

# Evaluation of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy

2000 - 2004



Potential Leaders  
in Local  
Communities  
Initiative



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## Annotated Acronyms

### **AIFS Australian Institute of Family Studies**

AIFS hosted the Stronger Families Learning Exchange and has an ongoing role in the SFCS 2004-2009 hosting the Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia (CAFCA). [www.aifs.gov.au](http://www.aifs.gov.au)

### **ARACY Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth**

ARACY is a national collaboration of researchers, policy makers and practitioners from a broad range of disciplines to generate and translate knowledge to enhance the well-being and life chances of children and young people. ARACY is now using online conferencing technology to conduct presentations and discussions with the Communities for Children Facilitating Partners at 45 sites around Australia. [www.aracy.org.au](http://www.aracy.org.au)

### **CAFCA Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia**

Funded by the SFCS 2004-2009 the CAFCA, within the AIFS, aims to improve access to current information and resources to assist those working in the field of early childhood and community development. It continues the work of the [Stronger Families Learning Exchange](#) which supported the 2000-2004 Stronger Families and Communities Strategy.

[www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/index.html](http://www.aifs.gov.au/cafca/index.html)

### **FaCS Department of Family and Community Services**

The Australian Government department with responsibility for administering the Strategy until January 2006. [www.facs.gov.au](http://www.facs.gov.au)

### **FaCSIA Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**

The Australian Government department with responsibility for administering the SFCS 2004-2009 since January 2006. [www.facsia.gov.au](http://www.facsia.gov.au)

### **SFLEx Stronger Families Learning Exchange**

A research unit of AIFS funded by the SFCS 2000-2004 to provide support to projects funded under the Stronger Families Fund in the 2000-2004 Strategy, to implement action research. [www.aifs.gov.au/sf](http://www.aifs.gov.au/sf)

Under the new Strategy, this type of support will be provided by Communities for Children (CfC) Facilitating Partners. In addition through CfC and Invest to Grow (ItG) the department has funded Local Evaluators to assist with project design, action research, and evaluation. Three streams of the new Strategy (all streams except for small equipment grants) are provided with support through the Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia (CAFCA) and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY).



**SFCS Stronger Families and Communities Strategy** - also referred to as the Strategy [www.facsia.gov.au/sfcs](http://www.facsia.gov.au/sfcs)

The first version of the Strategy, 2000-2004, funded 7 linked community based initiatives, as well as several broader initiatives, to strengthen families and communities.

The renewal of the Strategy (Phase 2) was announced in April 2004 with funding of \$365 million, which was subsequently increased to \$490 million, with a specific early childhood focus. In the new SFCS, attention has been focussed on early intervention in early childhood and is the primary vehicle for implementing the Government's National Agenda for Early Childhood (NAEC), which focuses on improving national coordination.

Phase 2 of the Strategy commenced in 2004 and will continue over five years until 2009. It aims to help families and communities build better futures for children; build family and community capacity; support relationships between families and the communities they live in; and improve communities' ability to help themselves. Phase 2 of the Strategy comprises four streams, the Communities for Children initiative, Invest to Grow, Local Answers and the Choice and Flexibility in Child Care initiative.



## Summary

This paper has been developed as part of the National Evaluation of the Australian Government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2000-2004 (the Strategy).

The case study examines the contribution of the Potential Leaders in Local Communities funding initiative to the process of strengthening Australian families and communities. It defines leadership, discusses contemporary approaches to its development, outlines the role played by FaCS and the Strategy in leadership development, describes projects funded under the initiative and records its achievements. The paper concludes by reflecting on the implications for future leadership development initiatives.

The paper looks specifically at the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative of the Strategy, but also bears in mind the fact that leadership development has occurred under other initiatives of the Strategy, particularly the:

- Nationals Skills Development for Volunteers program;
- Stronger Families Fund; and
- Can Do Community.

By and large the evidence suggests that projects provided by the Strategy through the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative have provided numerous success stories by:

- supporting the development of youth leadership;
- providing strategies that support and develop Indigenous leadership;
- providing momentum and support to the already strong leadership development initiatives focused on issues of rural and regional development;
- providing the framework for increased social participation;
- improving access to opportunities to enhance economic participation.

This case study should be read in conjunction with the *Community Capacity Building Issues Paper* produced earlier as part of this National Evaluation. Leadership development is identified as an important capacity building strategy.

## Background

Leadership is a process of influencing people and providing direction by working with them as part of a team. There are various approaches to leadership development and different leadership styles. Common strategies employed to develop leadership include mentoring, the use of role models, outdoor confidence and team building activities and training.



There is much impetus for leadership development in Australia at the present time, driven by a strategic recognition that:

- there is a leadership skills shortage;
- leadership development can help regional areas to proactively respond to change;
- leadership can enable disadvantaged social groups to become more self reliant.

These findings are supported by the Standing Committee on Regional Development's review of the Coordination of Regional Leadership Programs (2004), the Many Ways Forward Report of the Inquiry into Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities (2004) by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and the Victorian Health Promotion report; Promoting the Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing of Koori Communities through the Koori Communities Leadership Program Building Indigenous Leadership (2005).

Leadership development initiatives have historically been focused on four main target groups:

- youth;
- Indigenous communities;
- women;
- rural and regional communities.

There are sound coordination mechanisms and processes in place in the leadership development field and a well-established culture of collaboration between government, private sector and community organisations active in the sector. There are numerous examples of collaboration, funds pooling, joint sponsorship, networking and information sharing through mechanisms such as websites, meetings, conferences and coordinating structures.

There are some tried and tested strategies that have long been used to develop leadership capacity that have also been prominent in the Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects. These include training courses, the use of role models, peer mentoring and leadership camps. All of these strategies have been popular with Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects and participants.

FaCS is a key player in leadership development initiatives in Australia, not only through the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative, but also through other initiatives of the Strategy and through the funding of leadership conferences, events and project activities that lie outside the Strategy.

There were 144 Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects funded through the Strategy 2000-2004, representing a total public investment of almost \$20m. This initiative represents a significant component of the total Strategy, accounting for about a quarter of all projects and dollars spent. Average expenditure per project under the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative was almost \$137,000. This is a little more than the average spent on all Strategy projects.



About a quarter of all Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects were Indigenous, accounting for \$5.6m expenditure.

### **Achievements and Contribution of the Potential Leaders in Local Communities Initiative**

The Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative has:

- provided an important new and substantive source of funding for leadership development initiatives in Australia;
- added value to existing youth and Indigenous leadership development initiatives;
- further strengthened existing coordination arrangements in some areas;
- engaged disadvantaged social groups that have not previously been prominently involved in leadership development initiatives, such as culturally and linguistically diverse groups, people with disabilities, single parents, and the residents of depressed housing estates and caravan parks.

Some projects have been successful in relation to:

- achieving high levels of participation;
- successfully energising and motivating participants;
- the training of youth leaders;
- meaningfully contributing to local communities through project activities;
- establishing new networks amongst participants and between participants and other strategically-placed community leaders;
- building new cooperative arrangements between community and government bodies;
- the engagement of some participants in education, training and employment opportunities after the completion of Strategy projects;
- achieving recognition through prestigious awards for excellence.

Certain aspects of many projects accord with recognised good practice in the field of leadership development:

- the conduct of a literature review prior to project commencement to identify effective strategies and models;
- project management by an established organisation with a demonstrated track record in the leadership development field;
- the targeting of young people;
- a competitive participant selection process;
- the provision of pre-project information for participants to ensure that they are aware of the content and of what will be expected of them;
- the use of inspirational high-profile role models;



- the sharing of personal experiences as a form of bonding and as a mutual support mechanism;
- the adoption of 'whole-of-community' and 'whole-of-family' approaches;
- the use of mentoring arrangements;
- project oversight conducted by broadly-based groups which include representatives of the community;
- a concentration on activities that address specific community needs;
- the active involvement of participants and their families in project development, delivery and management;
- the use of action learning and evaluation to continuously improve practice.

The Indigenous projects funded through the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative have:

- most often been delivered in Indigenous places and by Indigenous people who make the participants feel at ease;
- recognised the link between leadership capacity and people's need for healing (perhaps for the first time);
- reinforced participants' feelings of cultural connectedness, especially for the emerging next generation of leaders.

## Lessons

The development of leadership capacity is necessarily a long-term process requiring engagement and professional development over a sustained period of time. It is not just about the transfer of knowledge and skills. Leadership development is also about attitudinal and behavioural change and the rebuilding of relationships, confidence and self-belief. In some instances the project time frame was too short and had only provided a beginning for what needed to be a much longer process of on-going capacity building. In some cases, long approval times reduced the duration of projects and inhibited what could subsequently be achieved.

Leadership is not an end in itself and does not exist in a vacuum. Rather it exists to address particular community needs and to serve particular social purposes. Some Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects provided opportunities to engage in community service, thereby providing opportunities to learn and demonstrate leadership on the job. Other projects were limited to the provision of formal training or forums without any opportunity to gain leadership experience or to utilise acquired knowledge, skills and understandings for community benefit.

Some projects funded under Potential Leaders in Local Communities were isolated initiatives that may have been more effective if they had been effectively linked to other institutions with a demonstrated sound track record in the field of leadership development. Some were not developed in consultation or collaboration with any other leadership initiatives and do not appear to have been directly informed by projects operating elsewhere or by the leadership literature about 'good practice'. There was no community service or leadership mentoring component to some leadership projects.

Regional contextual factors, such as remoteness or a lack of social cohesion, can be significant impediments to leadership capacity building. Some projects experienced difficulties in recruiting and training quality staff, particularly in remote areas. Such factors created access difficulties that delayed planned project activities.

#### Potential strategies for supporting future leadership initiatives

Some ways in which leadership projects might be better supported in the future include:

- the inclusion of a mentoring and a community service component in projects;
- the linking of projects to relevant sources of information and advice such as relevant organisations, websites and learning exchanges;
- resourcing peak organisations to provide support to localised leadership projects;
- greater assistance to link projects to potential sources of on-going funding;
- regular national leadership conferences and workshops where knowledge and experience can be shared amongst projects;
- the development of a national leadership development strategic plan.



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

This paper examines the contribution of the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative of the Australian Government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2000-2004 (the Strategy) to the process of strengthening Australian Families and Communities. The Strategy aims to strengthen, empower and support families and communities by increasing their capacity to meet the challenges of economic and social change and to cope with the pressures that can lead to family and social breakdown.

Leadership development was a priority of the Strategy 2000-2004. Leadership projects were primarily supported under the Potential Leadership in Local Communities initiative. While the Strategy 2004-2009 does not have a specific leadership funding initiative, leadership projects are eligible to apply for funding under the Local Answers initiative.

In 2002 CIRCLE, (the Collaborative Institute for Research, Consulting and Learning in Evaluation) at RMIT University was commissioned by the Australian Government's Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) to undertake an evaluation of the Strategy 2000-2004. This paper is one of many resources developed as part of the National Evaluation. Specifically it describes contemporary understandings of leadership and approaches to its development, outlines the role played by FaCS and the Strategy in leadership development, describes the nature of the projects funded under the Potential Leadership in Local Communities initiative and records its achievements. Finally the paper reflects on the implications for future leadership development initiatives.

This paper has been informed by the following sources.

- A review of project progress reports, project evaluation reports and FaCS project file documentation in relation to projects funded under the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative of the Strategy.
- A detailed case study in respect of the Hervey Bay Indigenous Community Leadership project previously undertaken as part of this National Evaluation.
- Case examples of Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects.
- Questionnaire data received from projects funded under the Potential Leaders in Local Communities Initiative.
- An analysis of the achievements of each project funded under the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative undertaken by CIRCLE based on all of the available sources of information, including an assessment of the strength and veracity of the supporting evidence in each instance.

The synthesis of all of the data from all of these sources has provided a comprehensive picture of the impact of the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative.



## 1.2 What is Leadership?

Leadership has been defined as "a process that includes influencing task objectives and strategies of a group or organisation, influencing people in the organisation to implement the strategies and achieve the objectives, influencing group maintenance and identification, and influencing the culture of the organisation" (Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992: 149).

The concept of leadership is often misunderstood. There was a time when leadership was considered to be analogous to an all-knowing decisive ruler who exercised authority and ruled over others; a sort of 'King' or perhaps an 'heroic champion'. Such conceptions have now largely given way to conceptions of leadership that are based on trust and cooperation rather than being built on power. Contemporary notions of leadership stress the need to share leadership roles and responsibilities. Today's leaders are not necessarily out front in the spotlight, but rather tend to work as part of a team where everyone moves forward together.

Leadership is an essential component of the capacity of every effective organisation. By capacity we mean:

*The process by which individuals, groups, organisations, institutions and societies increase their abilities to perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives, and to understand and deal with their development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner.*  
(United Nations Development Program cited in House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2004: 14).

At a leadership development forum conducted as one part of a Strategy project leadership was defined as "The art of how to be effective and change the world we live in" (Graham Tanner). This is what is sometimes referred to 'transformational leadership' because it is about mobilising people to reform their institutions and their society. "[T]ransformational leaders seek to raise the consciousness of followers by appealing to their higher ideals and moral values such as liberty, justice, equality, peace, and humanitarianism, not to baser emotions such as fear, greed, jealousy, or hatred" (Bass, 1985: 176).

Leaders need the passion, energy, enthusiasm, commitment and confidence necessary to engender a shared community vision.

*We all know that few people are born leaders. Leaders require nurturing, coaching and supporting. Leaders need exposure to experiences which build skills and role models to inspire and drive change.* Professor Mick Dodson, Director, Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre, and Chair Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. (Cited in House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2004: xiii)



The concept of 'leadership' is often confused with the concept of 'management', but they are not the same thing. Management is about planning, organising and controlling, whereas leadership is about visioning, networking and building relationships (Bolman & Deal, 2003: 337). Management is about the efficient use of existing resources, whereas leadership is about establishing the conditions necessary to move towards a better future.

The case study of the Hervey Bay Indigenous Community Leadership project undertaken as one part of this National Evaluation describes how this project was first envisaged as being about the transfer of management skills so that participants could take up positions and fulfil responsibilities such as committee membership. Participants would learn more about their roles and responsibilities in managing community organisations. The experience of this project enabled some of the participants to come to an appreciation that management and leadership are not the same thing. People with management skills are not necessarily leaders, and leaders do not always possess management skills.

