CRITIQUING THE CAPACITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO RESPOND TO COMPLEX SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES:
TWO FOOD SECURITY CASE STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

A new agenda of non-mandated human service needs demand local government’s attention. Food security exemplifies these complex and multi-level sustainability challenges that are not clearly defined, articulated or addressed. This research examines how the fit (or misfit) between government levels influences local government’s capacity to respond to this challenge. A constructivism ontology and epistemology, explored through a case study methodology and corresponding qualitative data collection methods (in-depth interviews, primary document analysis and secondary data analysis), provides an appropriate platform to explore the multiple perceptions about this fit. The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation’s Food For All program (2005-2010) and the Victorian Department of Health’s Food Access and Food Security Policy Development project (2009-2011) are used as case study exemplars to explore these concerns. A heuristic capacity assessment framework, synthesised and expanded from scholarly literature, analyses the relationships between the external environment and internal organisational capacity of local government, as mediated by capacity building partnerships. The research found that while strategically designed capacity building partnerships can build local government capacity to respond to complex sustainability challenges, gains in capacity are significantly overshadowed by the lack of internal and external fit between government levels that limits local government’s capacity to respond. This thesis argues that implementing feedback loops for local government to share its valuable experience and knowledge with higher government levels would improve fit and strengthen institutional capacity. It further argues that tensions between increasing capacity and role discovery need to be resolved so that local government can improve its performance and reinforce its identity as it adopts responsive roles. Such resolution requires the support of council leadership and senior management and the facilitation of integrated planning across departments. This research contributes new knowledge about the relationship between institutional capacity, local government and food security.
KEY WORDS

Food security, local government, capacity, capacity building partnerships, capacity assessment framework, task network, fit, problem of fit, adaptive institutional capacity, value-changing feedback loops, strategically-focused capacity building, integrated planning.
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other higher education institution. The thesis describes original research by the author since the official commencement date. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Christine Slade
19th May 2014
This thesis is dedicated to

Geoffrey George Rope
A ‘Pitt Street’ Farmer
(1920 - 1999)

&

Annie Betty Rope
(1922 - 2014)

Special people who valued and understood food security
In both urban and rural contexts and
Passed down this inheritance
To the next generation and beyond
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My food security journey began during a conversation with Marg Allan, now Director Organisation Support, City of Greater Bendigo, Victoria, who at the time was the Manager of the Strategy Unit, in that Council. In her wisdom, Marg suggested there was an important new challenge on the horizon of local government called ‘food security’ that could merit investigation as a thesis topic. My heart leapt when she spoke those words and I knew that this was the topic for me.

Around the same time Associate Professor Trevor Budge AM, Coordinator of the Community Planning and Development Program, at La Trobe University, Bendigo was researching the links between food security and land use planning. A common interest in food security was established that has endured over the past seven years, including welcome supervisory advice on my research, for which I am grateful. Special thanks also go Andrew Butt and Dr. Shari Siegloff from La Trobe University for their support in the early days of this research.

Since transferring my part-time candidature to the University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland at the beginning of 2010, I have been very fortunate to add Associate Professor Jennifer Carter, Geography Discipline Leader, and Dr. Claudia Baldwin, Senior Lecturer, Environmental and Planning Studies as my principal and associate supervisors. Jen & Claudia, I admire you both for your ability and willingness to impart intellectual standards and academic skills, couched in approachability and enthusiasm. Thank for your sustained support of my research and all your hard work on my behalf.

My thanks go especially to all the members of the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation’s Food For All program (2005-2010) and the Victorian Department of Health’s Food Access and Food Security Policy Development project (2009-2011) who openly shared their food security journeys with me. These projects were at the forefront of food security intersectoral capacity building partnerships with local government and have contributed significantly to a number of research and practice
fields. I applaud the professional efforts of all those involved and count it a privilege to record their inspirational work.

On a more personal note, my special thanks and acknowledgement go to my family who never questioned my motivation for undertaking PhD candidature and my ability to get to the finish line. Geoff, you have given me the greatest gift in life, a husband and partner who believes in me and wants me to reach my full potential no matter what his cost. Daniel, a son whose tenacity, creativity and thinking capacity provides answers to complex societal challenges; Elissa, who I admire as a daughter of distinction, insight and incredible determination; John, a son whose generous heart would give away all material possessions to feed the hungry; Joshua, a son who is a leader and social advocate in his own right, caring about those in need; and Eloise, a daughter whose love of learning empowers her, attending lectures and contributing to academic discussions at an early age. You are all true capacity builders and I give you my heartfelt love and thanks.
ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS FROM THIS RESEARCH

PUBLICATIONS


Slade, C 2009: Literature Review, Cities of Darebin and Banyule.


PRESENTATIONS

Slade, C & Wardell-Johnson, A, *The Nexus of food systems, governance and resilience on the edge: A case study of the Sunshine Coast in South-East Queensland,*
Beyond the Edge Australia’s first national peri-urban conference, October 2013, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.

Slade, C, *Creating a Climate for Food Security: Interactions between Landscapes and Foodsapes*, Agriculture, Food and Human Values Society Annual Meeting, June 2013, University of Michigan, Michigan, USA.


Slade, C, *Equitable food security and access in local government policy: Critiquing partnership models in Melbourne, Australia*, Agricultural, Food and Human Values Conference, June 2011, Montana, USA.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACLG</td>
<td>Australian Council of Local Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>AG</td>
<td>Preservation of high quality agricultural land</td>
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<tr>
<td>APM</td>
<td>Associated Project Member</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAF</td>
<td>Capacity Assessment Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALD</td>
<td>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAST</td>
<td>Council on Agriculture, Science and Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCT</td>
<td>Compulsory Competitive Tendering</td>
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<td>CFS</td>
<td>Community Food Security</td>
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<td>CGC</td>
<td>Commonwealth Grants Commission</td>
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<td>ComP</td>
<td>Community Plan</td>
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<td>CP</td>
<td>Council Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>CUP</td>
<td>Conditional Use Permit</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAFF</td>
<td>Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (Australian Government)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DH</td>
<td>Department of Health (Victoria)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DHS</td>
<td>Department of Human Services (Victoria)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DITRDLG</td>
<td>Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government (Australian Government)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DRALGAS</td>
<td>Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport (Australian Government)</td>
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<td>EOI</td>
<td>Expression of Interest</td>
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<tr>
<td>FA</td>
<td>Food Access</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>FS</td>
<td>Food Security</td>
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<td>FSU</td>
<td>Food Supply/Sustainable Food System</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIS</td>
<td>Geographic Information Systems</td>
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<td>HACC</td>
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<td>IA</td>
<td>Intersectoral Action</td>
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<td>IDRC</td>
<td>International Development Research Centre</td>
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<td>LG</td>
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<td>LGO</td>
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<td>MPHP</td>
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<td>MSS</td>
<td>Municipal Strategic Statement</td>
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<td>NPM</td>
<td>New Public Management</td>
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<td>NRM</td>
<td>Natural Resource Management</td>
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<td>New South Wales</td>
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<td>NT</td>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
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<tr>
<td>N&amp;WMR</td>
<td>North &amp; West Metropolitan Region</td>
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<tr>
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<td>North Yarra Community Health Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMSEIC</td>
<td>Prime Minister’s Science, Engineering and Innovation Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
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<td>SUWM</td>
<td>Sustainable Urban Water Management</td>
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<td>TAS</td>
<td>Tasmania</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>Temporary Occupancy Permit</td>
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<tr>
<td>UA</td>
<td>Urban Agriculture</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCAT</td>
<td>Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal</td>
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<td>VIC</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
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<td>VicHealth</td>
<td>Victorian Health Promotion Foundation</td>
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<td>VLGA</td>
<td>Victorian Local Governance Association</td>
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<td>WA</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
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<td>WSUD</td>
<td>Water Sensitive Urban Design</td>
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Food security as a contemporary and complex sustainability problem challenges institutional capacity across government. Recent global food-related developments, such as the 2007-08 spike in food prices which resulted in food riots across the world; the impacts of climate change and conflicts over land to ensure food security; as well as rapidly increasing urbanisation, demonstrate the complexity of food security challenges (Morgan 2009). Further, macro and micro level food-related policies shape governmental, private enterprise and civil decision-making across food systems (Slade & Wardell-Johnson 2013). Development of sustainable food policies necessitates consideration of sustainability through health, environmental, social and cultural aspects in addition to economic value (Lang et al. 2009). Local government is an important actor in this policy development milieu. Changes at one government level can potentially affect all other levels (Koç et al. 2012: 10), pushing institutional boundaries into non-mandated arenas and testing traditional government capacity. Such problems often lack a ‘clear jurisdictional home’ and have ‘few policy roadmaps to follow or regulatory tools to support their implementation’ (Mendes 2008: 943).

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1 The recent reiteration of the definition from the Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO) states that ‘food security exists when all people at all times have both physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs for an active and healthy life’ (2011:n.p.). Food insecurity results when these needs are not met.

2 Sustainability can be defined as ‘the ability of productive and consumptive systems to remain ecologically, socially and economically resilient over time and space’ (Marsden & Sonnino 2012: 427). This research acknowledges the role of the institution in sustainability challenges that emphasise social cohesion and equity (see Littig & Griebler 2005: 67; Kunz 2006: 34; Manzi et al. 2010: 5).

3 Food systems, according to Nath and Islam (2011: 7-8) consists of complex and cyclic processes involving all food chain stages from primary production through to waste disposal. Food systems exist at all scales from global to local.

4 Food policies are defined by Mansfield and Mendes (2013: 38) as ‘decisions that impact the ways that people produce, obtain, consume and dispose of their food’. It is noted by the researcher that ‘food security’, ‘sustainability’, ‘food system’ and ‘food policy are contested and overlapping terms. The working definitions above are therefore used for the purposes of this thesis.
Australia has a three-tiered governance system, consisting of the national or federal level, six state governments and two territory authorities on the intermediate level (Aulich 2005: 194) and 566\(^5\) local governing bodies\(^6\) at the lower level (DRALGAS 2012: 3). While this research acknowledges the critical importance of the broader conceptualisation of governance involving active relationships between the state, the private sector and civil society, and the role of national and state government levels, it focuses on local government’s capacity to respond as the closest level of government to on-the-ground food security impacts.

Local governments interface directly with their communities and frequently absorb responsibility for developing responses irrespective of organisational capacity, lack of agreed ownership of the problem, or a legislative mandate (Mendes 2007: 97). A question arises as to whether local government has the capacity to act on these complex needs successfully because even highly motivated councils face capacity challenges (Fiszbein 1997: 1031).

References to capacity in scholarly literature emphasise organisational and managerial resources, and processes and outputs across three major but often segregated sectors: business, public institutional and non-profit sectors (Christensen & Gazley 2008: 270-273). This research explores local government’s capacity, as defined in the public sector capacity literature as ‘the ability to perform appropriate tasks effectively, efficiently and sustainably’ (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 445) to deliver on food security. Capacity is multi-dimensional (O’Toole & Meier 2010: 344), evident across multiple contexts (Bryan 2011: 2) and different scales (Christensen & Gazley 2008: 274; Cornforth & Mordaunt 2011: 431). Capacity is also categorised by type. For example, within the public sector, capacity can be categorised as institutional, organisational or managerial,

\(^5\) This number comprises 155 (NSW), 79 (VIC), 73 (QLD), 139 (WA), 74 (SA), 29 (TAS) and 17 (NT) (DRALGAS 2012: 4).

\(^6\) The use of the term ‘local governing bodies’ includes 556 local governments and 10 declared local government bodies that includes ‘five Indigenous local governing bodies; the Trust Account in the Northern Territory; and the Silverton and Tibooburra villages and Lord Howe Island in New South Wales’ (DRALGAS 2012: 3).
to name a few of the more commonly used types. Capacity types can overlap, or blur with ‘capability’ and ‘ability’ terminology making distinctions difficult, yet the concept of capacity remains an important and relevant construct to investigate, encapsulate and articulate theoretical foundations about local government’s ability to respond to complex sustainability challenges.

The professionalism of local government has changed in the last twenty years with the introduction of concepts such as governance, new public management, competitive tendering and multi-level governance (Denters & Rose 2005: 1). Although financial constraints and corporate management impact local government service delivery, a new leadership role is emerging for local government in this transforming community environment (Stoker 1999: 14). A dominating and continuing discourse in literature, sparked particularly by British scholars (see Rhodes 1997:46-60), focuses on a shift from local government to local governance in light of these changes. As a result, there are adjustments in the relationship between government and citizen; the role of public sector staff; and within individual public organisations, that merit further research investigation (Goss 2001: 3-4).

Yet in Australia there is a lack of serious critical analytical attention given to local government compared with other tiers of government (Dollery et al. 2003:2; Mowbray 2011: 43). Furthermore, Mowbray (2011: 44) admits that ‘intellectuals who research, write and teach about community development generally ignore local government’ except when ‘the latter is recognized rather simply as a host institution for community development programs’. Therefore, it is timely to examine local government capacity to address increasingly complex sustainability challenges, such as food security.

RESEARCH AIMS

This research aims to contribute to institutional capacity and public administration discourses (and professional practice) by critiquing local government capacity, specifically responding to food security. It will develop a framework to explore
local government’s capacity to facilitate municipal food security; a complex global challenge that requires local government action. It will gather empirical data from two case studies to assist in theory formation and refinement. Critiquing local government capacity to respond to complex issues, using food security as an exemplar issue, provides an excellent testing ground for theoretical development and advancing the current knowledge base and internationally published research.

The main research question asks: ‘How does the fit between government levels influence local government’s capacity to address complex sustainability challenges, such as food security?’ This central inquiry is facilitated by the following three sub-questions:

1. In what ways do inter-sectoral capacity building partnership initiatives influence local government’s capacity to respond to food security needs?
2. To what extent do internal factors influence local government’s capacity to address food security?
3. How does the broader political, institutional, economic, social and environmental context support or hinder local government capacity?

Two health promotion partnership projects are chosen in this research as case studies. These projects used inter-sectoral capacity building partnerships in which external organisations provided funds and other resources to work collaboratively with participating local governments to strengthen their capacity to address the food security problem. ‘Capacity building’ refers to enhancement of capability (Lindley 1995: 797) or outside assistance given to help an organisation ‘improve its ability to manage its own problems’ (Honadle 1981b:1) or improve performance (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 445). Although pivotal to local government capacity, these arrangements may be only opportunistically available to local government, depending on the priorities of the lead organisation or higher tiers of government. This situation places local government in a vulnerable position where capacity is limited and community needs are unmet.

Public sector organisations, as part of an open organisational system, influence each other (Honadle 1981b: 3) within a ‘complex local milieu’ (Healey et al.
Within ecosystem management literature, ‘fit’ is the relationship between interdependent dimensions in the total system, considering scale, context, and internal and external change drivers (Folke et al. 2007: n.p.). The connection between institutional fit and capacity in sustainable urban water management is explained in terms of inter-sectoral vertical and siloed horizontal government relationships (Brown 2005: 464). Consequently the construct of fit in this research is applied to the alignment of government responses (its capacity) to complex and multi-level food sustainability problems.

‘Institutional capacity’, as the central perspective of this research, implies fit or connections between organisations and institutions (North 1990: 5). Institutional capacity is defined as ‘the ability of the whole institution, from individuals through to organisations and the legislative and policy instruments used, to undertake a task’ (van de Meene et al. 2009: 1922); in this case addressing food security as a complex sustainability challenge. Therefore, the concept of institutional capacity in this research encompasses a public sector organisation’s internal capacity, as well as its fit with other organisations, as part of the wider institutional context.

At the same time institutional responses to complex multi-level sustainability challenges require an adaptive capacity element. The term ‘adaptive capacity’ is used to capture change to structural elements and processes in response to ecological and social changes (Pahl-Wostl 2009: 355). ‘Adaptive capacity’ is applied in this research in the context of adaptive institutional capacity. This linking of institutional and adaptive capacity accentuates the ideas of flexibility and complexity within adaptive institutional capacity, necessary to address complex challenges in a resilient manner rather than continuing with a rigid and hierarchical system (Cortner et al. 1998: 161). These explanations provide useful language to articulate the meaning of fit between government levels and the critique of local government capacity to respond to complex sustainability challenges.
Local Government Capacity to Respond to Food Security

‘Food security’ is an exemplar complex challenge used in this research to highlight systemic governance problems and illustrate the importance of institutional fit to local government capacity. Key food security attributes include consistent food availability, equitable access to food, social and cultural acceptability of available food, and adequacy in terms of a sustainable food system (Koç et al. 1999: 1-2). Food security determinants evidenced in multiple sectors and across governmental tiers stem from macro level neoliberal market-driven food systems (Rosin et al. 2012: 219-222) that are inept at providing equitable food access. Due to the complex and multi-faceted nature of food security it is important to understand the fit between government levels, and the restrictions placed on institutional capacity by systemic barriers, in order to develop constructive solutions. Consequently, food security is a critical challenge facing all levels of government, the private sector and community groups.

Even though Australia is seen globally as a food secure country due to its agricultural production excess and corresponding export ability, research and evidence-based practice reveals citizens who experience food insecurity and suffer diet and lifestyle-related diseases (Farmar-Bowers et al. 2013a: 4). These problems necessitate government responses and the need for further in-depth research is becoming more urgent.

Acknowledgement of the importance of local government to address complex problems was given in 2008 by the then Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, in his opening address to the inaugural meeting of the Australian Council of Local Government (2008: 3). In this speech he re-emphasised the increasing roles local government plays in providing a diverse range of services, particularly human services, when he said:

Local government budgets must be stretched across many priorities, including health, social security, welfare, housing, community amenities, business development, transport, communications, recreation and culture and general public services.

Rather than answer the question of ‘what do local governments do?’, it is better to ask ‘what don’t local governments do?’
He confirmed the need for ‘stronger partnerships between levels of government’ (important to the fit between government levels and resulting capacity of local government) and the fact that local government is vital to Australian governance. Yet, such acknowledgements have not shifted the structural neoliberal efficiency-based models that underpin government or increased authority and resources to local government to increase its capacity to address complex challenges. Concerned local government advocates argue that it is ‘business as usual’ for local government delivering ‘services for communities despite being seriously under-resourced and increasingly over-regulated’ (Bell 2007: 173). This research will provide valuable insight and an independent analysis of the implications of this situation. It investigates the perceptions of local government staff and associated project organisations’ staff, of barriers to local government capacity to respond to food security challenges in their municipalities. Further, it uses primary document and secondary data analysis to critique local government capacity to respond.

Part of the problem for local government capacity is the expectation that it should deliver on a wide range of food security problems:

- entitlement, human right, basic need (Sen 1981; Maxwell 1996; Allen 1999)
- equitable access to nutritious, healthy and fresh food (Clay 2002; Cummins & Macintyre 2005; Whitacre et al. 2009)
- affordability (Burns 2004)
- cultural appropriateness (Region of Waterloo 2005)
- quality of life (Booth & Smith 2001)
- food system governance (Harris & Wills 1997; Lang et al. 2004; Yeatman 2008; Allender et al. 2009)
- consistent food supply over the long term (Pothukuchi & Kaufman 2000)
- an ecological sustainable food system (Koç et al. 1999; Pothukuchi et al. 2002; Miewald et al. 2007).

Therefore, understanding whether local government has the capacity to tie all these complex aspects together in order to respond is critical.
Research linking local government capacity and community food security is embryonic in Australia, unlike ‘hotspots’ in developed and developing regions around the world where municipal governments are implementing innovative and integrated food policies and programs. For example, the adoption of food policy by the City of Vancouver (see Mendes 2006, 2008); the development of the London Food Strategy (see Reynolds 2009); and the pioneering work of the Toronto Food Policy Council (see Blay-Palmer 2009) provide valuable insights into the policy enablers and challenges for local government. Innovative practices and early adoption of local government approaches to food security and food systems is most evident in developing regions. For example the role of local government in urban agriculture in Rosario, Argentina (see Lattuca et al. 2005), equitable urban food provisioning in Belo Horizonte, Brazil (see Rocha & Lessa 2009) and addressing ‘food deserts’ through urban food production in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (see Sonnino 2009), exemplify the possibility of new regulatory, economic and social pathways for government.

Similarly, there is a fast growing body of literature informing how local government is enabled and constrained in its food-related initiatives. For example, Reynolds (2009) reports that while the London Food Strategy 2006 takes a holistic sustainability approach to food and has identified current sector problems, the situation ‘on the ground’ has not really changed because the government does not consider ‘food’ as its service responsibility. In Belo Horizonte, Brazil, the local government drives integrated food security policies and food programs designed on social justice and equitable access to healthy food, yet Rocha and Lessa (2009) observe that despite the wide-spread benefit of this work, changes in government are still a potential threat to its continuance. Recent research by Hatfield (2012: 2-4) interviewing 15 municipal food policy professionals in North America, found common areas of work across local governments, included access and equity; economic development, environmental sustainability; food education; local and regional food; mobile vending; nutrition and public health; policy advocacy; urban agriculture; and waste management. Common challenges
identified by participants were funding for programs; the location of the program within the organisational structure impacting priorities and effectiveness; determining policy priorities and evaluation mechanisms; and difficulty in engaging other departments in the work (see also Mansfield & Mendes 2013). An initial analysis of local and regional Canadian government involvement in food-related change by MacRae and Donahue (2013) recommends clarification of other policy domains’ jurisdictional connection to food policy and definition of how they link to municipal policy work.

In the United Kingdom, Marsden and Sonnino (2008) explain that centralised government policy development placates private and industrial agri-food interests while, at the same time, embraces environmental and amenity driven interests. The authors conclude that this type of complex, multi-level governance systems need ‘some serious critical analysis of this process to explore ‘the contradictory nature of policy developments’ and the ‘the complex tensions and compromised nature of the relationships between the devolved bodies and the central state’ (Morgan & Sonnino 2008: 429-430). Social science research into food policy governance provides evidence for comparative purposes and a contribution to ‘global policy networks that can disseminate best practice’ (Sonnino 2009: 433). In Australia, scholars call for further research that explores barriers and enablers to local government’s involvement in food activities (Yeatman 2008:1406) and bring about changes at a local government level (Allender et al. 2009:7).

This research contributes and adds to this existing literature by providing Australian case study examples of local government food policy and program development. It will also contribute to scholarly understanding of the enablers and constraints faced by this level of government, and in particular, local government’s fit with other levels of government. In light of this information it will critique the capacity of local government to undertake potential roles in addressing this complex sustainability challenge.
THESIS OVERVIEW

This chapter introduces the research problem and contextual background on which the thesis is based. Local government is pressured to respond to non-mandated and complex human needs within their municipalities. This thesis particularly examines the impact of relational fit between governance levels on local government capacity to respond to a complex sustainability challenge. Research on local government is limited and its relationship to food security is even less researched and theorised. The chapter outlines the research problem, the main research question and corresponding sub-questions, and provides an overview of the remaining chapters.

Chapter Two reviews the background scholarly literature about local government’s capacity to respond to municipal food security. The chapter begins with a brief introduction to the neoliberal ideological impacts on public institutions, particularly new public management (NPM) mechanisms that affect local government capacity. Constraints dictated by improved efficiency and accountability objectives, together with increased complex community needs, pressure local government capacity. Literature provides evidence of the limitations of authority on local government capacity; tension between efficiency and social outcomes and their effect on capacity; and finally the dependency of local government on higher government for financial capacity. The chapter then introduces food insecurity at a community or municipal level. Lastly, the chapter outlines roles and responsibilities that link local government capacity and food security.

Chapter Three explores theoretical concepts of capacity and capacity building. It discusses the imprecise nature of these terms, and then focusses on institutional capacity as the lens for analysing this research. Traditional institutional capacity founded on hierarchical and top-down approaches is inadequate to address complex and multi-level problems. This chapter suggests new flexible governance approaches through adaptive institutional capacity are needed to build the resilience of local government. The chapter then discusses the role of
collaborative capacity building in addressing capacity deficiencies. A new heuristic capacity assessment framework is developed from the work of other scholars to theoretically explain and analyse the relationships between government levels, the role of capacity building and subsequent problems of misfits. The framework provides the structure to explore and explain constraints and enablers in local government’s capacity to respond to the complexity of contemporary food security challenges.

Chapter Four explains the research rationale and methodology stemming from a constructivism ontology and epistemology. This approach views social reality as multiple perceptions understood by individuals in their day-to-day activities. A case study methodology is chosen as an appropriate strategy to capture in-depth rich data for this data analysis process through in-depth interviews, primary document analysis and secondary data analysis methods. An abductive data analysis approach is used to sift and record these first order perceptions and then to abstract technical second order constructs from them to contribute to theory development. The overall data are analysed using the heuristic conceptual framework developed in Chapter Three. The chapter further discusses validity and reliability as important research elements as well as providing human ethics approval details, strategies for dissemination of results and finally a brief discussion of research limitations.

Chapter Five presents the findings from Case Study One: The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation’s (VicHealth) Food For All (FFA) program (2005-2010) using the heuristic capacity assessment framework explained in Chapter Three. The first section briefly outlines how overarching factors impact the program. The next section discusses the pivotal role of the capacity building partnership involved. Themes that emerge include the approach to collaboration, partnership processes and structures, and the collective capacity of the partnership members. The chapter then explores the capacity of recipient level (local government) according to three themes: leadership and management; financial, human and organisational resources; and structures and processes. The broad external
environment is analysed according to four themes, i.e. political and institutional; macroeconomic; social and cultural; and environmental. The chapter ends with a brief interpretation of changes needed in the relational fit between government levels.

Similarly Chapter Six presents the findings from Case Study Two: The Victorian Department of Health’s Food Access & Security Policy Development project (2009-2011) according to the heuristic capacity assessment framework used in Chapter Five. Ordering this case study according to the same themes as Case Study One enables the comparative analysis in Chapter Seven. The chapter ends by reiterating changes needed in the fit between levels. The most significant changes centre on lack of fit with the external environment.

