporting the information they divulged via a written request to edit the specific sections of the research report that contained information they divulged.

4 Case-study: A Rural Community Access Training Centre

4.1 The Community – Glassy Waters

Glassy Waters is a small rural community with a population of some 650 residents situated on a system of rivers and lakes in rural Australia. Glassy Waters is itself a collection of small residential communities spread over a geographical area of some eight (8) square kilometres and over two sides of a river.

Glassy Waters is a town like many others in rural Australia with a demographic profile as follows:

- 48% of the population is male, 52% is female
- 42% of the population is under 30 years of age, 58% is over 30 (with 38% over 60 years of age)
- Unemployment levels have been at around 23% for over a decade, with 38% of the population classified as itinerant or casual workers in agricultural industries
- The main industries are; agriculture, tourism, wood-chipping, retail services and forest/ parks & gardens (government employees)
- The cultural mix of the population is; Anglo-Celtic (45%), Italian (15%), other European (18%), Asian (10%), Indigenous (12%). (ABS: 2002)

Historically, Glassy Waters has been a supply town for Indigenous and colonial travellers who used the river as a highway for travel and as a source of water and food. During recent times it remains a supply town for travellers of a different kind being local/national and international

tourists who flock to the region to use the waterways for recreation during the summer months.

Residents of Glassy Waters have in recent years realized the environmental and economic importance of the rivers, lakes, swamps and forests that make up some of the geographical space in the region.

This realisation led to a review of how the waterways and forests are utilised and many residents have advocated an end to stock grazing and crop production as local industries and a move toward industries such as; tourism (guided tours, supplies and services), historical and Indigenous cultural education, sustainable horticultural development and sustainable land and water management projects.

The community discussion led to a new wave of planning for the town and a series of submissions for funding of various projects for the region, including;

- An environmental and cultural education centre
- An integrated convention/conference centre and tourist accommodation complex (motel, units plus camping ground)
- A rural transaction centre incorporating increased postal, banking and medical services
- An artists co-operative
- A café and restaurant incorporating local produce and Indigenous “bush tucker”.

A plethora of submissions and discussions with governments led to interest in these ideas and several concept proposals were completed with commitment by various governments for a number of these projects to be developed in the next few years (for example; a convention centre, a rural transaction centre, land management and sustainable horticulture projects).

During discussions with various government agencies, the issue of providing sustainable employment for local residents was raised and linked to research that revealed that the region had one of the highest levels of long-term unemployment and therefore the lowest levels of income in the country. (ABS: 2002)

In 1996 representatives from Commonwealth and State/Territory education, employment and training authorities as well as local residents and interested parties were invited to a forum to discuss education, training and employment incentives available to this town.

It was revealed at this forum that the Commonwealth government had allocated funding for the development of several Rural Access Community Training Centres to aid rural and regional communities to provide increased access to education and training services to local people. The people of Glassy Waters decided to put a submission to the government that one of these Rural Access Community Training Centres should be built at Glassy Waters.

In 1999 the residents of Glassy Waters were informed that their submission had been successful and that the project would proceed in the year 2000 ready for full operation in 2001. Despite several setbacks due to delays in developing partnership agreements between Commonwealth and State/Territory governments, the project commenced in late 2000 with the establishment of a Training Centre Management Group which had representatives from the local community (3 people), State/ Territory education and training authority (2 people) plus industry people (2 people).

Late in 2000 a firm of architects was employed to design the facility and manage the construction. In early 2001, the researcher was employed as a consultant to the project to manage the transition to a community owned and managed vocational education and training centre.

4.2 *The Organisation*

Glass Waters Advisory Corporation (G.W.A.C.) is a community owned and managed organisation situated in Glassy Waters itself. G.W.A.C. is funded by several government and non-government agencies for the provision of land management, environmental and tourism services to the community, government and industry in the region.

The organisation has restricted membership based on specific rules of incorporation and association regulated by Commonwealth and State government agencies. The organisational structure of this community organisation can best be described as a flat structure with a hierarchy of voluntary positions (i.e. Chairperson, Ordinary Members, and Ordinary Volunteers etc) based on community participation.

Members are voted onto the Committee of Community Advisors and the Management Committee by local residents at an Annual General Meeting (AGM) every twelve months. Residents can apply to become members of G.W.A.C. by proving that they have been a resident of the township for over two years and have some ownership of land, facilities or businesses in the region. Itinerant and holiday residents as well as tourists are not able to join as members of Glassy Waters Advisory Committee.

The Committee of Community Advisors is elected by all the members to set policies for the organisation to ensure that G.W.A.C. acts in the best interests of all residents. At the commencement of this project this Committee had thirteen (13) members, Ten (10) were women and three (3) were men, Eight (8) were over 50 years of age, four (4) were over 40 years of age and one (1) was under 40. Three of the members of this committee were Indigenous (Aboriginal) people.

The Management Committee is elected by all the members to manage finances, human resource and all the operational issues that arise. The Management Committee had nine (9) members, four (4) were from the Committee of Community Advisors and five (5) were from the general membership. People are elected for their specialist skills such as business management, finance and human services. Two members of this committee were Indigenous (Aboriginal) people.

4.3 The People

The key people who participated in the Rural Access Training Centre Project included the following stakeholders.

Firstly, two (2) government representatives who monitored the project and ensured it remained within budget and on a tight time schedule. Their role was also to monitor the project and report outcomes to governments relating to the project achieving policy outcomes as envisaged broadly by V.E.T. reform and specifically, the program of Rural Community Access Training Centres. Both of these representatives (bureaucrats) were men in their early to mid thirties, both had commenced their careers in community organisations and one was an Indigenous person.

Secondly, community representatives participated in designing the facility and deciding on the operational policies of the new centre. This was an important aspect of the process as it ensured participation by local community members and provided a mechanism for also ensuring that the new centre would be 'owned' and utilised by the local community.

The three (3) community representatives were all women, all in their mid forties – mid fifties, long-time residents of Glassy Waters and were known as 'community advocates' or fondly as 'community rat-bags', always attending public meetings, making submissions to government, stirring the pot of local government and generally 'advocating' for the local community. Two of these women are Indigenous people.

Three points to be made here include the fact that gender and age did play a part in the culture of the Training Centre Management Committee, the community representatives treated the younger, male government representatives with some disdain as being '*outsiders*' and as being '*too young to know*' about community and as being '*just male career bureaucrats*'. (Interviews A & B: February 2002)

The second issue was that of Indigenous versus non-Indigenous politics where issues of land management, cultural dispossession and access to education and training were real issues in the planning for the centre.