There are many styles of leadership. A recent Parliamentary report has drawn attention to styles of leadership that are "unrelated to administration, management and accountability requirements" (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2004:138). For example, the literature highlights differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous leadership.

*Indigenous Australians have markedly different leadership styles to non-Indigenous Australians. Leadership traditionally has been characterised by having Elders in cultural guidance roles; group and community contributions to governance and decision making; consensus decision-making styles; and an awareness of, and being responsive to, community needs without prior reference to ego or power-driven motives. (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2005: 24)*

Some additional features of the Indigenous leadership style are captured in the following passage.

*Indigenous models of leadership are complex, based on cultural frameworks and holistic approaches. They draw on the wisdom and experience of older people and integrate the spiritual with the political. Leadership in Koori communities is not just about the work of prominent members; it is about all members having a diversity of roles and responsibilities, as well as opportunities to develop skills and a vision to work towards a stronger lasting future. It is essentially about building the individual and collective capacities of all community members. (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2005: 28)*

Increasingly many mainstream leadership development practitioners would advocate a similar team approach to leadership development in mainstream contexts.

Some leadership development programs are primarily directed towards the development of the skills to better equip participants to carry out their roles and responsibilities, and to take on new activities and responsibilities. However, a recent report has noted that the development of leadership does not always necessarily have much to do with training (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2004: 141).



Increasingly leadership is seen as encompassing a particular set of values and behaviours. Generally a leader is perceived as someone who has:

- accepted responsibility for initiating and achieving change;
- a vision;
- a capacity to 'knit' the community together by embracing unity rather than division;
- a capacity to influence and inspire others;
- a capacity to build trust and bond with others;
- a capacity to build networks;
- confidence and a positive outlook and attitude;
- a capacity for diligence, consistency and perseverance;
- control over their own emotions;
- the determination to follow through on their own commitments;
- an ability to accept constructive criticism;
- wisdom to guide their choices, decisions and actions;
- a primary focus on the needs of people, rather than on the attainment of personal power;
- integrity in all that they do (i.e. in personal interactions as well as in the public domain);
- the capacity to build a culture of trust.

A process of deep reflection on what leadership really means is characteristic of many leadership development initiatives. Clearly there are certain standards of behaviour that are expected of a leader. The Hervey Bay Indigenous Community Leadership project initially started with a focus on skilling participants, but in the process it was recognised that attitudinal change, rather than skill, needed to be the initial building block. The facilitator at the Hervey Bay Leadership Summit posited that: "Leadership is a privilege, but with the privilege comes much responsibility. If you aren't prepared to accept the responsibility, don't take the privilege" (Graham Tanner).

Leaders have an important role to play in developing trusting relationships. It is difficult to conceive of someone as a leader who does not command the trust of those they interact and work with. In the recent years trust has increasingly come to be seen as crucial to effective leadership. This growing interest in trust has coincided with what some see as a general decline in confidence in both public and private institutions (Kramer, 1999). It has been argued that the "the psychological contract of trust" that once existed between people and organisations and also between people within organisations has been damaged by the unethical behaviour of some organisational 'leaders' (Rogers, 1995:15).



Open and transparent communication is seen as key to building a culture of trust because it helps to create a positive climate that cuts across functional and hierarchic barriers (Gray, 2005; Willemyns, Gallois and Callan, 2003). It is for this reason that many leadership initiatives are primarily focussed on connecting and networking people, rather than on transferring leadership skills. The aim is to create new alliances both within and across communities. Simply bringing people together can create new synergies and opportunities for positive change. This can take place at participatory forums such as social events, meetings or conferences. The development of leadership is a function of meaningful social interaction and effective communication.

Essentially leadership is about influencing and providing direction to people. "The best leaders are those who are deeply interested in others and can bring out the best in them" (Daft, 2005: 26).

### **1.3 Approaches to Leadership Development**

There is a range of views about how to go about developing effective leaders. The literature of leadership identifies various models. Some approaches, such as the Williamson Community Leadership model, have been particularly influential in Australia. The main strategies adopted have been leadership training in a course or workshop environment, mentoring, role modelling, and participation in outdoor camping, sport and adventure-based activities. Increasingly projects also include an experiential element that enables participants to practice their skills in the real world. This section of the report will briefly elaborate on each of these strategies.

There are a great many leadership training courses in Australia, several of which are formally accredited as school, certificate, diploma or degree courses. Much of the training that is provided is competency based. One Indigenous project funded under the Strategy reflected that: "many young Koori women and men have had negative experiences in formal education settings, so the leadership projects developed learning programs that were task and activity oriented" (Project Evaluation Report). A self-directed competency-based approach to learning about leadership has been adopted in many instances, rather than one focussed on academic achievements.

A review of the content of leadership development training programs provides us with insights into the range of core competencies that are typically thought to be required of a leader. These typically include:

- mentoring;
- team building;
- communication and listening skills;
- the provision of mutual support;
- esteem and confidence building;
- personal and social skills development;
- relationship building e.g. fostering positive parent-adolescent interaction;
- mediation and conflict resolution;



- stress management;
- managing emotions;
- an understanding of community development theory and practice;
- creative thinking;
- visioning;
- planning;
- governance ;
- principles of running an effective non-government organisation;
- consultation and negotiation;
- working with local and state government authorities;
- networking;
- working with groups;
- community engagement;
- representation;
- assertiveness;
- advocacy;
- public speaking;
- working with the media;
- generic problem-solving skills;
- cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills;
- health and substance abuse issues;
- personal financial management;
- duty of care and ethics.

Mentoring has long been seen as an effective way to multiply scarce leadership resources. A mentor is an experienced and trusted advisor. Mentoring involves the provision of one-on-one support by an experienced leader to an emerging potential leader. There are five dimensions to mentoring: emotional support (e.g. listening, debriefing, shared concern); appraisal support (e.g. affirmation, feedback); informational support (e.g. strategic advice, guidance); instrumental support (e.g. resources) and cultural support (e.g. cultural identity, cultural security). Several Strategy projects have involved the training of adults as youth mentors. This is especially popular in Indigenous contexts where, in recent years, there has been a move to repair the often damaged relationships between youth and their Elders. The peer education approach has also been popular where, for example, local young people are trained as youth workers to work with other youth.



Role modelling too has also been a common strategy employed. There is broad agreement about the potential of role models to motivate and inspire the next generation of leadership. It is therefore important to create opportunities for potential leaders to meet and talk with actual leaders. One of the most common forms has been to give young people an opportunity to meet sporting champions as a source of inspiration and positive reinforcement. However, some have stressed that it is important that the use of role models not be limited to sporting heroes, but rather should draw on achievers from all walks of life.

Participation in leadership camps is widely viewed as a character-building activity. For example, the Strategy funded Tomorrow's Leaders Camps project (NT) sought to enhance the sense of self-worth of participants. Strategies employed included the teaching of bush skills, the use of mentors, and the development of life skills in areas such as teamwork, self-control, coping strategies, self-confidence, cultural health and wellbeing. The emphasis was on ensuring that participants had strong male role models.

Participation in sport too is widely viewed as an activity that can be used to release people's potential. The literature suggests that physical activity programs are generally an effective means of promoting personal and social development. The Strategy-funded Rumbalara Football/Netball Club project in Shepparton Victoria, for example, used sport as a point of initial engagement with young people (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2004:140). This approach was linked to the use of role models such as football stars and a peer education strategy that actively used earlier participants to work with new ones. Regular contact with strong male figures was seen as particularly important because it was recognised that many male participants have grown up in single parent families without a father figure.

One approach to leadership development that has become prominent in recent years is to incorporate outdoor adventure-based activities, such as abseiling and orienteering, where participants learn to rely on and put trust in each other. They are challenged to think and act like leaders and to guide and support others. Participants are encouraged to go 'outside the square you live in' and 'feel the fear but do it anyway'. This approach to leadership development has emerged out of recognition that leadership is at least as much about raising confidence and changing attitudes and beliefs, as it is about learning particular skills.

The prevailing view is that leadership is best developed through real life experience and from practice, rather than in an abstract formal learning environment. It follows that leadership development ideally needs to occur in the context of local activities intended to address specific local needs. This is not to suggest that there is no place for leadership workshops and training courses. But wherever possible the trend is towards a broader approach that incorporates a practical experiential 'hands on' learning element involving some form of community service.



It is not so much about determining which approach to leadership development is the right one. Rather it is about being aware that different regions, communities, sectors and social groups have different needs and that leadership initiatives need to be tailored to the particular circumstances. Some leadership development initiatives are about extending the knowledge, skills, understandings and confidence of existing community, business and government leaders. Others are directed towards expanding the pool of existing leaders by identifying and engaging emerging new leaders. The leadership qualities required in the business community will, for example, be quite different to those required in local government or in a remote Indigenous community. Furthermore the content of some leadership initiatives is focussed on training company directors, some are focussed on equipping people to serve in local government, and so on.

Leadership development can serve diverse ends.

- It can enable people to take a more active role in their community.
- It can give committee members and project staff additional skills.
- It can encourage emerging leaders to take on more responsibility.
- It can be a way of networking and sharing information.
- It can be a source of motivation and inspiration.
- It can improve confidence.
- It can enable under-represented social groups such as women, youth, Indigenous people and others to represent their communities.
- It can transfer knowledge and skills to volunteers.
- It can generate new community activities and events.
- It can foster greater social cohesion.

Leadership is always instrumental to a particular purpose, rather than an end in itself.

In the field of leadership we need to be cautious about 'one size fits all' prescriptions.

*[I]t must be noted that all regional leadership programs are different, reflecting the needs and circumstances of the communities and regions they service. (Coordination of Regional Leadership Programs – A Review, 2004: 6).*

## **1.4 Indigenous Leadership Development**

Indigenous leadership development is a national policy issue that has come into sharp focus recently. "Leadership is critical to the long-term survival and growth of Koori communities" (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2005: 28).

This heightened level of interest in Indigenous leadership development arises out of the recognition that "much of the rural and remote younger generation may have neither the knowledge nor the skill to assume leadership roles" (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2004: 138). There is also a growing appreciation of the need to spread the leadership load more broadly.



*By increasing the capacity of existing and future leaders, and increasing the number of leaders, the load could be spread over more people and this could potentially increase the likelihood of leadership roles being an attractive option, rather than a burden. (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 2004: 142)*

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (the Standing Committee) conducted a detailed inquiry and reported on issues of capacity development in Indigenous contexts, with a particular focus on leadership development. The Standing Committee concluded that "Effective leadership is crucial to building and maintaining the capacities of Indigenous communities, as it is to all Australian communities" (Standing Committee Report, 2004: 136).

The Inquiry report recommended (amongst other things) "the incorporation of capacity building into the design and implementation of programs delivering services to Indigenous communities, including funds to enable mentoring of community members and organizations." The Standing Committee further argued that government should continue to develop and invest in appropriate training and mentoring programs, in partnership with Indigenous people (Standing Committee Report, 2004: xxix).

The Standing Committee Report (2004) also makes the observation that leadership needs to be seen as legitimate. It draws attention to the damage that is sometimes done by the inappropriate external recognition of 'leaders' who, in the eyes of the local Indigenous community, may lack legitimacy, authority, trust and respect. Professor Mick Dodson, Director of the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre and Chair of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, argues that "Leadership authority must be culturally sanctioned and transferable into wider environments and contexts" (quoted in the Standing Committee Report, 2004: xiii). Indigenous leadership programs stress the need for true leaders to display respect in all aspects of their lives and in all that they do; respect for their country, respect for women, respect for family, and respect for others in the wider community.

Indigenous leaders face many challenges beyond those faced in mainstream society. These include:

- the demands of continually operating bi-culturally at the interface between mainstream and Indigenous societies;
- the sheer scale of the family and social issues that need to be addressed;
- the added burden of personal experiences of grief and trauma in many instances;
- the risk of 'burnout' that is ever present when people feel overwhelmed.

Increasingly it has been recognised that, in order to be at their most effective, Indigenous leaders need support in all of these areas to enable them to positively contribute to the future of their communities.

A recent report has highlighted the importance of leadership development for Indigenous communities.

*In almost all areas of Indigenous affairs, leadership has been identified as a priority. Leadership projects and activities encourage personal growth, enhance self-confidence and build self-esteem in individuals, which in turn enhances mental health and wellbeing and strengthens communities. Well-designed leadership initiatives can also provide hope for Indigenous peoples to work towards fulfilling dreams and aspirations, particularly so among Indigenous youth. (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2005: 24)*

## **1.5 The Impetus for Leadership Development in Australia**

There are three main factors that appear to have provided the rationale and a strong drive for leadership development initiatives in Australia at the present time. They are a leadership skills shortage, the need to adapt to change especially in regional and rural areas, and the recognition that leadership development can be an important means of achieving greater self-reliance amongst disadvantaged social groups.

These factors were identified through project visits and reviews of project documentation undertaken as part of this evaluation. The findings are substantially supported by published research that includes the Standing Committee on Regional Development's review of the Coordination of Regional Leadership Programs (2004), the Many Ways Forward Report of the Inquiry into Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities (2004) by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and the Victorian Health Promotion report, Promoting the Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing of Koori Communities through the Koori Communities Leadership Program Building Indigenous Leadership (2005).

Firstly, there is a prevailing view that there are not enough leaders and that the 'same few people' always seem to be involved in community projects. Leadership is a scarce resource in many communities. This contributes to existing leaders being over committed and feeling 'burnt out'. Many leaders in the family and community services sector have difficulty in coping with the stress of trying to balance the requirements of their job on the one hand, with the expectations of their community on the other. The case study of the Hervey Bay Indigenous Community Leadership project found that this was the initial impetus. A recent submission to a House of Representatives Parliamentary inquiry noted that:

*Individuals in communities ... are loaded up with responsibilities – sitting on councils and committees, translating at meetings and responding to many competing demands. These few people are often targeted by external bodies and agencies because of their skills and become the main means of communication and 'consultation with communities ... (The Fred Hollows Foundation, 2004: 36)*

Another recent report makes it clear that this is an issue for mainstream projects as well (Coordination of Regional Leadership Programs – A Review, 2004). Increasing the number of leaders involved in community activities not only shares the workload, but it also brings to bear a broader range of values, knowledge, skills and understandings than would otherwise be the case.