Chapter Seven provides an analytical comparison of the case studies, presenting similarities and differences between the two studies. It examines a number of changes are needed to the fit between levels, and recognises the absence of a holistic food security governance framework in Australia, hindering local government’s capacity to respond to complex issues. It finds that responses to food security and other emergent complex sustainability challenges need to be integrated across government sectors and departments so food insecurity determinants can be more fully addressed and individual municipal responses designed and implemented.

Chapter Eight discusses the case study findings in light of scholarly literature that frames the research questions. It suggests that externally funded capacity building projects are used to improve local government capacity, explore solutions and evaluate fit but often only have short-term impacts. Therefore, such capacity building initiatives would benefit from strategically-focused planning that includes a comprehensive examination of all elements in the operational context, including external and internal fit. Internally, local government needs increased leadership direction and managerial support to respond to complex sustainability problems, facilitated by cross-departmental relationship building towards
integrated planning and policy development. Constrictive external barriers limit fit between governance levels cause misaligned internal structures and disjointed structures within local government. Higher levels of government need to provide value-changing feedback loop opportunities for local government to provide them with knowledge and experience to facilitate aligned governance responses to complex, multi-level problems, such as food security.

Chapter Nine provides an overview of the research and its significance. The first section reiterates the research problem and constructivism approach to exploring a complex sustainability problem using case studies for data collection and the new heuristic capacity assessment framework for data analysis. This section then provides a precise of the research findings. The significance of these findings is outlined in the next section, particularly their contribution to the knowledge and theory of capacity, local government and food security. Finally, the chapter explains the research limitations and possibilities for future research directions.
CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND LITERATURE

The first chapter introduced the research problem examining the impact of the fit between government levels on local government’s capacity to address complex sustainability challenges. Food security is an exemplar issue which highlights this fit. The chapter outlined the research aims and justified the need for this research. Further explanation of the background context to the fit between government levels is needed to understand the depth and breadth of the research problem.

Chapter Two provides this context by examining the scholarly literature that focuses on contention between government levels about limited devolved authority, efficiency drivers that inhibit social outcomes, and financial capacity. The chapter explains the implications of the resulting inter-government misalignment for local government capacity to respond appropriately to complex sustainability problems. Dominance of neoliberal drivers, translated through New Public Management (NPM) mechanisms, has reduced the institutional capacity of local government through a number of efficiency motivated strategies that are contradictory to social benefit. Yet increasingly complex sustainability problems continue to confront the public sector, particularly at the local level.

The chapter also introduces food insecurity as a contemporary problem faced by local government in developed countries. Food security pressures facing local government focus on equitable food access, food supply challenges and food policy development processes. A three-stage food security continuum is offered to explain potential responses by local government that potentially can stretch its capacity to deliver services, ranging from emergency and short-term food relief, to capacity building initiatives, and finally redesign of food systems. The chapter ends with a short summary of the main points.
NEOLIBERAL IMPACTS ON GOVERNANCE FIT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY

Neoliberal ideology has a profound impact on all levels of government and the connections between them. Foundational political and economic ideological shifts introduced by neoliberalism provide the backdrop to problems of fit between government levels and the resulting limitations of local government capacity. Neoliberalism assumes that market-driven individualism is essential to economic and social advancement, security and wellbeing (Cheshire & Lawrence 2005: 436; Brady et al. 2013: 124). In turn, this ideology advocates reducing government interference in business activity, collective action and social programs (Cheshire & Lawrence 2005: 436; Brady et al. 2013: 124). Neoliberalism allows the market to ‘determine both the price and the value of everything’ (Tickell & Peck 1996: 398) including government structures and processes. Therefore, based on an assumption that government bureaucracies are ‘slow, inefficient, ineffective and unresponsive to service users (Batley & Larbi 2004: 31), neoliberalism focuses on efficiency, outcome generation, accountability and service to individual customer expectations.

In order to fulfil the neoliberal mandate, a corporate-style efficiency mechanism called New Public Management (NPM) was developed and applied to the Australian public sector from the 1980s. NPM brought an entrepreneurial and managerial, competitive and efficiency-based private sector culture to government, resulting in an organisational shift from service provider to service facilitator (Batley & Larbi 2004: 39). For example, during the early 1990s in the state of Victoria, the Kennett Liberal Government made fast-paced and far-reaching structural changes to state and local government structures and processes grounded in NPM principles. Local government reforms focused on the potential of local governments to create economic growth, greater efficiencies and reduce spending (Williamson 2002: 14) through forced council amalgamations, compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) system, incorporation of strategic management tools (Kiss 2003: 102) and standardised planning schemes. Later attempts were made by the Bracks Labor government to include formal
community consultation, engagement and participation mechanisms into local government services within the corporate discourse (O’Toole 2005: 283-287). A detailed understanding of the impacts of a government change in 2010 on inter-government fit and local government’s capacity to respond to food security challenges is not clear; however significant neoliberal legacies are firmly in place between government levels that continue to constrain this capacity.

Over time neoliberal principles became the yardstick for governments to measure what is valuable and what is not within the public sector. Neoliberalism shifts the focus of all levels of government from delivering public services that meet collective needs to concentrating on alignment with a market-driven system, demanding efficient economic outputs. From a broad perspective, complex, multi-level problems cannot be measured by efficiency and/or economic outputs but rather require a sound fit between government levels in order to provide comprehensive solutions (Batley & Larbi 2004: 19-20).

Often, these problems are visible at a local government level. Years of severe organisational and managerial pruning and reshaping of government roles under neoliberalism (Broomhill 2001: 116) make it difficult for existing local government capacity to address new and complex problems. Local government capacity is squeezed from above and below. Local government is required to meet corporate demands through strategic planning, with elected councillors embracing roles similar to a board of directors, who facilitate (‘steer’) policy frameworks separately from directly providing (‘rowing’) services to citizens (Newnham & Winston 1997: 117; O’Toole 2005: 282). Local citizens, now as customers, comment on the ‘enterprise’ in annual customer satisfaction surveys, while managers embrace a business approach, using CCT and performance indicators, measured by cost-benefit analysis (O’Toole 2005: 282).

In summary, government capacity remains dominated by broader neoliberal ideology through NPM mechanisms. This market-driven efficiency model strongly influences the fit of inter-governmental relationships, strategic planning
and priorities, resource allocation and service provision. Despite the inclusion of communitarian elements, noble concepts of receptive leadership and public value are lost in a maze of management and service delivery reforms. Key factors of authority, efficiency and finances impact the relationship between government levels and restrict local government capacity to address complex problems.

**Governance Capacity: Give and Take Authority**

Important to understanding capacity, local government is not recognised in the Australian federal constitution but is given power through Local Government Acts legislated individually by the six states and two territories. This system in practice creates eight different types of local government. With different mandates in individual states, expectations and roles of local government shift through legislative changes, causing it to be in a continuous state of change where councils and managers are obligated to ‘formulate and implement policy in an increasingly complex environment’ (Dollery et al. 2003: 2).

Local government capacity to respond to complex issues is severely restricted by this constantly changing system. In practice this means there remains ‘a relatively small and weak local government level’ with limited downwards devolution of power from the states (Aulich 2005: 194). NPM gives centralised control to the state governments as they enforce the efficiency mechanisms, expect uniformity and value top-down reform processes (Aulich 2005: 194). In the current government structure, a tension exists for local government between authority given and subservience to state oversight (Pini & McKenzie 2007: 33-36). The consequence of this lack of authority is that if conflict arises the state dominates (McNeill 1997: 24) and local government’s purpose becomes predominantly ‘an administrative arm of the state government’ (O’Toole 2005: 288), providing efficient service delivery (Dollery & Marshall 1997: 4). Local governments can feel powerless to make a change, and interestingly, there was a hesitation on their  

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7 National referendums in 1974 and 1988 failed to give local government constitutional recognition. The Australian government planned another referendum in late 2013 to make changes to the Constitution so that the federal government can directly give it funds, rather than go through the intermediate state government level. This latest referendum did not eventuate due to the early timing of the federal election. See [http://referendum2013.gov.au/](http://referendum2013.gov.au/)
part to increase regulation in what they see as a heavily regulated system already, contextualised within a complex legislative framework (Allender et al. 2009: n.p.). Such unequal power relationships cause misalignment of authority to act and expectations of service delivery between government levels, resulting in limitations on local government capacity to address complex problems evidenced in their municipalities.

**Efficiency Reforms Stifle Social Outcomes**

The introduction of neoliberalism through NPM reforms in local government resulted in the implementation of tight economic and managerial efficiency models, anticipated to increase effectiveness. Local government reforms can be divided into two categories; firstly, structural reforms, including the redrawing of boundaries and secondly, procedural reforms in management and administration (Caulfield 2003: 13).

Structural reforms involve ‘resource sharing or joint-service delivery enterprises’ (May 2003:83), of which amalgamations are the dominant strategy. These are either forced (such as in Victoria under the Kennett government in 1992-1994) or voluntary. The main rationale for amalgamations is stated in terms of efficiency, not representation. While small councils may be more politically representative, larger ones with fewer elected representatives are considered to be more efficient (Marshall 1997: 9) in terms of delivering services to their communities (Aulich 2005: 198).

As well as structural reforms, NPM brought significant administrative and managerial reforms to local government. A number of principles underpin these reforms (scholar’s italics shows original emphasis):

1. ‘*Hands-on professional management*’ in the public sector
2. *Explicit standards and measures of performance*
3. Greater emphasis on *output controls*
4. Shift to *disaggregation* of units in the public sector
5. Shift to greater *competition* in public sector
6. *Stress on private sector styles of management practice*
7. Stress on discipline and parsimony in resource use (Hood 1996: 269).

This language of governance demonstrates the underlying ideology, including emphasis on the public sector (rather than public service), performance management, external accountability, outputs, ‘benchmarking, comparability, contestability, choice and competition’ (Gallop 2005: 5-6).

In practice the subsequent segregated areas of responsibility both horizontally and vertically at all government levels, result in fragmented understanding of complex and long standing social problems. Addressing such complex problems is suppressed by the absence of suitable solution pathways, such as collaborative efforts across government. It reflects an ideology that highly values economically efficient processes over social outcomes. The role of the public service changes from building public value\(^8\) and serving the community as a whole (Goss 2001: 18-20) towards one in which citizens are viewed as clients (Caulfield 2003: 14).

Both types of reforms not only affect the collaboration between government levels but the internal capacity of local government to address social outcomes. Structural reforms, particularly amalgamations, require adjustments to local government's strategic planning, policy making, and service delivery. Importantly, they dismantle the social fabric of municipalities. Similarly, administrative and managerial practices affect local government capacity levels (see Chapter Three for discussion on the theoretical underpinnings of institutional capacity). Reforming these practices through a neoliberal epistemology endangers local government capacity to address complex problems because valuing efficient management systems so highly excludes consideration of appropriate social outcomes for citizens.

Scholars consider the relationship between neoliberal efficiency-driven governance and its failure to address social policy outcomes across the public sector (Adams & Hess 2001: 13; Mowbray 2011: 145). Social outcomes take a back seat to ‘the market’ which is ‘the dominant policy-making logic’ and ‘public

\(^8\) Public value ‘is defined by a measurable improvement in social outcomes’ in contrast to corporate value of maximising profit (Goss 2001:19-20).
sector paradigm’ (Wiseman 2005: 72). Ironically the situation has not changed under governments of different persuasions:

Labor’s approach to social expenditures is virtually identical with that of the preceding, Kennett, government...despite the claim that community building is at the heart and a major commitment of the state government (Mowbray 2005: 263).

A change may occur in the institutional mix with the re-emergence of a community building focus meshing with neoliberal policies (Adams & Hess 2001: 14, 20-21) but not all scholars agree. According to Stoker (1997: 168) such communitarian advances can be viewed as individuals expressing their private self-interests, which potentially add little to public value (O’Toole 2005: 287). Furthermore, ‘a mixture of neoliberal and communitarian approaches’ is not constructive for local government because it can create an untenable tension between its ‘compliance role to state government, and its community governance role’ (O’Toole 2005: 289). The mixing of community building with neoliberalism does not necessarily guarantee lasting improvements in the status quo arrangements for the fit between government levels, nor the capacity of local government.

According to McKinlay (2010: 9) the ‘overarching business of local government in the world we now live in is providing community leadership and working with its communities to determine their preferred futures and how best to realize those’. To further this agenda, experts suggest that community development should be politicised and integrated into local government holistically, not confined to lower level community engagement activities away from central activities (Mowbray 2011: 148-149). Recent research in the City of Vancouver suggests the municipal social policy responses to complex, multifaceted

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9 At a state level the Cain Labor Government (1982-1992) introduced corporate management practices to the public sector and downsized its workforce to produce greater economic efficiencies. The Kennett Liberal Government came to power in 1992 against a backdrop of a serious debt crisis and potential state bankruptcy and introduced far-reaching public sector reforms. This government was defeated in 1999 and the Bracks Labor Government came to power. This new Labor government attempted to refine neo-liberal governance in terms of ‘Best Value’ which builds in a formal community consultation mechanism into local government services but the impact is questionable (O’Toole 2005: 283, 289). A change of government in 2010 saw a Liberal government return to power but the NPM mandate still remains in place.
sustainability issues may ‘represent a concerted repoliticisation’ of this agenda through open dialogue and participation rather than closed debates that reinforce existing institutional processes (Holden 2012: 528-529, 539-540). In a broader ideological agenda, such political conceptualisation presents local government as a vehicle for change that counteracts neoliberalism with a higher morality (Mowbray 2011: 149). Yet to realise such higher level roles, local government needs increased capacity, not only through increased authority and recognition but also financial provision.

**Local Government’s Financial Dependence on Higher Government**

The capacity of local government to successfully embrace new responsibilities is affected by its revenue collection streams (Pini et al. 2007: 162). Local government collects its own revenue from a number of sources:

- municipal rates
- fees and fines – fees refer to user charges for services rendered, such as building inspections while an example of fines is parking fines
- the net operating surplus of public trading enterprises
- interest received from council investments

A large differential exists in the capacity of different local governments to raise finances, depending on geographical location, their rate base and the opportunity or willingness to apply user charges (DITRDLG 2009: 13). All councils are also reliant on resources from higher government levels to meet their financial commitments.

Across Australia, only 37 percent of local government revenue came from rates in the 2006-07 financial year, with a variance within municipalities from 57.9 percent in South Australia to 15.9 percent in the Northern Territory (DITRDLG 2009: 13-14). Other revenues (see above) as well as federal and state grants made up the remainder. The federal government provides local government with funds through finance assistance programs delivered through the states, totalling $1,686.7 million in 2006-07; and specific purpose payments, such as *Roads to Recovery* funding directly or through the states. Such funding totalled $374.3
million in the same year (DITRDLG 2009: 20). However, the federal and local relationship is restricted mainly to road funds and based on a ‘vertical imbalance’ of financial superiority that can ‘obscure the line of responsibility for a service and each level of government can blame the other for inadequacies’ (McNeill 1997: 25). These funding relationships make local government dependent on state and federal funding to fulfill its obligations.

Historically, financial pressures on local government from higher government levels have included:

- devolution of responsibility for new functions but often costs are passed down without providing appropriate revenue levels
- higher levels of government increasing the standard at which local government services need to be provided
- two types of cost shifting: the first type occurs when local government agrees to provide a service for a higher tier of government, yet funding is reduced or ceases but local government still has to provide the service. The second type of cost shifting occurs when another tier of government stops providing a service and local government is obliged to take it over (Johnson 2003: 41).

Despite the 2006 Intergovernmental Agreement on cost shifting (Bell 2007:173) these practices are still problematic for local government.\(^{10}\)

Local government’s capacity to raise its own revenue in the period 1990-91 to 2005-06 declined in terms of GDP percentage (Productivity Commission 2008: xxiv). In response local government petitioned the federal government to increase grants but other options are needed, including increased property rates or a change in the way financial assistance grants are distributed (Sansom 2008:148). There is a dilemma between the growing problem with declining income and increasing community pressure for more services, which results in a gap between community expectations and local government services, called ‘the community expectation/funding gap’ (Johnson 2003: 40). Local government’s financial

\(^{10}\) See Pini and McKenzie (2007: 34-35) who comment that cost shifting was a theme of their interviews with local government staff about natural resource management.
capacity to deliver on new initiatives is squeezed from above and below with unavoidable gaps occurring due to lack of capacity.

At the same time local government service responsibilities have increased their proportion of human services whilst still performing property-based services, particularly infrastructure, such as roads. New human services roles include ‘arts and culture, management of health, alcohol and drug problems, community safety and accessible transport’ (Bell 2007: 177). Additionally, local government is increasing its ‘regulatory role in areas such as development and planning, public health, and environmental management’ (Bell 2007:177). Pressures are placed on local government capacity by increased service provision and regulatory roles with less revenue available. Consequently, local government relies more heavily on external funding and resources to meet these needs.

Neoliberal ideology drives an efficiency agenda across government levels. Local government capacity is constrained by limited delegated authority from higher government levels, the dominance of economic accountabilities over social outcomes, and limited financial capacity to respond to complex food security challenges. Centralised authority in higher levels of government limit local government’s decision making power and constrain its capacity for revenue collection and resourcing important community initiatives. Neoliberal efficiency reforms reduce local government capacity to provide social outcomes with local government reliant on external funds to maintain existing capacity without any consideration of resources needed for new roles.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY AND FOOD IN/SECURITY CHALLENGES

Initially, the term ‘food security’ related to ensuring global and national food supplies and stabilising food prices (Clay 2002:2) in the 1960s and early 1970s (Von Braun et al. 1992: 12). Definitional complexity increased over time to include an entitlement aspect, accredited to the work of Sen (1981) emphasising social justice and equitable food access at community, household and/or
individual scales. More recently, a sustainability element requiring a balance between the provision of human need and ecological integrity (Koç et al. 1999: 1-2) is overlaid on this already complex food security picture, in response to community food security needs. In their seminal paper Bellows and Hamm (2002: 35) state that ‘community food security (CFS) exists when all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice’. The operational definition of a community level of food security in this research is the areas within designated municipal boundaries of each local council participating in the two case studies.

Traditionally, food insecurity is regarded as a developing world issue, with approximately 852 million people out of the global total of 870 million in a constant state of hunger, living in those countries (FAO 2012: n.p.). Food insecurity also exists in developed nations amongst socially and economically vulnerable groups, who, due to individual circumstantial constraints and systemic disadvantage, have difficulty obtaining and eating a healthy diet. The Australian National Nutrition Survey in 1995 revealed 5.2 percent of persons over the age of nineteen in the previous twelve months were unable to replenish food supplies when they ran out. More recently, in the 2008 Victorian Population Health Survey the proportion of food insecure people rose from 4.6 percent in 2005 to 5.6 percent in 2008, with 11.4 percent of these respondents running out of food once or more weekly, 14.1 percent every two weeks, 18.4 percent once a month and 54.1 percent less than once a month (Department of Health 2011: 1). Results from the 2009 survey showed about one in twenty people experienced food insecurity in the previous twelve months (Department of Health 2012: 176). VicHealth (2008:1) reported that 59 out of 73 local government areas in Victoria were experiencing ratios of food insecure people higher than one in twenty.

Local government’s current capacity is stretched in response to a complex multi-level food security challenge. The boundaries of both mandated and non-mandated roles are under pressure from problems that overlap jurisdictions and
lack policy directions and regulatory support (Mendes 2008: 943). Current literature about food security challenges that place pressure on local government’s capacity focuses on addressing inequitable food access, food supply concerns, and food policy development.

**Addressing Inequitable Food Access**

Local government in Australia is involved in addressing food access and utilisation challenges in low-socio economic areas. A survey of local governments nationally in 2007 found Victorian councils were more involved in providing equitable food access and community initiatives than other states (Yeatman 2007: 2; 2008: 1406). Potential reasons for this trend were council involvement in the VicHealth *Food For All* program (See Chapter Five Case Study One); the mandatory requirement for all Victorian councils to develop a *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan* (MPHP); and the contribution of other capacity-building initiatives, such as the *Food Security Network*¹¹ (Yeatman 2008: 1405).

Despite this involvement by local government not all determinants of food insecurity can be addressed at the local level. Potential risk factors for vulnerable groups only include low income, but also poor transportation options (Cummins & Macintyre 2005:100). Other determinants include poor storage facilities and cooking facilities, lack of social support and time, and mobility restrictions (Rychetnik et al. 2003: 20-21). In the United States, studies show people in low socio-economic areas are vulnerable to obesity and other preventable diseases, because of poor access to healthy foods, as these ‘food deserts’¹² have a proliferation of fast food, convenience and liquor outlets. Supermarkets are

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¹¹ The *Food Security Network* is an online forum under the auspices of the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) for local government staff and other people working on food security initiatives (see http://www.vlga.org.au/About_Us/Supported_Networks/Food_Security_Network.aspx).

¹² ‘Food deserts’ have been defined by Cummins and Macintyre (1999: 545) as ‘populated areas with little or no food retail provision’ with a trend towards car-dependant food shopping in suburban supermarkets. A more detailed definition from Laurance (1997: n.p.) states that food deserts ‘are those areas of inner cities where cheap, nutritious food is virtually unobtainable. Car-less residents, unable to reach out-of-town supermarkets, depend on the corner shop where prices are high, products are processed and fresh fruit and vegetables poor or non-existent’. There is disagreement amongst scholars about the existence of ‘food deserts’ (see Donkin et al. 1999; Guy et al. 2004; Turrell et al. 2004; Winkler 2006; Ball et al. 2009).
hesitant to start a business in these areas because of the perception of low profitability (Shigley 2009: 26-27). Access to healthy food within walking distance is optimal as residents often do not own a car and public transport can be limited (Parham 2007:11).

Responses to the social and economic determinants of health impacting food security cross all levels of government. Such determinants include ‘education, employment, income, job security, occupation, working conditions, housing, area of residence, social support and social cohesion’ (Rychetnik et al. 2003). For example, analysis of the 1995 National Nutrition Survey showed that over 50 percent of people who were food insecure received a government benefit or pension as their main income source (Burns 2004:8). The Australian federal government determines the eligibility of applicants and the entitlement a person receives in a pension but the implications of these decisions are evidenced in the local community when citizens are unable to access appropriate affordable food. Disconnection between decision-making and resulting impacts across government levels limits the capacity of local government to address complex food access challenges.

Food Supply Challenges

Local government also faces food supply challenges such as preservation of high quality agricultural land and urban food production within their municipalities. A recent research report, *A Resilient Fruit and Vegetable Supply for a Healthy Victoria*, highlights loss of productive agricultural land as one of the three main challenges facing these producers (Carey & McConell 2011). The loss of agricultural land to other land uses has become a dominant food security challenge in some peri-urban13 municipalities. Peri-urban areas are ‘the urbanized edges of cities plus the spaces into which they expand, both physically and functionally’ (Burnley & Murphy 1995: 245). Land use conflicts in these areas

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13 Land & Water Australia (2007: n.p.) define peri-urban areas as ‘neither urban nor rural but a dynamic interface and transitional zone. They can be characterized by a diverse range of land uses, communities and environments. They occur at the fringes of high growth, large population centres located primarily in coastal areas but also in some inland, regional locations. The intrusion of urban land uses and subdivisions on previously rural land uses results in progressive fragmentation and pressures from competing land uses’.
arise due to pressure for residential land to accommodate population growth in these fringe areas, where traditionally agricultural uses dominated (Budge 2013: 368). Environmental and natural resource concerns in these areas need new planning attention (RMIT 2007: 199-200).

Peri-urban areas can be perceived as ‘farming land awaiting residential subdivision’ with the consequence that subdivision is considered a right (Willis n.d.: 3). The countering smart growth concept that aims to restrict growth within current urban boundaries and encourages densification, however, leads to a mismatch in expectations between governments and farmer/developers. As peri-urban land increases in value farmers take the opportunity to sub-divide or sell-up and either retire or move production to a cheaper area while politicians support rezoning to relieve urban pressures (Cook & Harder 2013: 414). In contrast, farming areas close to urban centres are invaluable to urban and rural populations, in terms of ‘food mile’ reductions, producing local fresh produce, reconnecting producers and consumers (Budge 2013: 370), thus building community resilience. The report, *Planning for food: Towards a prosperous, resilient and healthy food system through Victoria’s Metropolitan Planning Strategy* calls for the identification, mapping and protection of high value agricultural land and primary production, through a fixed urban growth boundary and promotion of higher density urban development to minimise sprawl (Food Alliance and National Heart Foundation of Australia (Victorian Division 2012). Local government, however, is limited in its ability to protect of prime agricultural land even through policy and planning scheme development if the state government chooses to deem the land for other purposes, such as extending the urban growth boundary (Cook & Harder 2013: 415).

Urban agriculture (UA)\(^{14}\) is another food supply challenge for local government. Local government can contribute to the sustainability and self-reliance of their  

\(^{14}\) The Council on Agriculture, Science and Technology (CAST) (2002) (cited in Community Food Security Coalition 2003: 3) defines urban agriculture ‘a complex system encompassing a spectrum of interests, from a traditional core of activities associated with the production processing, marketing, distribution and consumption, to the multiplicity of other benefits and services that are less widely acknowledged and documented. These include recreation and leisure; economic
communities by permitting various urban agricultural land uses, promoting UA activities and events, supporting education programs and partnering with community groups in establishing food security initiatives. At the micro level UA activities not only help small scale producers but add to the health and wellbeing in local areas, often through collaborative activities, while at a macro level such initiatives reduce the ecological food footprint and bring connections between urban and peri-urban areas (Sonnino 2009: 426-427). Planning for UA should recognise the strategic value of such agricultural activities in economic, social and environmental terms (Knowd et al. 2003:1). According to Mougeot, (2006: 1-6) local governments should view UA as an opportunity for productive use of empty spaces and provide permits for urban producers through provision of a urban economic land-use zone and support for UA initiatives in low socio-economic locations. The legitimacy and promotion of urban agriculture rests with local government through zoning in planning schemes to allow UA uses in existing open spaces, subdivision regulations to include community gardens and fresh food markets, and the adoption of design guidelines to include edible streetscapes and rooftop gardens (Wheeler 2004:207-208). Yet despite acknowledgement of these benefits of UA, links to sustainability, and its representation in state and local government high level plans, local government planning departments are cautious to support its implementation (Pires & Burton 2013: 383, 394). Local government planners in Victoria face challenges when confronted by complex issues, such as food security because they do not have the regulatory planning tools to enforce food security principles in land use decisions (Budge & Slade 2009:6). Whilst local government moves forward on some of these issues without state support or recognition, tension between the two levels can arise if municipalities attempt to move beyond the constraints of state-directed planning schemes.