The third issue related to the limited participation of local residents, even though most residents supported the project it seemed that most residents either had no interest or were not encouraged to participate on community advisory and management committees

Conflict occurred at every phase of the process including;

- the design features of the new facility
- ascertaining the training needs of the community
- engaging in lobbying for funding from government authorities, and
- the evaluation and measurement of training and education outcomes.

According to stakeholders interviewed for this research, conflict was consistently based on 'outsiders' not understanding the needs and lifestyle of small rural communities and non-Indigenous people not 'knowing' the needs and culture of the Indigenous peoples. However, from interviews with government representatives, their views were that conflict arose from the ignorance and inexperience of community members regarding government funding, accountability processes and a lack of a 'management culture'.

The Community Advisory and Community Management Committees of G.W.A.C. participated in the transition process and the organisation was required to modify its whole policy and procedures framework to incorporate relevant regulations set out by Commonwealth policies regarding the new Australia Quality Training Framework (A.N.T.A.: 2002).

As previously outlined, several members of these Committees were designated to participate in the management of the project as well as liaise with project consultants and government representatives. The major problem that ensued during the project was a change in Management Committee personnel and some delays in establishing a new Community Management Committee during 2001.

It had been decided by some residents in the community that there was need for change in the Community Management Committee to ensure that the community was able to effectively manage new assets and projects.

The power plays and lobbying that occurred over a period of some six months left a vacuum in G.W.A.C. where community members were sidetracked by these issues and having to manage incorporation regulations rather than other project issues.

The first annual general meeting (A.G.M.) of G.W.A.C. in 2001 was abandoned due to a lack of members attending and the second A.G.M. elected Committees that consisted of fewer members than were required by the G.W.A.C. constitution and incorporations legislation. This meant the new committees had to meet hastily and organize to co-opt new members onto the new advisory and management committees.

Ordinary members of G.W.A.C. were invited to several forums during the life of the project to be informed of progress of the project and to be invited to participate in forthcoming training and education programs. Most ordinary members were content with the project process and were keen just to see the centre open for business, however many were also quite disturbed by the community politics and power-plays that were being conducted over the management of this new community asset and service. (Interview A & B: February 2002)

Most of the staff of G.W.A.C. did not become involved in the V.E.T. project until its latter stages. The staff included, (2) administration staff, three (3) environmental education staff and two (2) environmental inspection staff.

Staff were kept informed of progress in the training centre project and then later were invited to participate in a training program gaining their Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, the national qualification required by government authorities for trainers in the new national V.E.T. system.

Two staff participated in this process, however, the remaining did not. The staff did not see the point of gaining a new qualification or modifying any work practices to incorporate Australian Quality Training Framework (A.Q.T.F.) regulations. Rather than accepting this as a staff/ career development opportunity, they considered this an impost of government on communities.

This was yet another indication of the lack of participation of local people and residents in the advisory and decision-making processes of G.W.A.C. and again indicates that people were either apathetic in their attitude to localized policy and process formulation or were intimidated into not participating by the 'murkiness' and social danger of local politics,

4.4 The Rural Access Training Project

4.4.1 The Training Management Group

The Training Centre Management Group consisted of two government representatives, three community members, the G.W.A.C. Programs Manager and the project consultant (the researcher).

The group met every two months to review the progress of the project, discuss policy and procedural issues and plan the next phase of the project, that is, the full operation of the education and training centre as a community owned facility.

The climate of most meetings was one of mistrust and suspicion. Government representatives truly doubted the ability of G.W.A.C. to effectively manage the project and the new centre. This view was based on their knowledge that effective management of a training centre required much higher skill levels than existed within this community. (Interview C: October 2001)

Interviews conducted by the researcher with one of the government representatives confirmed this attitude. He clearly stated that while hopeful of a successful outcome to the project, he believed that G.W.A.C. would require a plethora of consultants for years to come to assist in the management of the centre. He also stated that the success of the project depended on external people being involved in the new centre for the long-term. He stated that community members had specific agendas in terms of building "*an empire of facilities*" rather than actually wanting to effectively manage these facilities or achieve outcomes as required by governments. (Interview C: October 2001)

Community members were aware of these attitudes even though they were not verbalised. The community members who were interviewed stated that government representatives also have their agendas, "*they just want to build a career for themselves within the bureaucracy.*" (Interview A & B: February 2002)

This level of mistrust meant that Project Management meetings were usually brief and focused on functional issues relating to project milestones being achieved rather than any substantive issues relating to policy and procedural development, problems being encountered and the possible solutions to these problems.

In summary, the Training Centre Management Committee did not function as a community development agent but rather, a supervisory body. Community members on this committee were not communicating widely enough or effectively with the broader community about the processes to set up the centre and this impacted significantly on the eventual outcomes of the project.

4.4.2 The Consultants

Three consultants were engaged during the life of the project.

Firstly, a group of architects was employed to design the new facility and manage the construction of the facility. These consultants had a specific brief and were not involved in the project management group. The researcher took on the role of mediator between the architects and the Training Centre Management Committee.

Secondly, the researcher was employed for three (3) days per week to work on-site at G.W.A.C. as the project manager on a time specific contract to manage the change process. This process involved G.W.A.C. becoming a Registered Training Organisation and included policy and procedure development, coordinating liaison activities between the community,

government and the architects, managing submissions for funding and managing the process of employing new staff for the centre.

Thirdly, a consultant was engaged to liaise with government and manage the bureaucratic process of registering G.W.A.C. as an RTO and to manage the ongoing compliance with government regulations. This consultant met with the Project Manager and some community members about four times during the life of the project to ensure that the process was on track and that government regulations were being complied with.

4.4.3 The New Staff

Toward the end of the project, once the facility was near completion and funding for 2002 had been secured, a process commenced to employ four new staff members for the centre; a Training Centre Manager, Training and Education Coordinator, a Horticulture Trainer and an Administration Coordinator.

The interview and selection panels for each position were formed and interviews and selection occurred during the first two months of 2002. In April 2002, all positions except for the Training Centre Manager position were filled. Despite two separate processes of advertising, interviewing and selecting a manager, this position remained vacant. Two specific candidates (one within the region and one from interstate) were offered the position and both declined to take up the employment offered to them.

The issues raised regarding this position were that the salary of \$52,000 was insufficient to attract quality candidates, two (2) candidates offered the position were going to have to move to the region from somewhere else and in the end decided not to do this and the community was keen to

employ someone already living in the region and in the end decided that not employing a manager was more advantageous than employing someone who was not fully committed to the position or the community.