Secondly, there is the recognition that some regions and industries are experiencing a period of extreme social and economic change, especially in many rural and remote areas. The prevailing view is that leadership is essential to enabling communities to adapt to these changing circumstances and re-positioning to take advantage of emerging opportunities for regional growth and regeneration. It is this factor that lies behind much of the impetus for rural and regional development leadership initiatives. Leaders not only accept that change is inevitable, they openly embrace it out of recognition that it can be a source of renewed energy, but only if the potential opportunities are grasped (Daft, 2005: 9). A leader needs to be able to motivate others and influence their behaviour towards those actions that are necessary to achieve change. "Leadership is concerned... with communicating the vision and developing a shared culture and set of core values that can lead to the desired future state" (Daft, 2005:18 -19).

Thirdly, leadership development is seen as a means of achieving greater equity for marginalised or alienated sections of Australian society. This is especially relevant to initiatives relevant to the needs of underrepresented groups in decision-making processes, such as youth, women in rural areas and Indigenous peoples. These groups have long been involved in leadership development initiatives. But increasingly other disadvantaged social groups are also becoming engaged in leadership initiatives, such as culturally and linguistically diverse groups, single parents, those living on depressed housing estates and the permanent residents of caravan parks.

Currently there is much impetus for leadership development in Australia and, as we shall see, the involvement of FaCS and the Strategy is adding momentum to the process.



## 2 Leadership Development Initiatives in Australia

### 2.1 The Role of FACS

FaCS has become a significant and active player in the leadership development field in Australia in recent years, both through the Strategy and through its other initiatives. In 2001 FaCS hosted the National Regional Leadership Conference in Canberra. "At this conference it was clear that there was a strong identified need for leadership programs at the regional level, but funding for such programs, as opposed to local community based programs, was difficult to obtain and sustain" (Coordination of Regional Leadership Programs – A Review, 2004: 6).

Substantial FaCS funding of leadership development projects has subsequently occurred under most initiatives of the Strategy 2000-2004. The main initiative that has contributed to this has been Potential Leaders in Local Communities, the initiative that is the focus of this paper. It provides support to leadership training and mentoring projects. This initiative is discussed more fully later in this report.

While the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative has not been continued as a discrete initiative into the second phase of the Strategy over the 2004 - 2009 time period, leadership projects are still eligible to apply for funding under the Local Answers initiative of the Strategy 2004-2009.

It is also important to bear in mind that leadership development occurred under other initiatives of the Strategy, particularly:

- National Skills Development for Volunteers program;
- Stronger Families Fund;
- Can Do Community (which promotes networking between community leaders and community builders and funds events that showcase good practice).

Leadership development has been evident in some cases even where this may not have been the primary aim of the project. Examples of leadership initiatives funded under these other initiatives of the Strategy include the following.

Community Leadership Initiative (National Skills Development for Volunteers initiative) – This project trained volunteers in rural and remote regions. It was a collaboration between Volunteering Queensland, the Queensland University of Technology and the National Volunteers Skills Centre.

Wide Bay Burnett Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Support Program (Stronger Families Fund) – This project was active in supporting young Indigenous women to develop their confidence and leadership capacity. Initiatives included the 'Sistagirl' network which was a support group and the 'Murri Chicks Talking Up' forum developed, organised and facilitated by young local women. Strategies employed included peer education, the use of role models, the development of linkages between participants and relevant service providers and discussion of issues of concern to the participants such as education, culture, domestic violence and sexual abuse.



Australian Community Leadership Centre (Can Do Community) – This Centre fulfills a coordination role by assisting community leaders and organisations to access the resources and support necessary to develop the particular leadership skills they required. The Centre also maintained a comprehensive database of leadership courses available at [http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/leadership/leadership\\_main.jsp](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/leadership/leadership_main.jsp).

Green Corps is a non-Strategy FaCS program focussed on youth development and environmental management training. Volunteers between the ages of 17-20 years participate in community-based natural and cultural heritage project activities. Teamwork, the development of leadership skills, the strengthening of community connections through relationship building are core objectives. Further details are available at <http://www.greencorps.gov.au/> >

FaCS is also involved in the promotion of National Youth Week that has been run annually since 2000 as a joint initiative with State/Territory and Local Governments. The aim is to celebrate the achievements of youth, to recognise the contribution that they make to their communities and to provide an opportunity for young people to voice concerns and raise issues that are relevant to them.

In summary FaCS is a key player in leadership development initiatives in Australia, not only through the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative, but also through other initiatives of the Strategy and through the funding of leadership conferences, events and project activities that lie outside the Strategy.

## **2.2 The Role of Other Agencies**

### **Overview**

While FaCS has certainly added momentum to leadership initiatives, it is important to stress that it is but one of many government and non-government agencies that are active in this field. There are numerous leadership programs operating across Australia and a diverse array of agencies are active as funders, trainers and service coordinators in this field. The main players include:

- the Australian Government e.g. FaCS, Department of Transport and Regional Services, Prime Minister and Cabinet, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Department of Education, Science and Training and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry;
- State/Territory Governments e.g. regional development authorities;
- Education sector e.g. TAFE colleges, universities, schools and colleges;
- Private sector e.g. corporate funders, industry and private providers.

It is significant to note that, unlike some other areas of the family and community sector, leadership development is one area that does attract significant corporate interest.

*The private sector is heavily involved in the provision of leadership programs. Their involvement ranges from profit making businesses, to not-for-profit organisations and organisations partly or wholly government funded. (Coordination of Regional Leadership Programs – A Review, 2005:10)*



Some non-government leadership development institutions are the recipients of generous corporate sponsorship.

Leadership initiatives in Australia have tended to be focussed in four main areas; youth, Indigenous, women, and rural and regional development. Some programs overlap two or more of these categories. The following sections are intended to be a guide to some of the more prominent Australian leadership development initiatives in these areas. It is not intended to be a complete list.

## Youth Programs

The need to develop the leadership potential of young people is a dominant theme in the leadership development field. The following are some of the better-known leadership development initiatives that target youth.

- Fairbridge Village near Perth in WA delivers a range of programs that develop 'non-traditional' youth leadership skills. Initiatives include the Wilderness Youth Leadership Development (WYLD) program and the Youth Leadership Development Program (YLDP). Activities encompass communal living, outdoor adventure, music, art, esteem building, motivation, problem solving and training. Fairbridge was the auspice for a Potential Leaders in Local Communities project.
- The Foundation for Young Australians is a non-government organisation that runs leadership programs aimed at developing young leaders.
- The PYLI Leadership Development Program is a youth leadership development initiative designed to educate young people on how to lead change in the community. The program is supported and coordinated by Volunteering Queensland.
- The Youth Grants Program is administered through the Office of Youth Affairs in the Northern Territory. It enables young people to participate in community service work and leadership development activities such as peer skills, esteem and confidence raising, team building, role modelling and the enhancement of communication skills.
- Some community service organisations, such as Rotary, have also been active in the area of promoting youth leadership.

There are also several Indigenous youth leadership development initiatives that are discussed in the following section.

## Programs for Indigenous People

The following are some of the better-known Indigenous leadership development initiatives.

- The Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre (AILC) based in Canberra, is a training facility that delivers accredited diploma and certificate courses to develop knowledge, skills and understanding about leadership. The curriculum encompasses governance, conflict mediation, communication, networking and ethics. The objective of the AILC are to:
  - foster the development of leadership ability and skills of Indigenous peoples;
  - conduct educational and experiential courses and seminars in leadership and professional development;



- develop materials for education and training in leadership;
- promote Indigenous leadership skills and ability;
- create forums for Indigenous people to share ideas, experience and skills.

The AILC is funded by various government, philanthropic and corporate sources including the NSW Government and Citigroup (a private sector financial services company). A House of Representatives (2004) report has commended the work of the AILC. In 2001 the AILC received funding from FaCS through the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative of the Strategy to deliver leadership certificate course training in regional centres. The purpose was to make leadership training more accessible to Indigenous Australians.

- The Victorian Koori Network for the Future is a mutual support mechanism that brings together Indigenous leaders from across Victoria from many fields including the arts, sport, education, justice, health and academia. It is a resource and planning organisation that serves over 300 members. The Network holds regular forums on Indigenous leadership and community issues. In November 2003 it organised 'Conference 21: Positioning our Future'. Links have been established with Maori and Canadian First Nations peoples. Issues that the Network seeks to address include:
  - leadership development;
  - identified gaps in leadership;
  - the creation of an environment that is more conducive to the emergence of a shared purpose and vision;
  - Indigenous participation;
  - the promotion of emotional and spiritual wellbeing;
  - the need for long term planning in Indigenous communities.

The Network has been associated with positive outcomes in a diverse range of areas such as increased cross-cultural awareness, skills development, confidence and esteem, social awareness and participation.

- The Indigenous Capacity Building Program in Queensland aims to develop entrepreneurial leadership through the provision of mentoring to Indigenous communities and individuals to enable them to develop business skills, take advantage of enterprise opportunities and to develop joint ventures with the mainstream business community.
- The National Indigenous Youth Leadership Group is a collaboration between various Indigenous bodies and the Australian Government. It is a national network of young Indigenous leaders. There is an annual national forum that provides advice directly to government on Indigenous youth issues.
- The Indigenous Youth Leadership Program (IYLP) is funded through the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training. It involves the annual award of 250 secondary school student scholarships to Indigenous students, primarily from remote regions. Recipients are supported with orientation, study tours and practical leadership experiences.



- The National Indigenous Youth Movement of Australia is concerned with establishing 'right' relationships in family and community affairs, and the creation of 'safe spaces' where Indigenous young people can come together.
- The National Indigenous Youth Roundtables are an Australian Government initiated forum that regularly brings Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth together to discuss issues of mutual concern.
- The Young Indigenous Leaders Program is a workshop involving young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from across Queensland. The participants work with each other and with facilitators to reflect on aspects of leadership.
- The Young Indigenous Local Government Scholarship is a WA government initiative funded through that state's Indigenous Leadership Fund. Three scholarships of \$10,000 each are made available to local government authorities to provide a 12-month scholarship for young Indigenous people under the age of 25 years. Successful applicants have an opportunity to gain work experience, develop an understanding of the role and responsibilities of local government and to serve as a link to the Indigenous community.
- The Indigenous Outdoor Recreation Program is an outdoor leadership development program administered by the Tasmanian government.

### **Programs for Women**

The following are some of the leadership development activities that target women.

- The Women's National Leadership Initiative is administered by the Office for the Status of Women, in the Department of Family and Community Services. It aims to promote leadership by women and increase their participation in leadership roles. Women who are disadvantaged by remoteness are a specific target group. This program also seeks to build partnership between women's groups, governments, industry and professional associations. Initiatives include the Women's NGOs Network, the National Framework for Women in Local Government, the National Rural Women's Coalition and the 'Window on Women' website.
- The National Women's Development Program is also administered by the Office for the Status of Women. It funds activities undertaken by national women's groups to foster leadership, particularly those that strengthen the representation of women and give them a greater voice in policy. Initiatives include the Women as Leaders in Rural and Regional Australia program undertaken in collaboration with the Foundation for Australian Agricultural Women.
- The Sport Leadership Grants Program for Rural and Remote Women is a joint initiative of the Australian Sports Commission and the Office for the Status of Women. It provides women with an opportunity to assume sport leadership roles by undertaking accredited training in areas such as coaching, officiating, and sports management and administration.
- The Foundation for Australian Agricultural Women (FAAW) seeks to enhance women's involvement in decision-making roles and to raise the leadership capacity of women in rural areas. Initiatives include a scholarship program to Marcus Oldham College and the Facilitation Skills for Rural Australia program.



- Women on Board and Women into Local Government are programs administered by the Tasmanian government to promote the effective involvement of women in local government decision-making processes.

### **Rural and Regional Development Programs**

The following are some of the leadership development initiatives that focus on the needs of people in rural industries and regional areas.

- The Australian Rural Leadership Foundation (ARLF) is an established non-profit organisation based in Canberra. Its purpose is to identify, develop and support rural and regional leaders at a local, state, national and international level. The ARLF is resourced from multiple sources:
  - Australian Government agencies: FaCS, Department of Transport and Regional Services, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Health and Ageing;
  - State Government agencies: Queensland Department of Education, Queensland Department of Primary Industries, NSW Department of Agriculture, SA Department of Primary Industries and the Victorian State Government;
  - Non-government sources including major banks and industry associations.

The ARLF manages the Australian Rural Leadership Program which is a training course completed on a part-time basis over a 20 month period, with subsequent on-going involvement by graduates in the Australian Rural Leadership Network. In excess of 270 rural leaders have graduated from the Program and it is reported that many of these have subsequently assumed influential leadership roles. Scholarships to participate are sponsored by an array of private sector and government sources. Sponsorship is often tied to specific industries or locations. The Australian Rural Leadership Program reserves two places for Indigenous candidates in each course. The ARLF is also the auspice for a Potential Leaders in Local Communities project.

- The Rural and Regional Training Packages are funded by the Queensland government and administered by the Institute for Sustainable Regional Development in collaboration with Central Queensland University. Funds are used to promote community leadership and entrepreneurship. Community groups and others are assisted to develop local action plans directed towards community goals.
- The Young People in Rural Industries Program is administered by the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. It enables participants to network with their peers and also with government and business contacts. It promotes increased consultation with, and representation of, young people in rural industry forums and offers a Young Rural Leaders' Course and a Mentoring Young Leaders initiative.
- The Rural Industries Leadership Section of the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry publishes an e-newsletter which includes information about Australian Government and State Government programs.