Food Policy Development

Food policy development is a complex and multi-level process which challenges existing embedded policy frameworks in terms of accounting for current vitality and business entrepreneurship, individual health and well-being; community health and well-being; landscape beautification; and environmental restoration and remediation’.
externalities in the food system, developing a broader understanding of food beyond commodification, and increasing support for health promotion (MacRae 2011: 428). Policies should be concerned not only about what people eat, but how it is produced, and equitable distribution and consumption (Lang et al. 2002: 75-85). Important food issues stem from health, environment, social and economic policy.

Additionally, rapid urbanisation occurring globally requires ‘critical policy choices ahead… [and] it is important for food and health policy planners to ask who will produce this food and how’ (Lang et al. 2002: 86). Consequently, these authors suggest a long term food strategy needs to be based on an ecological health model rather than the productionist model of the previous ‘food revolution’ as explained in Table 1.

Table 1: The Productionist and Ecological Health Models’ Influence on Food Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Policy Feature by Area</th>
<th>‘Old’ Productionist Model</th>
<th>‘New’ Ecological Health Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic Policy</td>
<td>Increase production and supply by application of science and capital. Consumers have right to choose</td>
<td>Reducing inequality by state action provides health safety net. Citizenship requires both skills and protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Policy</td>
<td>Health stems from prosperity, availability and some equity of distribution; rising prosperity makes health services affordable.</td>
<td>Population approach; ill health stems from entire supply chain; degenerative diseases suggest how food is grown and delivered is important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment Policy</td>
<td>Should not dislocate market forces; long supply chain; global reach for affluent consumers.</td>
<td>Has to be built into food practices; short supply chains where possible; bioregionalism for all?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Policy</td>
<td>Family responsibility; plus welfare safety net.</td>
<td>Population approach; the state applies correctives to imbalances between individual and social forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>Individuals should be responsible for flood within market rules.</td>
<td>Societal responsibility should be based on citizenship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price Policy</td>
<td>Cheapness of food may externalize costs</td>
<td>It is false accounting if costs are externalized to other budget headings; costs should be internalized where possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Coordination</td>
<td>Primacy of economics; fragmented specialist decision making.</td>
<td>Social goals as significant as other policy goals; new mechanisms for integration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lang et al. (2002: 73)
Food policy development has long been considered the responsibility of higher government levels but Wiskerke (2009: 376) considers ‘cities and metropolitan regions’ are ‘new actors with regard to food policy design and implementation’. Despite individual strategy differences, all these actors seek to ‘connect and create synergies between different public domains, such as public health, education, social cohesion, environmental protection, employment and quality of life’ (Wiskerke 2009: 376). Policy makers in selected cities around the world, for example Toronto, Vancouver, Amsterdam and Kampala, have embedded such integrated food policies into existing policies and plans (Mendes 2006; Morgan 2009). Other cities, like London (see Reynolds 2009) and Melbourne, have adopted discrete food policies which interact with other key council policies, plans and strategies. In contrast to a siloed approach, these holistic approaches include health and wellbeing, social and cultural considerations, environmental impacts as well as economic benefits (Reynolds 2009). This research will also contribute other examples of local government food policies from the participating councils.

While local government’s role in food policy development is vital, policy development of this magnitude necessitates collaboration across and between government levels recognising that ‘policy outcomes at each level are impacted by, and part of, the dynamics at the other levels’ (Lang et al. 2002:76). To undertake these comprehensive food policy processes requires ‘integration across jurisdictions, such as health, agriculture, environment and social policy’ as in the ecological health model (Rideout et al. 2007: 570). In Australia food policy is spread across wider macroeconomic and microeconomic policies, financial regulation, infrastructure provision, trade practices regulation as well as health and welfare systems (DAFF 2011:5). Both the federal and state and territory governments have mandated power to address food regulations. While traditional

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local government food policy involvement includes environmental health, food safety and community food services. This fragmented silo approach\(^\text{16}\) allows inconsistencies, overlap and gaps to exist (DAFF 2011: vi). As a result food problems are not addressed in an integrated and coordinated way by government resulting in policy decisions made at one level or in one area having significant ramifications in other food security areas (PMSEIC 2010: 2, 45).\(^\text{17}\) Division of responsibilities for food over different government departments requires an integrated approach to ensure progress towards food policy. Local government needs food policy connections with the upper levels of government that facilitate addressing the complex challenges, discussed in this section, that challenge municipal capacity.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY AND THE FOOD SECURITY CONTINUUM

According to Allen (1999:118) the food security concept replaced the 1980s reactionary medical model of hunger and malnutrition because of its preventative approach concentrating on determinants of hunger. Yet both concepts can co-

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\(^{16}\) The Australian Government Departments involved in broad food-related policies and programs are listed below:
- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
- Department of Finance and Deregulation
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
- Department of Health and Ageing
- Department of Infrastructure and Transport
- Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government
- Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
- The Treasury (DAFF 2011: iv).

There are also a large number of regulatory bodies that function within these departments that directly or indirectly impact food.

\(^{17}\) In 2011, after the data collection phase of this research was completed, the Australian Government initiated steps towards a National Food Plan. The process included a discussion paper and green paper with corresponding community consultation processes. The final white paper, *National Food Plan* was released on 25 May 2013. See http://www.daff.gov.au/nationalfoodplan for further details.

It is the opinion of the researcher that the National Food Plan does not necessarily link with local government food policies but that discussion is outside the scope of this research.
exist, with anti-hunger initiatives focusing on short term and immediate food provision and food security initiatives at a community level primarily address capacity building and redesigning the food system (Winne et al. 1997: 6).

This three stage response forms a Food Security Continuum, with corresponding activity examples, is explained in Table 2. The first stage addresses immediate food security problems in the community while in Stage Two food security capacity building initiatives facilitate transitional food system changes. Stage Three seeks to bring institutional change using policy instruments and advocacy (McCullum et al. 2005: 276). There is no singular solution to food insecurity, poverty and hunger. Yet while emergency and short-term food security solutions are important in society, these strategies are unsustainable, and sustainability necessitates longer term solutions (Miewald et al. 2007:4-5).

Conventional food security initiatives concentrate on individual and/or household level, food assistance and social welfare; whereas community food security (CFS) takes a more structural view of the current food system, with focus on longer term sustainable access and availability of food (Pothukuchi et al. 2002: 5). CFS advocates value food access as a basic human right and seek to eliminate hunger through an equitable and just food system (Allen 1999: 119; Pothukuchi et al. 2002: 5). Such a food system is founded on long-term food security, equitable regional agricultural economies and food self-reliance, with community participation in decision making (Allen 1999: 119-120).

Table 2: The Food Security Continuum from a Food Systems Perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage One</td>
<td>Initial Food Systems Change through short-term relief</td>
<td>Emergency food relief e.g. food banks. Addresses immediate hunger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Two</td>
<td>Food systems in transition through capacity building</td>
<td>Food programs e.g. community gardens and kitchens empower people through education and training. Raise awareness of food issues. Create multi-sector partnerships and networks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Three</td>
<td>Food systems redesign for sustainability</td>
<td>Redesigning food system through advocacy, policies, social enterprises aimed at improving economic, environmental and social sustainability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Provincial Health Services Authority (2008:7) and McCullum et al. (2005:279).
Yet, ‘for better or worse, the corporate-dominated market food system is here to stay for the foreseeable future’ (Pothukuchi 2004: 360). In this competitive, profit-driven approach to the food system government input is constrained. Higher levels of government withdraw from confronting these corporate neoliberal drivers, resulting in misalignment between government levels. Local government capacity is constrained by inadequacies in the relationships between different government levels and their inability to examine their own capacity to address systemic food system problems. At the municipal level individual councils must work within their internal capacity levels to respond to food security problems that vary from council to council. Therefore, their approaches differ from more immediate solutions through to a focus on long-term systemic change depending on their existing capacity to act.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In summary, this chapter examined local government’s capacity within the existing governance framework in terms of efficiency versus social outcomes as well as governance and financial limitations on devolved authority, roles and responsibilities. It highlights the problems of fit between local government and higher government levels when the foundational driver is economic efficiency. Furthermore, open conversations and scholarly research about the importance of social and community needs as a whole-of-government priority are necessary in order to progress solutions.

Local government is placed within a complicated neoliberal governance system, with individual states imposing different statutory requirements and holding the ‘purse strings’. Local government is caught in a tension between upper level obligations and providing services to their constituents, within a context of too many competing tasks, restricted legislative powers and limited funds. Efficiency is the predominant driver in the current neoliberal context with human service needs taking a back seat. Complex problems over multi-levels cannot however, be measured solely by economic value and raise questions about local
government’s capacity to respond. Local government needs decision-making authority and financial resources to be available to local government to address such problems evidenced in municipalities. Give-and-take authority and reliance on external funding from higher levels of government make long-term capacity difficult.

New public management reforms changed the culture of local government. These changes affect its capacity to provide food security in several ways: capacity to take up new issues that are not seen as a priority by higher levels of government; limited resources; a corporate management structure based on efficiency and reporting; the consequential silo departmental approach to planning and programs; and an organisational cultural insecurity due to restructuring and change.

Complex and multi-level problems like food security do not fit neatly into traditional local (or State, for that matter) government systems and processes. Involvement in food security is not a statutory requirement for local government, yet currently relies on individual municipal responses. According to the food security continuum, responses fall into three stages ranging from emergency food relief, capacity building, through to food system redesign. Current local government food-related roles include health and community services, strategic and statutory planning, and food policy development. These roles are undergoing change and redevelopment in the face of complex contemporary problems. Local government needs the support of higher levels of government to have the capacity to effectively address these new and complex sustainability challenges within their municipalities.

Normative suggestions for strengthening local government’s capacity in the governance structure (Bell 2007: 173) include enacting the principle of subsidiarity. In practice, this means:

Decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen and that serious questions should be asked as to whether action at higher levels is justified in light of the possibilities available at the lower levels of government. (Gallop 2005: 17).
Governance foundations built on this principle legitimise the work of local government at the community level. It would underpin recognition of the unique role local government plays in responding to local needs, providing leadership, advocating for local priorities and civic pride (Bell 2007: 175) as well as service provision. Yet, on the other hand, it creates tension between government levels because resource allocation and capacity to respond would need to be shifted to this lowest level. This principle lies at the heart of increased capacity for local government but is not currently implemented, as shown by the above literature review. This research explores the ways in which misalignment between government levels prevents local government from fulfilling this leadership role as exemplified by the in-situ example of municipal food security. It considers the implications of these limitations and discusses potential advances.
CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF CAPACITY

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two placed this research within the context of neoliberal governance and NPM approaches to local government, which emphasise efficiency, devolved responsibilities and cost-shifting, and dependency on higher levels of government funding and regulatory systems. Local government is pressured by community expectations and the complexity of contemporary human needs within a context of management and service delivery reforms. Blurring of responsibilities within a fragmented government framework challenges local government capacity to respond to multi-level and complex issues, such as food security.

Chapter Three examines theoretical understandings about capacity that underpin this research. Capacity is a useful and relevant construct used across scales, in different contexts to explain links between effectiveness, efficiency and performance. The processes and structures that enable capacity are as important as the outcomes but are often overlooked. Organisations can also hold latent capacity waiting to be triggered and put to use.

The chapter explains that public sector literature focuses on elements of organisational and managerial capacity. This research, however, uses institutional capacity as a conceptual lens because it implies connections between organisations, or what is considered as fit between elements in the public sector. Furthermore, the chapter explores the notion that contemporary institutional capacity needs an adaptive governance approach when addressing multi-level and complex sustainability problems. The chapter then investigates the relational fit between government levels. No organisation is a silo but rather is influenced by external environments that influence fit. Current government structures seldom allow feedback from recipients’ experience and can be mismatched to practice. Fit-for-purpose governance aligns objectives, context and anticipated outcomes; an important concept for strategic planning capacity building.
Thus, institutional capacity building is examined as an important strategy to strengthen existing capacity of an organisation to act. Often capacity building is undertaken collaboratively across sectors through partnership arrangements because complex issues are intersectoral and have unclear jurisdictional homes. The aim of capacity building partnerships is to synergistically fulfill common objectives but constraints within local government and its external environment can limit capacity building impacts. In response to potential mismatches in the fit between institutional levels, the chapter discusses four existing capacity assessment frameworks drawn from diverse literature. A new heuristic framework is introduced that links the wider external environment, the capacity building task network and the recipient internal level of local government. The chapter ends with discussing the application of this framework to local government’s response to the complex food security challenge.

THE CONSTRUCT OF CAPACITY

A bibliometric analysis of academic journals that include articles about capacity by Christensen and Gazley (2008: 270-273) found that business, public institutional and non-profit management capacity were all represented, although not always cross-cited between disciplines. Several separate literature discourses result in limited collaborative understanding of capacity. Capacity is multi-dimensional (O’Toole & Meier 2010: 344) and can be used to explain phenomena at different scales ranging from the individual, a firm or organisation, a number of organisations to nation states (Christensen & Gazley 2008: 274; Cornforth & Mordaunt 2011: 431). Within these scales capacity is used in multiple contexts (Bryan 2011: 2) adding to the complexity of definition. Blurring occurs between the terms ‘capacity’, ‘capacity-building’, ‘capabilities’ and ‘competencies’ (Honadle 1981: 575-577; Fiszbein 1997: 1031; Cairns et al. 2005: 873-874; Christensen & Gazley 2008: 266; Bryan 2011: 8-13), yet capacity remains a useful and relevant construct.
Capacity is categorised by type in scholarly discourses. In a private organisational context, Yu-Lee (2002:1) proposes capacity represents an organisation’s ‘ability to perform work’ demonstrated in the usage of ‘space, labor (sic), equipment, technology and materials’. Within the public sector capacity is defined as ‘government’s intrinsic ability to marshall, develop, direct and control its financial, human, physical and information resources’ (Ingraham et al. 2003:15), emphasising the role of management in utilising existing capacity to achieve a good result (see also Eisinger 2002:117). Differentiating factors include organisational functions, processes, resources and ability to adapt and change (Cornforth & Mordaunt 2011:341-342), as well as knowledge and learning capacity, and collaborative capacity (Bryan 2011:7). Organisational and managerial capacities are prime foci in scholarly literature because they are common to all sectors (see Table 3). These capacities involve inputs, processes and desired outcomes; although inputs, such as competent personnel (Mead et al. 1979: 17), obtaining resources (Honadle & Howitt 1986: 2) and existing capacity (Eisinger 2002: 117) are given less attention.

Table 3: Definitions of Capacity that Focus on Organisational and Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burgess (1975: 706-707)</td>
<td>Public management capacity involves policy, resource and program management elements.</td>
<td>Involves strategic functions of leadership, administrative and support functions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Howitt (1978: 325) | To provide public services effectively and efficiently, identify incipient problems and develop, evaluate, and implement policy alternatives. | Efficiency  
Effectiveness  
Problem identification  
Management  
Evaluation  
Policy implementation |
| Mead et al. (1979: 17-37) | A local government with good management capacity will have a mixture the qualities below:  
- Competent administrators  
- Sound fiscal management practices  
- Equity in public policy  
- Open decision making  
- Effective and efficient service delivery  
- Information management | Variety of ways to demonstrate capacity in individual local governments (p.37) but competent personnel and sound fiscal policy are universal (p.17). |

18 The Macquarie Dictionary (3rd ed.) defines the public sector as ‘the sector of an economy which is owned and operated by government and government authorities’.
Source | Definition | Themes
---|---|---
Honadle and Howitt (1986: 2) | The ability to identify problems; develop policies to deal with these problems; devise programs to implement the policies; attract and absorb financial, human, information, and capital resources effectively to operate the programs; manage those resources well; and evaluate program outcomes to guide future activities. | Problem identification, Strategies, Obtain and manage resources for programs, Develop policies, Evaluate programs
Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995: 445) | ‘Capacity is the ability to perform appropriate tasks effectively, efficiently and sustainably.’ | Efficiency, Effectiveness, Sustainability, Public sector performance
Eisinger (2002: 117) | Capacity is a set of attributes that help or enable an organisation to fulfill its missions. | Strong emphasis on role of management to use existing capacity.
Ingraham et al. (2003:15) | Government’s intrinsic ability to marshall, develop, direct and control its financial, human, physical and information resources. | Manage resources and information.
Sowa et al. (2004: 715) | ‘Capacity’ refers to how the organisation or program operates; the structures in place; and the processes that dictate and direct employee action. | Measured by structures and processes not only outcomes.
Christensen and Gazley (2008: 265) | Resources and conditions necessary to achieve effectiveness. Capacity can be an input, throughput, resource and a process. | Linked to performance in Public administration

Capacity defined in organisational and managerial terms can be quantified by indicators. As such, Sowa et al. (2004:712,715) introduces a model of organisational effectiveness measured by management and program performance, deconstructed to capacity (understood as processes and structures) and outcome indicators. Using both performance and process/structure indicators is important because organisations are often measured by outcomes but the ‘complex and diverse dynamics that may vary across and within organizations and programs’ that enable or hinder the outcomes are ignored (Sowa et al. 2004: 715). These ‘behind the scenes’ inputs and processes add rich information to the understanding of capacity. These quieter process and structural elements include management of existing capacity (Eisinger 2002: 117), strategic leadership, program capacity (Sowa et al. 2004: 719), administrative support functions (Burgess 1975: 706-707), technology use ( Sowa et al. 2004: 715), problem identification and evaluation (Howitt 1978: 325; Honadle & Howitt 1986: 2),
human resource management (Sowa et al. 2004: 715) and other resources (Honadle & Howitt 1986:2; Ingraham et al. 2003: 15), and sound fiscal policy (Mead et al. 1979: 17). All these elements contribute to local government’s organisational and managerial capacity as illustrated in Figure 1.

Further, Eisinger (2002: 116-117) emphasises that organisations can have internal capacities that remain latent until activated to fulfill their goals. Therefore, the measure of local government capacity is being able to draw upon this latent or active capacity to fit strategies with functions performed in any given context and time (Kettl 1986: 49).

![Figure 1: Elements of Public Sector Capacity from Organisational & Management Perspectives](image)

Capacity outputs are linked to effectiveness, efficiency and performance. According to Ingraham et al. (2002: 2) capacity is ‘a platform for performance – a measure of positive or negative potential to obtain desired program results and policy outcomes’. Links are made between management capacity (Meier &

In summary, the way management structures (including leadership roles, organisational processes, resource allocation and programs), are undertaken internally impacts local government capacity. Capacity measurement is linked to performance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, however, this discussion so far only relates to elements that contribute to internal capacity of an organisation but local government is part of a nested and interactive governance structure. Therefore, capacity needs to also encapsulate the relationship between government levels and resulting capacity implications.

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY: THE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The most comprehensive list of capacity types is found in Christensen and Gazley (2008: 274), however, institutional (and adaptive) capacity is omitted. Local government, as part of the public sector institution, is linked to multi-level government interactions that therefore necessitates a broader appreciation and articulation of capacity.

This research uses institutional capacity as its central perspective because this construct infers the idea of fit between different levels of organisations as well as considering the internal workings of individual organisations\(^{19}\). This connection

\(^{19}\) Relevant research examples into institutional capacity in the public sector include:

- performance in international development (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995; Batley & Larbi 2004)
- management (Honadle & Howitt 1986; Honadle 2001); Community (Cavaye, 1999; Chaskin 2001)
- social capital and local government capacity (Wallis & Dollery 2002)
- performance and organisational capacity (Christensen & Gazley 2008)
- governance and institutional capacity (Cars et al. 2002)
- rural local government and natural resource management (Pini et al. 2007).
is reinforced between organisations and institutions as organisations incrementally impact institutional structure while institutional constraints shape organisational structures and functions\(^\text{20}\) (North 1990: 5, 73-74). Institutional capacity within urban water management emphasises ‘the ability of the whole institution, from individuals through to organisations and the legislative and policy instruments used, to undertake a task’ (van de Meene et al. 2009: 1922). Institutional connections are also used in a collaborative planning context to tackle social and environmental issues that require the ‘ability of administrative and government organizations and agencies to respond to and manage…through decision-making, planning and implementation processes’ (Polk 2011: 187). Institutional capacity involves a cluster of organisations using their own capacity, and importantly, their collective capacity in a synergistic way in order to respond effectively to complex sustainability problems.

The construct of institutional capacity is further defined. Administration and institutional capacity are linked to become ‘administrative institutional capacity’ when describing the type of capacity needed to create program and policy outcomes (Jeong 2007: 86). This linking sets a precedent to allow further defining elements, such as ‘adaptive’ to be coupled with institutional capacity as ‘adaptive institutional capacity’ (Bettini & Brown 2011: 2). Addressing complex issues across multiple governance levels requires adaptive institutional capacity. Examining scholarly literature from disciplines that already embed the concept of adaption into theory assists with understanding its links with institutional capacity. Within resource governance, adaption refers to the potential alteration of processes and further conversion of structural elements if required in response to societal and natural environment changes (Pahl-Wostl 2009: 355). Adaptive institutional capacity necessitates flexibility and complexity rather than a rigid and

\[\begin{itemize}
  \item Institutional change and ecosystem management (Pritchard et al. 1998; Imperial 1999)
  \item Local government capacity in sustainable urban stormwater management (Brown et al. 2006; van de Meene et al. 2009, 2010)
\end{itemize}\]

\(^{20}\) North (1990: 3) explains institutions as the ‘rules of the game in a society’ or ‘the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction’. Pahl-Wostl (2009: 356) separates formal (governmental bureaucracies) from informal (socially shared rules) institutions based on their different ‘processes of development, codification, communication and enforcement’.
hierarchical approach to ecosystem management (Cortner et al. 1998: 161). Similarly, urban storm water and environmental management literature assists the understanding of institutional capacity in adapting to new issues (see Bettini & Brown 2011: 1-8). Resilience is a result of adaptive capacity but an in-depth discussion of this concept is outside the bounds of the research, except to say that potential links are drawn between environmental and social resilience (Adger 2000: 347; Folke 2006: 260), which includes institutional resilience (Adger 2000: 351). In summary, contemporary literature stresses the need for flexible and resilient institutional capacity.

**Conceptualising the Fit between Institutional Levels**

The construct of ‘fit’ between different institutional levels is theorised within several different discourses. Scholarly literature from the ecosystem management, public administration, storm water management and international development disciplines provides grounding in its use. The richness provided by these diverse literary foundations articulates how this research will use fit to critique the interconnections between government levels and explain the resulting impacts on local government capacity.

The ecosystem management discourse explains the concept of fit using a systems-based example. While the concept of fit is familiar to ecosystems, the linking of ecosystems and socioeconomic-cultural systems is of particular interest to this research. These two systems are ‘interdependent dimensions’ requiring a deep understanding of their characteristics and how they fit together as ‘a new systemic totality’ (Folke et al. 2007: n.p.). Not only does the concept of fit link the ‘environment’ with the ‘social’ but it provides observations about where and how this relational connection works. These authors continue to explain this process as occurring ‘in a specific geographical space, be it on a micro level or a macro level, while recognizing the drivers of change internally and externally’ (Folke et al. 2007: n.p.). Successfully aligning the complexity of connections across different levels amidst constant change drivers can be problematic, and is referred to as ‘the problem of fit’ (Folke et al. 2007: n.p.).
Yet successful governance fit is vital to local government capacity in the pursuit of solutions for sustainability problems, such as food security. Again, within ecosystem management research, according to Rijke et al. (2012: 80) scholars address this problem of fit through:

system evaluation (Ekstrom & Young 2009), understanding different types of misfits (Galaz et al. 2008) and increasing understanding of adaptive (Pritchard et al. 1998; Olsson et al. 2007) and polycentric governance arrangements (Ostrom 2010).21

Transferring the problem of fit concept from ecosystem management to the public sector assists in the conceptualisation of lack of fit between institutional levels. No public sector organisation is a completely self-reliant silo but is rather part of an open organisational system, subject to the influences of others (Honadle 1981b:3). Stormwater management provides a good example of the ‘traditional implementation arm and top-down recipient of State policy’ whereby dominant vertical and technocentric governance structures are combined with siloed horizontal department relationships in local government (Brown 2005: 464). Complex vertical (external) relationships between higher levels of government and resulting horizontal (internal) limitations impact the internal capacity of local government to successfully address pressing municipal challenges.

The problem of ‘fit’ between institutional levels can also be explained in terms of external and internal relationships as intimated above. Within an international development research context Batley and Larbi (2004) explain two main implications of the idea of this external ‘fit’ between governance levels and corresponding links to internal capacity of a recipient organisation. Firstly, organisational reforms or capacity building in an organisation can fail because they do not consider the operational context in which they are situated, such as institutional regulation and norms, community expectations or wider economic influences (Batley & Larbi 2004: 19). Secondly, the concept of ‘fit’ suggests public sector organisations ‘need to adapt their organizational arrangements and skills to changing institutional environments’, such as new technological

21 Ostrom argues that institutional policy arrangements should not depend on simple solutions but rather be ‘willing to deal with complexity’ in explaining ‘the world of interactions and outcomes occurring at multiple levels’ (2010: 25).
advances, increasing community demands or changing economic conditions (Batley & Larbi 2004: 19-20). There are inextricable links between external fit and internal organisational capacity.