One community management member stated *“they really want us to operate on the smell of an oily rag, we can’t find good people to come and help us if we can’t pay them properly, this really means we have to still do as much voluntary work as we can to make this work ...”* (Interview A: February 2002)

4.5 Community Factors

4.5.1 Resources

The consensus amongst the community members of G.W.A.C. interviewed for this research was that the organisation was under-funded in every facet of its service delivery and program development meaning that sites and facilities did suffer from becoming outdated and not maintained to their potential. The individuals interviewed stated that the organisation was capable of providing more services to the local and regional community if more funding was available or if funds could be raised via fee for service opportunities.

Community members cited the suspicion of government bureaucrats for a lack of funding. *“We are constantly being told, **one step at a time**, that means we will get more funding when we prove we can manage what we have already”*, stated one community member. G.W.A.C. had been operating for some 8 years in some form or another but for only two years as a community corporation capable of managing government funding. (Interview B: 2002)

Both government representatives interviewed for the research stated: *“we also have to be accountable for funds, if there is a stuff-up, we have to explain it to our superiors, so it (funding) has to be manageable by all concerned.”* (Interview C: October 2001)

This clash of expectations is common in all communities trying to increase access to resources and services. However, the lack of understanding of government processes can lead to community cynicism and eventually apathy where community participation in planning processes can decrease which government representatives then read as a lack of interest and/or need for resources and services.

This is a cycle that is commonly expressed in documentation of community development processes around the world. (Cavaye: 2001, Kenny: 1994) However, there was also a lack of realistic assessment by the management of G.W.A.C. of their own capability to implement the project via community management structures and participatory decision-making.

4.5.2 Funding

G.W.A.C. became a Registered Training Organisation in Victoria in mid 2001. Funding for Registered Training Organisations throughout Australia is based on the delivery of a specified amount of Student Contact Hours (sch) per course per number of students, for example:

Certificate II in Horticulture 10 students X 240 hours each student = 2,400 sch @ \$9.80 per sch = \$ 23,520.00

Funding is provided by the Commonwealth government with each State/Territory government specific funding program topping up the total

pool of funding. Each State/Territory authority then allocates funds to R.T.O.s based on various processes such as centralised allocation or limited tender.

An R.T.O. can sustain its service delivery processes by delivering a range of courses over a calendar year. In 2002 Glassy Waters Advisory Corporation (G.W.A.C.) was successful in gaining interim funding (up to June 2002) for a number of training programs in horticulture, general education and business administration.

R.T.O.s can also tender and/or apply for specific grants to provide internally or externally based projects in staff development, information technology access, and curriculum/ training material development.

Glassy Waters Advisory Corporation tendered for V.E.T. funding in both 2001 and 2002. In 2001 it received \$97,000 to coordinate and deliver five training and education programs. In 2002 it received \$117,000 to coordinate and deliver another five programs and it has requested a total of \$ 124,000 in funding to coordinate and deliver six programs in 2003.

This proves in some way that the community members were correct in their view of how governments fund community development programs in that the relevant State/Territory authorities were gradually increasing funding to the new G.W.A.C. training centre in small increments over time. Community members believe that this allocation of funding is well below what G.W.A.C. is capable of managing and certainly below the level of training and education needs of the community.

This is evidenced by the fact that every training and education course offered by the new centre was filled very quickly and that by mid 2002, G.W.A.C. had to set up waiting lists for entry into some of the V.E.T. programs on offer.

One staff member said *“this is very frustrating, we have promised access to programs and now after being open for such a short time we are saying no to people and sounding like a TAFE college, you know, I’m sorry we can’t help you, we don’t have the space or money orwe will put you on a waiting list, please try somewhere else, that’s not why we are here, sad isn’t it!”* (Interview B: February 2002)

The government perspective on funding new R.T.O.s was that these organisations had to prove on a continuing basis that they were capable of not only attracting quality staff and filling courses with students but that they were also capable of managing all of the administrative processes and outcomes required by the V.E.T. system. The culture clash between these two perspectives on one V.E.T. centre was stark, community based education and training processes aimed at increasing access and equity versus bureaucratic systems that require quantifiable education and training outcomes based on concepts of quality processes.

4.5.3 People

The organizational structure of G.W.A.C. has previously been described as hierarchical in that there are layers of participation depending on roles within the organization. For example, the Community Advisory Committee and the Management Committee are ultimately and legally responsible for all the activities of the organization.

Most of the operational management processes were coordinated by the Program Manager with staff in the various project areas reporting to this position. Technically then, the decision-making structure of the

organization is hierarchical, however, the staff team has been small enough to allow day-to-day interaction between most staff.

During the eighteen months of the formation phase of G.W.A.C. as an R.T.O., the interim consultant manager (the researcher) also reported to the program manager, although in hindsight, the education and training project should have reported directly to the Training Centre Management Committee because the committee would then have had a greater understanding of all the issues of managing an R.T.O. As it occurred, frustration ensued because community members did not understand why the progression of the centre and its programs was so slow and complex.

The process of communicating with the broader community was clearly the responsibility of the G.W.A.C. advisory and management committees and not government representatives or the project consultants. However, in their enthusiasm to set the centre up, local people failed to inform and educate their own community about medium and long term V.E.T. policy, process and program development.

This conclusion also relates to the issue of ownership of the project by the whole community rather than just 'the organisation'. It was perceived within the broader community that the new centre was being managed by G.W.A.C. and that only a few people had influence over the centre rather than the community as a whole having a say over the centre and its policies and programs.

The recruitment and employment of staff occurred on an ad-hoc basis linked to the funding of specific programs and projects, for example, early in 2001 the organization employed eight staff, by the end of 2001 it

employed eighteen staff and mid-2002 it employed twenty one staff over three sites in two different towns via different projects.

This rapid growth of employment and staff numbers revealed several deficiencies in the organization's teamwork processes and a lack of vision within the community about localized employment (economic) development. These deficiencies included;

- A lack of philosophy and equitable process for recruitment, selection and induction of staff - factors such as funding timelines and staff induction by management committee members and the Program Manager meant that different staff had very different experiences of commencing employment with Glassy Waters Advisory Committee.
- Inadequate facilities within the community for accommodating a growing workforce - the main administration building was nothing more than a four bedroom home converted into offices. Workspaces were small and therefore overcrowded, information technology outdated and unpredictable plus there was no central administration position responsible for answering phone calls, gathering faxes and collecting mail, all of which occurred on an ad-hoc basis.
- There were no regular staff meetings across all programs to share information and staff development and training was dependent on the availability of external programs.
- There was little regular contact between staff and members of the Management Committee (community members).

The management of the new V.E.T. centre was then left to one member of the management committee who only attended the centre when needed for specific tasks. Therefore, the development and operation of the centre (and other community services) was not integrated into the wider community via consultation and participation. This led to many people

'drifting' away from the project over the two years the researcher was involved.