- The Building Rural Leaders program is a leadership development program administered by the Queensland Department of Primary Industries' intended to assist people in rural areas to cope with change. The program assists industries, communities and agribusinesses to build a critical mass of people of all ages who are skilled in leadership and strategic thinking. Training support funding is available.
- The Rural Leadership Program in South Australia provides participants from rural industries with exposure to a range of specialised professional leadership development opportunities and experiences. The aim is to energise both new and existing rural leaders and to expand their ability to stimulate rural industry and community development. A key objective is to establish a network of rural leaders who can share creative ideas and promote opportunities for partnerships between individuals, communities and industries.
- The website [www.yarn.gov.au](http://www.yarn.gov.au) is a forum for young people in rural areas where they can interact and share information. The site is maintained by the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.
- The Sustainable Regions Program is administered by the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DoTARS). It aims to build economic, social and environmental capacity in regional Australia through partnership arrangements with the private sector and other government agencies. Leadership development is a program objective. Community input is achieved through the establishment of local Sustainable Regions Advisory Committees.
- The Making Connections initiative has been piloted by WA's Gascoyne Development Commission and the Kimberley Development Commission. This program is designed to strengthen the leadership skills of people involved with providing services to Indigenous communities. Making Connections is part of the WA Community Leadership Program which also encompasses the Building and Empowering Sustainable Communities Fund and the Leadership Western Australia program.
- The Peel Community Capacity Building Program is an initiative of the Peel Development Commission (WA). Workshops for community service providers and practitioners provide professional development opportunities that address identified gaps in skills e.g. how to work more effectively with culturally and linguistically diverse clients.

## Coordination

Leadership development in Australia occurs within a very crowded policy space, therefore effective coordination is essential if duplication and overlap are to be avoided. Fortunately there are already well-established coordination structures encompassing many community, industry and government agencies involved in the sector. A recent review found numerous examples of collaboration, funds pooling, joint sponsorship, networking and information sharing through mechanisms such as websites, meetings, conferences and coordinating structures (Coordination of Regional Leadership Programs – A Review, 2004).



The review found that many existing initiatives are linked via established relationships between organisations as diverse and geographically disparate as Leadership Victoria, the Loddon-Murray Community Leadership Program, the Benevolent Society in Sydney, the Regional Development Commissions in WA and the Strategy funded Australian Capital Region Community Leadership Program. "These linkages involved learning about the types of programs being delivered, their successes and failures, and how to maintain funding through the life of the program." (Coordination of Regional Leadership Programs – A Review, 2004: 6)

Important coordinating structures include:

- Community Leadership Australia (CLA) group that has an established network of community based leadership programs across Australia that regularly discuss issues of program content, delivery and management.
- The Australian Rural Leadership Foundation that links government rural leadership initiatives with those in the private sector.
- The Victorian Indigenous Leadership Strategy (2004) which encompasses many aspects of leadership development including coordination, accreditation, role modelling, mentoring, strategic linkages, sustainable community based approaches, structured activities, youth participation in civic life, the development and consolidation of networks and the proposed establishment of a Victorian Indigenous Leadership Centre clearing house to disseminate information about research, events and activities . Further information is available at <http://www.dvc.vic.gov.au/aav.htm>
- Leadership Victoria is sponsored by the Victorian government and the private sector business and philanthropic interests. The primary purpose of this body is to create regional networks. The approach is strongly influenced by the Williamson Leadership model.
- The Victorian Koori Network for the Future is a 'think tank' with its own secretariat and an Indigenous membership exceeding 300 (discussed more fully earlier in this report).
- The Community Leadership Programs Directory maintained by the NSW Premier's Department on the website: [www.communitybuilders.gov.nsw](http://www.communitybuilders.gov.nsw) that identifies organisations and individuals involved in community leadership programs in NSW and also provides some definitions of leadership.
- The Community Building Resource Service is administered through the Department for Victorian Communities. It seeks to develop an innovative culture by offering practical assistance and support to organisations e.g. a research and practice clearinghouse.
- The WA Community Leadership Plan (2002) that encompasses strategies for networking, information sharing, resourcing, research and evaluation. The government of Western Australia is also working in collaboration with the Institute for Regional Development to establish an Alumni group that will bring together graduates from various leadership development programs.



One area where there may still be some scope to further improve coordination arrangements is in relation to some Indigenous leadership initiatives in some parts of the country. The case study of the Hervey Bay Indigenous Community Leadership project undertaken for this National Evaluation found that this project was developed and delivered in isolation from other leadership initiatives. It was suggested that it would have been beneficial to link this project to the expertise and experience of an established organisation with a track record in leadership development, such as the AILC.

But in most instances it appears to be the case that the linkages necessary to raise awareness, improve access to relevant sources of information, share experiences and learn from each other's experience already exist. In such an environment there is potential for good practice to thrive.



### 3 Potential Leaders in Local Communities Initiative

#### 3.1 Description of the Initiative

This section of the report provides information about the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative, the number of projects that have been funded, the level of expenditure, the distribution of these projects across different geographic zones and the main target groups that have been the beneficiaries of these projects. It also highlights the significance of Indigenous projects funded under this initiative.

The aim of the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative was to help build stronger, more self-reliant communities by providing potential community leaders with opportunities to develop their skills. The initiative identified and supported potential community leaders (including non traditional leaders) in socially disadvantaged areas and helped to develop their capacity to build strong and healthy communities. An important part of this initiative was to support the development of leadership in areas that lie beyond those that have traditionally been the focus of leadership development initiatives.

The Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative provided opportunities to:

- develop new and emerging leaders (especially youth);
- establish networks that link community leaders;
- teach community leaders how to involve the community in local projects;
- participate in leadership skills development training and mentoring.

Table 1 reveals that there were 144 Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects funded representing a total public investment of almost \$20m. Table 1 also reveals that Indigenous leadership development has been a major component of the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative. Forty-three Indigenous projects were funded through the Potential Leaders in Local Communities Initiative, accounting for 30 percent of all Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects and 31% (\$6m) of expenditure.

**Table 1: Potential Leaders in Local Communities - Number of projects and level of project funding**

	<b>All PLLC projects</b>	<b>Indigenous PLLC projects</b>	<b>Non-Indigenous PLLC projects</b>
No. of projects	144	43 (30%)	101 (70%)
Total Approved Funding	\$19,716,877	\$6,028,614 (31%)	\$13,688,263 (69%)

The following table, which described some of the projects, shows the range in scope and scale of the projects.



**Table 2: Examples of projects funded under the Potential Leaders in Local Communities Initiative**

<b>VIC</b>	<b>\$290,200</b>	<b>Community Empowerment Project</b>
The project identified and trained community advocates to facilitate disadvantaged communities in the City of Yarra to participate in civic activities and influence decision-making.		
<b>NSW</b>	<b>\$140,000</b>	<b>Development of Great Mates Mentoring Program in the Hunter Valley and Mt Druitt</b>
The Great Mates mentoring program was implemented in the Hunter Valley (Newcastle, Cessnock, Kurri Kurri, & Maitland) and Mt Druitt regions. A local support structure was set up enabling young people to link with appropriate quality adult role models/mentors from sporting, business, academic and other backgrounds, not normally met by young people.		
<b>TAS</b>	<b>\$303,750</b>	<b>Community Leaders Mentoring Program</b>
The project developed individuals' capacity to take on a leadership role. The project officer brought together groups of people in the communities targeted and provided development opportunities focusing on leadership in community projects.		
<b>NSW</b>	<b>\$22,680</b>	<b>Youth and Community Development Program</b>
This project recruited young people from Tumut and small towns within the Tumut Shire to take part in two weekend residential components followed by a ten-week action-focused program during which they initiated a response to an identified community need.		
<b>VIC</b>	<b>\$48,935</b>	<b>Care – GENS8</b>
Care – GENS8 recruited and trained volunteers in the Knox and Dandenong areas to assist young people and their families, and created opportunities for young people to set up, run or get involved in community events and education.		
<b>SA</b>	<b>\$11,070</b>	<b>Taking the Lead: Youth Programs in Enfield</b>
This project targeted at-risk young people 12 – 18 years and had a strong focus on developing their leadership skills through problem solving, self-reflection and personal growth. It ran a two-week program for adolescent girls and two holiday programs. It established a peer support program in partnership with CREATE South Australia.		
<b>NT</b>	<b>\$53,900</b>	<b>Borroloola Community Services Plan</b>
The Mabunji Aboriginal Resource Association consulted with groups of people in the towns and communities in the Borroloola area to address the communities' social issues, infrastructure needs, environmental issues, and economic development.		
<b>NT</b>	<b>\$110,000</b>	<b>Ramingining Women's Centre</b>
The project provided two coordinator positions at the Centre, and provided them with regular professional support through externally sourced training and professional development.		
<b>WA</b>	<b>\$60,000</b>	<b>Wheatbelt Community Builders Clusters Project</b>
The project provided a community-based program of skills development, workshopping and activities across twenty communities in the Wheatbelt area of West Australia, with the intention of providing a group of trained, empowered and active community members prepared to commit the necessary time, and provide leadership to community-building activities in their communities.		
<b>QLD</b>	<b>\$83,000</b>	<b>Community Finance Initiative</b>
This project provided over 50 no-interest approved loans to low income, socially isolated and financially vulnerable people in the Kyabra community of Brisbane.		



Table 3 below enables us to compare the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative with other initiatives funded through the Strategy 2000-2004. This reveals that this initiative represents a significant component of the total Strategy, accounting for about a quarter of all projects and dollars spent.

Average expenditure per project under the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative was almost \$137,000. This is a little more than the average spent on all Strategy projects. Table 2 also reveals that there was great variability in project expenditure levels within the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative, ranging from a high of almost \$1m to a low of just \$1,000.

**Table 3: Summary of funding approved for Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects**

Primary initiative	No of Projects	Total Funding (\$)	Average funding (\$)	Median funding (\$)	Maximum funding (\$)	Minimum funding (\$)
Potential Leaders in Local Communities	144 (23%)	19,716,877 (25%)	136,923	90,929	980,000	1,000
All Strategy projects	635	79,926,810	125,868	76,888	4,027,987	46,985

Table 4 below shows the spread of Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects across highly accessible, accessible, moderately accessible, remote and very remote regions of Australia according to classifications used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

This reveals that Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects were most numerous in highly accessible and accessible regions. Together these accounted for almost 80% of all projects and 74% of the approved funding. Rural and remote leadership initiatives have not been numerous amongst the Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects. Of the 144 projects funded, only 22 had an auspice organisation in a remote or very remote area, with a further 8 projects in the moderately accessible zone.

This pattern is similar to that of Strategy initiatives overall. A limitation in using this data is that each project has been classified on the basis of the postcode of the auspice organisation and occasionally this may not reflect the primary location of project activities. This would be the case where, for example, a Canberra based organisation was the auspice for a project on Cape York.



**Table 4: Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects by ARIA class**

	<i>Highly accessible</i>	<i>Accessible</i>	<i>Moderately accessible</i>	<i>Remote</i>	<i>Very remote</i>	<i>Total</i>
Total No. of PLLC projects	92	22	8	7	15	144
% of projects in each zone	64%	15%	6%	5%	10%	100%
Total No. of Strategy projects	396	102	52	33	52	635
% of projects in each zone	62%	16%	8%	5%	8%	100%
Total PLLC funding (\$)	14,587,232	2,038,638	662,279	683,701	1,745,027	19,716,877
% expenditure in each zone	74%	10%	3%	4%	9%	100%
Total Strategy project funding	53,004,955	12,320,040	4,597,831	3,865,524	6,138,460	79,926,810
% expenditure in each zone	66%	15%	6%	5%	8%	100%

Source: FaCS Stronger Families and Communities Strategy Database

*ARIA classification*

Highly Accessible—relatively unrestricted accessibility to a wide range of goods and services and opportunities for social interaction

Accessible—some restrictions to accessibility of some goods, services and opportunities for social interaction

Moderately Accessible—significantly restricted accessibility of goods, services and opportunities for social interaction

Remote—very restricted accessibility of goods, services and opportunities for social interaction

Very Remote—locational disadvantage - very little accessibility of goods, services and opportunities for social interaction

Table 5 reveals that the primary focus of the Potential Leadership in Local Communities initiative was on projects that targeted youth. Almost half of all projects and over half of all funding under the initiative were directed towards youth projects. Nearly \$11m was expended on youth leadership development under the initiative, representing a very substantial source of new social investment. There were also 17 projects funded that sought to promote the development of rural and regional leaders. This target group, together with youth, has long been a central focus in Australian leadership initiatives.

About a quarter of all Potential Leadership in Local Communities projects have been categorised as 'Other' in Table 5. These are projects that generally have a 'whole-of-community' focus, rather than targeting any specific social group. Such projects brought together potential leaders from all sections of the community and from across various age groups. Many of these were leadership training courses, workshops or conferences.

Leadership projects for women were not a major focus of attention in the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative. Table 5 reveals that only six projects specifically targeted the leadership development of women. However, it is important to bear in mind that women were participants in most projects.

Table 5 identifies only one project as specifically targeting people with disabilities, but several other projects explicitly included people with disabilities as part of a broader target group such as youth.



Table 5 reveals that the disadvantaged residents of housing estates and the permanent residents of caravan parks have been targeted as a new and innovative focus of leadership development. Nine such projects were identified, most of which were in NSW.

Similarly Table 5 indicates that there were seven projects that were concerned with leadership development within culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD).

**Table 5: Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects by Target Group**

Target Group	Total No. of Projects		Total Expenditure	
Youth	67	46.5%	\$10,959,015	55.0%
Rural & Regional Development	17	11.8%	\$1,768,843	9.0%
Housing Estates	9	6.3%	\$1,202,956	6.0%
CALD communities	7	4.9%	\$811,961	4.0%
Women	6	4.2%	\$647,586	3.0%
People with Disabilities	1	0.7%	\$133,604	1.0%
Single Parents	1	0.7%	\$91,857	0.5%
Other	36	25.0%	\$4,163,484	20.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>\$19,779,306</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: FaCS Stronger Families and Communities Strategy Database

Table 5 above is broadly indicative of 'where the money went' in respect of the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative. However, it is important to bear in mind that the categories used are not mutually exclusive and it is open to different researchers to categorise some projects differently. For example, one project targeted culturally and linguistically diverse women and another targeted youth with disabilities. In such instances it was a matter for judgement as to whether or not the first project was primarily a culturally and linguistically diverse initiative or a women's initiative, and also as to whether the second project was primarily a youth initiative or primarily an initiative to assist people with disabilities.

