



Summer 2013

MARION LEARNING FESTIVAL 2013

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There were more than 80 interactive and practical workshops covering everything from arts and culture, the environment, healthy lifestyle, kids and youth activities, leisure, digital technology and boosting careers and business.

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Helping One Child to Succeed

Last year, Mother of God School principal, Gerard Broad-foot, along with Michelle Buckley and Greg Woolford, travelled to Santa Fe, New Mexico, to visit schools working collaboratively with families and local communities to bridge home and school learning.

There they visited *César Chávez Community School* and were introduced to the 'Helping One Student to Succeed' program, linking students with community volunteers in one-on-one reading.

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Congratulations Peter Blunden

ALCN Member, Melton City Council recently received the National Economic Development Australia Award for the category Business/Industry Development for its Building Melton Together Project (BMT). BMT is a City of Melton Community Learning Board project and is an example of how a Learning Communities approach can be applied to achieve significant employment and economic outcomes in a Local Government Area. Peter Blunden is the Executive officer for the Board

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Congratulations Steve

South Australian Member, Steve Fawcett, was key figure behind a Pre-employment program winning a community Learning Award

The project provided intensive skills and personal development to unemployed people to ensure the participants were job ready on completion of the twenty week program.

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Free Wi-Fi and Public Space

This white paper examines the transformation of public spaces through free Wi-Fi services offered by Australian cultural institutions and municipalities.

Australian public institutions have been slower to offer free Wi-Fi services compared to their counterparts in Europe and the United States. Nevertheless, public institutions are beginning to discover a variety of benefits in offering Wi-Fi. These include: enriching community life; enhancing public safety; providing marketing and communications portals; servicing city employees and sensors; and, most prominently, enhancing local economies by attracting more visitors.

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Growing Non Participation highlights Need for Action

Today's release of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Reform Council's latest reports on education and skills highlights the immediate need for a concerted effort by both state and national governments to boost youth employment and put skills development integrated with work for young Australians back on the national agenda.

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Freeing kids from poverty benefits us all

A new report by The Benevolent Society reveals the damaging, long-term consequences for children growing up in poverty, and the resulting financial and social costs to us all.

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Vinnies tells government: "It's time for new thinking on poverty"

The St Vincent de Paul Society National Council marked Anti-Poverty Week today by launching *Two Australias: a report on poverty in the land of plenty*.

[Read more](#)

The Role and Future of Citizen Committees in Australian Local Government

Citizen committees are a widely utilised yet little explored form of public participation in Australian local government. Typically, citizen committees comprise volunteer citizens who meet regularly, face to face, and sometimes over extended periods of time, to provide councils with policy advice and place management related services.

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The Story Tree

The opening of the new Lavington Library also brought about the creation of a 'tree' by local artist Ken Raff, adding to AlburyCity's growing Public Art collection. Tom Arnold, AlburyCity's Urban and Public Art Officer, said "the tree has been a great success since opening. The kids absolutely love it; in fact they had 86 kids at story time...which is incredible."

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LEARNING FESTIVAL 2013

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The festival has been delivered in different formats over the years as we have responded to the changing needs of our community this year, the focus was very much on workshops, most notably environmental sustainability. On Saturday the 24th August the Marion Cultural Centre was effectively 'going green' with free events that will provide practical tips on everything we need to know about sustainable home design. The day had a great start with the fascinating documentary 'Biophilic Singapore' which showed how nature is being integrated into a bustling, modern city. This was followed by two exciting free events brought to us by the Alternative Technology Association. 'Living Green' seminar hosted by Sophie Thomson that featured presentations and a question and answer session enabling people to find out about anything from solar power and solar hot water to permaculture and backyard vegie gardening.