The role of the researcher was to manage the more 'bureaucratic' processes of liaison with government, funding applications, liaison with architects, builders and other sub-contractors. The G.W.A.C. advisory and management committees made it clear that consultants were to play no role in the policy development and local decision-making processes. This was a noble and empowering sentiment, however, the committees proved that they did not have the motivation and skills to actually manage liaison with their own community.

4.5.4 Community Development

The significant factor that contributed to this community conducting a review of the resources and services that existed within the geographic location of the town was that the allocation of funding for the construction of the new community training facility was predicated on the organisation developing a comprehensive strategic plan for the community and the new facility for the period 2001–2004.

The process of researching and writing the strategic plan necessitated the analysing of internal and external community factors to ascertain the future viability of the new community education and training service. The external community factors found by the researcher to have influence on the viability of the centre were that the community was working hard to increase access to government funding for community education and training services, governments funded this project and would not want to see it fail, therefore lobbying for funding needed to continue in earnest. (Researcher observation journal: 2002)

Current trends toward education and training services in the areas of literacy/ numeracy, environmental management and small business management provided the impetus for lobbying for ongoing funding. A certain level of motivation in surrounding rural communities to utilise the facility meant that the time was ripe to launch such a service. Current developments in new forms of sustainable agriculture leading to the availability of funding for V.E.T. projects and programs and the under utilisation of local features as tourist destinations meant that this organization could capitalize on market demand.

The internal community factors considered crucial to the development of the new education and training facility were the impact of adding another facility to the management of the organisations placed stress on the whole community and specifically those representatives on the community committees. The impact of expanding financial and administrative tasks and processes within a staff team with limited skills meant that the organisation had to research and decide on the options for future financial management.

The lack of participation by some of the local community in the advisory and management processes meant that there was a level of dissent and dissatisfaction within the community. Community politics was interfering with strategic development and priority setting, the reality being that different groups within the community had very different views about the education and training priorities to be addressed by the new facility. People accessing the facility would highlight deficiencies in other aspects of community infrastructure such as; transport, child care and income support systems.

The goodwill expressed by government agencies such as Centrelink and local job network providers to link education and training outcomes to potential employment for disadvantaged groups within this community meant that the centre potentially had a wider role than initially anticipated, however, this placed strain on the planning and operational processes of G.W.A.C..

The process of developing and evaluating strategic options involved consultations with Government representatives about funding options, local community groups regarding education and training needs, key individuals who participate in management processes and industry groups about potential employment outcomes.

The second stage of this process involved preparing realistic business plans to implement organizational and V.E.T. delivery strategies resulting in the launching of the Strategic Plan 2001 – 2004. (The contents of this plan are unable to be revealed in this research due to privacy and confidentiality considerations)

These observations again point to the fact that the emphasis of the Training Centre Management group was on how the organisation was going to cope with this new resource and service rather than how the whole community was going to cope. This emphasis was partly reiterated by funding bodies who located the project within an organisational context rather than engaging with the whole community. This was a reasonable approach to the project initially, however, given the need to engage the whole community in the new service, in hindsight this was an issue that needed to be addressed from the outset.

4.5.5 Organisational Development

G.W.A.C. soon realized that it needed to conduct an organizational review to enable it to incorporate government sanctioned V.E.T. regulations and practices into its management and service delivery processes.

This organizational review needed to be conducted to enhance operational processes encompassing growth in income, service delivery and human resources management and against a backdrop of:

- Falling participation by community members in management processes, the remote geographical situation of the organization meant that many people had to travel extensive distances to attend meetings
- Staff having to participate in a plethora of negotiation processes involving setting up new partnerships with government agencies and industry about land management, tourism and other opportunities
- Ongoing conflict between State Labor governments and a conservative Liberal/National Federal government over funding for major projects, V.E.T. reform priorities, education funding as well as environmental and land management programs.

Faced with an overwhelming workload on a day-to-day basis, it was decided by the G.W.A.C. management committee to use external experts and consultants to input to the process and manage review projects as required, for example; the consultant interim manager was employed to manage the process of establishing the training centre, a group of consultants were employed to conduct a review of the environmental education centre and a consultant was employed to review rules of incorporation, the organizational structure and different models for community business development.

It was found that the engagement of external consultants to conduct reviews had several advantages as well as disadvantages. The advantages were that consultants were able to quickly collect information and distil new knowledge and information relevant to the organizations needs and they were able to meet with all stakeholders and seek views about a range of issues and make recommendations for change without being hampered by involvement in community politics.

The main disadvantage was that the consultants could not, ultimately, be responsible for incorporating ongoing or continuous improvement into organizational processes.

The organization struggled to cope with the myriad of changes that were required to implement at an organization level. Issues presented by community members include:

- *to decide whether to remain as one organization with three or more service delivery sites with their own program delivery areas or to disassociate sites and program areas into two discrete organizations within the one community*
- *how to incorporate Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) regulations and associated government audits into its management and administration practices*
- *how (and more importantly, who) to manage all future negotiations with government and industry about service delivery agreements. (Interviews A & B: February 2002)*

This struggle and the resultant frustration led G.W.A.C. management committee members to ignore their own lack of structure and motivation and to blame government and its representatives for the impending failure of the project.

The organization conducted a few staff development programs to assist in the process of staff inclusion in organizational reviews and as an attempt to integrate day-to-day management of all services. The organization also encouraged staff to attend relevant training and education programs as they arose.

Organisational review processes remained an ongoing concern for G.W.A.C. due to a lack of resources, both financial and human, to actually monitor review processes and implement recommendations for change. The researcher's experiences with other organisations leads to the conclusion that this issue exists in most organisations. Governments do not fund organisational review processes unless they are a part of some industry restructure package.

4.5.6 Managing New Information and Knowledge

The process of incorporating new service delivery options into its total organizational structure, required the management and staff of G.W.A.C. to source and organize new knowledge and information about training and education frameworks and practices. This was preceded by analysing the new knowledge and information for its relevance and suitability to the current organization.

Rather than study other organizational processes and examples of processes of managing new information and knowledge, G.W.A.C. decided to create its own vision and processes for delivering vocational education and training services. Again this was an empowering vision, however, G.W.A.C. lacked the skills to actually evaluate existing organization and community structures and implement new ones as required.