Projects concerned with the development of Indigenous leadership capacity were a particular focus of attention under the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative. The majority of the Indigenous projects and most of the Indigenous funding were directed towards the development of Indigenous youth leadership capacity. Some other projects, however, had a 'whole-of-community' focus that involved bringing together potential leaders from all sections of the Indigenous community and from across various age groups. These generally took the form of training courses, workshops or meetings.



Of the 144 Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects, it was found that 48 had produced resources of one kind or another. The most common form was leadership training curriculum materials such as manuals, handbooks, workbooks and CD ROMS encompassing topics such as leadership styles, communication, confidence and esteem, train-the-trainer, peer skills and community capacity building. Several projects had established informational web sites. Some had produced and disseminated newsletters, booklets, photographic records or posters relevant to project activities. Several projects had produced video records of project activities or video's that promoted project messages. A few had established databases and directories that mapped and provided details about local services. One project had developed a procedures manual and an orientation kit for new members of the group. Another had formulated a strategic plan.

Further data about the activities undertaken by projects funded under the Potential Leaders for Local Communities Initiative comes from the Final Questionnaires completed by Strategy projects upon completion of the project. Questionnaire data was received from 59 leadership projects, a response rate of only 41% compared to 68% of all Strategy projects.

The activities most commonly undertaken by the Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects were mentoring and role modelling, community consultation, bringing community members together, the development and enhancement of networks and linkages with partners, practical activities (such as camps and life skills development) and the conduct of a significant community event. Most of the Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects that responded to the final questionnaire were also involved in training project staff or volunteers to undertake project work, and with skills development training for members of the community. Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects were found to be less likely than other Strategy projects to be involved in activities such as systematic action research, the development of resource materials or with strategies that were designed to improve family relationships.

## **3.2 Case Examples**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this section is to supplement the quantitative data about the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative provided in the previous section with qualitative information. It presents some descriptive examples of projects that have been funded under the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative to provide the reader with a sense of the nature of these projects, their context, their achievements and any difficulties encountered as the project proceeded.

Features common to many of these projects were:

- the adoption of a preventative early intervention approach;
- a grounding in community development and capacity building principles;
- collaborative project development and implementation processes involving many people and multiple agencies;
- the use of a point of meaningful engagement with participants (eg sport, horses, camps, music);
- the widespread use of peers as mentors and role models;



- project linkages to other agencies such as family and community services, education, training and employment services and justice services;
- a focus on raising the self-respect, confidence, esteem, motivation and skills of participants;
- a strength based approach that is focused on developing a positive value system amongst the participants;
- the development of communication, teamwork, problem solving and other life skills.

These characteristics are evident in several of the examples given below. The projects discussed are not identified.

### **Project A**

This project was a 7-day Indigenous residential leadership development certificate course. Seven regional courses were conducted in regional centres across Australia. A total of 95 participants (39 men and 56 women) from all states and territories and from all adult age groups completed the training.

The course was accredited as Certificate IV in Indigenous Leadership. The content included topics such as governance, relationship management, ethics, representation, communication, media and lobbying skills, stress management, men's business, women's business, facilitation, mediation and conflict resolution, time management, and occupational health and safety.

Other features of this project included:

- a competitive selection process;
- pre-course information to ensure that participants were aware of the content and what was expected of them prior to arrival;
- pre-course readings sent to all participants;
- the completion of written assignments during the course;
- the use of high profile Indigenous presenters as role models (many of whom contributed their services at no cost to the program);
- the availability of information technology for each participant for the duration of the course;
- a simulation exercise in which participants role play as Directors of a fictional Indigenous community organisation;
- discussion groups;
- the sharing of personal experiences.



This training placed a strong emphasis on supporting participants. A particularly innovative feature was the use of a Psychologist and the provision of one-on-one counselling to enable participants to deal with personal issues of grief and trauma. The need for Indigenous leaders to be a source of mutual support for each other was stressed. Mutual support means opportunities to debrief together, to share 'survival' strategies and to be there for one another.

The counselling and coping with grief and trauma aspects of the course received a favourable response.

*Excellent – Thank you for healing me and giving me knowledge to go forward and inspire others. I am honoured to participate in this course.*

*[T]he lump is still in my throat really. Our people need more of this stuff. Important session – People aren't able to work effectively if past problems have not been yet accepted.*

*We all learn to live with grief. It was upsetting to face it front on again. However, it gave others an opportunity to open up.*

This project received high praise from participants right across Australia. Clearly many saw it as a life changing experience. Participants also found it rigorous and challenging. In particular there were positive comments made about the commitment and professionalism of the presenters and other support staff. A sample of participant feedback follows.

*This is the best course by far that I have ever done.*

*A course that was professionally thought out, organised and co-ordinated.*

*Outstanding! It delivered everything I could have wanted. It was challenging, enjoyable and inspirational, among many other things.*

*Fantastic, informative, exciting, rewarding, lots of organisation; professional, friendly presenters; absolutely fabulous.*

*An excellent experience. I'm craving for the diploma course. I hope I am lucky enough to be accepted onto this course in the future.*

*I wasn't clear about governance before and now I have a clear understanding.*

*It was a good group. We all had our strengths to contribute, they weren't necessarily the same, but everything seemed to get together.*

*Incredible, empowering, I rate it as the BEST course I have ever done.*

*Thank you so much for seeing something in me that I... had lost. I now have balance and grounding. I know where I am going. I now know that I am a leader in my community and have the knowledge and skills to be a DEADLY LEADER.*

*It makes us look within ourselves to identify the skills and commitment to our community we already have. We are all leaders.*

*It has motivated me to do more in this area and carry it through to my place of work and community and to work more with the Indigenous community.*

*This has re-inforced my desire to lead.*



Each of the six courses delivered was the subject of a separate evaluation and there was on-going reflection and revision of the program based on the feedback received after each course. Issues identified through the evaluation process included the following:

- some participants (but not all) felt uncomfortable when non-Indigenous people were present when certain sensitive issues were being discussed;
- the courses were expensive to run (\$80,000-\$120,000 each) because they were delivered in regional locations and because of associated accommodation and venue costs;
- 10 courses were originally planned, but this was reduced to seven because it was found that the available funding was insufficient to permit more;
- some participants found the workload heavy and the hours long;
- some participants found that the literacy level required was too high for them;
- a few participants lacked confidence to express themselves in the group training environment, at least initially;
- it was suggested that public speaking should be added to the curriculum;
- participants expressed a desire for on-going leadership mentoring beyond the course.

The evaluation report concluded that:

*The... courses conducted to date in regional Australia have been successful in increasing the skills, knowledge, confidence and networks of Indigenous Australians working in and with community organisations; local, state and federal government departments; and to a lesser extent universities and corporations.*

## **Project B**

This project was under the auspice of a large non-profit youth service NGO with substantial experience in the leadership development field. It was located in a rural area on the outer rim of a state capital and had extensive accommodation and training facilities to meet the needs of participants. In all of its programs the organisation seeks to foster the development of 'non-traditional' leadership. It has been successful in attracting substantial financial and other support from diverse government, corporate and philanthropic sources.

Activities undertaken are responsive to a comprehensive community needs analysis carried out in 1999. Since that time several new youth programs have been developed, including programs for youth at risk and youth with disabilities. All programs seek to build resilience, perseverance and personal responsibility and to build social competence and life skills through communal living and group environmental learning activities involving music, art and culture.

Members of the community were involved in project planning and monitoring, and youth were active as participants, as committee members and as volunteers assisting with program delivery. One youth representative was a member of the Board.



The Strategy project aimed to address issues of social isolation, marginalisation and alienation amongst young people that made it difficult for them to positively contribute to their communities. It was the result of joint funding arrangements involving many organisations including the Disabilities Services Commission, the Office of Youth Affairs, the local Regional Development Commission and a large mining corporation.

The aim was to provide youth with greater options in their lives and to encourage participants to accept personal responsibility for their life choices.

Key strategies employed included:

- leadership training;
- outdoor adventure activities and recreational learning e.g. camps, hiking, abseiling and rafting;
- the provision of accredited training and information for volunteers and carers;
- the fostering of dialogue about the creation of a more inclusive community;
- the strengthening of connections between youth and their families;
- activities that build self-esteem, motivation and encourage initiative;
- the development of life skills such as teamwork, interpersonal communication, problem-solving and citizenship education;
- the involvement of participants and their families in program development and delivery.

Important outcomes of the Strategy project were as follows.

- Positive feedback from participants, parents, community members and staff.
- The auspice estimates that 1,564 young people/annum access the project at an average participant cost of just \$246 each.
- The project has achieved outcomes consistent with the 'Australians Working Together' policy i.e. it has created pathways for youth into education, employment and training opportunities.

### **Project C**

This was an early intervention crime prevention program for young people in a rural town where the level of crime had been an issue for several years. The project worked with a group of 12 males aged between 10-13 years. Participants were primarily referred to the project through the justice system. Repeat offending and truancy were the main triggers for recruitment into the project.

The focus was on strengthening the capacity of families and youth to achieve improved life outcomes. The project sought to:

- enhance the sense of belonging and attachment of participants;
- raise the confidence of the participants;



- encourage participants to interact positively with the community;
- enable participants to understand the consequences of their behaviour;
- engage family and community members as a source of support;
- develop the decision making skills of participants.

The project addressed a range of factors that are known to be associated with the involvement of youth in crime. Many of these factors are related to family and community functioning. They include exposure to violence and conflict, low levels of self esteem, the death of a family member, insecurity of childhood attachments, poor school performance, peer group pressure, unhealthy beliefs about aggression, inadequate social skills, high degree of family reliance on welfare and inadequate availability of community support services.

The project was a collaboration between local community service organisations, various state government agencies and FaCS. The involvement of the local organisations was seen as especially important because they already had established relationships and day-to-day involvement with the people that needed to be involved with this project.

Project activities included camps, the provision of mentoring support, case conferencing, the development of individual action plans and the conduct of community fun days.

Various aspects of this project accord with 'best practice':

- the design of the project was based on national and international research in relation to juvenile offender programs;
- extensive prior consultation with the community and with other stakeholders occurred to gain their support;
- there was prior identification of project risk factors and the implementation of strategies to minimise their impact;
- extensive partnership arrangements were supported by a Memorandum of Understanding which locked in commitments;
- the project engaged parents in the process and involved family members in decision-making related to their children;
- community members were trained as mentors and camp leaders;
- funding was secured from diverse sources to enhance the prospects of on-going financial sustainability;
- a regular dialogue was maintained with all agencies involved;
- a project logic was developed to clarify the relationship between project activities and their intended effects;
- evaluation was a major component of the project through the application of an evaluation framework.

One of the lessons learnt from this project was the importance of carefully matching mentors with young people, and the need to rematch them if the relationship is not working.



## Project D

This project was conducted at five different community sites. The aim was the personal development and growth of Indigenous youth by supporting them through the process of making life choices. The project identified young people as the priority target group because it was noted that 57% of the state's Indigenous population was under the age of 25 years.

This project was about building decision-making, teamwork, networking and communication skills. It involved a combination of coursework, practical experience and outdoor education.

*Each project was developed from the 'bottom up' by local communities whose members have defined what they mean by leadership and what is important for their community and devised programs within the parameters of the funding guidelines. The programs are based in schools, sporting clubs and Aboriginal co-operatives... While each project is unique to the communities involved, all have in common the strong themes of: strengthening culture, community and family; drawing on the skills and experience of Elders; concentrating on young people; mentoring by older community members; and utilising relevant skills and training from the non-Indigenous sector. (Project Evaluation Report)*

The Strategy contributed significant funding towards the projects and towards the multi-site evaluation.

Some specific objectives of the project were:

- to develop practical problem solving skills and demonstrate how the principles of leadership can be applied in a range of family, work, community, sport and other social settings;
- to encourage participants to reflect on their values and beliefs;
- to encourage youth participation in community affairs;
- to engage young community members in leadership training;
- to integrate leadership development with activities to improve emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing;
- to increase youth awareness of family and community support organisations.

There was a strong hands-on experiential community service element in this project. One group renovated a local soup bus used to feed homeless people. One produced and distributed a community newsletter. One group worked on the development of a cultural heritage trail, one focused on theatre arts, one did modern dance, one provided a food catering service, and yet another engaged in film-making; dramatising people's life stories. One group even played a demonstration game of Marngarook (a traditional form of Aboriginal 'football') prior to an ALF fixture.



Other project activities undertaken at one or more of the five project sites included:

- an intensive leadership development camp;
- small team discussions around common interests conducted with the support of leadership facilitators;
- contact with leaders from various walks of life in their role as mentors and role models;
- completion of an accredited leadership training course (six intensive residential training modules were held in regional locations);
- the development of public speaking skills;
- community events to celebrate achievements and award certificates;
- fund raising activities.

Aspects of this project that accord with 'best practice' include:

- the conduct of a literature review prior to project commencement by the Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies at Monash University to identify the key themes and national and international models of good practice;
- the targeting of young people;
- the stress placed on establishing a foundation based on strong culture, community and family;
- drawing on the wisdom, skills and experience of community Elders;
- mentoring by older community members;
- accessing existing training resources from the broader non-Indigenous sector;
- project oversight by a broadly based group including community leaders and academics;
- the concentration on activities that address community agendas;
- the use of action learning to improve practice.

The project evaluation outlines how participants became involved.

*There was an extensive recruitment process that involved nominations from the local community, schools and existing programs targeting young people in the area. Direct contact with young women and men was the most successful method for engaging interest as it allowed for detailed discussions about the requirements and responsibilities of participating.*  
(Project Evaluation Report)



Participant feedback comment received included the following.

*This course has built my self-confidence and changed my attitude within myself and the community. (Project Evaluation Report)*

*[It] is good because it gives people the skills, ability and confidence to be able to run and organise something... (Project Evaluation Report)*

The project evaluation suggests that this project has produced some important tangible and lasting benefits. The main achievements identified were:

- a high level of participation with 250 Indigenous youth involved as project participants and an additional 250 as mentors and in other support roles;
- high attendance levels and enthusiasm and commitment evident during training activities;
- participants felt comfortable in the learning environment ;
- a strong sense of Indigenous ownership and control over project development and implementation;
- enhanced understanding of the importance of positive forms of leadership;
- increased confidence of participants;
- broader involvement of parents, teachers and others in youth development activities;
- stronger family relationships;
- some innovative partnership arrangements with a diverse array of organisations such as peak sporting bodies, health and community organisations, secondary colleges, and universities;
- support received from local businesses;
- some aspects of the leadership training have been incorporated into school curriculum; and
- the project was recognised with awards for its training programs .