Capacity requirements change over time depending on the type of task and individual contexts (for example geographical, sectoral, differing activities or organisational cultures) in which organisations operate (Batley & Larbi 2004: 20). Support for contextual diversity also comes from wider literature. Each community is somewhat unique (Gargan 1981: 652) with the result that capacity levels are influenced by the social, economic and political contexts, geographical locations and timeframes (Howitt & Honadle 1986: 334; Honadle 2001: 80-83). Performing tasks is not a ‘universal list’ but ‘appropriate tasks are those defined by necessity, history or situation in specific contexts’ (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 445). Further, Sindall (1997: 6) suggests that effective intersectoral collaboration not only involves developing ‘the capacity for joint working, but also our ability to read, interpret and ultimately to shape the context in which collaboration occurs’. Research in Italy’s regional government areas found some governments are ‘consistently more successful than others, more efficient in their internal operations, more creative in their policy initiatives, more effective in implementing those initiatives’ even with the same structures (Putnam 1993: 77-78). Similarly, research measuring 45 local governments’ sustainable urban water management performances found that capacity varied on a continuum from ‘high’ to ‘low’ with ‘average’ spread across the middle (Brown 2008: 224). The measure of capacity within individual organisations varies within different contexts necessitating understanding not only of internal contributing factors but the impact of all pertinent external relationships.

As a result, it can be argued that public sector organisations should only attempt reforms and tasks for which they have capacity to achieve (Batley & Larbi 2004:

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22 The reasons for this difference in performance, according to Putnam (1993), stem from varying levels of civic community. See Putnam (1993: 79-120) for a discussion on the elements of civic community. The important point for this research is that capacity of government varies within contextual diversity.
20). Resources and management have the most consistent influence on performance with some evidence that more money and better management may improve performance (Boyne 2003:390). As a result Boyne (2003: 390) tentatively suggests reformers may be best ‘to leave regulatory arrangements, organizational structure, size, and market structure as changes to these variables may not lead to any better performance’. Consequently, undertaking a realistic and comprehensive critique of the fit between institutional levels before implementing new capacity initiatives may provide a clearer picture of existing capacity and enable strategic decision-making and performance.

**Potential Mismatches in Institutional Fit**

Complex multi-level problems require all levels of government to respond in an aligned and cohesive way. Realistically, however, misalignment of fit between levels can occur for several reasons: misjudging the appropriate scale and/or scope of appropriate responses; misalignment between objectives, contexts and anticipated outcomes; and limited opportunities to give feedback, adapt to uncertainty and provide governance flexibility.

*Scale and Scope*

Scale and timeframes elements are often omitted in institutional analysis (Pritchard et al. 1998: 19) but can be causes of mismatches in fit. Complex sustainability challenges do not fit neatly within the existing institutional rationale and procedures. Finding the ‘right’ scale to suit a problem is considered a conventional response, but Pritchard et al. (1998:19) argue that complex problems should be seen as ‘crossing and linking scales’ and therefore tackled simultaneously at several levels. In response, policies cannot be evaluated at one scale without consideration of the interactions with policies at other scales and timeframes (Pritchard et al. 1998: 20-21). Another important relationship for understanding fit is the potential mismatch between scope of a problem and managing institutions (Folke et al. 2007:15). This phenomenon occurs for three reasons: a mismatch between top-down forces that do not allow feedback and realistic ‘on-the-ground’ processes; the unrelated nature of one external driver’s impact on other areas; and local institutional responses to these drivers and forces.
(Pritchard et al. 1998: 21). Finding the appropriate scale and scope in response to complex sustainability problems avoids mismatches in institutional fit. Using a fit-for-purpose governance framework reduces the likelihood of such mismatches.

**Fit-for-purpose governance structures**

The concept of fit-for-purpose governance seeks to align response objectives, contexts and outcomes (Rijke et al. 2012). There is a call for nested governance to provide an adaptive approach to complex institutionally-related problems (see Pritchard et al. 1998; Folke et al. 2007). In respond Rijke et al. (2012: 80) developed a ‘fit-for-purpose’ framework to evaluate present and future adaptive governance structures, processes and functions. The framework responds to three observed capacity constraints: ambiguous aims, vague contextual conditions and lack of effectiveness evaluation (Rijke et al. 2012: 74). As a result, the framework measures effectiveness ‘of existing and proposed governance mechanisms to fulfil their purpose in a particular context’ (Rijke et al. 2012: 76). This model stresses the importance of strategic alignment and realistic decision-making when formulating responses to complex problems.

**Lack of opportunity for feedback, uncertainty and flexibility**

Complex problems can generate ill-informed siloed top-down institutional responses that lack opportunity for feedback, are incapable of dealing appropriately with uncertainty or are mismatched to the on-the-ground realities. External driving forces are only one-way which inhibit any ‘feedback from the consequences they engender’ (Pritchard et al. 1998: 21). Conventional ‘tight fit’ management is equated to success and efficiency but constrains diversity and resilient responses (Pritchard et al. 1998: 16). Using the example of resource governance regimes Pahl-Wostl (2009: 355) argues that path-dependency required to consolidate element interdependence can limit change and develop into ‘lock-in-situations’ where a dominant established pathway leads to inferior performance but ‘excludes non-compatible approaches’. For example, a command-control pathway excludes active stakeholder participation (Pahl-Wostl 2009: 355). An alternative governance model promotes flexibility and self-organisation (Rijke et al. 2012: 76) which accommodates uncertainty in policy implementation (Pritchard et al. 1998: 28). These conceptualisations create a mismatch with
current institutional frameworks based on the ‘predict and control paradigm’ aiming to reduce uncertainty (Rijke et al. 2012: 76).

Local government capacity depends on the relationships between itself and the higher government levels embraced within the concept of fit. Complex sustainability problems cross all levels of government and require nested and synergistic responses. Intersectoral capacity building initiatives are significant opportunities to develop relational partnerships that enhance capacity to respond successfully to complex challenges.

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH INTERSECTORAL COLLABORATION

Similar to ‘capacity’, ‘capacity building’ is a broad, inconsistent and ill-defined construct (Cairns et al. 2005: 873-874; Cornforth & Mordaunt 2011: 430) which Harrow (2001: 226) assesses as ‘theoretically homeless’. A number of articles discuss both constructs, alternating from one to the other throughout (see Honadle 1981a; Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995; Cornforth & Mordaunt 2011). Obviously these constructs are linked but it can be confusing because they have different meanings. As a result, it is important to clearly separate and articulate the differences between the two constructs. Talking about organisational capacity building, Cornforth and Mordaunt (2011:431) reinforce the importance of clarity in understanding ‘what is meant by capacity building, the level it is being aimed at, the different types of capacity that may be built or developed and to understand the different forms it may take’. Further, Harrow (2001: 227) emphasises the need for clarity to enhance evaluation outputs and outcomes. One way to bring clarity about capacity building and its relationship to institutional capacity is to use case study applications which draw out a richness of the constructs in-situ (see Chapters Five, Six and Seven).

Capacity building initiatives attempt to strengthen a public sector organisation’s existing capacity to address a particular problem. As Healey et al. (2002:22) suggests, capacity building is important because it promotes ‘institutional
capacities which are desirable from the point of view of distributive justice and human flourishing’. Table 4 shows the evolution in scholarly definitions of capacity building within the public sector. Initial emphasis is placed on increasing the institution’s self-sufficiency as Lindley (1975: 797) suggests or its capability to be independent and resilient to vulnerability (Brown 1980: 21). Furthermore, Burgess (1975: 706) and Honadle (1981a:1) expand the idea of building the institution’s management ability while Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995:445) and Brown et al. (2006: C5-2) link capacity building to performance improvement. Wakely (1997:1) recognises these different contexts in terms of three levels of development; human resource, organisational and institutional, but Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995: 443) question whether ‘organizational strengthening’ and/or ‘training activities’ are the most efficient public sector capacity building efforts. These authors make the point that these activities assume individual organisations can improve performance given that the organisations are also part of wider influencing contexts that affect their capacity to perform (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 443). As such, it is important to look at the impact of externally led capacity building initiatives on the internal capacity of local government to respond to complex challenges; in this research, food security.

Table 4: Scholarly Definitions of Institutional Capacity-building

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Definitions (quoted from texts)</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lindley (1975: 797)</td>
<td>To enhance the capability of local governments to perform intelligently and efficiently under their own direction.</td>
<td>Self-sufficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burgess (1975: 706)</td>
<td>Any federal activity (including grants, contracts, and technical assistance) a primary purpose of which is to strengthen the capability of federal, state, and/or local government officials to manage their programs, to provide services to their constituents, or to manage their over-all jurisdictional or inter-jurisdictional responsibilities.</td>
<td>Policy management Resource management Program management (p. 707)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown (1980: 21)</td>
<td>The primary goal of this approach is to develop the capacity of rural areas and the governmental jurisdictions within them to manage their own affairs, and to more effectively protect and promote their interests and decrease their vulnerability to disruptive changes coming from without.</td>
<td>Capability Independence Protection from outside forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honadle (1981a :1)</td>
<td>The term “capacity-building” denotes helping a unit of government improve its ability to manage</td>
<td>Improvement in management ability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Capacity building is often undertaken through collaborative processes. A common method of capacity building in public institutions is intersectoral collaboration, particularly using partnership models. Intersectoral collaboration involves stakeholders from different sectors working together over a given timeframe in order to achieve common objectives (Gray 1985: 912; Roberts & Bradley 1991: 212; Roussos & Fawcett 2000: 370-371). Collaboration is an important element in health promotion activity (such as the food security case studies in this research), particularly in addressing broad social and economic determinants. In a world of turbulent change (Gray 1989: 27) where issues are complex and diverse, and resources scarce, the health sector needs to work with other sectors (Thompson & Stachenko 1994: 214) and across governance levels as unilateral action is not adequate (Gray 1989: 28). These societal level problems, according to Trist (1983: 270) are ‘domain[s] of common concern’ being ‘too extensive and too many-sided to be coped with by any single organization’. They are meta-problems requiring inter-organisational attention, such as ‘finding new solutions to complex policy problems’ (Geddes 2000: 784). Within this collaborative arrangement partners can extend their own visions and create a synergy that extends beyond their own capacity (Gray 1989:5; Thompson & Stachenko 1994: 21). This new synergy ‘creates something new and valuable together’ which can ‘stimulate constructive thinking’ (Lasker et al. 2001:184) within the collaborative decision making processes.
Collaboration through intersectoral action (IA) is utilised by the new public health movement\textsuperscript{23} as an essential part of achieving objectives. The Declaration of Alma-Ata in 1978 introduced the connection between health, social and economic development with action consequently required across sectors, and was followed by debate on ‘inter-sectoral action for health’ at the World Health Assembly (Talbot & Verrinder 2005: 245, 248). Strategies in line with this ‘social view of health’ include the development of ‘healthy public policy and supportive environments for health, which would necessitate ‘action outside of the health sector, generally in partnerships with the health sector’ and ‘accountability for the health consequences of decisions taken in all sectors of government’ (Nutbeam 1994: 143). The World Health Organisation (WHO) Conference on Intersectoral Action for Health in 1997 called for visionary collaborative efforts, led by innovative leadership (Public Health Agency in Canada 2007: 5). More recently, Crosby and Bryson (2010: 211) introduced ‘integrative public leadership’, a model that requires government organisational leaders not only ‘to inspire, mobilize, and sustain their own agencies’ but ‘lead across sector boundaries to foster the requisite relationships and resource flows needed to produce desirable outcomes’. Yet workforce rationalisation also squeezes out time and resources for new initiatives that do not directly contribute to core accountabilities or objectives. Such efficiency models militate against collaborative action and encourage further segmentation, evident in differential sectoral languages, communication processes and agendas (Sindall 1997: 6).

Collaborative capacity building partnerships can strengthen an organisation’s internal capacity to address a problem that requires multi-level responses. Within a constricted neoliberal governance context capacity building exemplifies synergistic opportunities to extend capacity past day-to-day efficiency outputs to address more complex social problems often beyond the scope of an organisation’s existing capacity.

\textsuperscript{23} The ‘new public health movement’ is based ‘in a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which life styles and living conditions determine health statuses, and a recognition of the need to mobilize resources and make sound investments in policies, programs and services which create, maintain and protect health by supporting healthy lifestyles and creating supportive environments for health’ (Nutbeam 1998: 3).
CAPACITY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS (CAF)

Scholars call for more methods for rigorously evaluating institutional capacity building processes (Harrow 2001: 226; Healey et al. 2002: 22; Ivey et al. 2006: 946) that improve effectiveness (Ivey et al. 2006: 946; Cornforth & Mordaunt 2011: 430:]. A number of scholars use conceptual frameworks to improve the strategic planning of capacity building initiatives and/or to evaluate existing and potential capacity building exercises to identify gaps and develop enhanced intervention strategies (Hilderbrand & Grindle 1994: 14; Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 444). Limited research and assistance is given to guide assessment processes of institutional capacity (Brown et al. 2006: 5-3). A comparison of institutional barriers against a capacity assessment framework (CAF) enables this research to highlight targeted capacity building interventions (Brown & Farrelly 2009: 840). The CAF needs to include contextual analysis because of interdependence between different levels (Dahlberg 1993: 77).

Four CAF examples from literature are discussed below: firstly, Hilderbrand and Grindle (1994), Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995); then Larbi (1998), Batley and Larbi (2004); Brown et al. (2006) that was also used by van de Meene et al. (2009); and finally Christensen and Gazley (2008). A detailed and diagrammatical explanation of each model is provided in Appendix A. All these models attempt to heuristically explain the relationships between contexts, collaborative processes and external factors that influence the capacity of recipient organisations or levels.

The first framework was developed by Hilderbrand and Grindle (1994) to evaluate the capacity of the public sector in international development. Hilderbrand and Grindle (1994: 14) explain the purpose of their five dimension framework as ‘a tool for decision makers and managers…to assess constraints, capacity gaps, and opportunities and also as the basis for developing intervention strategies for more effective capacity’. These authors define ‘capacity as the ability to perform appropriate tasks effectively, efficiently and sustainably’.

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24 Interestingly the authors were concerned about some international development capacity-building initiatives negatively affecting non-government organisations and focusing ‘too much on
clarifying that often factors which influence public sector outcomes are situated in an outside context or network (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 445). Succinctly Hilderbrand and Grindle explain this interactive process of fit between levels and the resulting impact on the internal capacity of the organisation as:

The central unit of analysis in the framework is an organization charged with performing all or part of the task. But, as we have argued, organizations do not exist in a vacuum. Rather they are embedded in complex environments that affect their ability to carry out tasks effectively and efficiently (1994: C2).

The five dimensions used to measure this interactive process range from the wider economic, political and social influences (labeled ‘the action environment’); the regulatory context (‘institutional context of public sector’); mapping organisations working together for a particular task (‘the task network’); internal capacity of organisations (‘organisations’); and employee systems (‘human resources’).

The authors operationalised this framework researching public institutional capacity using six developing country case studies across the globe. Grindle and Hilderbrand explained their findings about constraints that stem from the fit between levels:

The studies demonstrated the extent to which performance can be constrained by a wide variety of factors. They also indicate the extent to which the five dimensions of capacity are interdependent. In general, interventions to improve performance are most difficult to make and take the longest time-horizon to demonstrate results at the broadest level of the action environment. Constraints that occur at the level of the organizational network, the organization itself, or the preparation and use of human resources are likely to be much more tractable and remedied more quickly. Nevertheless, an important finding of the studies is that remedies introduced at the human resource, organizational, or interorganizational level may not produce improvements if constraints along other dimensions of capacity are more binding (1995: 448).

The essence of the findings is that capacity building initiatives to strengthen performance are constrained predominantly by interactions in the wider economic, political and social environment, even to the point of no improvement. Internal organisational constraints are easier to remedy with more likelihood of enhanced capacity benefits.

“getting the job done” rather than on building sustained ability to carry out development-related functions’ (Hilderbrand & Grindle 1994: C2).
About the same time a similar framework emerged from an unpublished doctoral thesis by Larbi (1998: 164), and then again in Batley and Larbi (2004: 19). In this framework capacity ‘extends beyond human services quality as the new roles that government face requires a wider capacity assessment approach’ (Batley & Larbi 2004: 17-18). This approach appears influenced by Grindle and Hilderbrand’s (1995) five dimensional framework except Batley and Larbi’s (2004: 18-19) framework has three levels of analysis from internally in an organisation; then a wider network of organisations; to finally the broader ‘social, political and legal’ external contexts.

A case study methodology was used by Batley and Larbi across four developing countries examining the role of government in health care, urban water supply, business development and agricultural marketing (2004: 20-28). It involved a six step analysis of which the last was assessment of the government’s capacity to undertake these roles i.e. measurement of performance using three levels: intra and inter organisational capacity and extra-organization/institution conditions (Batley & Larbi 2004: 27-28). Findings included lack of attention to staged ‘reforms to meet existing capacity for implementation or to match reform ambitions to realities’ within varying country contexts (Batley & Larbi 2004: 235). Analysis revealed some problems are transitional while others are more institutional requiring different capacity building approaches from short-term to systemic rule changing (Batley & Larbi 2004: 236). Overall, they focus on the fit between levels and conclude that capacity building should target recognised and particular constraints that are adaptable to different contexts, sectors and timeframes (Batley & Larbi 2004: 236).

More recently, Brown et al. (2006: 5-2) examine institutional capacity within a sustainable urban water management (SUWM) context where current institutional systems inhibit the uptake of an agreed vision. The authors suggest it is vital to understand in-depth current institutional systems and map capacity needs through a model that uses four spheres: human resources; intra-organisational capacity; inter-organisational capacity; and external institutional rules and incentives.
The focus of this framework is the quality of capacity to act internally and in relationship with other spheres and are matched to capacity building interventions (Brown et al. 2006: 5-2). Qualitative SUWM research interviewing practitioners in Metropolitan Sydney by van de Meene et al. (2009: 1923) builds on this model by Brown et al. (2006), adding potential key attributes for each sphere to measure capacity in order to develop an institutional capacity assessment (ICA) framework (van de Meene et al. 2009: 1922). This research was later extended to include sustainability practitioners in Metropolitan Melbourne (van de Meene et al. 2010: 2243). ICA is considered vital to effective capacity building strategies by identifying the underlying constraints (van de Meene et al. 2009: 1922).

Lastly, Christensen and Gazley (2008: 268) synthesise a number of other frameworks (see Eisinger 2002; Boyne 2003; Forbes & Lynn 2006) focused on four capacity functions: organisational infrastructure; human resources; financial resources and management systems; and political and market characteristics. The purpose of this research is to understand the relationship between capacity and performance and how these two constructs are defined and operationalised within literature (Christensen & Gazley 2008: 276). The authors’ research does not include a separate task network level. Importantly however, Christensen and Gazley (2008: 276) found that although ‘the frameworks used to define capacity adequately capture its multidimensional nature’ a time dimension is often omitted in public sector management capacity literature. These four assessment frameworks provide the foundations needed for capacity assessment as well as finer nuances from different perspectives that contribute richness to this research’s understanding of fit.

Synthesis of Capacity Assessment Frameworks

This section draws similarities and differences between these frameworks in preparation for the development of a new capacity assessment framework for data analysis in this research. Finer elements, such as context diversity, type of task and timeframes, mentioned only briefly by scholars, also add richness to the framework’s development. Table 5 provides a summarised comparison of the
main five elements and other criteria discussed across the four CAF used in this research. Then, the section briefly discusses the overarching factors deemed important by the different scholars. Finally, it uses a tri-category analysis structure to elaborate on the similarities and differences between CAFs; task network, the internal environment, and the external environment.

Table 5: Comparison of Elements in Capacity Assessment Frameworks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholars</th>
<th>Overarching Factors</th>
<th>Task Network</th>
<th>Internal Capacity</th>
<th>Individual Capacity</th>
<th>External Enviro</th>
<th>Institutional Enviro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hilderbrand and Grindle (1995)</td>
<td>Sustainability Context</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batley and Larbi (2004)</td>
<td>Importance of fit between levels Time Context</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown et al. (2006)</td>
<td>Quality of Institutional Capacity</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christensen and Gazley (2008)</td>
<td>Time Context</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overarching Factors

All selected scholars recognise the role of specific and diverse contexts in the implementation of their capacity assessment frameworks. The context for Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995) and Batley and Larbi’s (2004) capacity building evaluation research is the national level, while for Brown et al. (2006) within urban water management organisations and Christensen and Gazley (2008) it is the sector level. Within each of these contexts, internal diversity occurs yet again. Batley and Larbi (2004) and Christensen and Gazley (2008) acknowledge the importance of two-way relationships between levels that vary not only within these individual contexts and over changing timeframes. Brown et al. (2006:5-1) are particularly interested in the quality of capacity to act that varies between organisations in response to institutional inertia25.

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25 This phenomena occurs ‘where the agreed vision for sustainable water management is not realised in the delivery of such outcomes in the current institutional system’ (Brown et al. 2006: 5-2).
Task Network

The task network encompasses those organisations working towards a particular task (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 445). Performance is influenced by communication processes, coordination, and implementation of responsibilities. Not all organisations in the task network may be in the public sector (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 447). According to Batley and Larbi (2004: 18) the wider network level includes coordination arrangements, such as roles, decision making and finances, within networks performing together on certain tasks. Brown et al. (2006) and van de Meene et al. (2009, 2010) describe this level as the inter-organisational sphere which includes interactions between organisations from general communication, information sharing through to formal agreements (van de Meene et al. 2010: 2242). The task network is not a focus of Christensen and Gazley’s framework; it simply uses internal and external interactions (2008: 268).

Internal Environment

Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995) and Christensen and Gazley (2008) separate human resources from organisational capacity and financial resources, management and infrastructure respectively. The human resources category focuses on how employees are recruited, utilised and retained in the public sector, particularly in terms of ‘managerial, professional, and technical talent’ and the influence of training and career aspirations on overall performance (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 447). Christensen and Gazley (2008: 266-267) base this decision on the four dimensions of management capacity created by Ingraham et al. (2003); the five categories that predict performance (Boyne 2003); and Eisinger’s capacity framework (2002). Brown et al. (2006) also separate the human resources sphere from the intra-organisational capacity sphere, due to the importance of technical and other knowledge, skills and expertise of individuals involved in SUWM. Organisations involve how the ‘structures, processes, resources and management styles’ affect goal establishment, work structure, power relations and incentives, which then ‘affect organizational output and shape the behaviour of those who work within them’ (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 447). Yet, Batley and Larbi (2004: 18) explain the internal level as a combination
of three areas centred on human resources, organisational and administrative arrangements and the organisation’s assets and equity.

*External Environment*

The external environment includes the wider economic, political and social setting around government (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 45). Factors that can affect the public sector include economic growth or decline, the labour market, global economic relations, political leadership and institutions and social conflict, class structures and the organisation of civic society (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 445-446). Christensen and Gazley (2008: 268) measure capacity in this environment by ‘political and market characteristics’. The ‘institutional context of the public sector’ includes regulatory obligations for government, responsibilities for development, policies, formal and informal structures which can either enable or constrain tasks (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 445 & 447). The wider institutional context can either enable or constrain an individual organisation’s capacity through mechanisms and macro-policies and systems within the immediate institutional and political control, and the broader economic and societal structures (Batley & Larbi 2004: 18-19). This approach emphasises the ‘fit’ between levels which ‘raises the possibility that agencies and governments need to adapt their organisational arrangements and skills to changing institutional environments’ (Batley & Larbi 2004: 20).

In summary, this section examined four capacity assessment frameworks used at an organisational level in the public sector. Three frameworks identify a separate task network of organisations focused on building capacity. Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995) and Batley and Larbi (2004) identify the task network level which mediates the internal and external levels, particularly in collaborative capacity-building. Brown et al. (2006) and van de Meene et al. (2009, 2010) offer an inter-organisational sphere that interacts across a broad spectrum of activities rather than specifically targets a particular task. All identify and categorise levels or spheres that explain the relationships between internal factors and external environments affecting an organisation’s capacity to act.
A HEURISTIC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK DESIGNED FOR DATA ANALYSIS

The preceding frameworks are based on scholarly discourses in international development, public administration, sustainable urban water and ecological systems management. An empirically informed capacity assessment framework that synthesises these previous CAFs was developed for this research as a tool to analyse data collected from the two food security case studies (see Figure 2).

This new framework recognises the importance of the alignment of fit-for-purpose dimensions, appreciating diverse contexts, various timeframes and scope pressures, which stand as an umbrella over the three levels (task network, internal and external). Similar to all the previous frameworks, it describes the task, internal and external relationships that impact capacity in three ways. Firstly, the framework examines the impact of collaborative partnerships (the task network) on the fit between government levels and the institutional and adaptive capacity of participating local governments. Literature points to this capacity building level as the pivotal one on which improving institutional capacity is heavily reliant (see Brown et al. 2006: 5-2; van de Meene et al. 2010: 2243). Then, it examines the horizontal intra-organisational issues in participating local governments as the recipients of enablers and constraints of the fit between government levels. Finally, it examines the vertical fit between government levels, teasing out the inhibitors and enablers in these relationships.

The dotted lines dividing the three levels indicate there are permeable boundaries that allow two-way interaction between them. The two-ended arrows reinforce the idea of fit and reciprocity. The focal recipient level uses four main categories for assessing internal capacity: leadership, management and resources, and structures which incorporate human resources as an equal factor rather than a separately identified category proposed in Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995) and Brown et al. (2006). The organisation’s relationship to the task network extends the analysis of structures and processes to include collaboration and collective capacity. Similarly, the external environment not only includes political and institutional,
economic and social/cultural influencers but distinct from the discussed frameworks, it includes a separate theme on environmental concerns as a vital part of the sustainability agenda.