The process of interpreting new information and knowledge about V.E.T. practice is one that can take many years and is outside the scope of this research, however, the following occurred during the 2001/2002 period:

- New knowledge and information about the A.Q.T.F. was imparted by several consultants and government representatives via publications, information seminars and mentoring
- This knowledge and information was utilized to develop a 4 year strategic plan for the new training centre plus a draft operational policies and procedures manual
- Differences between government based regulations and the organization's own policies and procedures were identified and negotiations commenced around different issues such as; charging of fees and the role of community advisory groups/industry training boards. (Researcher's Journal: 2002)

This process was managed by the consultant interim training manager (the researcher) and the programs manager with some involvement from one particular management committee member. It was later considered by all concerned that not enough people from the management committee (i.e. the community) had participated in this process to ensure effective integration of new information and knowledge into the life of the community and the organization's overall framework of policies and procedures.

The second phase of managing new information and knowledge involved using this new information and knowledge to facilitate effective decision-making. This had occurred to a minimal extent when this research was being conducted.

Effective decision-making was still being hampered by a lack of community participation in the management committee process resulting in slow decision-making and a lack of a broad based understanding of the need for change. Only a few individuals would turn up regularly to management committee meetings and the organization was struggling to keep its internal governance up to the standards required by incorporations legislation.

This is not a rare occurrence amongst grass-roots community organizations and presented a basic challenge to the organization, that is, it could not effectively integrate new information and processes into its current management processes and practices if these processes were not already operating at an effective and practical level.

The final phase of integrating new knowledge and information involved empowering staff to engage in information and knowledge management to ensure that service delivery met funding requirements.

This phase had to proceed despite the organization struggling at a management level due to current (2001/2002) funding provision to deliver V.E.T. programs. It was therefore imperative that at an operational level, the staff come to terms with current V.E.T. issues and processes.

At one level this was relatively simple to do given that the new training centre would commence with a completely new staff team including a new manager, two new training staff and one new administration coordinator. Despite the fact that no-one could be found to fill the position of manager, the remainder of the new staff team commenced at the new facility with a

comprehensive induction and training framework aimed at integrating new information and knowledge.

It was recognized that such integration would take at least twelve months, however, the following factors contributed to a positive start to the process: a management committee member agreed to fill the position of manager as a part-time replacement, two new training staff both had experience of working within education and training organizations under national training reform processes and the part-time administration position was filled by someone who also had experience in an education and training organization.

These factors ensured that the process of information management commenced with the staff who had some experience and a management committee member with some input into the overall management structure and process of the organisation.

The processes used to audit and integrate information and knowledge included:

- Mentoring of individual staff in specific work tasks
- Facilitating external staff development opportunities
- Developing and trialling operational policies and procedures such as; student enrolment, staff and student use of computers, access to student support services etc
- Designing and conducting a mock audit of training and education services to give staff insight into future audits.

5 Results and Analysis: Education & Training within a Community Development Context

The aim of the Glassy Waters community vocational education and training project was to implement a new V.E.T. service in one rural community based within an existing community based organisation. For a period of 6–9 months during 2002 the project achieved its objectives by coordinating and delivering a number of V.E.T. programs to the local community. However, by late 2002 the management of the centre was in crisis due to a lack of participation by the local community, there was still no manager for the new centre, all the consultants had completed their contracts, two courses had to be cancelled due to lack of numbers and two staff members had already resigned their positions at the centre.

The community had been successful in creating an environment for the delivery of flexible learning processes, the evidence being that during 2002 the centre was able to recruit some thirty five (35) so called 'disconnected' students into literacy and numeracy education programs (access and equity).

The profile of these students, youth and women, meant that the program had to be flexible and creative in order to attract such a response from the local community. This occurred for a short period of time and in terms of measuring short-term success, government funding and audit models will reveal the actual number of students enrolled and their demographic profiles for the period 2002.

Community orientated training services (access and equity) were the main aim of both government policy and the new community managed training centre. Over the period 2001–2002 the new facility had been successful in creating access to V.E.T. programs for over 60 people being women, people with disabilities and ATSI people traditionally excluded from V.E.T. services because of geographic location and social/ economic isolation. In this area, the project had been very successful.

Overall, Glassy Waters Advisory Corporation (G.W.A.C.) had been successful in meeting the primary objectives of the project to establish a Rural Community Access Training Centre but was unable (to date) to create an ongoing impact on the prevailing community management and community culture and practices. This has been evidenced by the ultimate collapse of the community based management of the centre and the fact that between the period November 2002 and November 2003 there have been no new courses or enrolments at the centre.

From the evidence provided in this case-study, the specific government program aimed at increasing long-term access and equity outcomes within rural and remote communities is in danger of failing to a large extent. Even though there has been increased access to some programs within this rural context, the project was unable to instil a culture of community development or community learning within the organisation (G.W.A.C.) or the broader community and in some ways is no further along the pathway of creating greater long-term social and economic development than it was at the commencement of this project.

The outcomes of other community based V.E.T. programs and new rural training and education centres is unknown and from this case-study it seems that a comprehensive evaluation of this specific initiative is required.

In other words, the project produced some short-term gains in providing some V.E.T. services to disadvantaged groups (youth, ATSI and women) within a rural community. The medium to long-term gains will be compromised by a lack of an ongoing 'culture of learning and development' and by a failure of governments to identify, resource and manage the complexities of community life, community politics and regional capability. These gains are also compromised by the failure of specific rural and remote communities to understand the complexities of managing change within a local organizational and community context.

An analysis of Australian V.E.T. programs within a community development context needs to return to the original research question:

How successful has vocational education and training (V.E.T.) reform been in empowering local communities to plan for, manage and deliver new education and training services?

The framework for this analysis of community development in Australian education and training is complex and has its origins in various theoretical positions.

Community development processes are the most effective way of transforming communities that are lagging in their social, economic and community indicators. Community development is described as a process where organisations and individuals act as change agents by managing projects and programs that aim to increase participation in decision-making structures and processes and increase access to resources and services. (Kenny: 1994)

Learning (formal and informal education and training) within communities can lead to the transformation of community life via increasing the knowledge and skills of individuals, particularly those people disadvantaged by; gender, age, cultural background, disability and/or geographic location. (A.N.T.A.: 1994; Morris: 2001)

Organisational change processes facilitate learning within an organisation and in the community via the creation of cultures and processes that allow people to transform the way they organise themselves within organisation. (Bawden & Zuber-Skerrit: 1991, Billet: 1992, Bunning: 1992)

The development of new individual learning processes can promote notions such as flexible learning and lifelong learning which (in theory) ensures that individuals, and particularly those from disadvantaged groups, are able to negotiate life and work for the whole of their lives and not just distinct ages. (Bunning: 1992, DET: 2002, Hensley & Russell: 1997, Kolb: 1984)

The main focus of this account of one case-study then is to draw conclusions about how one community is coping with the implementation of V.E.T. reform policies and practices at a micro-level within Australian society. One conclusion is that the new Rural Access Community Training Centre outlined in this research, seems to be caught in the middle of not only policy confusion but also philosophical confusion about adult education and training in Australia. The case-study presented in this thesis raises the following question which will be considered in the remainder of this analysis:

How does the rhetoric of the learning community, learning organisation and life-long (adult) learner fit with the reality of community and organisational development in Australia?