We held our 1st ever first 'Speed Date a Sustainability Expert' session to be held in South Australia. The Alternative Technology Association has been running these events around Australia since 2010 with great success. South Australia's first Speed Date a Sustainability Expert event was held in Marion as it puts our community in the front row for green learning. A bell announced the start of the event, and then it's all action with a series of 13-minute 'dates' with architects and designers and experts in permaculture, solar power and energy-efficient lighting providing rapid fire advice to people who are renovating or building homes. It showed that sustainable and environmentally friendly homes are more comfortable and cheaper to run than traditional houses along with the many simple and cost-effective things we can all do to make our homes more sustainable. These speed date events have seen more than 50 of Australia's leading experts in green architecture give priceless advice to hundreds of homeowners.



THE Marion Cultural Theatre hosted a free entertainment extravaganza, Marion on Show. Dance performances including hip-hop, classical ballet, jazz and Bollywood as well as youth theatre and fitness lit up the theatre showcasing local talent.



Marion Learning Scholarship

A 48-year-old woman from Edwardstown won the \$1000 Marion Learning Scholarship following a record 24 submissions. Lee-Anne Aldridge will use the prize, which is designed to remove financial barriers to learning, to complete her Diploma of Counselling and begin Certificate IV in Community Services. Ms Aldridge said she was delighted to win the scholarship which would enable her to pursue her passion for helping others by setting up a counselling business. “The Marion Learning Scholarship will help me complete my study and use my skills to give back to the local community by setting up a counseling business,” Ms Aldridge said. “I am really excited to win the scholarship and will use it to kick start a new career.” The scholarship is in its sixth year and is funded by Marion Council as part of the Marion Learning Festival. Mayor Felicity-ann Lewis said she was thrilled the scholarship would create a new opportunity for a local resident. ”The Marion Learning Scholarship can change people’s lives and I hope Lee-Anne can use it to boost her career,” Ms Lewis said.

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HOSTS Helping One Child to Succeed

Mother of God School Ardeer

Last year, Mother of God School principal, Gerard Broad-foot, along with Michelle Buckley and Greg Woolford, travelled to Santa Fe, New Mexico, to visit schools working collaboratively with families and local communities to bridge home and school learning. There they visited César Chávez Community School and were introduced to the 'Helping One Student to Succeed' program, linking students with community volunteers in one-on-one reading. They were impressed by the vitality and sense of partnership they saw the program foster in the school community. HOSTS staff spoke of the changes they saw in students as twofold; marked improvements in reading and literacy, as well as the development of confidence and self-worth through regular periods spent with volunteers. Introduced at Mother of God Ardeer in term 3 of this year, HOSTS is a structured mentoring program seeking to increase literacy outcomes for students recommended by teachers to benefit from one-on-one tutoring.



A key component of the program is encouraging the value of a strong connection between the volunteer and student. Paired with the same student at the same time every week, volunteers are supported to engage with students to explore their reading further, build conversations and share ideas. Over the course of the term, this process and ongoing interaction has allowed students to fully benefit from mentoring as they develop relationships with their 'coaches'. Volunteers in the program are drawn from the community and include parents, grandparents, educational personnel, retirees, members of the business community and Mother of God School staff. The program has developed partnerships with St Theresa's Primary School, Albion and Ardeer Parish communities, Brimbank City Council, The Smith Family, and Edmund Rice Community and Refugee Services St Albans. After just one term, the program has seen vast improvements for many participating students. Currently servicing prep-year 2s only, Mother of God School is seeking to develop the program to include year3s-year 6s. If you would like more information about volunteering in the HOSTS program, please contact Gwen Hammett:

E - ghammett@mogardeer.catholic.edu.au Ph. - 9636 17334

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Building Melton Together

ALCN Member Melton City Council recently received the National Economic Development Australia Award for the category Business/Industry Development for its Building Melton Together Project (BMT). BMT is a City of Melton Community Learning Board project and is an example of how a Learning Communities approach can be applied to achieve significant employment and economic outcomes in a Local Government Area.

The City of Melton has a lack of employment opportunities, lower than average education levels, lower SES levels and high population growth combining to create significant economic and social challenges. To overcome some of these challenges it was decided to target an industry where there will be jobs for many years to come. Given that the City of Melton is one of the top five growth areas in Australia and that housing development will continue for at least the next twenty years, it was logical to target the building and construction industry.