Batley and Larbi (2004: 19-20) stress the importance of this ‘fit’ between different organisations within a system, acknowledging that various adjustments may need to be made within organisations in response to changing external environments. Brown et al. (2006: 5-2) focus on ‘the quality of institutional capacity for effective action’ while the new exploratory framework takes a wider perspective, seeks to explain the fit between governance levels as well as the internal workings inside local government when facing complex sustainability issues. It particularly seeks to identify the barriers to this fit in terms of response to complex sustainability challenges, such as food security.

Application of New Framework to Local Government’s Response to Complex Challenges

Australian local governments are diverse, ranging from managing large cities to regional and remote areas, with a wide variety of constituents, and differing funding systems based on demographics, geography and politics. The authors of the DITRDLG (2009:3) draw insightful comparisons between local governing bodies26 in Australia to show the range of diversity that exists, in terms of size, population, function range and scale, fiscal position, physical, economic, social and cultural environments, attitudes and aspirations of local communities and different legislative frameworks, which include voting rights and electoral systems27. Therefore, Dollery et al. (2003:4) warns that such diversity ‘is the cause for caution in extrapolating policies in a ‘one-size-fits-all’ manner’. This is

26 This term includes state and territory constituted local governments as well as ‘declared bodies’ which receive similar grant allocations but do not have the same council legislative requirements. Declared bodies include Outback Areas Community Development Trust (SA), the Roads Trust (NT) and some Indigenous Community Councils (DITRDLG 2009: 3).
27 Comparison examples as at 1 July 2006 include: Road Length: 25 per cent of local governing bodies are responsible for > 310 kms of local roads and a similar per cent are responsible for <1273 kms. Brisbane City Council has the longest road length at 5,562 kms. Area: 50 per cent had an area of less than 1824 sq kms. Nine covered < 100,000 sq kms. East Pilbara (WA) covered 378,533 sq kms.
Figure 2: The New Capacity Assessment Framework Emphasising the Fit between Levels contextualised and evolving in different timeframes, with resultant diversity in capacity. Organisations can have internal capacities that remain latent until activated to fulfill their goals (Eisinger 2002: 116-117). Therefore, the measure of local government capacity is being able to draw upon this latent or active capacity to fit strategies with functions being performed in any given context and time (Kettl 1986:49).

Population Density: City of Burnside (SA) area 27 sq kms with population density of 1590 per sq km while Flinders Council (TAS) had an area of 3556 sq kms with population density of .025 per sq km.
Dollery et al. (2006: 10) see local government capacity having three elements that must be successful: an effective and productive elected leadership; adequate administration and technical assistance; and freedom to make autonomous decisions. Yet, within a NPM context capacity building in local government is fragmented. External organisations which provide finance and other resources work with segmented areas of service provision through intersectoral collaboration rather than influencing local government holistically. It is then the responsibility of the particular department or program to work across other areas of council to influence the wider context (Honadle 1981b:3).

The scholarly discourse linking food security and institutional capacity is at best, embryonic. There is a growing body of literature highlighting specific food security governance concerns and/or highlighting roles that government can undertake such as: planning issues (see Pothukuchi & Kaufman 2000; Cassidy & Patterson 2008); food policy (see Lang et al. 2002; Mendes 2006, 2008; Lang et al. 2009; Holden 2012); health-related food services (Yeatman 2008); food programs (Scheider et al. 2008) human service delivery (Allender et al. 2009); addressing ‘food desert’ areas if recognised (Cummins & Macintyre 1999; Turrell et al. 2004; Winkler et al. 2006; Ball et al. 2009); and urban agriculture (Mougeot 2006). Yet this list does not mean that government has the capacity to act even if it chose to do so. Applying a heuristic framework to examine the relationships between capacity building networks, local government and its fit with higher levels of government will add insights into this current investigation. Analysis of the research findings using this framework will draw out deeper perceptions of the role of capacity building partnerships, reveal enablers and barriers to local government capacity, and add further understanding of the impact of external influences on this capacity. Gaining this knowledge is significant because local government depends on the alignment between government levels in order to have enough capacity to effectively address multi-level and complex sustainability problems that are evidenced in municipalities.
CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter differentiates between the constructs of capacity, institutional capacity and adaptive capacity and concludes that an adaptive institutional capacity approach is needed to address contemporary complex and multi-level problems. Such an approach challenges traditional hierarchical governance with one-directional information and authority flows. Capacity building through collaboration is seen as a significant method to address capacity deficiencies; however, positive impacts may only be temporary and limited by systemic constraints. In response, the chapter examines four capacity assessment frameworks from scholarly literature used to examine impacts, and develops a synthesised and extended heuristic framework as a significant conceptual advancement in understanding impact of the fit between government levels.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH RATIONALE AND METHODOLOGY

Chapter Three addresses foundational capacity-related constructions and determines that an adaptive institutional capacity is needed to address complex and multi-level problems. While capacity building through collaborative partnerships is seen as a significant way to address capacity deficiencies within local government the impact of these partnerships can be temporary and limited by systemic constraints. Internal organisational and external institutional influences can result in the problem of fit that limits local government capacity to respond. A synthesised and extended heuristic framework was developed from the literature to analyse the data and contribute to theoretical understandings of the constraints and enablers in the fit between government levels.

This chapter explains the rationale and methodology undertaken to answer the research questions. The first section examines the scholarly debate surrounding philosophical assumptions of what is social reality and how can it be investigated. Then, the chapter outlines the case study methodology. Brief contextual information is provided about the individual case studies, before explaining the three qualitative methods employed. Data analysis is then detailed on the basis of using an abductive strategy which leads on to a discussion about validity and reliability. The chapter ends with information about the research’s ethical approval, dissemination strategies and research limitations.

PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Understanding the philosophical foundations of social research can be confusing due to the deep and often complicated theoretical debates between researchers (Denscombe 2003: 5). Ontological and epistemological considerations tend to merge as scholars who write about research methods have difficulty separating them (Crotty 1998: 10). Yet reflecting on these philosophical assumptions allows refinement of the decision making processes important to planning and implementing a social research project (Williams & May 1996:1). Blaikie (1993: 3-4) suggests that answers to the questions about the nature of reality under investigation, and how that knowledge can be obtained, have significant
consequences for how social research is undertaken. Whilst a detailed analysis of the different theoretical debates is beyond the scope of this research this chapter draws on the perspectives of a number of scholarly texts and briefly discusses key concepts and their relationship to the research design.

**Paradigms**

Research paradigms are basic belief systems that inform and are derived from ontological, epistemological and methodological choices in research inquiry (Guba & Lincoln 2004; 17). Scholars do not agree on one specific list of research paradigms, although several paradigms are recurrent in the literature. Denscombe (2003: 14-24) divides the explanation of paradigms into three categories: positivism, which uses a natural scientific approach; interpretivism, a term that rejects positivistic elements; and finally, pragmatism, which focuses on the best methods for the particular research at hand rather than taking a purist theoretical position. Alternatively, Guba and Lincoln (2004: 23-27) provide four alternative inquiry paradigms: positivism like Denscombe (2003); post-positivism, which is critical of the scientific methodology yet still uses modified elements of positivism; a critical theory cluster that focuses on systemic shaping of reality; and lastly, constructivism, a relativist approach that embraces multiple subjective realities.

This research uses the constructivism research paradigm, (Guba & Lincoln 2004: 23-36) which views social meaning as occurring through interactions (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2004: 5) and focuses on social agency (Walters 2006: 17). It takes the ‘insider’ view by discovering ‘why people do what they do by uncovering the largely tacit, mutual knowledge, the symbolic meanings, intentions and rules, which provide the orientations for their actions’ (Blaikie 1993: 176). This concept of understanding social life, called *Verstehen* by Max Weber captures the opinions and insights of people in day-to-day living (Sarantakos 2005: 40). It is these in-situ perceptions of social actors that need to be understood, articulated and interpreted by the researcher (Blaikie 1993: 176) who as a ‘constructivist’ facilitates ‘the “multivoice” reconstruction of his or her own construction as well as those of all other participants’ (Guba & Lincoln 2004: 34).
Constructivism Ontology and Epistemology

Ontology is defined by Blaikie (1993: 6) as ‘the science or study of being’ with particular approaches to social research making claims or assumptions about ‘the nature of social reality – claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other’. Further, Crotty (1998: 10) agrees that ontology refers to ‘the study of being’ but would rather generally talk of theoretical perspectives than overuse the term ontology. Therefore, ontology is left out of his heuristic explanations of social research that include epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods as a four-step model (Crotty 1998: 4-5). Yet there is benefit in articulating the ontological approach taken in this research because it gives insight into the way the research was designed and implemented, and brings clarity to the alignment of the research’s chosen epistemology, methodology and paradigm.

The constructivist ontological and epistemological perspective of this research acknowledges that both the participants and researcher reject objective truth, rather understanding reality in terms of subjective meaning found in interactions between people and the world (Crotty 1998: 44-45; Sarantakos 2005: 37). As such, Blaikie (2010: 93) calls this view of reality ‘idealistic’ ontology. Within his/her view, there are multiple realities, with each person making sense of the world through their own interpretation and influenced by culture, history and personal experiences (Crotty 1998: 53-57; Sarantakos 2005: 37-39). This knowledge is ‘constructed in and out of interactions between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context’ (Crotty 1998: 42). This process is called social constructionism28 (Sarantakos 2005: 39). Consequently, the perceptions of participating social actors are used as a starting point for data collection and analysis in this research as they may see reality differently from the researcher (Blaikie 2010: 170-171). Yet, the

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28 The term ‘constructionism’ can be used as a substitute for ‘constructivism’ (Crotty 1998: 217). A distinction is made, however, by Crotty (1998: 58) that ‘constructivism’ is an individual’s epistemological consideration while ‘constructionism’ focuses on a collective meaning through social interaction.
interpretation of the perceptions ultimately depends on the ontological and epistemological perspective constructed by the researcher.

Furthermore, Creswell (2013: 20-21) explains while ontology is concerned with multiple realities, the epistemological perspective taken in much social research reduces distance between researchers and participants; resulting in subjective evidence. A constructivism epistemology is viewed as transactional with the investigator and participants ‘interactively linked so that the “findings” are literally created as the investigation proceeds. The conventional distinction between ontology and epistemology disappears.’ (Guba & Lincoln 2004:26-27). Working together ontologies inform ‘what’ should be studied while epistemologies inform the nature and context of knowledge collection that is bundled into paradigm packages (Sarantakos 2005: 29). For example, a ‘constructionist ontology and an epistemology, guide the strategies of qualitative methodology and prescribe mostly flexible designs and qualitative methods’ (Sarantakos 2005: 30). Consequently, ‘reality is co-constructed between the researcher and the researched and shaped by individual experiences’ (Creswell 2013: 36).

To contextualise these theoretical concepts more fully, this research is based on the view that interactions within complex governance problems demand multifaceted attention, clarification and explanation in order to critique current trends and engender the possibility of systemic improvements. Government decision-making at one level affects the fit between all levels and consequently affects citizens in different ways. There is no one answer to these complex problems but multiple perspectives and experiences. As a result, this research assumes these problems require an ontological and epistemological approach that focuses on social agency (Walters 2006: 17). This approach values the richness of collecting multiple subjective understandings of the experience, perceptions and observations of participants in their everyday professional experiences. In this process a relationship is built between the participants and the researcher as
understanding is gained and the data are explained within systemic social structures (Sarantakos 2005:40).

**Case Study Methodology**

The constructivism ontological and epistemological assumptions discussed in the previous paragraphs direct this researcher’s perspective, resulting in a methodological choice (Creswell 2013: 16-18) and methods to collect and analyse data in response to the research question and the anticipated outcomes (Crotty 1998: 2-3). A case study methodology is appropriately aligned with a constructivist ontology and epistemology because it allows multiple views of reality and allows for the complexity of ‘information-rich cases’ (Patton 2002: 230). Using a case study methodology enables in-depth research (Sarantakos 2005:216) giving opportunity to explore the reasons why outcomes may occur (Walter 2006:315). Case studies facilitate the exploration of the naturalistic experience of a phenomena and peoples’ interpretation of it (Gillham 2004: 2). Sarantakos (2005: 37) emphasises that ‘the reality people experience in everyday life is a constructed reality - their reality - based on interpretation’. A case study methodology not only focuses on the detail of this reality but places it in a context of wider societal and political influences (Stake 2008: 120). Further, Yin (2003:13-14) points out that a case study is particularly useful when investigating a real-life phenomenon ‘when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’.

Multiple constructions can coexist as the participants and researcher is differentiated by their individual perspectives and experiences (Guba & Lincoln 2004: 35). In line with a constructivism ontology and epistemology, a case study methodology provides opportunity to facilitate these multiple constructions through ‘conventional hermeneutical techniques’ and ‘dialectical interchange’ (Guba & Lincoln 2004: 27). The benefits of such interpretation and interaction include the distillation of ‘a consensus construction that is more informed and sophisticated than any of the predecessor constructions’ including those of the investigator (Guba & Lincoln 2004: 27). Using such a distillation process in this research enabled the researcher to draw out significant systemic barriers, often
existing in the external context of participants that needed articulation and interpretation in order to recognise their influence in the problem of fit between government levels.

Case studies are a widely used research methodology in social science disciplines, practice-orientated fields, such as urban planning, thesis research, and increasingly, in evaluation research (Yin 2009: 4). Perceptively, Walter (2006: 315) comments that case studies ‘provide the opportunity to find out more than just what the outcomes are; it provides the opportunity to explain why certain outcomes might occur’. According to Feagin et al. (1991:5-6) the benefits of using case studies include the grounding of the research in a natural setting and the opportunity to study complex interactions and meaning from a number of sources. The focus on direct life experiences that ‘work’ within their surroundings enables in-depth research (Sarantakos 2005: 216). The case study methodology not only captures broader interactions between significant elements of the case, but encapsulates finer and less obvious nuances and patterns (Berg 2004: 251). Thus, a case study methodology is most apt for this research about local government’s capacity to respond to food security needs within its municipalities.

Using in-situ food security case studies in this research provides an opportunity to investigate a complex problem within a broad, real-life institutional context, and allows for comparison and contrast across various elements of the individual cases. Local government involvement in food security initiatives is in its pioneering stage and in-depth understanding of complex external and internal interactions involved at the conceptual and implementation levels of such projects is invaluable to the research aims. Of particular importance in this research is the understanding of local government staff and associated project leaders’ perceptions of the fit between governance levels that influence local government capacity to address food security initiatives. Additionally, analysing food security principles embedded in high level council policies and associated documents provides empirical evidence to support these perceptions and the placing of the case studies within wider political and social contexts.
The generalisation of findings from research using a case study methodology is debated in scholarly literature. Researchers need to be careful not to lean towards presenting cases as widely ‘generalizable’ without the support of evidence (Hodson 1999: 8). Yet, it is imperative for case study researchers to fully explain their selection criteria and identify how those cases chosen compare significantly with other cases, so readers can make informed judgment about relevance (Denscombe 2003: 36-37). The case study methodology, however, is not necessarily used primarily to generalise findings. Stake (2008: 120) emphasises the epistemological driver should be optimal ‘understanding of the case rather than to generalize beyond it’. The decision to use a case study methodology is the beginning of an iterative process of data collection, analysis and theory development. It is not until the researcher understands the data and its context that the most appropriate theoretical explanations are known (Gillham 2004: 2). Consequently, Yin (2003:32) makes the point that case studies should not be seen in terms of statistical generalisation but rather considered in terms of ‘analytical generalization’ which uses existing theory in order to compare the results of the case study. Furthermore, as in this research, Yin (2003: 33) argues if two or more case studies support this theory then replication has occurred.

**Qualitative Methods**

The case study methodology can be used in both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection, although it has different functions and purposes in each. In quantitative research the method can be used as an exploratory study in the pre-research phase (Sarantakos 2005: 212). Qualitative research uses case studies to purposefully conduct in-depth, multifaceted studies as the main research within a natural context and with varying units of analysis (Sarantakos 2005: 212). Some case studies use both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods (Feagin et al. 1991: 2-4; Alston & Bowles 2003: 198). Using three complementary qualitative data-gathering methods, i.e. in-depth interviews, primary document analysis and secondary data analysis, is appropriate for this research to fully capture the depth of a complex multi-scale sustainability problem, such as food security. Whilst in-depth interviews give opportunity to hear from people directly involved in the case study projects, the study of primary
documents and secondary data provides other equally important sources of relevant and thematically rich knowledge.

In summary, Table 6 takes the four elements of a constructivism ontology and epistemology and outlines their application to this research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Constructivism</th>
<th>Application to Research Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontology</td>
<td>Relativism</td>
<td>Multiple, context-based socially constructed realities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>Interaction between participants/documents and investigator to create findings in cyclic process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Hermeneutic, dialectic</td>
<td>Case study approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>In-depth interviews, primary document analysis, secondary data analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Guba & Lincoln (2004: 24)

SELECTION OF CASE STUDIES

Case studies are used by researchers for different purposes. Stake (1995: 3-4) suggests there are three different types of case studies – intrinsic, instrumental and collective. An intrinsic case study provides details about a particular example for its inherent qualities rather than the development of theory (Berg 2004: 256). An instrumental case study is fully explored for the purpose of understanding an external theoretical problem and may not be considered as a typical case study (Berg 2004: 256). Collective case studies are a cluster of instrumental case studies with the same purpose but within a broader context (Berg 2004: 256). Two case studies were chosen for this research with the view that they would be instrumental in understanding external theoretical problems, such as the problem of fit and its impact on the capacity of local government to respond to complex challenges, such as food security. There is a leaning towards a collective case study cluster because the two case studies allow understandings about this fit between institutional levels within broader contexts.

Two cases studies were considered enough to provide sufficient data for analysis, theory generation and conclusions given a PhD timeframe. The availability of appropriate case studies to the researcher was somewhat opportunistic as food
security work within local governments was minimal at the time. The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation’s *Food For All* program (Case Study One), the first larger scale food security program working with Victorian local governments beginning in 2005, (see Figure 3 for participating council locations) was accessible to the researcher. Fortunately, the program participants were keen to participate in the research. The researcher began investigating this project in late mid-2008 and followed its progress until its completion at the end of June 2010\(^\text{29}\).

The overall goals of this project were to ‘reduce local government systemic and infrastructure barriers to food security’ and ‘increase regular access to and consumption of a variety of foods in particular fruit and vegetables by people living in disadvantaged communities’ (VicHealth 2011: 5).

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\(^{29}\) The final evaluation of VicHealth’s *Food For All* program highlighted the federal and state level barriers to developing integrated food policies. As a result of these findings, VicHealth funded the Food Alliance with a mandate to promote integrated food policy development that targets ‘structural determinants of healthy and sustainable eating’ in order to establish a sustainable and equitable food system (Caraher et al. 2012: 80). The Food Alliance has worked with a number of stakeholders in Victoria across government, civic society and industry in the development of integrated food policy (Caraher et al. 2012: 86).
West Metropolitan Region (N&WMR) of the Department of Health. Food security was a priority in the N&WMR because of the food insecurity need of citizens in a number of the fourteen councils in the region. The project focuses on councils that had not received funds from the *Food For All* program. The participating local governments were keen ‘to develop Council policy around Food Access & Security in partnership’ (DHS 2008b: n.p.) with the staff of the N&WMR where the three partner councils were located (See Figure 4 below for council locations). This was a shorter project finishing in the second half of 2011.

![Figure 4: Location of Local Governments in Case Study Two](image)

The relationship between state and local government levels in Victoria increased with the introduction of legislated Municipal Public Health Plans (MPHP) to be developed by each local government. This State government action reinforces local government has an important role in health matters in terms of advocacy, programs, partnerships and policies. The legislation mandates every local government must consult the Department of Health in the formulation of their MPHP. So, in the early years the emphasis focused on writing plans rather than implementation (Harris & Wills 1997: 406). In 2001 the Victorian Department of Health, in association with local government associations and partners, developed a framework to assist local governments with their municipal public health
planning. The *Environments for Health* framework measured the impact on health and wellbeing from four environments: ‘social, economic, and natural and built’ (DHS 2001: 2) and is still used effectively today.

Both case studies included health promotion entities as the funding provider and lead project partner, and sought to build local government’s capacity, strengthen its leadership and develop local actions and strategies to address food insecurity (VicHealth 2004: 6; DHS 2008: n.p.). All municipalities in both case studies have a high percentage of relatively low socio-economic populations often with a high proportion of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups. Case Study One involved a diverse range of councils, including two rural municipalities, and a mixture of metropolitan, urban interface growth areas, and non-urban conservation interface councils (see explanatory notes of Table 12 in Chapter Five). The participating councils in Case Study Two were all metropolitan (see Table 14 in Chapter Six).

**DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

A case study methodology uses a range of data collection methods in order to capture the complexity of a case example. In this research data were collected using three methods. Firstly, data were gathered from in-depth interviews with project managers, coded as (PM), local government officers (LGO) and associated project members (APM). Additionally, primary document analysis examined two broad categories of documents. Key individual council policy documents provided evidence of the effectiveness of council’s food security work, while other documents associated with the program/project provided contextual details and understanding about the case studies. The third data collection method was secondary data analysis of documents, programs and presentations already evaluated by previous parties.

**In-depth Interviews**

The research uses purposeful sampling as the most appropriate strategy for interview participant selection. Instead of focusing on replication as the primary research goal the use of purposeful or judgement sampling is to answer the
research question through a smaller yet appropriate sample size (Marshall 1996: 523). The strength of purposeful sampling, as used in case studies, stems from its focus on in-depth understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Patton 2002: 230). This emphasis allows intentional and strategic selection of the appropriate number and type of information-rich cases, according to the study’s purpose and resources. Therefore, the researcher chooses participants considered relevant to the project based on their knowledge and expertise of the topic (Sarantakos 2005: 164).

Interview participants in these case studies were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- Participants who worked for local government with responsibilities for the selected programs or food security initiatives.
- Participants not working for local government but who hold or have held a position of authority/leadership within the relevant initiatives.
- Participants who held positions of responsibility in other tiers of government or associated organisations who have a professional interest in these food security projects.
- The external evaluators of the projects

In the two case studies the existing local government project officers, managers, and associated organisational leaders, and evaluators had the most in-depth knowledge and understanding of the current work so they were selected as potential interview participants. The local government officers were informed by the project managers that this research was in progress and were encouraged to participate.

As Marshall (1996: 523) explains, the number of participants ‘becomes obvious as the study progresses… [as understanding of] …new categories, themes or explanations’ develop to saturation point. Through interviewing the existing project officers, leaders and evaluators, opportunity developed over time to speak in-depth with previous project officers who had had time to reflect on the benefits
and barriers of the projects. This cyclic approach to sampling and data collection provided flexibility (Marshall 1996: 523) and a depth of data that would not have been possible within a linear approach to research design.

This participant selection strategy was facilitated by the researcher’s attendance at the VicHealth’s Food For All Forum in Swan Hill in July 2009, which attracted numerous parties interested in local food security issues and allowed relationship building to occur. Additionally, as contact information was discovered for previous project officers and managers they were asked to consider participating in the research. The resultant interviewees provided valuable new insights about the projects as these people had had time to reflect since their actual participation. Further relationship building by the researcher with participants occurred at the final VicHealth Food For All Forum held in Melbourne, in June 2010, where the majority of participants from both case studies were in attendance.

Potential participants were contacted by the researcher via email or phone, at which time they were informed about the project and invited to consider participation. An information sheet explaining the project was forwarded to potential participants and upon agreement to participate they signed a consent form. Copies of the Project Information Sheet and Participant Consent Form can be found in Appendices B and C.

Guidelines for Interview Questions were drawn up by the researcher in light of background literature (see Appendix D). Interviews of approximately one hour’s duration were conducted in person or by phone, recorded, transcribed and checked for accuracy. In total 29 interviews were undertaken; 19 in Case Study One and eight in Case Study Two. The purpose of the interviews was two-fold: firstly, to understand local government staff, managers and evaluators’ perception of the institutional capacity of local government to deliver municipal food security; and secondly, to discover any enablers or limitations on this capacity through lack of fit between government levels.

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**Document Analysis**

Evidence to support the interviewees’ perceptions was sought by the researcher from the study of relevant documents. This method forms an integral part of the research. Document analysis assumes ‘that the real world is being observed and reported’ (Hodson 1999: 7). Contextual documents provide further understanding of social structures that potentially influence the participants’ experiences and perceptions. Policy document analysis again adds richness through evidencing the organisational journeys and outcomes of participants’ social agency within these processes.

The document analysis in this research was divided into primary document analysis, including policy analysis, and secondary data analysis of numerous associated documents across the projects. Primary document analysis is used when no previous research was collected or analysed that answer the research questions while secondary data analysis uses information gained through prior research (Stewart & Kamins 1993: 3) by other researchers. Primary and secondary research is often used together in a complementary fashion rather than being seen as substitutes for each other, with secondary data enhancing primary research activities (Stewart & Kamins 1993: 3-4).

There were three purposes for using primary document analysis and secondary data analysis methods in this research. Firstly, due to the nature of the research in examining institutional capacity, documents, presentations and online resources provide rich sources of explanatory data; some of which are readily available to the public. Secondly, documents specifically relating to the case studies contributed important contextual understanding to the researcher’s understanding of the interviewee data and the broader external and internal factors that influence the stages of the projects. Thirdly, primary document analysis of policy documents enables further understanding of anticipated government food security roles and desired outcomes because they explicitly states the collective position of each institution. Documents were selected on the basis of their relevance to the
case study contexts, the capacity building partnerships, and the project structures, processes, outputs and evaluation.

Expected outcomes from using documents analysis in this research include:

- To see the progress of food security principles over the duration of the projects and beyond in high level council plans, policies and strategies.
- To trace content themes within the usage of food security language over different municipalities, as well as comparisons being made across case studies.
- To contribute to the understanding of ‘best practice’ models to implement sustainable food security initiatives within local government.
- To gain insight into the contextual environments surrounding the food security initiatives and to understand the aims and objectives of the partnerships, policy development and programs implemented.