This account of the case-study takes as a premise that the community and the workplace are increasingly being recognised as primary sites of learning and therefore, primary sites for the delivery of training and that industry enterprises and community based organisations (and not TAFE) are increasingly becoming the managers of vocational education and training processes. (A.N.T.A.: 2000, DET: 2002)

Communities are asking for more resources and processes to be based in the community. (A.N.T.A.: 2002) It is timely then, that A.N.T.A. (2003) has released a new research paper, *'Shaping Our Future: Summary Report: 26 regional forums on the national strategy for V.E.T. 2004 – 2010'* which provides a summary of issues raised at 26 regional forums during early 2003, forums held throughout Australia seek feedback about the next Australian V.E.T. strategy.

The main issues to arise during these forums included:

- Training resources are more limited in regional, rural and remote communities,
- Collaboration and networking among all stakeholders in a community deliver greater outcomes and benefits,
- V.E.T. outcomes will be better served with greater flexibility, collaboration and partnerships across groups/ industries within communities,
- Much greater flexibility is needed in funding, delivery and resource provision when planning V.E.T. for those groups disconnected from education and training,
- Developing local community V.E.T. plans increases a community's 'ownership' of V.E.T. programs,
- Governments and communities need to use V.E.T. processes as community capacity building strategies,
- There needs to be greater community ownership of the whole training process,
- Communities and regionally based training organisations need additional mentoring and support strategies. (A.N.T.A.: 2003)

The report concludes that:

An important message from regional forums was the need to meet local and special needs:

- *Greater involvement of the community in identifying training needs,*
- *Pilot programs to successfully link training and employment,*
- *Local communities in decision-making on V.E.T. in schools,*
- *Strategies that deliver on promises made,*
- *Special funding requirements to deliver V.E.T. to remote Indigenous communities. (A.N.T.A.: 2003: 19)*

This supports the notion that the government rhetoric of community controlled V.E.T. planning does not necessarily match the provision for resources to actually implement new 'learning cultures' within communities.

Morris (2001: 11) defines a learning community as:

any group of people... which addresses the learning needs of its members through proactive partnerships. It explicitly uses learning as a way of promoting social cohesion, regeneration, and economic development.

Three types of learning community can be a community defined geographically, a community of practice (any group which shares a common purpose that bonds the group and gives meaning to their joint activity) or a virtual community, a group of people who share space on a computer network. (Morris: 2001)

The general movement toward the development of learning communities (regions, cities and towns) is based on frameworks of community development stemming from 1960's and 1970's social theory and is now being utilised to inform the development of knowledge, information and skills within communities. The ideal community is one which is advanced, innovative, participative, flexible, adaptive, integrates living, work and learning, links its past with the present and the future (Morris: 2001).

For example, the community of Glassy Waters has in fact taken on the challenge of self-managed community development as a means of creating new structures and processes leading to becoming a learning community, as a concept only. (A.N.T.A.: 2002, Kenny: 1994)

However, the concept of learning communities is not upper most in the minds of the participants in this project. The community is primarily concerned with economic and social development leading to growth in the community rather than decline in economic and social processes and resources.

It has been revealed in the case-study of Glassy Waters, that it is a rural community where tensions, conflict amid complex relationships drive the issues and processes actually engaged in by community members.

Comments from interviews provide evidence of this:

This community organization contains sub-groups who have differing views about the; structure and decision-making processes of the organization, strategic direction and program delivery areas plus communication processes evident in day-to-day service delivery coordination.

However, like many community organizations there exists shared values and vision about what is important and about the expectations of change, that is change is rooted in reality, societal structures and attitudes are slow to change and lobbying for change in areas such as environmental management are paramount.

This shared vision binds the community and this community organization together in a manner that is difficult to qualify and/or quantify. The ongoing tension between the vision and shared norms can and does result in the paralysis of organizational processes and creates resistance to change management.

(Interview D: February 2002)

The case-study of Glassy Waters reflects research conducted throughout Australia (ANTA: 2002, Collits: 1999, Falk & Kirkpatrick: 1999) which identifies the barriers to learning objectives in a community context. These barriers include:

- *tensions between overall system values and processes and local community needs and the needs of individuals*

- *competition policy has lessened the likelihood of cooperation and partnership*

- *strategic partnerships between stakeholders are not well developed*
- *the role of employers in the process is underdeveloped*
- *insufficient understanding of and demand for lifelong learning*
- *the heavy concentration by some V.E.T. providers on narrowly defined instrumental vocational outcomes to the detriment of broader learning outcomes.* (Kearns:1999 in Morris: 2001)

A localised focus on education and training provides a geographic framework within which to examine the implementation of effective education and training programs. The issues to consider when implementing and evaluating regional V.E.T. projects include the development of local planning processes that meet local needs and outcomes, securing a considerable commitment by key people including community leaders and ensuring that community based organisations are included in the planning, implementation and evaluation of V.E.T. programs. (Falk & Kilpatrick: 1999)

It seems that the philosophy and rhetoric of lifelong learning and the learning community is actually in direct conflict with other aspects of public and economic policy (for example; national competition policy, tendering for government funds). There is also evidence of a lack of development of community structures leading to the implementation of learning communities.

Some of the problems and issues encountered by the Glassy Waters community include, government policy and rhetoric about regional development is received with much cynicism by this community because

they do not see resources being allocated to find out what they (as a local community and as individuals) need and want.

There are a plethora of V.E.T. and adult education providers in the region (three T.A.F.E. Institutes, two adult education colleges and ten private Registered Training Organisations) all competing for a limited number of customers who are also competing for a limited number of employment and business opportunities.

Relationships and partnerships within this community are fractured by years of tension and conflict over issues such as land and environmental management, a national issue that plays at its worst at a local level with stakeholders such as farmers, residents, ATSI people and a growing group of environmental activists. The relationship between individuals, community organisations and local employers is problematic due to – knowledge of individual employment practices, most business are small seasonal enterprises and government departments are amongst the largest employers.

There is a total lack of understanding and demand for lifelong learning, many individuals are focused on day-to-day survival where income is scarce and decisions about work, housing and education are made based on income potential and nothing else. There is no link between lifelong learning and income potential. Current V.E.T. services in regional and rural communities focus on success stories and emerging industries as a way of increasing their profile. Access and equity issues do not make front page news in regional and rural media.