Building Melton Together (BMT) is a local employment initiative led by Melton City Council in partnership with community and industry stakeholders. The initiative assists the building and construction industry to identify its skill and recruitment needs. It matches training, employment opportunity with an available skilled workforce. It also assists building and construction subcontractors to increase their capacity and ability to become preferred subcontractors with volume and domestic builders.

BMT connects supports and gains the collaboration of developers, builders, sub-contractors, Jobs Services Australia, education and training providers, community and jobseekers.

Building Melton Together (BMT) has three phases. Phase 1 focussed on linking training to jobs in the Building Construction Industry. BMT brokered relationships between employers Jobs Service Australia, Education and Training Providers and community. By acting as an industry referral service, improving training, undertaking employability skills assessments to ensure appropriate referrals to local building and construction jobs were made. This process ensured jobs were not only gained but also sustained.

BMT Phase 2 built on the lessons of Phase 1. It targeted support for local subcontractors assisting them to gain preferred subcontractor status with volume and domestic builders. It has been demonstrated that if more local subcontractors gain jobs with local builders they will employ apprentices and salaried workers.

Phase 3 aims to provide project sustainability. It is exploring how aspects of BMT can be driven by the building and construction industry itself. The BMT model will also inform on how to best support fledgling building and construction businesses to be supported in Melton City Council's Western Business Accelerator and Centre of Excellence (BACE). Building and construction businesses are one of three categories of business planned to be supported through the BACE. The others are digital enterprises that can lever of the NBN and services businesses.

See www.meltonconstructionjobs.com.au

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Pre-Employment Training (PET) Program wins Learning Community Award



The Adult Learners week awards were held last Thursday night in Adelaide as part of the Adult Learner's Week, with the Pre-Employment Training (PET) Program winning the Learning Community Award.

Regional Development Australia Whyalla and Eyre Peninsula has brought together funding partners from State and Federal Governments as well collaboration with Whyalla's local industry to develop the PET Program. DFEEST, through its Skills for All in Regions funded programs and the Department for Employment, Education and Workplace Relations, through the Local Employment Coordinator and the Flexible Funding Pool, have joined TAFE SA in its accredited training to deliver an adapted and industry relevant program which has enabled long term unemployed participants to find sustainable local jobs.

TAFE SA delivered a Certificate II in Engineering demanding a full time commitment from the participants over the duration of the program. The collaboration between TAFE SA, particularly the Mining, Engineering and Transport Centre team, and the Onesteel Safety Training Centre complimented the program with a number of licenses and tickets pertinent across a range of local industry positions. The program supported people into heavy industry focused pathways and employment while providing local industry with a much needed human resource pool they required. The project provided intensive skills and personal development to unemployed people to ensure the participants were job ready on completion of the twenty week program.

The Awards were held on Thursday the 29th August. The Picture is of Grace Portolesi MP, Minister for Employment, Higher Education and Skills, Minister for Science and Information Economy and Steve Fawcett.

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Free Wi-Fi and public space

This white paper examines the transformation of public spaces through free Wi-Fi services offered by Australian cultural institutions and municipalities.

Australian public institutions have been slower to offer free Wi-Fi services compared to their counterparts in Europe and the United States. Nevertheless, public institutions are beginning to discover a variety of benefits in offering Wi-Fi. These include: enriching community life; enhancing public safety; providing marketing and communications portals; servicing city employees and sensors; and, most prominently, enhancing local economies by attracting more visitors.

This white paper finds that Wi-Fi services can enhance public spaces by adding to their vibrancy and atmosphere. Wi-Fi services also provide a valuable digital resource for different mobile users, including out-of-office workers and travellers. However, Wi-Fi services should not be launched indiscriminately. Poorly thought out services can also support uses that isolate groups of users and prevent cross-group mingling in public space.