The project evaluation states:

*They reported that their involvement had given them improved self-esteem, greater confidence, dedication and perseverance, self-awareness, a sense of achievement, positive emotions, goals identification and a realisation of their capacity to make a positive contribution to the community. Their interpersonal communication skills were enhanced through extensive exposure to a diverse range of people from the industrial, business, sporting and community sectors. Participants were able to diversify their existing skills through their exposure to new competencies in a range of areas, including budget management, project planning, delegation, role identification, setting goals, acquiring information, meeting management, submission writing awareness, and reading and writing skills. (Project Evaluation Report)*



The project evaluation report for this project also found that it had broadened social participation beyond the target group.

*The local leadership has become energised by the enthusiasm of the younger community members... these younger women and men are making a visible and meaningful contribution to the community, which in turn has served to strengthen the positive recognition of project participation within individual families. (Project Evaluation Report)*

The project evaluation goes on to conclude that:

*[P]erhaps the most significant outcome of this project stems from the effect it has had on individual participants. One-third of the young women and men involved have opted for further education, while the achievements of others have been acknowledged by their families and workplaces, and in cultural and community settings. The participants have also formed strong connections and continue to 'network' with each other in their own working and community environments... The outcomes of the current projects are a testament to the capacity of Koori organisations to reach young people, engage with the community and offer innovative models of education and community development. They also highlight the critical need for continued leadership training to secure the future sustainability of Koori communities.*

## **Project E**

The aim of this project was to develop the capacity of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to manage their own affairs, thereby contributing to the building of a stronger, more self-reliant community. The project primarily consisted of two short leadership development workshops. It set out to achieve the following outcomes:

- improved confidence of participants;
- improved ability of women and youth to represent their communities;
- the transfer of skills to other committee members and volunteers;
- the development of greater social cohesion (i.e. communities working together);
- positive community activities and events;
- the development of local leaders;
- the establishment of an on-going program of leadership mentoring.



The project was initiated because the local community identified leadership training as an area of critical need to be addressed to enable the community to achieve sustainable self-management. Specifically it was identified that there were too few leaders carrying too much load and that new leadership needed to be encouraged to come through from the younger generation. It was decided that a capacity building project was required; one that was directed towards those who were already involved, and also those who had the potential to become involved, in assuming leadership roles within the local community. In particular women and youth were identified as priority groups that needed to be targeted. It was felt that many women and young people were keen to take a more active role and share more responsibility, but that they often lacked the confidence, knowledge and skills necessary to do so.

It was found that this project did give participants a better understanding of what 'leadership' entailed, that it did help local community members to more clearly identify their priorities (such as youth development), and that it did provide a useful opportunity for dialogue about the need for more community cohesion. The project succeeded in stressing the importance of leaders portraying a positive outlook and of drawing positive lessons from the past by reminding participants of what Indigenous people had already succeeded in overcoming. The facilitators stressed the value in "visiting past seasons for positive reasons" i.e. drawing inspiration from what Indigenous people have achieved and overcome in the past, rather than falling prey to feelings of bitterness and anger that ultimately harm self and family.

But it was also found that there were several problematic aspects:

- the project lost momentum because many months elapsed between the conduct of the first and second workshops;
- the project was not developed in consultation or collaboration with any of other leadership initiatives and does not appear to have been directly informed by projects operating elsewhere or by the leadership literature;
- non-attendance by some people at the workshops was attributed to community conflict and/or insufficient communication;
- there was a considerable turnover of participants over the course of the project, with very few people participating in the whole process and this inhibited opportunities to develop new leaders;
- there was no evidence that significant skills transfer had occurred;
- there was no community service or leadership mentoring component to this project;
- the project did not develop identifiable new community leaders;
- participants in the leadership workshops concluded that they had only provided a beginning for what needs to be a much longer process;
- no plans were in place to carry out any other leadership development events and activities beyond the Strategy funded project.



In hindsight, for this project, 'leadership development' appears to have been an overly ambitious outcome to expect when the project effectively only consisted of two short workshops each of a few days duration. Clearly it would be unrealistic to expect significant skilling to occur in this limited time. The development of leadership capacity is always a long-term process requiring engagement and professional development over a sustained period. This project was never designed to achieve this.

## **Project F**

This was a large national project established to introduce a particular youth movement to remote Indigenous communities in the 'top end' of Australia by training adult youth leaders from the communities and recruiting them to promote the movement to local youth. One feature of this project was the involvement of high profile Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders as patrons. The aim was to develop culturally specific leadership and Indigenous ownership over the activities in the targeted communities. The training encompassed safety, creative thinking, planning, leadership and developmental games. It sought to equip the newly trained youth leaders with the ability to run their own local activities.

The project did have some important achievements. Three people completed the Certificate of Adult Leadership training course at one community. At another it was reported that 25 young people were regularly participating in organised activities. The project appears to have been most successful where activities were integrated with schooling, as was the case in at least one community. The involvement of community based Sport and Recreation Officers also appears to have been beneficial in some communities.

Progress reports for this project reveal that there were three main inhibiting factors:

- difficulties in recruiting and training staff to work on the project;
- the isolation of communities including access difficulties in the 'Wet' and the distance that staff had to cover in traveling between project sites;
- other community issues and priorities that repeatedly delayed planned project activities.

Such factors meant that training and project activities were repeatedly deferred and rescheduled. Inhibiting factors for local people included personal and family matters, funerals and local political issues. In one community the scheduled timing of the youth leader training clashed with the employment commitments of some trainees at a nearby mine. Training therefore had to be re-scheduled to the weekend.

The following are extracts from project progress reports.

*In the case of the Northern Territory, the major issue has been the delay caused by the resignation of the Development Officer. (Project Progress Report)*

*Despite numerous visits and talks with various Councillors (individually and collectively) and Community members, the Development Officer has been unable to recruit any adults to become Leaders. (Project Progress Report)*



*In November, we brought together a group of respected people and gave them the task of recruiting potential Adult Leaders. Unfortunately there has been no progress. Whilst we don't fully understand why we hear about school holidays, deaths in the Community, the monsoon and family matters. (Project Progress Report)*

*The planned visit for three days during the school holidays in October was postponed, due to some community issues that arose. (Project Progress Report)*

*On the Monday of this visit, advice was received that an elder had passed away and [the community] was closed in respect for the Elder. Therefore, the planned meetings for the young people that evening were cancelled. (Project Progress Report)*

In most sites this project struggled to achieve traction, despite reports from the auspice organisation of high levels of enthusiasm in some communities. As a result major changes had to be made to the timing and detail of implementation plans.

## **Project G**

This project was directed at increasing life opportunities and choices for youth at risk of offending, drug and alcohol abuse and truancy. Participants in the project were recruited through schools, the Aboriginal community, the Police, health and welfare agencies and the local youth centre. Staff was recruited on the basis of their capacity to work effectively with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Cultural awareness training was incorporated for those who were inexperienced at working with Indigenous people.

This project provided a series of developmental youth activities over a 12-month period to enable young people to:

- realise their full life potential;
- develop leadership qualities;
- participate in their own communities.

The project sought to raise the capacity of participants in a diverse range of areas including leadership capacity, cultural awareness, communication, teamwork and group planning skills. Content was focused on life skills training, team work, communication, dealing with conflict, building a positive sense of identity, the provision of information about youth education, training, employment, health and wellbeing opportunities, and community connectedness.

Project activities included:

- a 10 day camp that focused on skills development;
- guest speakers on topics identified by the participants;
- assisting participants to address issues such as education and substance abuse;
- youth involvement in community projects.



This project was grounded in community development and capacity building principles. It was initiated by members of the local community, and developed with the support of FaCS and with the active involvement of the Police and several other state government agencies. The Project Advisory Committee had broad community and agency involvement. Project strategies built on a successful peer education model that had previously been used extensively in the region by another project. Participants were trained as mentors and role models for their peers. The project also enacted the recommendations of a regional needs report and those of a high profile state government inquiry report relating to:

- the adoption of a preventative-early intervention approach to youth issues;
- the need for projects that develop school leaver strategies and effectively link youth to local education, training and employment opportunities;
- the need to introduce innovative young offender programs.

The project proposal was developed collaboratively with the support of several local government and non-government agencies. Many served on its Project Advisory Committee. Strategy funding was originally applied for in January 2001. The project gained funding approval in October 2003.

Despite this initial setback the project is reported to have achieved a number of positive outcomes including:

- increased participant confidence and self esteem;
- enhanced communication, teamwork, leadership, self reflection, problem solving and other life skills;
- increased motivation to undertake and access further education;
- linking participants to existing youth services that were already operating in the region;
- enthusiastic support of many in the local community;
- partnership with other organisations involved in similar activities.

Supplementary project funding was secured from the Foundation for Young Australians and a state lottery fund.

### ***3.3 Identifying Good Practice***

There are certain aspects of the projects that have been described above that would appear to accord with recognised good practice in the field of leadership development.

- the conduct of a literature review prior to project commencement to identify effective strategies and models of good practice;
- project management by an established organisation with a demonstrated track record in the leadership development field;
- the targeting of young people;
- a competitive selection process;



- the provision of pre-project information for participants to ensure that they are aware of the content and what will be expected of them;
- the use of high profile role models;
- the sharing of personal experiences as a form of bonding and as a mutual support mechanism;
- the adoption of 'whole-of-community' and 'whole-of-family' approaches;
- the use of mentoring arrangements;
- project oversight conducted by a broadly based group which includes members of the community;
- a concentration on activities that address specific community needs;
- the active involvement of participants and their families in project development, delivery and management;
- the use of action learning and evaluation to continuously improve practice.



## 4 Achievements

### 4.1 Overview

Positive outcomes identified by some of the projects that have been reviewed include the high levels of involvement by intended participants. For some projects the high level of involvement referred to the numbers and spread of participants, and for some projects it is in terms of the level or intensity of participation. Positive outcomes also include the successful energising and motivation of participants, the training of youth leaders, the meaningful contribution of project activities to local communities and the networks that were built amongst participants and between participants and other strategically placed community leaders. Some projects had also established new co-operative arrangements between community and government bodies. One reported that participants had gone on to engage in education, training and employment beyond the Strategy project. One project had also won prestigious awards for excellence. These and some other achievements of the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative are discussed more fully in this section which draws on all of the available sources of information about the Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects in order to document their achievements. This section also identifies some enabling and inhibiting factors for leadership development projects that have been identified in the course of this National Evaluation.

In their questionnaire responses the Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects overwhelmingly indicated that they had achieved most, all or exceeded what they had wanted to. Furthermore most projects expected that further changes for the participants or others in the community would continue to occur after the expiry of the Strategy funding. Many projects also reported unexpected positive outcomes, but this was tempered somewhat by others that reported some unexpected negative outcomes.

Most questionnaire responses indicated there was a widespread expectation that projects would continue after the expiry of Strategy funding. Expectations varied as to the form this might take, being fairly evenly divided between:

- continuing the current project with the current activities;
- running a similar project with new activities and the same target group that builds on the previous work;
- running a similar project with a new target group;
- running a similar project at a different location or in a different community.

However, in order to be able to continue most Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects that responded to the questionnaire indicated that they would need various kinds of support, specifically:

- funding;
- community support;
- in kind support;
- specific types of expertise and skills;



- volunteer time;
- the support of Indigenous community organisations;
- the support of existing networks and partners;
- the support of employment and training programs.

Interestingly relatively few projects indicated that they intended to apply for further funding from any source.

Doubt about the continuity of projects beyond the expiration of Strategy funding makes it difficult to make conclusions about the achievements of Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects in the longer term. Nevertheless the following more immediate achievements are evident.

## **4.2 Supporting the Development of Youth Leadership**

Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects have added substantial momentum to youth leadership development initiatives. Projects involving youth have pre-dominated. Examples include the following.

- The aim of the National Peers Skills Program was to equip young people in the 14 to 18 year age range to provide support to each other to make appropriate life choices or to deal with times of crisis. Three main areas addressed were 'Helping a Friend', 'Asking for Help', and 'Approaching a Helping Agency'. The idea was to train participants so that they might become an enduring community resource.
- The Great Mates mentoring program in the Hunter Valley and Mt Druitt regions (NSW) was about linking young participants to adult role models and mentors in areas such as sport, business and academia. These were people that the participants would not normally come in contact or collaborate with because of their different socio-economic circumstances and life experiences.
- The On Track Leadership Project was a national project directed towards developing the leadership capacity of young people between the ages of 14 - 24 years. The auspice was the 'not-for-profit' NGO the Foundation for Young Australians. The program was delivered at a national and local government level. It created opportunities for young people to acquire skills through involvement in community-based projects.
- The Mentoring Program aimed to assist disadvantaged young people to develop the interests, skills and confidence necessary to participate in school and community activities. Community members were trained as mentors so that they could assume leadership roles as mentors. The project adapted a mentoring model that had previously been developed and used in the USA.
- The Pathways for Young People Program, under the auspice of Fairbridge (a high profile NGO based in WA), aimed to assist young people, including young people with disabilities, on a pathway to becoming valued contributors and leaders of their communities.



### **4.3 Strategies that Support Indigenous Leadership**

It has been noted earlier in this report that Indigenous projects comprised a significant component of the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative. What has not yet been outlined is the nature of their contribution. These projects tended to have some distinctive features.

Firstly every Indigenous project that was examined has sought to build a strong sense of cultural identity and to foster personal stability as a foundation for effective leadership i.e. knowing 'who you are and where you come from'. As a consequence of this there is a cultural dimension to Indigenous leadership projects, as typified by the central place reserved for community Elders. The Indigenous projects have generally placed a lot of stress on the need to foster positive social interactions between young people and Elders through mentoring activities. This has generally been found to be an effective means to repair and reinforce relationships and bonds.