Primary Document Analysis

Two general types of primary documents are used in this research; council policy documents and project-related documents. Both case studies included a commitment to integrating food security into municipal plans and strategies as a high priority. All partners involved had relevant policy documents published in hard copy and on the internet, particularly through their Council websites, or available on request. Policy documents, such as the Council Plans, Municipal Public Health Plans and Municipal Strategic Statements are required within each municipality and are written in consultation with the community and other stakeholder groups. Other documents, such as the Community Plans, individual council food security policies, and social justice charters, were also valuable sources of empirical data.

The Council Plan (CP), the Municipal Public Health Plan (MPHP) and the Municipal Strategy Statement (MSS) are the three high-level policies mandated from State government legislation that drive council agendas (Slade 2013: 69). The Victorian Local Government Act 1989 Section 125 Part 6 mandates every local government to prepare and adopt a Council Plan outlining the council’s
objectives, strategies, monitoring indicators and a Strategic Resource Plan for the next four years (Victorian Government 2010a: 193-195). This process includes community consultation. Similarly under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 each Council is required to produce a Municipal Health & Wellbeing Plan on a four yearly basis. This MPHP includes health goals and strategies, a community consultation process, reference to how council has worked with the Department of Health in the Plan’s development and needs to be consistent with the CP and MSS (Victorian Government 2011: 33-34). The Victorian Health Promotion Priorities 2007-2012 and the Environments for Health Framework are foundational to the development of the MPHP. The Planning & Environment Act 1987, Section 12A requires council to prepare the Municipal Strategic Statement for strategic and regulatory land use purposes (Victorian Government 2010b: 27-28). It must be consistent with the Victorian planning objectives and must be aligned with the CP.

Policy documents were an important part of the primary document analysis across the two case studies. Themes from the interviews, scholarly literature and associated project documents formed the basis of the criteria for undertaking the policy document analysis. The following acronyms summaries the themes:

AG = preservation of high quality agricultural land
FA = food access
FS = food security (includes elements of affordability, culturally appropriate, nutritious)
FSU = food supply/sustainable food system
SJ = social justice, equitable access

30 The Victorian Department of Human Services and VicHealth developed seven state-wide health promotion priorities for 2007-12 of which ‘promoting accessible and nutritious food’ was one (Department of Health 2011a). The Environments for Health Framework was developed to assist local governments preparing their Municipal Public Health Plans. It ‘considers the impact on health and wellbeing of factors originating across any or all of the built, social, economic, and natural environments’ (Department of Health 2011b).
31 It is acknowledged by the researcher that not all the inclusions of the themes in these policy documents are the result of these case studies’ activities. This particularly relates to the Municipal Strategic Statement in councils. Thematic evidence in these policies is predominantly pre-existing prior to this research and can refer to topics such as strip shopping centres and activity centres, higher density housing in certain locations that encourage accessibility to services and economic...
Preservation of high quality agricultural land was an important food supply challenge in several participating municipalities while inequitable food access and food security were common problems in all participating municipalities. Policy responses to other food supply and food system challenges were also included as well as consideration of social justice and equality motivations. See Chapters Five and Six for the results of the policy analysis across the participating councils.

Project-related documents include the lead partner’s expression of interest, strategic planning and investment plans and program reports. Details of specific documents are listed under the data collection sections for the individual case studies later in this chapter.

Secondary Data Analysis

As mentioned above, secondary analysis is a further analysis of data already available from previous primary research undertaken by others (Stewart & Kamins 1993: 2) for other purposes (Devine 2003: 286-7). More commonly recognised by analysing quantitative statistical data, secondary data analysis has also included the re-use of qualitative data since the mid-1990s (Heaton 2004:1).

Secondary documents examined in this research include evaluation reports concerning particular elements of the project, internal and external evaluation reports of the whole project, project officer presentations, and GIS mapping analyses, community surveys and consultations undertaken by individual councils. According to Stewart & Kamins (1993: 18-19) a number of questions should be asked by the researcher when using secondary sources about the purpose of the study and what information was collected, the credibility of the researchers, how and when the information was collected, and the consistency of the information compared to other sources.
**Data Collection: Case Study One**

Between July 2009 and December 2010 19 in-depth interviews were undertaken with seventeen participants involved with the *Food For All* program in their professional capacity. Two managers, eleven local government project officers assigned food security responsibilities, and four associated project members were interviewed. One local government officer and one associated member were interviewed twice at different stages of the program due to new information being available over time that was relevant to this research.

Primary document analysis provided evidence of the program’s effectiveness from 33 high level council policies and strategies written during its timeframe (see Table 7 for details). All participating councils had recently developed *Council Plans* (CP). Seven had stand-alone *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans* (MPHP), one incorporated the MPHP into the CP and another into their *Community Plan* (ComP). Five councils have Community Visions and/or Plans. Two councils have ‘stand-alone’ *Food Security Policies*; the one written by Maribyrnong City Council in 2002 was reviewed in 2011 and the other adopted by Wodonga City Council in 2005 has undergone a review process in the latter part of this research project’s timeframe. Additionally, valuable primary findings were provided by VicHealth and other documents related to the program.

**Table 7: Primary Document Analysis Sources in Case Study One**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Councils</th>
<th>Policy Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brimbank City</td>
<td><em>Council Plan 2009-2013</em> (incorporating the Municipal Public Health Plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Municipal Strategic Statement</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Community Plan 2009-2030</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Social Justice Charter 2008</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardinia Shire</td>
<td><em>Council Plan 2009-2013</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Municipal Public Health Plan 2009-2013</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Municipal Strategic Statement</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casey City</td>
<td><em>Council Plan 2009-2013 v17</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Municipal Public Health Plan 2009-2013</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Municipal Strategic Statement</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>C21, Volumes 1-3 May 2007 (Community Plan)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankston City</td>
<td><em>Council Plan 2010-2014</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Municipal Public Health &amp; Wellbeing Plan 2009-2013</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Municipal Strategic Statement</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Secondary data analysis of multiple evaluation-based reports, including project forum presentations, provided a comprehensive understanding of the objectives and operational measures of the initiative, and the lessons learnt by project

---

VicHealth felt an obligation to share their program findings with other councils who were not funded and others involved in their own food security projects. They ran three free annual forums (2008-2010) to fulfill this objective. These events also allowed networking, input from key speakers and showcasing of new and associated initiatives.

---

**VicHealth**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leading the Way - Councils creating healthier communities Part 1 (resource funded by VicHealth).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food For All Improving Access to Food for Health Eating A Food Security Program Funding Guidelines for Local Government Authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting Healthy Eating Resource Pack for Partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food for All Program and VicHealth’s Strategies to Promote Healthy Eating PowerPoint Presentation Learning from the Field Forum.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Eating in Brimbank, Welcome Kit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh Food in Frankston City booklet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Security: promoting access to nutritious food, prepared for the Sprouting New Ideas Project: a VicHealth funded joint initiative of the City of Casey and Cardinia Shire Council.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
partners. This information was particularly important as VicHealth did not publicly release the full evaluation reports for either Phase One or Two of the project, but rather, issued summary evaluation documents at milestone stages. Table 8 below provides the list of public evaluation documents from the program. Of particular interest was the release of ten micro movies (plus a previous trailer) and corresponding information sheets based on the program’s evaluation report at the final Melbourne Food For All Forum in 2010. An important aim of VicHealth’s dissemination strategy was to support other councils with food security interests. A very brief summarised version of the complete set of evaluation reports was made public in April 2011.

Table 8: Secondary Data Analysis Sources in Case Study One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Document Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elsworth, G &amp; Astbury, B (2005)</td>
<td>Sustainability in Health Promotion: Case Studies of Two Food Insecurity Demonstration Projects, CIRCLE RMIT University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food For All Forums</td>
<td>Project officers and associated presentations at Food For All Forums at Swan Hill (2009) and Melbourne (June 2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VicHealth (2008)</td>
<td>Food for All How local government is improving access to nutritious food.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection: Case Study Two

Ten in-depth interviews were undertaken with eight participants involved in the project between October 2009 and January 2010. Four managers, three local government project officers assigned food security responsibilities, and one associated project member were interviewed. Similar to Case Study One two participants were interviewed twice at different stages of the project in order to update current knowledge that was relevant to the research.

Primary document analysis provided evidence of the project’s effectiveness from 15 sources. As shown in Table 9 all of the participating councils have recently developed new Council Plans (or City Plan) and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans. Two councils have a stand-alone Food Security Policy. The Department of Health’s Expression of Interest Process for Regional Funding for Local Government Food Access and Security Policy Development document provided a comprehensive understanding as to the objectives and operational measures in establishing and managing the project.

Table 9: Primary Document Analysis Sources in Case Study Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Councils</th>
<th>Policy Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banyule City</td>
<td>City Plan 2009-2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Plan 2010-2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Policy 2009-2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2009-2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Municipal Strategic Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Inclusion Policy 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darebin City</td>
<td>Council Plan 2009-2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2009-2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Municipal Strategic Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City of Darebin Food Security Policy 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobsons Bay City</td>
<td>Council Plan 2009-2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health and Wellbeing Plan 2007-2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Municipal Strategic Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improving Food Access in Hobsons Bay Policy Statement 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Document Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Health</td>
<td>Expression of Interest Process for Regional Funding for Local Government Food Access &amp; Security Policy Development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Secondary data analysis of nine documents contributed valuable data from GIS mapping audits, community consultations and surveys from individual councils and project evaluation documents, shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Secondary Data Analysis Sources in Case Study Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Document Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Darebin City Council   | Food Security in Darebin  
Part 1: Background Paper  
Part 2: Community Survey Results (Summary)  
Part 3: Mapping Food Supply and Access |
| Department of Health   | Evaluation of the DH Support for Food Security in the Cities of Banyule, Darebin and Hobsons Bay 2008-2010 |
| Department of Health   | Summary External Evaluation Report 2011                                           |
| Hobsons Bay City       | Draft Community Consultation Report May 2009  
Food Security – Discussion Paper  
Food Access GIS maps       |

**DATA ANALYSIS**

The data analysis methods in this research draw upon the constructionist ontology and epistemology as discuss previously in this chapter. They aim to understand the lived reality of participants but to move ‘beyond description to explanation and prediction’ using an abductive research strategy (Blaikie 1993: 163). This approach constructs theory from participants’ perceptions and theories of everyday life by firstly describing them and then using this data to derive categories and theories (Blaikie 1993: 163). Therefore, Blaikie (1993: 177) states abduction relates to the ‘process of moving from lay descriptions of social life, to technical descriptions of that social life’ that involves a two-step process in which first order constructs from participants’ social experience are then organised into the researcher’ explanatory second-order constructs (Schutz 1963: 3-47). This transition relies on the researcher selecting appropriate meanings and activities from participant perceptions and constructing social world models that are relevant to the desired goals (Blaikie 1993: 180). This is considered an iterative process in which the researcher is alternatively immersed in the social world data or reflection and analysis; in other words, the ‘research becomes a dialogue between data and theory mediated by the researcher’ (Blaikie 2010: 156).
The dialogue between data and theory in this research focuses on several interactions:

- The process of transcribing and coding the interview data, then developing categorisations for the development of theory
- The analysis of documents and secondary data
- The development and application of a heuristic theoretical framework to analyse the overall data.

First order constructs were organised through the use of thematic content analysis, based on categories or ‘themes’ present in the interview data and document analysis, synchronised by the researcher into a legitimate and realistic order and then supported from the published literature and observations. NVivo software was used for coding the interviews, resulting in the formation of themes and their interlinking, both internally and in association with the literature. The documents were too large to be imported in the NVivo software version available at the time, so they were analysed manually.

Second order constructs were established by the researcher through the development and application of the new heuristic framework to categorise and explain the interviewees’ perceptions and observations within a wider contextual environment. This process allowed the transference of the everyday social world of the participants and associated project documents into broader technical descriptors and categories to explain these phenomena in theoretical terms.

**VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

Hodson (1999: 50) emphasises that ‘reliable and valid data are essential for the advancement of knowledge’. The four most commonly used validity and reliability tests in case study research have been expanded in Table 11 to show how they can be used to achieve rigorous standards of empirical research. The three most important research phases for validity and reliability are the research design, the data collection and data analysis stages.
Construct validity refers to demonstrated consistency between research findings and theoretical expectations (Hodson 1999: 63) and is achieved in this research by using three sources of evidence collected in a systematic and coordinated approach. Key informants were given the opportunity to read and comment on publications based on the research findings. In order to achieve internal validity, data analysis is based on thematic content themes within each case study and a comparison made between the studies. To safeguard external validity the research design processes were alike for both case studies and each separately related back to theory. Rigorous data collection methods produced reliability. Interview data were recorded through interview notes and audio recordings and transcribed verbatim and a comprehensive collection of documents was gathered. Participant and document quotations are used throughout the presentation of the data analysis to reinforce the clarity and richness of perceptions. The quotations have been coded only by the case study and project participant number, dividing them into project manager (PM), local government officers (LGO) and associated project member (APM) roles as discussed previously to ensure participant confidentiality.

**HUMAN ETHICS APPROVAL**

The research started as part of a Master of Arts candidature at La Trobe University, which was transferred to University of the Sunshine Coast on 1st February, 2010. The candidature was upgraded to a PhD level on 2nd August 2010.

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### Table 11: Case Study Tactics for Four Design Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tests</th>
<th>Case Study Tactic</th>
<th>Phase of Research in which Tactic Occurs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Construct Validity | • Use multiple sources of evidence  
• Establish chain of evidence  
• Have key informants review draft case study report | Data Collection  
Data Collection  
Composition |
| Internal Validity  | • Do pattern-matching  
• Do explanation-building  
• Address rival explanations  
• Use logic models | Data Analysis  
Data Analysis  
Data Analysis  
Data Analysis |
| External Validity  | • Use theory in single-case studies  
• Use replication logic in multiple-case studies | Research Design  
Research Design |
| Reliability       | • Use case study protocol  
• Develop case study database | Data Collection  
Data Collection |

Source: COSMOS Corporation cited in Yin 2003
2010. Ethics approval for the research was initially granted by La Trobe University’s Human Ethics Committee, reference number FHEC No: #801-09 (see Appendix E). Upon the researcher’s interstate relocation, human ethics approval was requested from the University of the Sunshine Coast, which was granted until 31 May 2011, under ethics approval number HREC: S/10/248 (see Appendix F). In May 2011 an extension was requested and granted until May 2012.

DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

Results of this research have been and will be presented at conferences and appear in publications as part of the dissemination process, particularly to those who have an interest in local government’s capacity to respond to complex sustainability challenges, such as food security.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

There are limitations of this research that need to be qualified. Firstly, the main focus of the research is to examine local government’s institutional capacity to respond to complex issues, through the example of food security. Data collection was restricted to the perceptions of local government staff and project leaders immediately involved in the food security case studies. Due to the focus on institutional capacity and PhD time constraints, it was not feasible to interview other local government officers or community members who benefited from the food security initiatives. Secondly, Case Study One’s extensive evaluation documents of both Stages 1 and 2 were not released to the public and therefore could not be included as part of the research’s data. Instead, the project evaluator was interviewed and the small summary project evaluation document released by VicHealth in April 2011 was used.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the philosophical approaches to social research and concluded that this research uses constructivist ontological and epistemological assumptions in addressing the research aims. The chapter presented the research design used to capture the multiple interpretations of participants and discussed
the benefits of using a case study methodology. Consequently, it outlined the reasons for using qualitative data-gathering methods and explained the data analysis approach using a two-stage abductive strategy. The process for ensuring validity and reliability is then discussed before detailing ethics approval and dissemination strategies, and lastly acknowledging the research limitations. This chapter provides the research rational and methodological groundings before presenting the findings of the case studies in Chapters Five and Six.
CHAPTER FIVE: CASE STUDY ONE – THE VICTORIAN HEALTH PROMOTION FOUNDATION’S (VICHEALTH) FOOD FOR ALL PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Four explained the foundational philosophical and methodological perspectives in undertaking this research. Using a constructivism ontology and epistemology allows multiple voices to be heard in the dialogue between participants and the researcher. The case study methodology enables the development of ‘information rich” data collection and analysis through complementary qualitative methods and a two-stage abductive analysis process. Background information about the two case studies was provided in order to contextualise the findings of Chapters Five and Six.

This chapter presents the findings from Case Study One; the larger of the two case studies undertaken in this research. It uses data from in-depth interviews with local government project officers, managers and associated project managers from the nine councils participating in Vic Health's Food For All program and related primary document and secondary data analysis. Data analysis is based on the capacity assessment framework explained in Chapter Three. This conceptual framework involves three interconnected levels: the task network (Pivotal Level); internal (Recipient Level); and the external environment (Wider Influencing Level). Overarching factors impacting all these levels include the diversity of specific contexts, scope of the project and timeframes.

The chapter concludes by drawing together the main themes, highlighting that the complex problem of food security demands appropriate government responses across all levels. The lack of fit between governments affects local government’s capacity to respond. Internally, local government also needs supportive leadership and inter-departmental cooperation to prioritise food security work within a broader framework of integrated planning and policy development.
OVERARCHING FACTORS: SCOPE, CONTEXT AND TIMEFRAMES

Scope

A brief understanding of the history of VicHealth’s food security work at the local level explains the scope of the Food For All program. VicHealth was attracted to work with local government because it provides systems and structures within bounded locations for working to improve the health of vulnerable communities (1M1). VicHealth, as lead partner and funding provider, was particularly interested in local government strategic policy development processes because embedding food security within policy facilitates longer-term outcomes (1APM2a). By late 1999 VicHealth had spent millions of dollars over a number of years on healthy eating initiatives but people were still overweight and not eating a nutritious diet (1M1).

As a result, a review of all the projects was undertaken and two community demonstration projects were funded in partnership with the Department of Human Services in 2001-02 (1M1). The Braystone Fruit and Vegetable Shop and Delivery Service, facilitated by WestNet33 and supported by Maribyrnong City Council, and the Café Meals Program, under the auspices of North Yarra Community Health Inc. (NYCH),34 were two food security strategies within these demonstration projects (VicHealth 2006:1-5). Evaluation findings from the demonstration projects focused on the complexity of systemic determinants of both food access and supply and supported the potential role of local government to address these determinants (VicHealth 2005: 3).

Further, in 2004 VicHealth issued the Healthy Eating – Food Security Investment Plan 2005-2010 which focused the organisation’s available food security resources ‘on regular access to healthy eating’ (VicHealth 2005: 2). The Plan

33 WestNet is ‘an organisation located in Braybrook…[a suburb in City of Maribyrnong]…that provides a range of pre-vocational training opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities’ (VicHealth 2006:2).

34 NYCH is ‘a community health service that provides a range of health, aged care and mental health services’ to a number of inner city suburbs of Melbourne (VicHealth 2006: 5).
provided a rationale for such an emphasis and gave detailed explanation of vulnerable groups in the community, links between low socio-economic status, obesity and food insecurity and the impacts of physical localities (VicHealth 2005: 5-7). The conclusion was that linking ‘locality, low income and mortality offers the potential for local governments to be more involved with people with low disposable incomes who are experiencing food insecurity’ (VicHealth 2005: 7). VicHealth saw local government as the most appropriate partner for their future food security work and plans towards developing the *Food For All* program began.

**Context**

The councils involved in Case Study One vary in population size and status, geographical features including zoning and regulatory overlays and revenue collection ability. The geographical locations were mainly urban with only two rural councils involved, however, two other councils are in the interface between urban and rural and six are green wedges (see explanatory notes underneath Table 12). Cardinia Shire Council and Casey City Council are designated urban growth areas.

**Table 12: Demographic Profile of Municipalities in Case Study One**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Council Category</th>
<th>Special Category</th>
<th>Estimated Population at June 2009</th>
<th>Area sq km</th>
<th>Rate base 09-10 ($Ms)</th>
<th>Rate % income 09-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brimbank</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Metro G W G W CALD</td>
<td>185,890</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>92,859</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardinia</td>
<td>Shire</td>
<td>Interface Growth Area G W</td>
<td>68,641</td>
<td>1281</td>
<td>42,526</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casey</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Metro Growth Area G W</td>
<td>247,357</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>112,274</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankston</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Metro G W G W CALD</td>
<td>128,576</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>69,880</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Dandenong</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Metro G W G W CALD</td>
<td>137,600</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>76,005</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Study One: VicHealth Food For All

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Metro CALD</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Rural City</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maribyrnong</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>71,523</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>57,271</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melton Shire</td>
<td>Interface G W</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>53,206</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan Hill Rural</td>
<td>Rural City</td>
<td>22,116</td>
<td>6,117</td>
<td>18,848</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wodonga City Rural</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>35,733</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>26,264</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Slade (2013: 66)

Notes:
1. Interface councils are described as 30% urban and 70% rural, forming the interface between regional and metropolitan Victoria. These areas face significant planning, infrastructure and funding challenges (Interface Councils n.d.)
2. Green wedges (GW) are ‘predominately non-urban areas outside the Urban Growth Boundary, set aside to help conserve rural activities, significant natural landscape features and resources between metropolitan Melbourne’s growth corridors’. Changing land use, development pressure and increasing awareness of environmental issues and threats place pressure on councils’ managing these areas (Municipal Association of Victoria n.d.)
3. CALD is the acronym for culturally and linguistically diverse groups who have ‘languages and cultures that are not considered the mainstream’ (Maribyrnong City Council 2006: 7).

The populations of participating councils ranged from as low as 22,116 in Swan Hill to 247,357 in Casey; however, the area of the municipality was not always equally proportionate to its population. For example, population densities range from 3.7 persons per sq km in Swan Hill Rural City, increasing to 304.3 persons per sq km in Casey City, and finally, 2307.2 persons per sq km in Maribyrnong City. Additionally, as shown in Table 12 the rate bases of each council range from 43 per cent to 65 per cent of the councils’ total income in 2009-10. This means on average councils have to find 57 per cent of their revenue from other sources (see Chapter Two).

Timeframes

Further to context and scope, timeframes play an important part in measuring local government capacity needs and availability. There are two main time-related influences on capacity in this case study; the understanding gained by the lead partner about local government capacity over time and the experience of each individual council exploring potentially new food security roles over the course of the project. VicHealth expected each local government to develop policy but they learnt over time how difficult that would be to achieve (1APM2a). Each council’s
response to food insecurity was unique and progressed at varying rates. Finding local government’s role in food security provision was a challenging task (1M1). Initially, according to one of the project manager, Victorian councils took time to perceive food insecurity problems within their municipalities, evidenced by the dramatic increase in the number of councils applying for funding from Phase One (four councils) to Phase Two (37 councils) (1M1). Then, even as part of the program the nine participating councils took considerable time to develop food security roles (1M1).

Of course, other internal overarching factors can influence the best initiatives. Councils have individual organisational cultures and change through restructuring, staff turnover or amalgamation. Council elections every four years bring new faces, priorities and working relationships. These major factors disrupt the flow of the organisation and limit capacity to work in new areas, as observed by the following participant.

*Some councils are going through so much restructuring and it is just impossible. You need a council that supports the integrated planning. They have to be ready. Their heads have to be receptive of this new idea* (1M1).

Program scope, context and timeframes are important overarching factors involved in understanding and measuring capacity. Existing local government capacity in terms of procedural systems and accountability enabled the development of a collaborative capacity-building partnership to further enhance capacity to address complex problems. All participating organisations in the partnership learned significant lessons over time about the capacity of local government to respond to municipal food security challenges.

**PIVOTAL LEVEL: THE TASK NETWORK**

Public sector organisations often work together in partnerships or task networks creating synergy that extends their capacity beyond their individual internal environment. This pivotal level examines the partnership approach towards collaboration, its processes and structures, and finally its collective measure of capacity building.
Theme 1: Approach to Collaboration

The first theme of this section examines the partnership’s approach to collaboration that is vital to the success of the capacity-building initiative, particularly in the early development stages. It discusses the expression of interest expectations and requirements which established the project design.

VicHealth’s rationale for choosing local government for further collaborative work was three-fold:

1. The food security demonstration projects in 2001-02 showed the necessity of a procedural structure that keeps records and ensures staff changes in order to capture food security work that otherwise may be transient.

2. These projects also showed that initiatives get better traction if they are part of Council organisational culture rather than situated outside in the local health centre.

3. Importantly, local government could incorporate healthy eating into the most influential council plans and policies that are mandated for review; providing a level of accountability (VicHealth 2010: 1-2).

The goals of this capacity-building program were to ‘increase regular access to and consumption of a variety of foods in particular fruit and vegetables by people living in disadvantaged communities’ (VicHealth 2004:6; VicHealth 2011:5) and ‘reduce local government systemic barriers and local infrastructure barriers to food security’ (VicHealth 2011: 11). The objectives for Phase 1 (2005-2008) concerned local government leadership in working with communities to reduce barriers, developing key actions and strategy solutions, and increasing local government’s integrated planning around healthy food access, advocacy and the development of partnerships (VicHealth 2004:6).

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35 These demonstration projects were funded by VicHealth and the Victorian Department of Human Services. ‘Evaluation of these two successful inner city projects, which involved a café meals program and a mobile fruit and vegetable venture, revealed that the barriers people faced in accessing affordable fresh food were not simply personal or individual” (VicHealth 2011: 7).
At the beginning of Phase Two (2005-2008) the objectives were adjusted to more accurately emphasise the program’s rationale to influence ‘local government policy, planning and practice across the four environments for health…and in particular bringing health and urban planning closer together’ (VicHealth 2011:8).

A participant saw the aims as two-fold:

To build the capacity of local government to be able to reduce systemic barriers [and] to strengthen local government leadership when they are working with the community (1M1).