It could then be concluded that this Australian government policy initiative of trying to increase access to V.E.T. programs via Rural Access Community Training Centres, aims to implement specific learning (education and training) outcomes before ensuring that the community via its people and organisations is ready, willing and able to cope with the responsibilities of managing new learning processes let alone understanding the concepts behind such processes.

McIntyre and Solomon (1999: 2) state:

While it is true that work-based learning represents an organic accommodation of educational institutions to changing times and new external pressures ...it is also important to ask how this development is advanced as a solution to pressures for institutions to 'customise' courses to clients and 'stakeholders'. It is essential to inquire into the nature of the environment that has endorsed work-based learning as a worthy development, an 'answer' to perceived problems. We argue that the educational policy environment has been decisive in suggesting the parameters for this development.

McIntyre and Solomon (1999) also argue that reform to education and training systems have been influenced by changing (globalising) economies and changes to 'governmentality'. These changes have manifest in the following practices within some organisations. The humanisation of the workplace where work roles are being changed by technology and there is recognition that we need to manage people in the workplace as well as manage production systems and processes.

We can then utilise these concepts to examine how the community of Glassy Waters is going to cope, economically and socially in the coming decades. The valorisation of knowledge means that so called *knowledge work* is now dominating employment opportunities; knowledge is the new commodity and organisations are changing to cope with this and importantly enterprises now compete with TAFE and universities for the development and dissemination of knowledge to their own and other workplaces.

Glassy Waters as a community needs to capture the knowledge it has within its region, for example, knowledge of the environment, rural lifestyle and the individual initiative required for individuals and families to survive in this kind of context. This knowledge needs then to be utilised to train people in the skills required to provide new kinds of services to the regional community.

The learning organisation (Blackman & Henderson: 2001) is a concept being taken on as organisational vision where the learning potential of a workforce is now considered the key to organisational success where flexibility and learning about new ways of working, different skills and learning development are considered legitimate work process and outcomes.

Consultancy, expertise and outsourcing of specialist knowledge is required by organisations to manage transitions, new product and service development and this brings with it new links between organisations and “others” who hold knowledge and information and who can assist in the creation of new work systems. (McIntyre & Solomon: 1999)

The changing workplace and the fact that education and training organisations are themselves having to change and create change both to their internal philosophies and systems and to the services they provide is the context for many studies of organisational change. This is one aspect of the Glassy Waters project that was significantly lacking, both government and the local community failed to perceive the importance of both organizational and community development processes existing alongside the implementation of new V.E.T. services.

Glassy Waters is a case study of a new 'player' in the V.E.T. system and is an example of how reformed V.E.T. policy and practice is impacting on one kind of region, community, organisation and workplace. As can be seen by information in the previous section, Glassy Waters Advisory Corporation, struggled in its management structures and processes to deal with the implementation of new education and training services and at no time did the concepts and processes of the 'learning organisation' enter the community and workplace discussions and decision-making.

It is worthwhile at this point to frame the analysis with some data about participation in education and training in Australia via a snap shot published by the UTS Research Centre for Vocational Education and Training (Dumbrell: 1999: pp 4-11).

Some of the conclusions to the R.C.V.E.T. data analysis provides an insight into training activity throughout the country;

- *the total number of hours in training courses, almost 214 million contact hours in 1997, compares with about 300 million contact hours recorded in the formal V.E.T. context. Hence, according to these figures structured vocational learning beyond the formal V.E.T. system is around 71% of the size of the formal V.E.T. system ...*
- *Most of the training courses were delivered in-house, TAFE's low market share could be related to some inflexibility in delivering other than classroom based training.*
- *Most people undertaking training courses were, predictably, employed (88%)*
- *Training appears to be fairly distributed by age group. More than 50% of those in the 25 to 49 age range participated in training in the 12 months prior to the survey ...*
- *On a number of measures ... it is clear that access to training is not distributed equitably. Training is more likely to be provided to those who already hold a higher level educational qualifications and who are working in professional or associate professional occupations. (Dumbrell: 1999).*

This information is relevant in that it reveals firstly, that training occurs almost as often via the workplace as it does via TAFE (or formal V.E.T. system) and secondly that equity is still an issue afflicting V.E.T. in Australia.

The context of this case-study of Glassy Waters is the development of a rural community access training centre, a policy and practice initiative of the Commonwealth Government via the Australian National Training

Authority (A.N.T.A.) that attempts to acknowledge access and equity issues and be proactive in changing participation in V.E.T. programs.

The project aimed to provide access to low level V.E.T. programs within the context of a small rural community through the building of a new education and training centre and providing programs that attempt to meet local needs.

These aims are reflected in the new centre's philosophy and aims which are to:

- Provide access to V.E.T. programs across age groups and to disadvantaged groups such as women, people with low literacy and numeracy and people with disabilities
- Provide flexible V.E.T. programs that are targeted toward the needs of individuals, local industries/ enterprises and emerging employment opportunities in horticulture, environmental management and tourism
- Locate training opportunities within employment and work initiatives in conjunction with local community and industry enterprises. (Researcher's Journal: 2002)

The location of education and training (learning) in this kind of community context rather than the traditional institutional context (large, multi-campus TAFE or University) is an important development in Australian V.E.T. Vocational education and training is delivered in many forms and by many providers and recent data has revealed that this diversity is being strengthened not only by funding but by demand (Dumbrell: 2000).

Morris (2001) points out that there exists a plethora of "community" based education philosophies and structures relevant to the community sector of V.E.T., including;

1. Extra mural education – outreach education services provided by institutions as a way of reaching local communities
2. Adult education in the community – an all age, multifunctional education service becoming the focal point of community life
3. Education for community action – education to empower individuals and groups to participate in community and society more effectively.

Morris also points out the common issues often ignored in the development of new education and training services:

- *connective leadership – an essential factor in forging strategic partnerships to extend lifelong learning opportunities*
- *empowerment – empowering local communities is a further necessary condition and the administrative and other barriers which impair such empowerment must be addressed*
- *attitudes towards learning – there needs to be great changes in the attitudes of Australia and Australians towards learning in the emerging conditions of the twenty-first century*
- *modern learning technologies – the effective use of such technologies is clearly one of the keys to building a learning community.* (Morris: 2001: 13)

This means that organisations (both government and community) need to acknowledge and improve relationships within communities and community based organisations before embarking on major projects that aim to create new services within communities. Most change management processes in the Australian context have focused on outcomes (products and services) rather than processes and relationships.

Recent international and Australian business scandals (for example; One Tel, HIH) have in some ways proven that gaining profit based purely on products and services is still the primary focus of organisation (business) relationships and can all fall apart when people and processes are ignored.