Despite the potential benefits, many public institutions are deterred from offering attractive Wi-Fi services due to cost and a lack of 'digital culture' in local government. Institutions are also concerned that next generation mobile broadband services will make Wi-Fi hotspots redundant, a position this report argues against. As online access becomes increasingly integrated into social life, these stances will need to be reconsidered.

This white paper recommends that:

- The benefits of Wi-Fi in public space are better conveyed to public institutions through educational initiatives.
- Public institutions consider the different network and business models available to subsidise the cost of a service. In so doing, institutions should be aware of the positive and negative aspects of privatising public space and spectrum, especially when it comes to control over amenities which service the public good.
- Institutions can learn from successful service models that focus on 'user-centric' service and consider the different positive 'place-attributes' described in this research.
- Institutions explore positive models for providing or seeding services that enable cross-group social interactions.

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MEDIA RELEASE

OCTOBER 30, 2013

Growing Youth Non-Participation highlights need for action

Today's release of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Reform Council's latest reports on education and skills highlights the immediate need for a concerted effort by both state and national governments to boost youth employment and put skills development integrated with work for young Australians back on the national agenda.

While there was some good news in the report, with increases in literacy and numeracy in primary school students, and more students completing year 12 and growth in post-secondary education, it is alarming that over 27% of 17 – 24 year olds are not in full time study and work, a figure that has worsened in the last five years.

In the last 12 months commencements of non-trades apprenticeships, which are particularly effective entry point for school-leavers as they combine formal training with work experience, have fallen by a third compared to the same period last year with young Australians the hardest hit. The previous government oversaw changes to apprenticeship policy and cuts in employer incentives that led to huge drops in the numbers of young people starting an apprenticeship, with 10,000 fewer under 19's starting an apprenticeship in the first three months of 2013 than in the same period in 2012.

The new Coalition Government needs to work closely with employers to develop plans for jobs growth and combating youth unemployment and get the apprenticeship system back on track. One of the fundamental building blocks of skilled employment and a strong labour market, the apprenticeship, has been neglected by Government and needs to be revived so we do not create a lost generation of Australian who missed out on opportunities to develop skills that enable them to secure sustainable employment.

For More Information:

ACCI's Director of Employment, Education and Training

Jenny Lambert

0418277919

ACCI's Senior adviser on Employment, Education and Training

Stephen Bolton

0427735393

MR444/13

www.acci.asn.au

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Freeing kids from poverty benefits us all

A new report by The Benevolent Society reveals the damaging, long-term consequences for children growing up in poverty, and the resulting financial and social costs to us all. “This Anti-Poverty Week we’re calling on all sectors of our community to recognise the lifelong consequences for children of growing up in poverty, and take steps to address it,” said Anne Hollonds, CEO of The Benevolent Society. The report, *Acting Early, Changing Lives: How prevention and early action saves money and improves wellbeing* shows that 15% of Australian children live in jobless families - the fourth highest rate among OECD countries. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics more than 1 in 5 Australians live in low economic households, and half of those are families with dependent children (1). The latest release of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey found that a quarter of children in single-parent households live in poverty.(2)The *Acting Early, Changing Lives* report finds that experiencing sustained poverty in early childhood may affect children’s mental and physical health and development, and their home life is likely to be more stressful. Children tend to begin school well behind their peers and lose ground further during the school years. Consequently they are more likely to be unemployed as adults, and dependent on welfare. “The solutions to child poverty lie in helping parents into education and employment, and providing stable housing and income security. To break the cycle of disadvantage we need investment in preventive services that help parents to be the best mum or dad they can be, and ensure all kids grow up in a nurturing environment. “Our report *Acting Early, Changing Lives* shows how effective prevention and early action measures for families with young children can improve children’s life chances and the earlier we act, the greater the impact for those kids and families, and the greater the return on our investment.

“The evidence shows that kids who participated in these programs did better at school, went on to earn more money, had more stable housing, better mental and overall health, and most importantly became better parents themselves. “We know what works to break the cycle of disadvantage. Failing to invest in prevention and early action is like signing a blank cheque now for much higher future costs,” concluded Ms Hollonds.