The partnership developed because VicHealth was concerned about the health and wellbeing of vulnerable groups in low socio-economic areas, traditionally serviced by community health groups. In late 2004 VicHealth published their first expression of interest document, Food For All, Improving Access to Food for Healthy Eating, A Food Security Program, Funding Guidelines for Local Government Authorities to establish formal capacity-building partnerships with interested councils. Local governments were eligible to apply for funding if more than 20 percent of their municipal population ranked low on the Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) measuring Advantage/Disadvantage. The rationale driving the program partnership with these particular local governments was that they

...have the most disadvantaged people due to lack of transport, lack of shops, lack of facilities, amenities and where the most number of people on low income tend to congregate because the housing is cheap. Then if we have a whole council approach these people would be captured (1M1).

36 The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) 2006

This measurement suite from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) consists of four indexes which measure comparative socio-economic disadvantage using census data differentiated by geographical location. These indices in 2006 were:

- Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage using variable related to disadvantage e.g. low income, unemployment and dwellings with private transport.
- Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage measured by using a continuum of advantage (high) and disadvantage (low).
- Index of Economic Resources using variables such as income, household assets and housing expenditure.
- Index of Education and Occupation measured at a community level using these educational, vocational and occupational variables.

(see http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2033.0.55.001/ for further information)
Additionally, councils needed to provide supporting documentation, based on an understanding of needs and barriers faced by their citizens, as well as a commitment to an integrated planning approach and evidence of the local government’s capacity to undertake such a project (VicHealth 2004: 6-7). Applicants could choose between three funding categories according to the design of their anticipated involvement: several local governments work together on new initiatives (up to $100,000 per annum for three years); one local government works collaboratively with its community on new initiatives (up to $70,000 per annum for three years); and one local government replicates a successful food security model from another locality or expands an existing model in its own municipality (up to $30,000 per annum for three years) (VicHealth 2004: 7). In-kind resources were provided by the municipalities (ILGO2a). This funding process ultimately resulted in nine councils being funded in Phase One from 2005-2008 and six councils, out of the nine in the first phase, funded in Phase Two from 2008-2010.

According to two interviewees local government was attractive to VicHealth for food security work because of its systematic support framework that enables longevity and complexity management.

We are not pleased that more people are food insecure but what we want to do is show the hidden issue and by approaching individuals and groups, it is not enough ...you need the system also supporting what is done (1M1).

and

It’s a complex area and like with any other health promotion initiative the difficulty is really been able to target the people you want to target, those disadvantaged groups and those hard to engage groups, are hard to engage exactly for that reason, and if they were easy to get to and work with, and they were happy to participate in things, and we could easily support them to improve their health and wellbeing, then we probably wouldn’t have a problem in the first place (1LGO1).

This action was based on the assumption that local government was the best fit for partnership arrangements in confronting community food insecurity through mandated procedural planning, infrastructure and service responsibilities to constituents within individual municipalities (1M1).
The Expression of Interest (EOI) document explains the selection criteria which includes ‘a demonstrated understanding of the barriers faced’ by the community; evidence of supporting plans and activities already in place within council; a commitment to integrated planning in order ‘to reduce systemic and infrastructure barriers’; and evidence of the organisational capacity to undertake the work (VicHealth 2004: 7). Furthermore, according to two interviewees, project expectations included increasing the capacity of local governments through horizontal relationship building with other departments and the raising up of ‘champions’ within council. (1M1). The lead partner also anticipated all local government partners would either develop a discrete, stand-alone food security policy and/or incorporate food security principles into their most important and influential policies and plans in order to address systemic barriers (1APM2a). This work was spearheaded by the project officer within each council who was specifically employed by the partnership to advance food security initiatives.

The expectation levels of the EOI’s selection criteria and the anticipated outcomes explained by the aforementioned interviewees show a lack of understanding of the difficulty in meeting these expectations through the project’s design. For example, the low status of the food security project officers makes influencing policy direction in the councils challenging, as one interview participant reflected.

I don’t think it [the Food For All program] has made major shifts in council. I don’t think it was able to achieve that. I don’t think it was ever going to achieve that. I think the way the program was set up it was a project worker funded who was sort of a more junior position I guess in council and the mandate was to go and influence strategic direction around food security and I think that for anyone who has worked in local government, they know, that’s a big ask (1LGO6).

The interviewee continued to explain that senior leadership support for the program’s priorities is vital to balance the project officer’s limited influence, and enable the inclusion of food security within the strategic capacity of the organisation.

It’s a whole process of actually; you need senior direction, strategic direction within the organisation to actually drive that, not a small project with a project officer trying to drive those bigger agendas. So I think it was able to achieve some things. It helped to build some capacity in our local government in some areas to work on food security (1LGO6).
The procedural structure of local government made it an attractive partner to VicHealth to increase equitable food access and to address contributing systemic and infrastructure barriers. Unfortunately, in the program design the existing capacity of local government to achieve these goals was over-estimated. Without explicit EOI requests for senior leadership support for food security priorities, the capacity of the project officer to influence the strategic direction of council was limited. Existing officers taking up food security as part of their workload were able to progress these priorities quicker and more easily. Externally funded project-based capacity building initiatives provide opportunity for capacity enhancement but this capacity can be limited by the program’s design.

**Theme 2: Partnership Processes and Structures**

The second theme examines communication processes, funding and management arrangements and evaluation of the program’s processes and outputs as the basis for building local government capacity through this partnership.

The communication processes between VicHealth as lead partner and individual councils generally flowed well according to interview participants, with regular interaction both at formal and informal levels (1M1). Regular meetings between VicHealth and project officers were scheduled to discuss issues and strategies and written reports were consistently required from the project officers in order to monitor progress (1M1). VicHealth recognised that it was a difficult project to undertake from the council and community partners’ point of view yet there were a number of formal requirements needed of them as explained by a project manager:

>This is not an easy project and we understand that and we try to be as flexible as possible. They [the local government officers and partners] have to evaluate many times, they come to meetings…we try to forward information but sometimes it is still not enough (1M1).

The lead partner supported and monitored all project activities, with responsibility for funding and managing a complex and challenging project amidst other duties, staff shortages and a mandate to its own organisation’s interests (1APM2a). Funding agreement conditions drawn up by VicHealth included a budget, detailed
work plan including timelines as well as acknowledgement that record keeping of project decisions, newly developed resources and any community consultations and statistical data would be included in progress reports. Annual reports were also required by VicHealth that involved data collection of progress achieved, key challenges and any changes to activities. Additionally, the final report due at the end of Phase One required benchmarking against criteria and the explanation of key lessons learnt and implementation issues, as well as giving reasons why the funding should be extended. Local governments also agreed to be involved in the external evaluation. Participating local government officers, managers and partners were required to attend a two day orientation course (VicHealth 2004: 7-9). There were a few negotiated outcomes when particular local governments in the project did not meet the guidelines, particularly over the allocation of resources, pressured by staff shortages and/or the lack of higher level council support (IM1, IM2, 1LGO9).

Evaluation of program processes and outcomes was a vital element of the VicHealth and local government partnership’s life. Problems with baseline data collection and analysis in the early stages reduced the ability of VicHealth and the external evaluator to assess the program over time (1APM2b). Not all of the numerous separate initiatives with local government within the project were evaluated due to workload constraints as explained by one interviewee:

*There are maybe 150-200 separate initiatives; some started by local government, some supported by local government, some facilitated by local government. Not every one of those little strategies can be evaluated. The staff were supposed to do it but they couldn’t do that either. Some of them work 19 hours a week. That’s crazy!* (1APM2b).

On the other hand, some initiatives proved to work well with impacts empirically supported by evaluative activities (1APM2b). A meta-analysis of program impacts was undertaken by an independent evaluator employed by Vic Health at the end of both phases (1M1).

Open communication channels, support for project activities through funding and management arrangements, combined with and a priority for evaluation provides a strong basis for the enhancement of current local government capacity to
respond to municipal food security problems through this collaborative partnership. There were, however, unrealistic expectations from the lead partner about the extent to which such a program structure could influence planning in local government.

Theme 3: Collective Capacity

Importantly, the third and final theme discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the collective capacity of the partnership to address municipal food security problems. The partnership used its collective capacity strategically to expend resources wisely and take advantage of opportunities to influence policies, people and programs to increase food security (1M1, 1APM2a & 1APM2b); however, this successful process was not without its barriers and limitations. The lead partner, VicHealth experienced organisational restructuring with a new strategic plan and senior staffing changes during the life of the project (1APM2a) as mentioned above. The participating local governments also faced challenges. Geographical location and socio-economic status also influenced the possibility of recruitment.

Some councils experienced long gaps and/or high turnover of project officers. An interview participant reflected on the difficulties in recruitment and retention of suitable staff in Phase One of the project.

*One of the things we didn’t have at that stage was a workforce with capacity. So that has been a real challenge. There has been a lot of turnover. Only two officers out of the nearly forty who have been through the program actually worked in local government before they worked in the Food For All Program. They [other new officers] were not only learning food security because most of them had not worked in it before, they were learning local government. Often they worked part-time and they were a fairly low level (1APM2a).*

Two councils used existing staff members to advance food security work. Less turnover of staff facilitated existing capacity to more readily embrace new priorities, such as food security. For example, in one participating council the project officer only had about sixteen hours a week to work on food security but, as explained by the interviewee:

*She knew council, she knew people, she knew what was happening, she understood the planning cycle, a whole lot of things that a lot of the other project officers*
needed a year to learn and she is a community development person, so she knew what she was doing. She just did a fantastic job with so few resources (1APM2a).

Despite the difficulties in developing a workforce, by the end of the project a number of mature officers could now work in other locations and organisations, bringing their new expertise with them.

One of the good things is that we have now got forty people who were Food For All project officers out there working in other fields with all their knowledge...you know it is spreading. We are building capacity in the workforce which is essential (1APM2a).

Over time it was clear it was an unrealistic expectation of the lead partner, VicHealth, to anticipate change in external systemic barriers as the state legislative environment concerning land use planning limits the power of local government to change systemic barriers, such as ‘business retail mix’.

A lot of those barriers, it became clear, were not actually in the hands of local government to deal with. For example...the placement of fast food outlets, local government cannot control business mix because they have got very limited powers to dictate, to mandate or control business mix (1APM2a).

This understanding highlighted a problem with the fit between government levels because higher levels of government were not addressing these systemic barriers, according to the views of two interviewees:

So the extent to which local government can influence large scale planning initiatives is surprising limited and there has been a lot of awareness grown about that in particular (1APM2a).

and

Some of the issues when you hit the ceiling you can’t change because its legislation like the Planning and Environment Act and the rural, you know, land use and overlay (1M1).

Case study participants saw systemic barriers of disadvantage, such as unemployment, high housing costs, rising petrol and food costs, physical and mental health issues, existing food industry impacts and media advertising as government policy areas that hinder the partnership’s collective capacity when not addressed at higher state and federal levels.

Some of the other issues are about low income, high housing cost, high petrol cost, cost of food. There are a lot of higher level issues...because where it is food distribution, where it is food pricing, where it is food marketing; that’s not local
VicHealth continued to advocate to State and Federal governments for planning and food system changes through formal submission channels (1M1)\textsuperscript{37}. Yet there are only limited formal advocacy avenues available for this feedback as shared by a project manager:

\textit{[We connect directly to state and national issues] through a range of submissions. I just finished the XXX one of Friday. There is one on urban boundaries coming up and there was the Senate Inquiry, the national one on agricultural production (1M1).}

The collective capacity of the partnership between VicHealth and participating local governments, although strong, faced a number of limiting problems. Internal staffing capacities were challenged by the geographical location of councils, the impact of low-socio economic status within those areas, changing organisational structures and the difficulty in recruiting and retaining food security project officers. Using existing staff workloads to include food security has advantages. In a wider environment the partnership brought to light systemic planning and infrastructure challenges in state and national government which affect the collective capacity across all government levels. Consequently, all these challenges directly diminished the collective capacity of the partnership aiming to enhance local government capacity’s to respond to food security challenges.

**RECIPIENT LEVEL: INTERNAL ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY**

Although local government is the recipient of collaborative capacity building initiatives, its existing internal organisational capacity is a vital element in responding to complex sustainability challenges. This recipient level examines leadership and management, financial, organisational and human resources, and thirdly, local government internal structures and processes.

\textsuperscript{37} Formal submissions include:

- The Victorian government’s review of the Planning and Environment Act;
- Department of Planning and Community Development’s Retail Policy Review;
- Senate Inquiry into Food Production in Australia, 2008; and
Theme 1: Leadership and Management

The leadership and management theme looks at the contested issue of responsibility for food security responses within local government. Some council staff and councillors within participating councils questioned whether involvement in food security initiatives was really a local government concern. They felt that local government is already pressured by higher levels of government and community concerns to fulfill numerous mandated and chosen priorities; and food security would involve taking on more responsibility in a new area. Such proliferation of responsibilities has created a feeling of resentment within local government which flowed over to food security:

There is also this growing resentment. I don’t know the right word for it. In local government there is a lot of responsibilities that are not our core business that get pushed onto us and food security can be one of those things (1LGO10).

An interview participant reiterated this sentiment, acknowledging that local government already expends its capacity on existing service areas:

Because it is one of the things that council staff and councillors have said ‘Why is it our business? Why should we be bothering about this?’ And you know that’s a good question because local government cannot do everything and it does do a hell of a lot (1APM2b).

New issues are devolved from state government to local government requiring councils to develop responses to changing contemporary priorities. For example, in late 2009 new priorities for local government included writing a heatwave policy and a strategic plan to ensure four-year-olds get a kindergarten experience.

Every council was told it had to develop a heat policy. So they were given a bit of money by the state government, so they put somebody on to write a heat policy. And it is exactly this; unless those heat policies are well integrated in every area they won’t make any difference. It will be a heat policy on a shelf (1APM2b).

Continually adding new priorities in a policy document does not guarantee substantive change unless the capacity of all relevant departments within council is developed to respond in an integrated way. This process can be exhausting for local government management and staff (1APM2b).

The answer to relieving some of this pressure on capacity may rest in local government contributing to food security solutions in further partnership
arrangements, rather than feeling obligated to take all the responsibility for the whole initiative itself (1APM2b). This solution would stop local government from continually needing to extend its service provision capacity, as shared by the following associated project manager interviewee.

So, for example, I might say, local government doesn’t have to do cooking classes but if its facilities have got adequate kitchens other places can do that and will do that, or pick it up. And they will be running men’s cooking classes, and bilinguals educators will come in and teach new arrivals how to manage Australian vegetables and all council has to do is make sure that its neighbourhood houses, its community centres and anything else it owns actually have kitchens that are adequate and then that’s the end of story. And once that is done they can just leave it and it will go. Yes, that makes local government feel more comfortable that they are not being told that they have to do it all (1APM2b).

Council leadership is in a difficult position between state government obligations and provision of community services. The management of complex issues, such as food security requires an aligned government and community response that allows local government leadership to use existing institutional capacity in the best interest of their own municipalities.

Similarly, it was suggested that food security responses should be led at the state and federal levels and then filtered down through the institutional structures to the local level. One interviewee expressed this concern by sharing:

I think the thing [food security] is a bigger state issue. And we desperately need a change there. And if there is not a commitment at the federal level it won’t filter down either and commitment at the federal government level that was quite holistic for food security in general, it would filter down from the Department of Health, Department of Education and all those sort of agencies and then to ours (1LGO10).

There does need to be changes at the higher levels which would filter downwards; however, local government still has its own part to play in responding to food security whether state and federal government actively address the problem or not.

Despite all this questioning, participating local government officers and program partners continued to grapple with potential food security role/s. Senior council leadership and management support for the internal food security work was essential to influence change at an organisational level as shared by one project officer.
One of the things that I felt was critical to the success of my project was that I had the support of the CEO (1APM3).

On the other hand, upper level management support was not always forthcoming and this was a significant barrier to increasing capacity, as shared by another interviewee.

There are other barriers including getting higher level support. So for strategies and so forth to be endorsed you need councillor support and understanding. So while at the coordinator, and I dare say even now the manager level, there’s a real understanding of food security, what it is, how we can influence it, I am not able to confidently say that there is that understanding at the higher levels where the bigger decisions are made. So that’s really about the last of the barriers and that’s a significant one (1LGO9).

At the end of the program VicHealth shared their experience with other local governments, that ‘without senior level support, doors do not open, other priorities will dominate and the person with allocated responsibility may find the challenges too great’ (VicHealth 2010:1).

Complex sustainability challenges, such as food security, confront local governments in their own municipalities. There is an element of resentment within councils at the suggestion that food security responses need to emanate from local government. State and federal government have a responsibility to address food security at these higher levels and to support local government capacity to respond. Existing local government capacity is stretched without adding another problem, however, the assistance of the collaborative capacity-building partnership allows participating councils to continue addressing food security and exploring their roles. Council and/or senior management support is a vital element of capacity, which when absent, reduces local government capacity to respond.

**Theme 2: Financial, Human and Organisational Resources**

Financial, human and organisational resources, discussed in theme two, are important elements in the capacity required by local government to respond. Current funding models and the ability to recruit and retain suitable staff for food security initiatives within councils were the two main resource concerns detailed by interviewees in this case study. Many local government initiatives are reliant on external funding. Therefore, they have a ‘project’ mentality where initiatives
are temporary, perhaps two or three years and in this case, three or five years, but they always have a beginning and an end. Community development as a practice is very difficult to undertake on this basis because work interfacing with community members, who are disadvantaged and hidden, takes considerable time and resources to make any impact (1M1). Community awareness and knowledge of new options, and then potentially participating in initiatives, is a long process and cannot be squeezed into funding frameworks, particularly in low socioeconomic and poorly educated areas.

The idea that one problem could be the focus for a few years then move on to another problem, with parameters often being dictated by State government, was frustrating to local government officers and the community as outlined below.

That’s it. We have so many other responsibilities we have to follow where the dollars go (1LGO10).

Problems are created when funding comes to an end because local government often is not able to continue that work themselves.

I think local government is the best place to carry it out but not without funding. You know we build up for three to five years, we have built up an expectation of our people and all of a sudden that finishes.... We only have X amount of ratepayers and that has to do all of these new projects that local government are asked to take on board [from higher government levels] as well as your rubbish, roads and rates (1LGO11).

When the funding ceases and the project officer leaves, unless dedicated resources are provided to keep that momentum going, food security in this case, due to natural attrition, fades into the background of priorities.

Funding for the project—we don’t have a dedicated officer so now it is only one thing in that whole range of things that I do. I assume if I got hit by a bus tomorrow if a person came into my job and they don’t have my background they wouldn’t pick it up. Although the principles stay within the policy the actual driver wouldn’t be there. I am not sure what you do about that (1LGO10).

When longevity in the individual local government is not forthcoming, another organisation is required to pick up the work if it is to continue. Such projects are very much resource dependent. The impact of local government not having continued funds can result in cost-shifting to community groups and service agencies who feel obligated to continue the programs. Yet, these groups are also
continually under tremendous pressure to find their own funds and to comply with formal reporting and compliance processes.

At the same time these community groups are taking up services without extra funding they are being required to formalize their service delivery and evaluation. Now they are concerned about processes, such as grant writing whereas in the past they ‘almost responded on instinct’ and ‘could survive primarily on volunteers’ (1LGO10).

The break in continuity affects the community that comes to rely on local government initiatives and is disappointed when they are stopped. Externally funded capacity building partnerships only provide short-term boosts to local government capacity. Unless food security remains a priority after this time, community groups end up with the responsibility but no added resources.

The second area of concern about resources was the recruitment and retention of project officers to work in the participating councils. As discussed previously the project design with project officers in low status positions within council did not give them the capacity or context to make changes or influence other departments’ policies as expected by the project brief. It was a very difficult task for them to advocate to or gain support from the senior management or councillor level and in particular to understand the types of community development initiatives needed to respond to new challenges such as food security:

That’s the problem to attract the right person with the right skills. You need someone who has worked with local government or some understanding of local government, some understanding of community development would be some help. It doesn’t have to be but community development is important (1M1).

Two participants expressed their concern about the longevity of the work because of the causal relationship between staffing and available funding.

One of the biggest problems is sometimes when local government is actually allocated funds they only allocate it for three years. Then you have built up some very good programs which still need some sort of support officer to keep them going, to keep them sustainable long term. Then that funding for that officer ceases when the project ceases (1LOG11).

and

It’s like any health promotion project and a lot of staff within health promotion teams particularly in local government are project specific, project funded externally and that’s the challenge is identifying those actions that are sustainable once the project officer leaves. We can, you know, produce banners and flyers and
posters so every time we go out somewhere we are putting messages in people’s faces, but we still need people out there who actually provide them the education (1LGO1).

Capacity involves the ability to sustain responses over the long-term. Local government capacity is constrained by short-term project-based funding models because it is difficult to attract suitable staff and when the project ends, if no ongoing resources are available within council, the responsibility for the work shifts to community groups. There can also be a mismatch between the time needed to address the problem and when the resources are available.

**Theme 3: Internal Structures and Processes**

Theme three examines the internal structures and processes that drive the goals of the program through integrated planning and policy development whilst unravelling the internal systemic barriers that limits local government’s capacity to act. At the beginning of the partnership participating local governments ensured their commitment to inter-departmental integrated planning across their organisations. Embedding of food security principles in high level policy documents was anticipated by the lead partner while addressing systemic regulatory barriers to food access was a program aim (VicHealth 2011:8). Achieving these goals tested the existing capacity of local government and met with varying levels of success.

**Integrated Planning**

The idea of integrated planning in this context came from the *Leading the Way Program*, funded by VicHealth, which is a collection of resources that assist council and senior staff:

...develop policy and strategic priorities to address the social and economic issues of health and wellbeing in an integrated way across the planning processes of council, particularly municipal public health planning (PDF Management Services & Rubenstein 2002: 20).

For example, the *Leading the Way Program* gave a detailed illustration of making links across different local government policy ‘action areas’ between a Youth Plan, Housing Plan and Ageing Plan as explained in Figures 5 and 6.
The important thing is to ask the right questions and to ensure that the answers are available for any other planning activities.

For example, if there is a Youth Plan, a Housing Plan process would simply take into account the action areas relating to housing. If no Youth Plan exists, then the Housing Plan process would need to ask questions (and have them answered by residents and other experts) about the housing needs of young people.

**Youth Plan**
- Youth
  - skate park
  - youth council
  - training
  - housing subsidy
- Youth at risk
  - youth shelter
  - drug counselling
  - emergency relief

**Housing Plan**
- Youth
  - youth shelter
  - housing subsidy
- Aged
  - aged units
  - home visitor referral
  - housing subsidy relief
  - safe streetscape

**Ageing Plan**
- Aged People
  - aged units
  - transport
  - Golden Years Club
  - housing subsidy
  - seniors discount
  - safe streetscape
- Frail elderly
  - home visitors

Figure 5: Examples of Integrated Planning Based on Existing Policy

Source: PDF Management Services Pty Ltd & Rubenstein (2002: 16-17)
Integrated Planning

This integrated approach to planning means that links can be made immediately between various action areas. It avoids the costly duplication of separate planning for all the different council activities.

That is, the information from the Youth Plan and the Ageing Plan are used in the Housing Plan. Had the Housing Plan occurred first, the information from the Housing Plan could have been used in the Youth Plan and Ageing Plan respectively.

Similarly, the information from any of these sources could be used to help develop the Municipal Public Health Plan. The diagram below illustrates how different planning processes might be better integrated to streamline planning and to ensure that the issues are adequately covered.

![Diagram showing integrated planning between Youth Plan and Aged People Plan](image)

In this way the Municipal Public Health Plan (MPHP) can capture all ‘action areas’ that will impact directly or indirectly on health and wellbeing.

This will reduce duplication of effort across planning processes.

Figure 6: Integrated Planning in the Municipal Public Health Plan Development

Source: PDF Management Services Pty Ltd & Rubenstein (2002: 16-17)
This program was complemented by the Department of Human Services’ *Environments for Health Framework*, a tool used in local government for public health planning (PDF Management Services & Rubenstein 2002: 20) which addresses health determinants across the built, natural, social and economic contexts (VicHealth 2011: 7). One project officer explained the usefulness of this tool in framing the progression in understanding about food security within local government.

*It wasn’t really that long ago that we were only talking nutrition and I guess a lot of the assumption about nutrition is that you just teach people what they should eat and they go and eat it but to try and develop that more sophisticated understanding of what food security means and a more sort of systemic approach to work towards...we use Environments for Health. That’s quite useful...because it helps to develop thinking as to what it is about those different environments and council’s role in those, about what kind of interventions or strategies we could put in place for food security (1LGO6).*

Another project officer showed the usefulness of the framework as a planning tool that links different areas of council responsibilities.

*It is a tool for thinking about a lot of things. We used it to think about food security but you can hang a lot of things off it. We could actually tie a few things together. For example in talking about food security and access tie in community safety, tie in social inclusion, tie in disability access. Some of the principles are really similar. (1LGO10).*

Using the *Environments for Health Framework* contextualises food security within the built, social, natural an economic environments as shown in the example from the Shire of Cardinia in Figure 7. Furthermore, it calls for integrated action to respond to municipal food security problems through strategies that alter the built surroundings, look after the natural environment, support people to participate in the community and encourage economic development. Drilling down even more, these strategies address equitable food access and affordability through planning, increased opportunities for food production, developing food policies and advocacy, targeting food services and private sector engagement.

*Such an integrated planning approach relies on the success of cross department relationships and the perceived understanding of other people in council as to how food security fits within their work.*
...it’s all about building up the capacity of every business unit and that’s part of the directive of VicHealth as well. You can’t get food security into policy at the local government level unless you are very proactive in consulting with, building the capacity, of each unit (1LGO9).

Often this relationship development was most successful on an opportunistic basis (1M1) or by building rapport with responsive individuals who were prepared to consider food security within their responsibilities, as reported by one interviewee:

_I found there was a very high level of receptivity from surprising areas with people prepared to think about that issue [food security] even if it wasn’t in their work roles but recognized that some of the things they already did have an impact on food security._ (1LGO7).