The paradigm shift away from bureaucratic models of organisation toward the construction of learning organisations requires the systematic analysis of what currently exists within communities and organisations, where we are heading and the processes in between.

This systematic analysis could involve research and consultation processes that attempt to answer the following questions such as, is this organisation a candidate for more extensive change efforts, if so, how should we proceed? How much more does the manager/management have to be educated about policy and process before involving other staff? How should staff be approached to participate and do we want the driving forces for change to come from the management or the operational level?

How do we avoid the dilution of ideas and ideals to well-meaning opportunism and how do we avoid a backlash aroused by the zeal of the pioneers and their perceived priggishness? Finally how do we avoid sabotage by people opposed to the philosophies and processes of change? (Sugarman: 1997)

A systematic process of answering these questions requires leadership within government, local communities and community based organisations not just the management of strict regulatory factors such as the recently implemented Australian Quality Training Framework (A.Q.T.F.).

Blackman & Henderson (2001) reveal the once a structure is in place within a community or an organisation, it takes a major “*push*” to change it. This “*push*” requires the allocation of resources, that is, human resources more than just physical resources to encourage the community and/or organisation to flourish.

Where should this push come from? Leaders within communities, leaders within Government and/or leaders within public service authorities?

It can be seen from this analysis that the policy and operational issues associated with implementing a new vocational education and training (V.E.T.) service at a localized, regional and rural level are complex. Such processes require careful planning, consultation, education, review and monitoring to ensure medium to long term success.

6 Conclusion

Governments have only recently begun providing resources to **all** R.T.O.s to manage the change process (T.A.F.E. have always been a priority), for example, via A.Q.T.F. administration projects and with Reframing the Future new funding programs. (A.N.T.A.: 2002) Resources have been passed onto State/Territory authorities and Industry Training Advisory Boards (I.T.A.B.s) to allocate funding, this process of allocation requires an RTO to have a close relationships with these bureaucratic structures and processes.

One example of governments attempting to show they are creating change within the sector is the 2002 statement by The Hon. Lynne Kosky, Victorian Minister for Education and Training; *'Knowledge and Skills For the Innovation Economy'* (DEET: 2002) which outlines funding for the further development of training processes leading to greater relationships between business and T.A.F.E.s and aimed at increasing participation and statistical outcomes.

Smaller R.T.O.s such as community and industry providers tend to attempt to be more innovative in their processes, however, resistance at government level does occur, Morris (2001: 16) points out:

There is a tension ... between the willingness of these emerging learning communities to work within existing national and state frameworks and a perceived unwillingness in the administration of many of those frameworks to accommodate new forms of cooperative relationships and the need for new forms of public sector resourcing to support them. This new

community based approach presents a challenge to the long established and entrenched bureaucracies. The system may well need to change.

This raises the issue of (managed) change needing to occur at different levels within government (politicians and the bureaucracy), community (individuals and organisations) and industries (industrial and human relations).

By extrapolating from the literature and this research, the Glassy Waters case-study and the subsequent analysis, it can be concluded that what is required to achieve long-term access and equity within the Australian V.E.T. system is a framework for the allocation of resources and the management of processes that build the capacity and capability of government, regions, communities and industries to:

1. Develop a shared philosophy about education and training,
2. Develop agreed policy about equity, access and priorities for education and training,
3. Resource regional and community infrastructure and processes that inform and encourage innovative practice,
4. Resource the management of effective regional and community based organisations with shared philosophies and agreed work practices,
5. Implement processes that research and then attempt to meet regional, community and individual needs and aspirations.

The case-study presented in this research has revealed that although change is occurring on the edges of the V.E.T. sector in terms of the key principles of national V.E.T. reform, the actual communities and organisations delivering these new services are a long way from being able to implement and manage the complex processes required to implement V.E.T. reform.

It can also be stated that the individuals, groups and communities traditionally disadvantaged by the V.E.T. system are still being disadvantaged in their access to V.E.T. services.

The A.N.T.A. (2002) report, *Learning Communities in Education and Training* provides similar conclusions based on a range of case-studies, and summarises the following as current in the Australian V.E.T. sector. 'Quality Assurance' as a process of management and evaluation of V.E.T. rarely contributes to the effectiveness of V.E.T. outcomes. Collaborative partnerships and relationships within regional and rural communities contributed the most to the effectiveness of V.E.T. Appropriate resource provision for providers, learners and the whole community were integral to the effectiveness of V.E.T.

Community development issues such as planning for local community needs, fostering strong community trust and networks, encouraging local leadership and managing diversity were all key issue effecting the outcomes of V.E.T. programs.

The case studies point to several examples where V.E.T. is integrated into community development models. Where V.E.T. was integrated in community development projects reported in

case studies, collaboration and partnerships were always present. Within the scope of this research it can therefore be concluded that V.E.T. will be an effective vehicle for community change where collaborative partnerships and networks were present.
(A.N.T.A.: 2002: 144, 145)

There is evidence then that we need to review the philosophies, the people and the processes of national V.E.T. reform to ensure that we are all on the same track and that resources are allocated to the right kinds of community based projects and programs not just industry and government based programs.

V.E.T. reform must now be seen within the broader context of urban, regional and rural community development. Emerging V.E.T. programs and projects must be immersed within a framework or model of community development and not just industry development.

Community development is underpinned by philosophy, people and process. In order for the V.E.T. sector to be successful throughout the country and not just in inner city areas, it must work in partnership with all community development agencies and practitioners to create effective long-term social, economic and community outcomes.

Postscript

In the period May - September 2003, the researcher had some informal discussions with community members of Glassy Waters and has learned that despite some initial early success, their new V.E.T. centre has been closed since November 2002 with no programs currently on offer.

There has been ongoing conflict with the relevant State Government authority on funding and the provision of resources. Community members believe that neither the Commonwealth nor the State governments are providing sufficient resources to the community for them to effectively manage the centre.

G.W.A.C. has decided to keep the centre closed until sufficient resources are allocated. These members stated that governments still require communities to implement “user pays” V.E.T. programs and be “entrepreneurial” in their approach to funding. G.W.A.C. members believe this goes against a philosophy of access and equity.

In closing, one community person said recently,

Same old stuff, we are expected to deliver services on the smell of an oily rag, well we have had enough and we won't do it. Our young people can still go elsewhere if they want (for services) but the rest of us would rather do without rather than work 60 hours a week on little pay for just a few miserly education programs. We want more and they (government) just aren't interested in being serious about funding ...

We have a lovely building but we want long-term commitment for resources, a voice on planning and development, a voice that's it, we still do not have a voice in this whole process!

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