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St Vincent de Paul Society
NATIONAL COUNCIL
good works

[ABN: 50 748 098 845](#)

[National Council of Australia Inc.](#)
[Units 4-5](#)
[22 Thesiger Court](#)
[Deakin ACT 2600](#)
[PO Box 243](#)
[Deakin West ACT 2600](#)
[Telephone: \(02\) 6202 1200](#)
[Facsimile: \(02\) 6285 0159](#)
[Website: \[www.vinnies.org.au\]\(http://www.vinnies.org.au\)](#)

16 October, 2013

Media Release

Vinnies tells government: “It’s time for new thinking on poverty”

The St Vincent de Paul Society National Council marked Anti-Poverty Week today by launching *Two Australias: a report on poverty in the land of plenty*.

The report outlines practical recommendations for the new government in the light of the facts on poverty in prosperous Australia. It explains that for those who have been left out, choices are few and deprivations are many and that, in the provision of the fundamentals such as housing, health, education, and access to meaningful employment, governments must do what markets cannot.

Chief Executive, Dr John Falzon said:

“Our members across the nation are continuing to see the emergence of two Australias: one characterised by prosperity and high-end consumption, the other by a daily struggle to be able to afford the necessities of life. We are launching this report as a tribute to the courage of the people who have borne the brunt of inequality in Australia.

“It is popular in the current political environment to blame people for their poverty, but the truth told by the people on the margins speaks louder than the lies told about them.

“An adequate income is crucial, which is why, despite the constant ideological resistance, we continue to advocate for a much-needed \$50 a week increase to the Newstart payment (which currently sits at 40% of the after-tax minimum wage) and a change in the way it is indexed. But income support is not enough. We need to look at what locks people out of the labour market.

“Tackling inequality means investing in high quality social and economic infrastructure for the benefit of all. It means high quality education and health being completely accessible to everyone regardless of their income or their postcode, their gender, the colour of their skin, or their disability.

“It means guaranteeing appropriate housing rather than abandoning people to a private rental market that is notoriously bad at meeting the needs of low-income households.”

St Vincent de Paul Society National President, Mr Anthony Thornton, said:

“Over the last 40 years full-time wages have increased by 59% for high-income jobs, but by only 15% for the lowest income jobs. While the poorest fifth of households have not seen an increase in their wealth over the last 10 years, the richest fifth have increased their wealth by almost 30% in the same time. When compared to other developed countries, Australia performs poorly on income inequality measures. Out of 34 developed countries, we are the ninth most unequal.

“We are calling on the new government to revisit the recommendations of the McClure Report commissioned by the Howard government in 2000. This must start with income adequacy for those outside the labour market and on its insecure fringes but it must also include practical pathways to employment instead of punitive or paternalistic programmes such as compulsory income management.

“It’s time we got serious about poverty and mustered the political will as a nation to broaden our revenue base so that we can systematically reverse the slide into two Australias. It is time that we left behind the outmoded notion that we can actually address poverty by making life harder for people or that we can help people find jobs by kicking them when they are down. We should also reject the falsehood that we can address poverty and unemployment by sacrificing wages and conditions for the low-paid.”

For a copy of *Two Australias*: [click here.](#)

For more information about Anti-Poverty Week: www.antipovertyweek.org.au

Media contact: Colleen O’Sullivan 0400 845 492 or media@svdp.org.au

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The Role and Future of Citizen Committees in Australian Local Government

Executive summary

Citizen committees are a widely utilised yet little explored form of public participation in Australian local government. Typically, citizen committees comprise volunteer citizens who meet regularly, face to face, and sometimes over extended periods of time, to provide councils with policy advice and place management related services.

This research aims to:

- offer an exploratory study of citizen committees in Australia local government
- examine the potential for citizen committees to support sustained community engagement that is representative of the broader community
- identify how citizen committees could be improved.
-

The project examines three Victorian councils with different demographic characteristics. One is regional, one is peri-urban and one is a growth area council. The analysis of evidence from the case study councils draws on relevant policy reports and research articles, qualitative interviews and focus groups with staff and citizen members, as well as a half-day workshop with the case study councils.