*Individual project reviews and the Multi-Site Evaluation affirmed that participation not only improved the emotional and spiritual wellbeing of individuals, but also had a 'ripple effect' on families and the community as a whole. The design of the projects allowed for broad participation by Elders, and other local and high-profile community leaders, to act as role models and mentors for younger members of the community. This not only enhanced the content of activities but also served as an affirmation of the work done by existing community leaders. (Project Evaluation Report)*

The Lajamanu Horse Sports Project (NT) was an Indigenous project undertaken in partnership between the remote Lajamanu community and the NT Rural College. The project used the participants' interest in horses as a point of meaningful engagement with local youth. Project activities centred on learning to ride and the construction of stockyards. The project was reported to be beneficial in building relationships between youth and those older men in the community who still retained their horse skills and their knowledge of the pastoral industry. Through this project they were able to pass their knowledge and skills on to a younger generation. This was a source of community pride because it gave prominence and recognition to the skills of existing leaders and fostered respect between the generations.

Mutual respect is seen as an important issue. It is also seen as a 'two way street'. Elders in some communities complain that some young people fail to display the respect that is their due. Equally some youth complain that the behaviour of some Elders does not always show respect for them. However, it is noted that the strategy of creating opportunities to bring Elders and youth together, although popular, is not universally supported. It has been suggested that some young people may feel 'put down' and too intimidated to speak up in the presence of certain older people. In such cases it may be necessary to create spaces where youth can speak and gain confidence away from Elders, at least initially.

Secondly there is a recognition that many Indigenous people need to be enabled to heal themselves from traumatic life events before they can be in a position to display strong leadership in their own lives. Some projects consciously built in counselling opportunities for participants to de-brief about aspects of their lived experience. The notion that a process of debriefing of the Indigenous past is necessary before people can begin to heal clearly resonated with participants.

*The trauma that many young Indigenous women and men have experienced cannot be underestimated, and needs to be given due consideration in the design, and the evaluation of the effectiveness, of programs both for individual and community development. The outcomes of this leadership project can be measured by the significant achievements that participants attained at an individual, family and community level. (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 1995: 46)*

One of the main learnings to emerge from this National Evaluation is that a component of leadership development with Indigenous peoples is about creating opportunities to release personal anguish before beginning to re-build people's confidence and self-belief. Many projects placed an emphasis on the development of coping strategies. One leadership training project employed an Indigenous Psychologist and several included a counselling component, the use of these strategies was well received.

Thirdly the Indigenous projects have been built on the recognition that factors such as social isolation, alienation, marginalisation, feelings of powerlessness and poverty can make it difficult for many people to contribute to community affairs. A lack of self-esteem, social competence, life skills, motivation and initiative are typically the end result. Therefore there has been a concern to ensure that leadership development occurs in a secure setting where participants feel comfortable.

*[A]ny program that promotes the future development of Victorian Indigenous leaders must be delivered in a culturally safe environment so that individuals have enough confidence to speak openly about what is needed, and to feel sufficiently empowered to affect the events shaping their future. (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation)*

The use of Indigenous facilitators was considered to be most important in this respect. One project initially ran a workshop with a non-Indigenous facilitator. One participant reflected on this.

*This course I believe was very informative and gave a great outlook for leadership within an organisation and the community. But speaking as an Indigenous person, I do not believe that the modules addressed certain sensitive issues related to working and being associated to an Indigenous community in today's society. I believe that an Indigenous person would have best delivered this type of leadership course and unfortunately I was not involved in the process of the appointment of the training provider. (FaCS project file)*

Community members wanted greater opportunities to identify and speak about sensitive local issues. It was also felt that an Indigenous facilitator would be in the best position to achieve this. The auspice subsequently ran the next workshop using experienced Indigenous facilitators.

One of the most sensitive issues is that of internal community division and conflict. It is difficult for united and universally accepted leadership to emerge in some communities because of the detrimental effect of divisive community politics and family and factional feuding. These issues have sometimes been addressed 'head on' in Indigenous leadership development projects funded under the Strategy.



In summary Indigenous projects have reinforced participants' feelings of cultural connectedness, especially among youth. They have been delivered in places where, and by people who make the participants feel at ease and, perhaps for the first time, they have recognised the link between leadership capacity and people's need for healing. For the most part the Indigenous Strategy projects have been strength based with the focus on positive images. They have equipped participants with coping strategies that build and reinforce personal resilience and they have held out a supportive hand, both to existing leaders and the emerging next generation of leaders.

#### **4.4 Support for Rural and Regional Development**

Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects have also added some momentum to the already strong leadership development initiatives focussed on issues of rural leadership and regional development.

One prominent example was the Capital Region Community Leadership Program that sought to develop and implement a regional leadership development program in the ACT and the south-east region of NSW by enabling participants to develop the skills necessary to take a leading role in community projects. It was a collaboration between the Australian Capital Region Development Council in the ACT, the Government of NSW, the private sector and FaCS. Program design had been influenced by the Williamson Community Leadership model. This project was about intensive experiential learning aimed at 'broadening' the leadership skills of the participants. Rather than strictly adhering to pre-determined modules, content was largely driven by the participants. It provided participants with the opportunity to have a real impact and to make a real difference in their own communities following on from their participation in the program. Activities included:

- training and development sessions;
- interaction with leaders in the community, business and government sectors;
- 'retreats' to focus energy and commitment;
- regional excursions and site visits;
- issues development and networking sessions;
- skills development activities.

Another example was the South Australian Rural Leadership Program. This was a leadership development project directed towards people involved in primary industry. Rural leaders in ten rural country communities in South Australia participated in a mentoring program to raise their practical skills.

A couple of Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects focused on improving coordination arrangements in regional areas. A leadership program for community agencies in Forbes and the Central West areas of NSW, for example, was undertaken specifically in order to strengthen existing linkages between the community sector, government and the business community. This program included two forums attended by 81 representatives of various community organisations.



## 4.5 Increased Social Participation

Many projects achieved a high level of social participation. One project reported as follows.

*The July 'Holiday Program' ... was a great success. Over the period of nine and a half days worth of activities, a total of forty to fifty children joined in. Groups were usually of about twenty to thirty children, so that not every child who participated came to every activity. Most children came to at least two different activities over the time. To begin with, a majority of the children were boys, but as time went by, the male/female ratio became fairly equal. Ages ranged from between two to thirteen. Activities run included craft activities (balloon powered cars, drum making, 'Chicken cups'), pioneering activities (raft making) and games (including underwater hockey, water polo, space ball, number hockey, sport, relays, circle games)... The children were very enthusiastic as the increase in numbers throughout the program indicates. (Project Progress Report)*

Another project developed the leadership competencies of 25 teams of young people involving an estimated 225 participants from 11 local government areas drawn from across all states and the NT. Beneficial outcomes reported included enhanced trust, greater awareness, a widening of choice, improved understanding and skills and a greater capacity for initiative.

Some training projects reported high completion rates. One rural leadership training project in Queensland reported that 22 participants completed the training course out of an initial intake of 24.

One of greatest achievements of the Strategy has been to extend the reach of leadership projects to new sections of society that have traditionally not been prominent in leadership initiatives in Australia. These groups are:

- culturally and linguistically diverse communities;
- single parents;
- the residents of depressed housing estates and permanent residents of caravan parks;
- people with disabilities.

Some relevant examples of projects include the following.

- One three year long project aimed to increase Muslim women's social participation, capacity and awareness in key areas such as leadership, parenting, education and domestic violence issues.
- The Talking Realities Peer Leader Project sought to recruit, develop and train young single parents as peer educators and leaders so that they might present information sessions on their experiences and the lifestyle implications of being a young single parent.



- The aim of the Eastern Suburbs Community Leadership Program was to support the social development of five disadvantaged public housing estates in Sydney. The project was focussed on activities that met local needs. The original plan was to train individuals as potential leaders, but the focus shifted to the engagement of people through action groups and more indirect ways of developing leadership skills. This more participatory focus was found to be more appropriate.

Some Strategy projects have also brought people together from diverse social and cultural backgrounds in order to foster a sense of harmonious and shared community leadership, thereby strengthening the social fabric. This includes projects involving both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants. One project reflected on the experience.

*[I]n terms of reducing discrimination, there were advantages and disadvantages to bringing together Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people on the projects. Many of the projects reported improvements in the relations between the two groups and attributed this to the fact that the clear leadership of these programs rested with Koori organisations. Those who worked with both groups indicated that the use of a traditional approach served to increase cultural awareness with non-Indigenous young people. Although many of the projects operated from a range of venues and settings, the principal location was readily identifiable as a Koori-friendly environment. This was considered an important aspect of ensuring an environment free from discrimination. (Project Evaluation Report)*

But of course it is not only participants from diverse social backgrounds who are brought together, it is also diverse organisations with different values and constituencies that may not have previously worked together. One report on an Indigenous project suggested that "collaborative partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities are important both to maximise opportunities for young Koori's, and to work towards long-term community-wide reconciliation" (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 56).

#### **4.6 Enhanced Opportunities for Economic Participation**

Some Potential Leaders in Local Communities Strategy projects focussed directly on issues of economic participation by improving access to opportunities. Several projects reported that participants had gained employment, entered education and training or established a business directly as a result of their participation.

For example, one project that worked with 15 young people reported that by the end of the project 5 of the young people had secured employment, 2 had established businesses and the remaining participants were keen to further their studies.

Another project worked with young leaders from newly arrived culturally and linguistically diverse communities to support the young people to assist their families and communities to integrate into the Australian way of life, and to provide the young leaders with information and skill development so they could lead and empower their communities. The project resulted in 3 young people being employed as part time youth workers with a Migrant Resource Centre and 4 young people were employed by a State Government Department.



One youth leadership project reported that some participants had progressed from the program to take on leadership mentoring roles with other young people, while others had continued into training and other forms of employment.

*The young women and men involved reported that they now have greater self-confidence and a more comprehensive understanding of the issues confronting the emotional and spiritual wellbeing of Koori communities, evidenced by their ongoing commitment to community development activities. They also believe themselves to be better equipped with the tools and practical experience necessary for them to participate in a range of activities in personal, family, community and public settings. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of those individuals who contributed to the project as mentors, have now progressed to full-time education or employment.*  
(Project Evaluation Report)

Entrepreneurial innovation and leadership was the main focus of some projects. One assisted women to enter the macropod and wild game harvesting industry.

Another project supported the economic participation of low income people by setting up a no interest loans scheme. The majority of participants were single parent families, and the purposes of the loans were mainly vehicle related, debt consolidation, education for school-aged children, bond loans, and the purchase of white goods and furniture. The project was reported to have made a significant difference to those who received loans. Two additional funding sources have been secured for the project.

One project that targeted Indigenous young people resulted in the development of a Memorandum of Understanding with a Regional Fire Management project to coordinate the training and employment of a Fire Control Team, and with the Land and Sea Management Department of a Land Council to develop an Environmental Management Plan. Three school scholarships were also obtained.

In relation to increasing Indigenous economic participation one project progress report highlighted the extent of the obstacles yet to be overcome:

*...the projects did allow young Koori women and men to explore potential education and employment options that may not have been considered prior to their participation. However ... the structural barriers to enable real economic participation should not be ignored.* (Project Evaluation Report)

Further information on economic and social participation can be obtained from the issues paper *Economic and social participation*, prepared as part of this evaluation.

#### **4.7 Learning About What Works**

Project progress and evaluation reports indicate that, in the process of project implementation, several projects made adjustments based on evaluation feedback received from participants and staff.



Many projects also ensured that they were informed by established good practice in Australia and internationally by adapting 'tried and tested' successful leadership models. The Wide Bay/Burnett Building Rural Leaders Program, for example, drew on the experience of the Victorian Challenging Offending Behaviours program and the Queensland Department of Primary Industries to deliver a 'proven' training package.

#### ***4.8 A chain of outcomes leading to stronger families and communities***

##### **A common outcomes hierarchy**

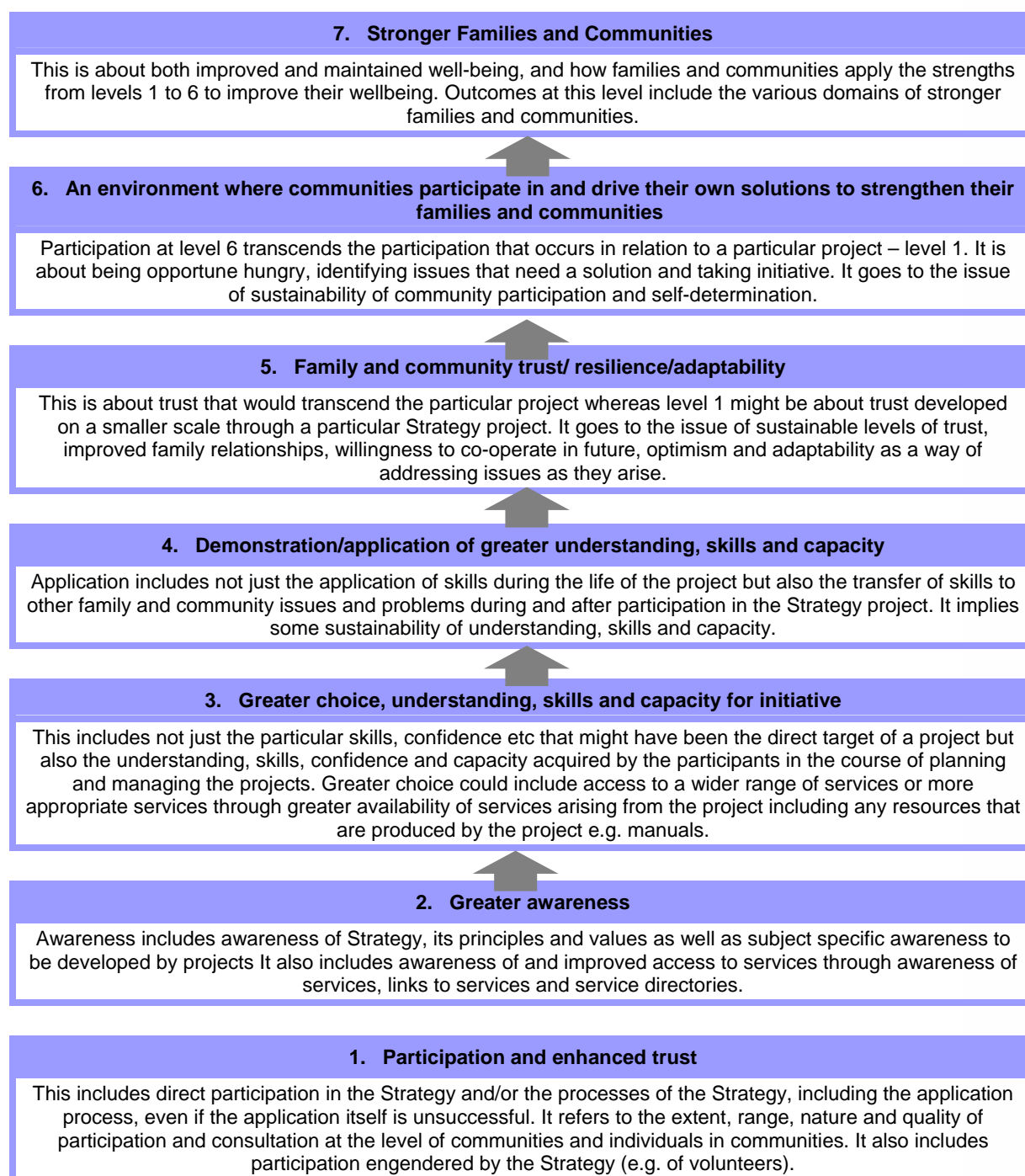
The monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy used a common 'theory of change', a sequence of intended outcomes, as a conceptual framework that provided coherence across the Strategy and could be adapted for evaluating particular projects or clusters of similar projects, or for funding initiatives. It was developed as part of a performance indicator framework generated before projects began. Used to develop specific performance indicators, both qualitative and quantitative, for individual projects, the performance indicator framework became the basis of the evaluation framework for the overall Strategy.

This theory of change (also called an 'outcomes hierarchy') delineated seven levels of Strategy outcomes, from short-term to longer-term, that capacity building projects could progress through. It presents a schema where projects achieve 'lower order' outcomes towards the bottom of the ladder, such as increased participation and inter-personal trust, before moving up to achieve 'higher order' outcomes, such as greater community resilience, a capacity to drive their own solutions and a reduced reliance on external support.

The 'theory of change' for Strategy projects is shown in the following figure.



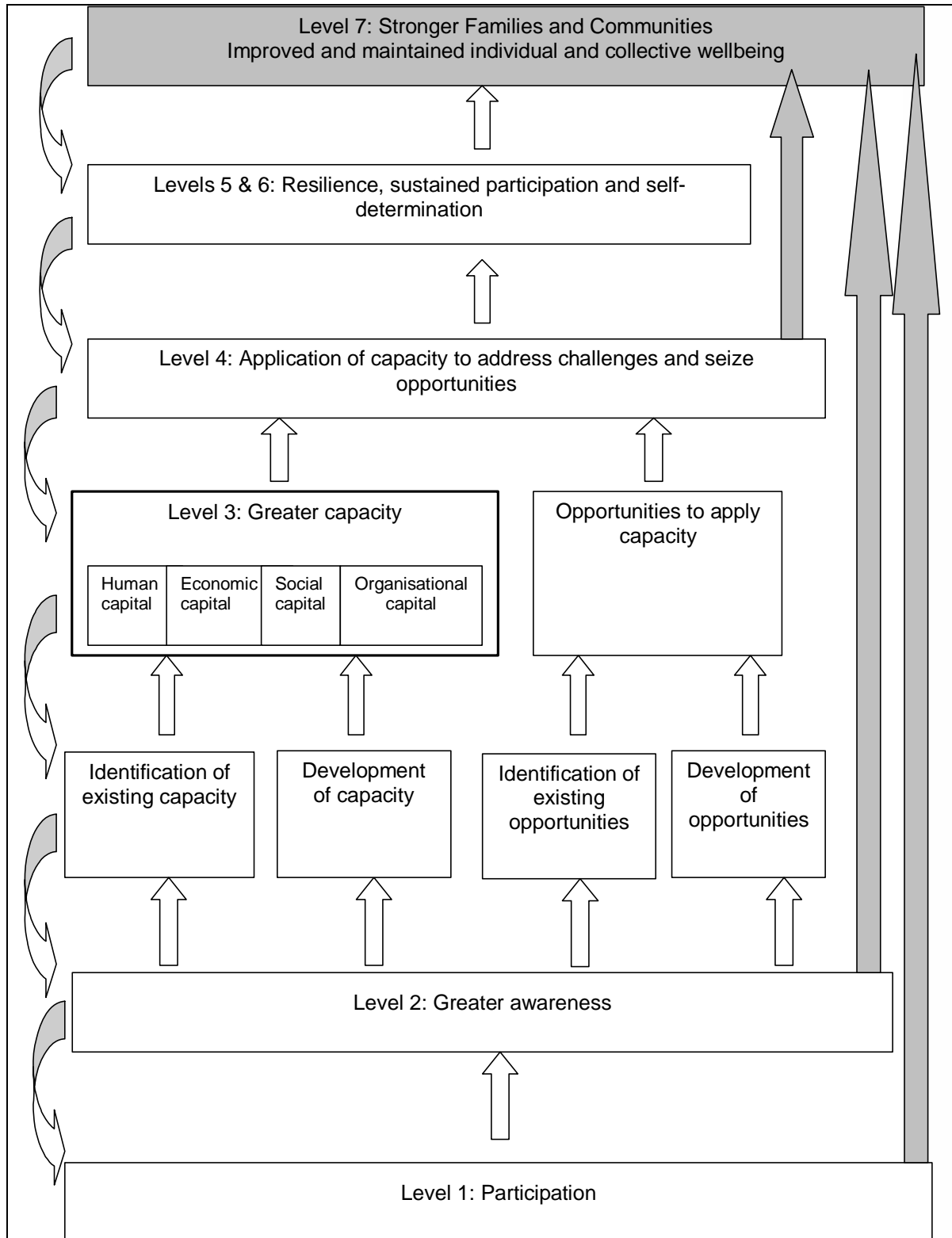
**Figure 1: A common causal pathway leading to stronger families and communities**



Of course, like all models the Outcomes Hierarchy is a simplified representation of a more complex reality. The following diagram shows an adaptation of the outcomes hierarchy which emphasises its iterative nature, and the different components of capacity building.



**Figure 2: Adaptation of the outcomes hierarchy focusing on iterative capacity building**



More successful leadership projects did not only focus on developing skills (human capital) but on identifying and developing other types of capital (including social capital), on identifying and developing opportunities for applying this capital, and on supporting participants in the application of the new skills they had developed, for example through supervised or mentored projects.

### **Outcomes of projects funded under the initiative**

An analysis of the achievements of each project funded under the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative was undertaken by CIRCLE (Collaborative Institute for Research, Consulting and Learning in Evaluation) based on analysis of the available sources of information. The categorisation of projects by level of outcome achieved was carried out by a member of the National Evaluation team on the basis of written documentation about each project using certain criteria outlined in 'rules of evidence' established prior to the analysis. In some cases this information was extensive and persuasive (e.g. detailed project progress reports, independent project evaluation reports, completion of initial and final questionnaires), but this was not the case in the majority of instances.

The achievements of the Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects in relation to each level of the Outcome Hierarchy are summarised in Table 6. This shows that, as with most Strategy projects, project achievements primarily relate to the three lower levels of the Hierarchy. In other words there is much evidence to suggest that many projects have increased social and economic participation, enhanced trust, raised awareness, provided greater choice, contributed to better understandings, increased skills and built a capacity for initiative.

However there is less evidence to suggest that most projects achieved 'higher order' outcomes such as a demonstrated capacity to apply new found understandings, skills and capacities to other family and community issues beyond the original project or the achievement of greater resilience. The capacity building literature relevant to building stronger families and communities makes it clear that the development of this kind of 'higher order' capacity is likely to be a long term process requiring a level of sustained support and commitment beyond what was realistically achievable within the duration of most Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects. Nevertheless the analysis does suggest that most projects have achieved some very positive outcomes.



**Table 6: Potential Leaders in Local Communities Projects with reported outcomes at each level**

Level of outcome	Number of PLLC projects	% of PLLC projects
1. Participation in the Strategy and enhanced trust.	115	98%
2. Greater awareness.	115	98%
3. Greater choice, understanding, skills and capacity for initiative.	96	67%
4. Demonstration/application of greater understanding, skills and capacity.	52	36%
5. Family and community trust/ resilience/adaptability.	59	41%
6. An environment where communities participate in and drive their own solutions to strengthen their families and communities.	49	42%
7. Stronger Families and Communities	15	13%

Note: All percentages in the above table refer to the percentage of PLLC projects that could be coded. For 37 projects (26% of projects) there was insufficient information available to code the types of outcomes achieved.

The quality of evidence varied considerably between projects and levels of outcomes. Projects were categorized into three broad groups according to the quality of evidence of outcomes available. Projects were rated as providing evidence that was Verifiable, Credible, or Negligible.

For projects with verifiable outcome evidence, information about achievements was independently verifiable from a credible source. These sources varied widely between projects. In some of these instances the achievements of projects had been thoroughly documented in independent studies conducted by research centres, universities or other reputable sources. A few projects had engaged in a process of systematic action research the results of which were documented. A number of projects had established a process for receiving participant feedback. Of the 144 Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects, the available evidence about the achievements of projects was considered to be verifiable in only 20 projects – for some of these evidence of lower-order outcomes was verifiable and evidence of higher-order outcomes was credible.

Projects with credible outcome evidence, whilst lacking systematic evidence of achievements, did back up assertions about achievements with examples, detailed anecdotes or first person descriptions and observations. This provided a degree of plausibility to any claims made. In 73 cases it was considered that credible claims had been made about project achievements.



Projects with negligible outcome evidence reported statements about project achievements, or simply re-stated project objectives, without providing any supporting evidence. This included personal opinions expressed about project achievements that were unsupported by any data. Some project progress reports did describe the activities that had been undertaken, but did not provide any information about outcomes. Most of these projects appeared not to have any established systematic process for receiving feedback from participants or other stakeholders. In a few instances it did appear that such mechanisms existed, but there was no subsequent reporting of the results. Most of these projects appeared not to maintain any statistical database on attendance levels or other indicators of participation in various project activities. Forty one projects provided negligible outcome evidence. For a further 27 projects, insufficient information was available to code the quality of evidence.

#### **4.9 Enabling and Inhibiting Factors**

The main factors that were identified by Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects in their questionnaire responses as being particularly helpful (in order of importance) were Strategy funding, the people involved, local partnerships and networks, the assistance of the project auspice organisation, community support, previous experience with a similar project and the perception of project responsiveness to community issues. All of these factors were also identified as helpful by Strategy projects more generally.

Although the questionnaire responses highlight the importance of Strategy funding to Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects, they also reveal that many projects were successful in attracting funding from other areas of government, NGO's, community groups and the private sector. Some also engaged in self-funding activities.

Almost every Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects reported that the activities of the auspice undertaken during the project had contributed to their achievements.

The questionnaire responses also reveal that non-financial support has been very important to projects, especially the support of the local community, networks, volunteer time and other forms of in-kind support such the provision of office facilities and equipment. Other forms of support, such as that provided by employment and training programs, were less important.

Most projects responding to the questionnaire also indicated that the flexibility and adaptability of the Strategy and FaCS had contributed as well. However only 13 respondents suggested that support from FaCS had been helpful or very helpful during project implementation, and only 6 projects indicated that FaCS had been involved in the process of identifying and forming partnerships. This suggests that the support of FaCS was most important in the project development phase.



Overwhelmingly Potential Leaders in Local Communities projects also indicated that partnership arrangements were 'important' or 'very important'. Most project partnerships were with (Commonwealth State and local government) agencies or NGO's/community groups. Partnerships with the private sector and Indigenous community organisations were also fairly commonplace. The nature of these partnership arrangements varied. Most were informal, but some were backed up by written agreements. Common activities undertaken with partners (in order of importance) were networking and sharing staff, knowledge, experience and expertise; undertaking project activities together; the identification of needs and opportunities within the local community; the identification of local community strengths that could be built upon; participatory decision-making processes; the referral of participants between partners; and the joint preparation of funding submissions.

Leadership development appears to be most cost effective where projects have been under the auspice of an established organisation with a demonstrated track record in the this field and with existing facilities and resources. The cost effectiveness of developing new leadership training courses and workshops 'from scratch' is questionable.

By and large the evidence suggests that the Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative has been a success story, although some inhibiting factors were evident in relation to specific projects.

- Some leadership projects were not developed in consultation or collaboration with any of other leadership initiatives and do not appear to have been directly informed by projects operating elsewhere or by the leadership literature.
- There was no community service or leadership mentoring component to some leadership projects.
- Some projects experienced difficulties in recruiting and training quality staff, particularly in remote areas.
- The isolation of some remote communities created access difficulties that delayed planned project activities.
- It took a long time for some projects to gain approval. In one case in Queensland this meant that by the time approval was granted most of the young people originally selected as participants had progressed to other activities, with the consequence that new participants then had to be selected.
- In some instances project progress reports indicated that the project time frame was too short and had only provided a beginning for what needed to be a much longer process of on-going capacity building. One project in Queensland, for example, reported that the project had just got the "community fired up and keen" when the funding expired.



#### **4.10 Concluding Comment**

The transformational perspective on leadership development suggests that it is about much more than simply building capacity. Arguably it is a fledging social movement; one that continues to grow and gain momentum and which is having a significant impact on many regions and communities. The Potential Leaders in Local Communities initiative of the Strategy 2000-2004 has added significant momentum to a process that was already in train.

Some ways in which leadership projects might be better supported in the future include:

- the inclusion of a mentoring and a community service component in projects;
- the linking of projects to relevant sources of information and advice such as relevant organisations, websites and learning exchanges;
- resourcing peak organisations to provide support to localised leadership projects;
- greater assistance to link projects to potential sources of on-going funding;
- regular national leadership conferences and workshops where knowledge and experience can be shared amongst projects;
- the development of a national leadership development strategic plan.



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