This report examines the role of committees, and the types of committees used. It situates these committees within the broader local government mandate of community governance. The experiences of the case study councils suggests that there are limits to generalising about the ways in which the citizen committee mechanism is used, since situational factors influence each local government's approach.

Key findings of the research are:

- Committees are a key element of councils' community engagement strategies.
- They predominantly service community and council needs, have limited influence and are not highly inclusive or representative.
- Those who are involved in the work of committees value them for multiple reasons, depending on their roles as members, officers or elected representatives.
- These parties have different interests in committees, and this may at times lead to misunderstandings and conflicts of interest.
- There are many factors influencing the effectiveness of citizen committees, and the report suggests ways of dealing with common issues.
- Committee sustainability and recruitment present challenges to the sector, given that many councils depend on them not only for consultation and decision making activities, but for public management of facilities.

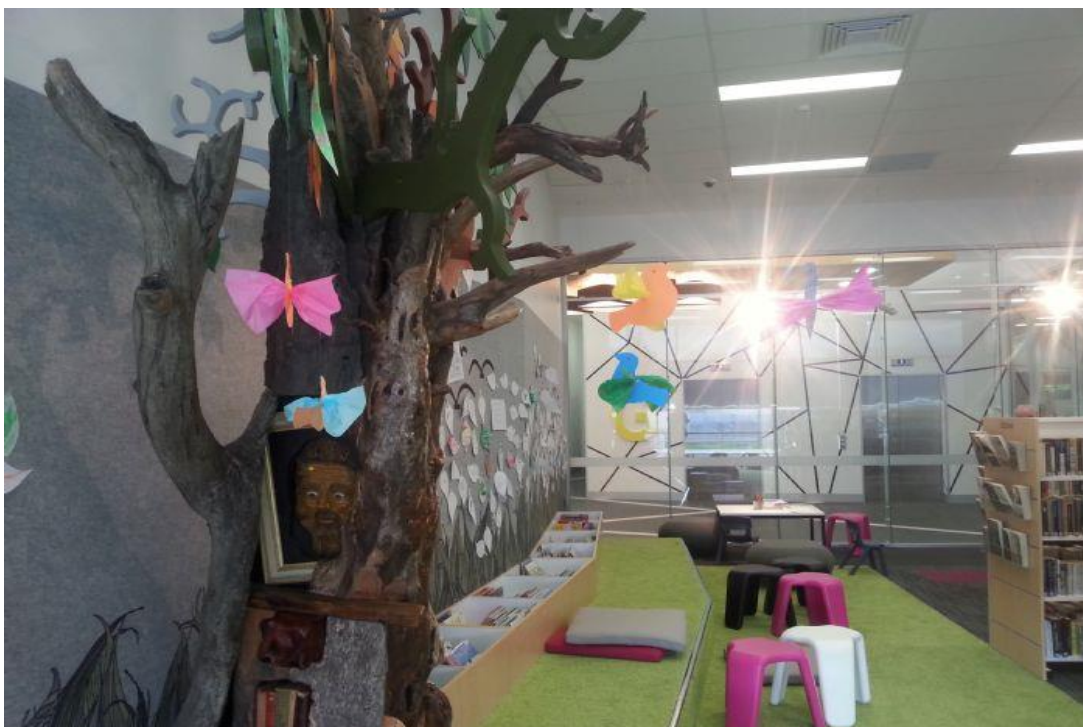
The research concludes that citizen committees, both council-appointed, and incorporated non-for-profits, enable the sector to draw on a considerable resource from the community for advice, issue resolution and public management. Though other kinds of engagement have become more common, citizen committees have the potential to enhance the democratic capacity of councils and citizens, but this potential is not realised unless they are clearly integrated into and connected to broader activities in community governance.

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