Therefore, the Food For All program encouraged ‘local government to improve integrated planning to address factors that influence access to food, such as transport, housing, economic development, urban planning and land use’ particularly through ‘council integrated planning around policy, strategy and actions’ (VicHealth 2011:7-8). Yet developing rapport in Phase One was easier within community, social, and health areas of council and more difficult in the planning, infrastructure and economic development departments (1APM2a).

Interview participants held varying opinions about the use of integrated planning across councils to further embed food security. Several interviewees spoke of opportunities when planning discussions were held across departments and/or when opportunity came to input into council plans and strategies (1M1, 1LGO2b, 1LGO3, 1LGO9, ILO10). On the other hand, one participant observed the current practice was still a total silo approach with very little integrated planning.

_That’s what they talked about at the beginning-integrated planning. That’s what VicHealth wanted to do...the projects were supposed to influence integrated planning but it doesn’t actually occur. It rarely occurs in local government. Very few of them do integrated planning, still total silo planning...As far as local government actually doing it Wodonga is one of the few places that I would call a really streamlined process. That’s why they were ready to go with planning._ (1APM2a).

In Phase Two emerging synergies occurred between the food security work and the environmental sustainability departments through understanding linkages between the two areas and providing foundations for potentially influential integrated planning outcomes.
Connections are now being made between the climate change, environmental sustainability and food security elements. The council people in the climate change area are beginning to see that they have something in common with the food security people which is good...two or three years ago not at all (1APM2a).

The process of sharing responsibility for food security across departments progressed during the life of the program but needed the resilience and drive of numerous departments to secure ongoing capacity.

One participant explained the importance of integrated planning between social and community departments, and urban planners to further the capacity of local government to address complex issues, although the process is only emerging.

There isn’t going to be a project or a discrete part of local government that deals with all these [new responsibilities for local government e.g. food security, anti-gambling, anti-alcohol]. It has to be driven by the social planners and the urban planners. They have got to keep picking them up, people in Children Services, the people in Aged and Disability Services, the people in Youth and Leisure Services. I don’t know if we are actually at the point where those people are ready to carry these forward. I suspect that we may not be, but we are on the way (1APM2a).

Integrated planning was VicHealth’s ideal approach for participating councils; however, most local governments still functioned in a siloed approach. Tools such as the Environments for Health Framework provided opportunities for project officers to develop capacity across departments to respond to municipal food security problems. It highlights that in the future urban and social planners have an obvious leadership role. The resulting improvement in the level of integrated planning differed in individual councils and further capacity within the councils is required to meet the complex challenge of food security.
Figure 7: The Use of the *Environments for Health Framework* for Integrated Planning

Source: PDF Management Services (2008: 4)
Policy Development

Integrated planning was a stepping stone to policy development. VicHealth anticipated that every council would embed food security into high level policies and plans in particular because of the influential nature of these documents. Opportunity came when simultaneous local government elections were introduced in November 2008 which required all Victorian councils to redevelop their three major plans in the following six months (1APM2a). Significant progress was made but not every council achieved this goal. Overall, progress occurred in the Council Plan (CP) and more commonly in the Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing Plan (MPHP), and where applicable, Community Plans (ComP) across the participating municipalities. Table 13 explains the categories used by this research to illustrate embedded aspects of food security and the capacity available through policy development to respond within individual councils.

Four councils embedded aspects of food security principles in their CP, including preservation of high quality agricultural land, food security, food access, food supply and social justice. The MPHP is the most popular area for inclusion due to the natural fit of food security with health promotion and social planning priorities. Cities of Maribyrnong and Wodonga adopted ‘stand-alone’ food security policies. Additionally, Brimbank City Council has integrated health and wellbeing strategies conventionally in the MPHP into their ComP (1LGO2b) while the City of Maribyrnong embedded their MPHP into the CP as explained by their mayor in his introduction to the CP.

38 One participating council based on its individual context, decided that a more prudent approach would be to focus on developing community capacity and awareness and leave policy development until a later stage (1LGO11, 1APM2a).
39 Victorian local governments are legislatively mandated to develop policy. Three main policy documents theoretically drive council agendas: the Council Plan, the Municipal Public Health Plan and the Municipal Strategic Statement (land use orientation). Councils can choose to develop a Community Plan which provides the long term strategic priorities of the council in line with extensive community consultation. The term ‘policy’ and ‘plan’ are often interchangeable.
40 For further information about embedding food security principles into council plans and policies see the Food For All program Micro Movie No. 4 titled Policy and Plans [online] at http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Video-Gallery/Food-For-All---Policy-and-plans.aspx.
41 It is recognised by the author that not all food security policy inclusions may be a direct result of the Food For All program.
In a Victorian-first, we are the first council to incorporate our Municipal Public Health Plan into the Council Plan. By doing this, we acknowledge whatever actions we undertake—whether collecting rubbish, planting trees, constructing new buildings or providing maternal and child health care—contribute to the wellbeing of our community (Maribyrnong City Council 2009: 3).

Table 13: Food Security Related Principles in Current Council Policies in Case Study One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council Name</th>
<th>Council Plan (CP)</th>
<th>MPHP</th>
<th>MSS</th>
<th>Community Plan/Vision</th>
<th>Food Security Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brimbank</td>
<td>FA, SJ</td>
<td>(In Com Plan)</td>
<td>FA, SJ</td>
<td>FA, FS</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardinia</td>
<td>AG</td>
<td>FA, FS</td>
<td>AG</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casey</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>AG</td>
<td>AG, FA, SJ</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankston</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>FA, FS, FSU</td>
<td>AG</td>
<td>FSU, SJ</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Dandenong</td>
<td>FA, FS</td>
<td>FA, FS, SJ</td>
<td>AG, SJ</td>
<td>FS, SJ</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maribyrnong</td>
<td>FA, FS, SJ</td>
<td>(In Council Plan)</td>
<td>FA, SJ</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>FA, FS, FSU, SJ 2002 AG, FA, FS, FSU, SJ 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melton</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>FS, FSU</td>
<td>AG</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan Hill</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>FA, FS</td>
<td>AG</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wodonga</td>
<td>FSU, SJ</td>
<td>FA, FS</td>
<td>AG, FA</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>FA, FS, FSU 2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Slade (2013: 68)

AG = preservation of high quality agricultural land
FA = food access
FS = food security (includes elements of affordability, culturally appropriate, nutritious)
FSU = food supply/sustainable food system
SJ = social justice, equitable access

Local government’s key land use policy document, the Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) was perceived by interview participants as the most difficult policy area in which to embed food security principles because of its regulatory nature. The food security rhetoric as shown in the MSS themes in Table 13 does not always follow through with action unless it can be translated into land use planning instruments. State government changes to existing planning legislation and associated regulations are required for local government to have capacity through the MSS to address systemic food security barriers.
Most MSSs have some motherhood statement but then the actual tools that they have to enact that is the question. So it usually comes through ‘liveability’ or things like that, you know that they manage to have walkable neighbourhoods and easy accessibility but they can’t do anything about what is a retail area. They can but it would be through things like council subsidising rent for healthy businesses or building steps that are outside actual planning (1LGO7).

The inclusion of food security principles in the most influential council policies and plans was an important way to ensure local government had sufficient capacity to address municipal food security problems. Varying degrees of success in this process were achieved in each council. Overall, the MSS proved the most challenging strategy to influence as enactment tools are significantly controlled by the state government.

**Systemic Regulatory Barriers within Local Government**

Local government’s existing land use planning and regulatory capacity raised a number of important concerns for interview participants as they pursued food security work. This capacity was significantly restricted by three problems. The dominance of ‘by-right permits’ allowed developers broad powers to mix business types. Complex regulatory bureaucratic processes slowed the implementation of new food security initiatives while prohibitive municipal by-laws squashed appropriate food security actions.

A designated number and type of zoning classifications are used to categorise land uses in local government planning schemes. This system allows the approval of any activity, if permissible within the right zoning classification, within the planning scheme. Some participants expressed concern at the extent of such ‘by-right permits’ which allow developers or other businesses broad discretionary scope in choosing the type of business combinations in their projects. For example, local government planners do not have the power to limit the placement or number of fast food outlets if they are going to be within a suitably designated zone. This situation was explained by one project officer after discussions with local government land use planners:

> There’s so much by-right, so that they [planners] can’t respond to fast food, excessive fast food, nor packaged alcohol nor gambling. As long as they are within the right sort of zoning they’ve by-right permits. So they [planners] are saying that’s where the changes need to take place (1LGO7).
Further to the granting of ‘by-right permits’, the definition in the planning schemes of ‘retail activity’ means ‘anything that sells retail’ (ILGO7). Such an ambiguous definition can lead to unintended consequences that impinge on food security as explained by one interviewee.

*Local government cannot control business mix because they have got very limited powers to dictate, to mandate or control business mix. If there is a shopping strip and five fast food outlets open they can’t say ‘No, we want one fruit and veggie shop, one health food shop and one fast food shop’. They can’t do that. It’s actually not allowable. So the extent to which local government can influence large scale planning initiatives is surprising limited and there has been a lot of awareness grown about that in particular (1APM2a).*

Local government cannot control the mix of retail businesses or promote healthy food retail options due to these regulatory barriers. Their lack of authority in turn constrains capacity to deliver on new initiatives that require a strategic land use change. Food generally (let alone healthy food) does not have special conditions within the blanket retail zone.

Complex internal regulatory barriers also potentially slow new food security initiatives, such as increasing community agricultural activities for community gardens, fruit trees in public spaces, home gardening, farmers’ markets and food swaps. Uses, such as community gardens and orchards require a review of ‘land use, open space and building regulations and practice’ (VicHealth 2010:1) to adjust existing structures and procedures to accommodate new options. Two participants expressed frustration about the regulatory processes involved in developing community gardens, either as part of a council project or in response to community requests. This sentiment is expressed by one local government project officer:

*They [community gardens] are really…it sounds so simple but they are not. It is hard work. They are not as simple as ‘Here’s a piece of ground, go for it’. There are so many regulations it’s amazing (1LGO10).*

In another municipality the council initiated a community garden with several stakeholders from state and local government jurisdictions. Bureaucratic processes held up the progress of the project with a memorandum of understanding, a lease agreement, public liability insurance, allocating
maintenance responsibilities and a grant application. The project officer shared some of the frustration at the time it was taking to open the community facility:

We are chomping at the bit but we can’t until we get the permission, the lease agreement from the Department of Human Services. We can’t put a fence up and I think defining the area with a fence, even though it is not going to be a big, high fence… then we can really say ‘Here’s the garden’. So until then we’re kind of dabbling around the edges…so we are getting there but these things take time (1LGO3).

Consequently, systemic regulatory bureaucratic processes hinder local government capacity to deliver food security options in a timely way.

Establishing community gardens was not the only initiative that found the regulatory process inhibiting. In another council a food security initiative was thwarted by a municipal local law that prevented the setting up of a mobile fruit and vegetable stall on council land unless a permit was granted for each site.

It [the permit] was $500 per site and they can’t set up within 500 metres of a school or an established community centre as well. I don’t know whether that was from a traffic point of view but you want to be based at a community centre, you want to be based at a school…so I am trying to work with the person involved in reviewing these other local laws (1LGO2a).

Due to the nature of the government regulatory environment it takes considerable time and process to review and possibly change these local laws. In the meantime local government capacity to respond effectively to food security challenges is limited.

Through programs, such as Food For All, local government is finding its place in addressing food insecurity. The following quotation from a participating project officer provides a sophisticated understanding of the breadth of food security aspects facing local government and a realistic appraisal of its current capacity and understanding of the roles to be played into the future.

Our Strategic Development Department...are really looking at the land use, the agricultural land...and that is incredibly important. There are other departments in council, such as the environment area who are looking at what does it mean around water and other areas like that. So I guess there is a whole range of different perspectives and it gets everybody in some way talking together and saying well this is what food security looks like, but there’s not one part of the picture, it’s a really complex picture...and it’s new and emerging. We are only in very early stages with this and what’s our role as a local government to actually build community understanding too and know of their agenda around food security because ideally
This section analysed internal regulatory mechanisms that hinder the internal capacity of local government in food security provision. It explained the problem of ‘by-rights permits’, the complex regulatory bureaucratic processes and prohibitive municipal by-laws. Furthermore, the ambiguous definition of ‘retail activity’ reduces local government capacity to control the mix of retail businesses and promote healthy food retail choices. Significant limitations to the program’s capacity building activities are caused by internal regulatory planning barriers.

**BROADER INFLUENCING LEVEL: THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT**

This section outlines influences from four external environments that enable or constrain local government capacity.

**Theme 1: Political/Institutional Influences**

The first theme examines the wider political and institutional influences that impact local government capacity, particularly in land use planning and funding support whereas the previous section examined the land use planning limitations of local government from an internal perspective. This theme examines these limitations from an external perspective stemming from the problem of fit between government levels. It particularly focuses on lack of state government support through regulatory mechanisms for local government food security responses as explained by one of the project officers. In their opinion changes are needed around public transport and in planning schemes to reverse the trends of linking residential areas and take-away food outlets.

So it’s just not necessarily specific to this project but any health promotion initiative is really trying. ‘How can you target those people’ and I think the biggest change needs to be made...further up the ladder, in terms of state and federal government, where the changes around transport connections, and having residential estates that are close to food outlets, and not allowing the planning scheme...to put in rows after rows of MacDonalds and KFCs. There are lot of things that could be done to improve it but won’t come from local government level because we don’t have support we need from that level (1LGO1).

Local government is unable to make such municipal improvements without this higher level support. This lack of fit between government levels in responding to
food initiatives limits the capacity of local government to address the systemic land use problems associated with food security.

Local government land use planning is dependent on overarching state government legislation and planning provisions (1LGO2a). Interview participants particularly expressed concern over the resulting lack of local government authority in the decision-making and management processes of municipal land use planning and regulation, as exemplified by the following interviewee.

Much of the planning legislation regrettably is still running on an economic use of land model and local government really are just administrators...of the state legislation in that area, so we have very little discretion and incredibly rule bound and because it is state legislation we are really just putting in and enforcing that legislation (1M2).

One option is to link food security to the already accepted urban design concept of ‘liveability’, with its associated ‘accessibility’ and ‘walkability’ features, which is an important aspect of the built environment/healthy outcomes planning discourse (1APM2a). Wodonga City Council uses these concepts throughout their planning policies, including their Municipal Strategic Statement and sees the principles of food security42 fit nicely into this ‘liveable neighbourhood’ concept.43

This is where the principles of food security, planning for food security in the physical environment, such as connected neighbourhoods, and small neighbourhood shops, and public open space and community hubs, and all those kinds of things, are included in the MSS. I think that’s why people who are really focused on single agenda, like food security, want to see the words ‘food security’ in the MSS and I feel and I think it is probably more strategic to have the principles of food security in there rather than a one liner that says ‘We will address food security’ (1LGO3).

This point of view is sensible and easily understood; food access is a basic need that can be facilitated by the built environment. Yet, there is a difference of opinion amongst planners and other interested parties whether food security can be legitimately included in the planning framework. The most common view

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42In this case principles of food security include the retainment of high quality farming land, access to transport, walkability and accessibility, social inclusion and provision of green spaces.
43For further information see Food For All Micro Movie No. 5 titled Land Use Planning [online] at http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Video-Gallery/Food-For-All---Land-use-planning.aspx.
holds there is no provision in the State’s Planning and Environment Act\textsuperscript{44} to take food security problems (or other health considerations) into account while ‘walkability’ and ‘accessibility’ are linked to planning codes which could be changed. This situation is further explained by an interview participant:

\emph{Accessibility has always actually been there. How can you interpret accessibility? It could mean that everybody can drive to the supermarket. In some people’s heads that is what it does mean but accessibility means something different to the people who are conscious of the needs of people who don’t have cars, who can’t drive, or who are disabled. So accessibility has a hook within the planning framework in Victoria on which to hang things like walkability. In the major planning documents it is not about physical activity and health; it is about walking and cycling and accessibility, which is code for physical activity. We don’t have the codes for healthy eating. And there is nothing in the planning framework, and by that I mean the legislation and the planning principles that actually enshrine that and drive it} (1APM2a).

Without a test case being undertaken, answers are hypothetical and councils which act on food security’s inclusion in land use planning decisions face the possibility of expensive appeals by interested parties, such as developers, before the Victorian Civil Authority Tribunal (VCAT) as explained by one interviewee:

\emph{We will just go to VCAT and get toppled because there is nothing in the Planning and Environment Act to support any of these actions you might want to put in} (1LGO7).

Another issue that highlights lack of fit between the higher government levels and local government is funding for food security work. An interviewee expressed concern over the lack of funds for food security work provided by the higher tiers of government and compared the situation to the ongoing provision of funds for other services.

\emph{If food security is seen to be by state and federal as an important they should be providing the funds to local government to be able to implement it on a continuous basic like they do with HACC\textsuperscript{45} services and other programs} (1APM3).

\textsuperscript{44}This Act is the key piece of state legislation that shapes local government’s land use planning activities. Since the program ceased the Victorian Planning and Environment Act review has been finalised. After considerably advocacy to the state government by numerous parties, this Act now includes the word ‘health’ which potentially can act as a trigger for food security inclusion. Yet, the new incoming state government elected in late 2010 sought to review previous changes and progress towards activating such triggers for food security have dissipated.

\textsuperscript{45}HACC is the acronym for the Home and Community Care Program which is ‘Victoria’s principle source of funding for services that support frail aged people, younger people with disabilities, and carers (Department of Health 2013: online).
Yet another participant took this idea further by linking the need for these funds with having a dedicated officer within council to drive food security integration as an ongoing priority.

*That's probably the biggest barrier somehow and I don’t know how you overcome it. Food For All was all about integrating it into council, but I think if you want food security integrated into council you need to provide the dollars for an officer to work through that. They still integrate it into council but keep the momentum and the energy happening. I am trying to think of an example. It would be like asking council to do an aged and disability service which we do through HACC. If HACC ceases the DHS funding it is going to fall over because you actually need people managing that project right through (1LOG11).*

Responsibility for sustained food security responses at the local level dictates an integrated government approach where higher levels of government provide sufficient funds for local government to continue service provision.

Land use planning is a foundational area in food security responses. Capacity building partnerships are unable to address these capacity deficiencies. The lack of legislative and regulatory fit and funding restrictions between state and local government significantly hinders local government capacity to include new responses in land use mechanisms to adequately address food security within their municipalities.

**Theme 2: Macroeconomic Pressures**

The second theme discusses the broad economic pressures on the governance of food systems and resulting impacts in low socio-economic municipalities. There has been increasing attention to food security in the macroeconomic environment, at a global and national level. Previously, the scale of food insecurity was measured predominantly at the individual or group level but now there is the expression of food system thinking, such as food production, distribution and marketing. While this attention is assisting projects like *Food For All* in raising awareness, many of the food security barriers are ‘in the broader society, like the food industry and the marketing and the legislation to do with media advertising’ (1M1) as indicated by two other participants:

*Amazing isn’t it yet it [food] is a key requirement of life. It is treated like a commodity where in fact it is a life need. Yet a necessity of life is market-driven (1LGO10).*
The government is out of tune with the community. If you have evidence that the community believe that we should restrict advertising the government should restrict the advertising of fast foods in children’s television hours. But the government won’t do it because they are so heavily lobbied by the food industry themselves. “We [the food industry] will self-regulate. We will do it’. But the evidence is they don’t do these things well because they are counter to their commercial goal (1APM2a).

Broader relationships in the external environment, such as legislation priorities in higher levels of government and between government and private enterprise impact all organisations involved in the institutional domain. Local government capacity (or lack of capacity) is shaped by these higher level food system-related interactions and it is left to negotiate the impacts of these decisions at the municipal level.

The impacts of the globalisation of the food system, combined with environmental concerns, such as climate change and population growth make food security an increasingly relevant issue for all Australians (VicHealth 2011:7). Any major disruption to the food system ‘impacts employment, household income, education and food supply through availability in geographical locations, varieties available, prices and packaging’ (1M1). People who are wealthy can find strategies to overcome these problems but those who are food insecure find it very difficult.

For example, single parents often barely have enough money; people with disabilities cannot carry food. Such people wrestle with hunger, anxiety and social exclusion, so our focus should be on these people (1M1).

The inability of the higher levels of government to constrain self-regulated food industries from marketing unhealthy food even to children, and the commodification of food through a globalised market system impacts local government’s capacity to address food insecurity within the community. The vulnerability of the broader food system to disruption impinges most significantly on people in low socio-economic locations. Local government’s existing capacity is not strong enough to address these impacts.

**Theme 3: Social/Cultural Environment**

This theme looks at the relationship at the local level of council programs and community partnerships. Partnerships contributed invaluably to the 150-200 food
security programs run by participating councils. These programs enhanced service provision in the community to varying levels and importantly provided a heightened awareness of food insecurity issues and solutions inside council and in the community. For example, production of the ‘Welcome Kit’ for new arrivals and those from refugee backgrounds in Phase One, involved partnerships between three Food For All participating councils to share resources and increase language translations as well as between individual local governments, community groups and welfare agencies (VicHealth 2008: 4-5). The ‘Welcome Kit’ is contextualised to individual municipalities, providing a map depicting the location of local shops that sell fruit and vegetables. It also assists new community members in their own language with the purchase, preparation, cooking and storage of Australian fruit and vegetables through a number of fact sheets (See Appendix G).

The key focus was really to try and look at accessibility to fruit and vegetables and availability and do these groups have enough and how can we get them to eat more fruit and veg (1LGO2a).

Phase One focused on community programs and local evidence collection but in Phase Two there was a focus shift towards planning, partly due to the political changes in simultaneous council elections and the opportunity to impact policy development required with these elections. So in Phase Two there was more emphasis on planning and policy (1AMP2a) through the use of integrated planning techniques as explained by one project officer:

[now] we are thinking about how can this project, how do you get strategic planning, urban planning and design, economic development to understand the issues of food security when there is fruit and veg that’s got nothing to do with me in planning (1LGO2a).

Links to sustainability, in terms of longevity of impacts, developed as part of this shift involving continuation of the project when the funding ceases, the ongoing delivery of benefits, the acceptance of project activities as part of normal council practice and the embedding of project outcomes in the community (Montague 2009: n.p.).

A process of each council knowing their capacity levels to respond to food security needs intensified leading into discovering acceptable and corresponding
food security roles. The pressure on local government to perform ‘miracles’ on multiple service fronts can be overwhelming, yet if the idea can be harnessed that local government does not have to take all the responsibility itself, rather provide leadership and support for other agencies and/or groups, sustainable outcomes would be increased, was explained by one interviewee:

_A lot of it is about local government providing leadership and support. It’s not about them delivering.... There are some areas of their work that naturally fit that they would be able to shine a food security lens on but other times when they can really just do things as simple as provide a venue for others to come and meet and cook together...or whatever their community identifies they need to do_ (1APM3).

Local government’s existing capacity for service delivery has provided multiple food security programs and initiatives. As the program entered the second phase and opportunity came for intensified influence on policy development the objectives shifted. Councils were still finding the level of their capacity to respond through various food security roles.

**Theme 4: Environmental Concerns**

Finally, theme four discusses the impact of wider environmental concerns on food access and supply within the municipalities. Although the Food For All program predominantly concerns equitable food access, food security problems are complex with specific determinants and predominant issues varying in different locations. Two peri-urban councils involved in the first phase of the Food For All program now face far-reaching food security issues around the replacement of prime agricultural land with urban housing as part of the state government’s planning decisions. Cardinia Shire Council’s *Council Plan 2007-11* states:

_Cardinia has several agricultural areas, in both the Hills and Southern Rural regions that are important to the economy at a local and international level. These areas will be protected. Council has a significant challenge to support ongoing agriculture. Agriculture is facing significant pressure from changing economic and environmental conditions and an ageing farming community (p.5)._  

Losing prime agricultural land is currently a pressing issue in the neighbouring municipality, the City of Casey, which has extensive documentation in its *Municipal Strategic Statement* and *Community Plan C21* outlining the agricultural importance of land in the municipality (and to the State) and the need for its
protection. Yet, despite objections by this local government to the Planning Minister, the urban growth boundary has been extended and prime agricultural land is being used to provide housing for the rapid growth of metropolitan Melbourne. This demonstrates that broader food supply concerns, let alone equitable food access are not seen as priorities of the community or of politicians (1LGO6).

Other issues concern food distribution. Participating rural councils noted that although horticultural production occurs in their municipalities, the produce does not stay in their area and local residents can have limited access to fresh fruit and vegetables. For example, an interview participant shares that:

_We were just talking the other day about eating Italian tomatoes and we have got beautiful fresh tomatoes in market gardens down at the river but they don’t get eaten here_ (1LGO10).

Similarly, in Robinvale, an agricultural area on the Murray River between Mildura and Swan Hill, ‘fresh produce is in abundance but is mostly sold away from the area, leaving many locals with little access to the freshest fruits and vegetables available’ as the produce available in the supermarkets is a number of days old (Councillor Katis, cited in VicHealth 2008:16). Food distribution matters are outside the scope of local government capacity and need to be addressed between higher levels of government and private enterprise. Yet local inequitable food access is the result of this higher level problem.

Another pressing food security issue in this area affects food supply. Lack of water in the region raised questions about the sustainability of irrigation for growing food in this region as the government drives reductions in water allocations for farmers in the Murray Darling Basin. The unbundling of water rights from properties changed ‘the dynamic of water and its allocation to land, and then land became less valuable; it’s the water that’s valuable’ and therefore, ‘the type of crops grown needs to be questioned – they should be staples’ (1LGO8). In this area council needs to work on food access programs and/or food security as an economic development concern, as water is such a significant food security problem.
If we can’t supply food to other areas because of lack of water then that is a food security issue. On the employment side of it, if people in our community can’t be employed because there’s no water to grow food then how are they going to put food on their table? (1LGO8).

Food security is a complex challenge and determinants are different in individual municipalities. Local government’s capacity needs to be flexible in order to adapt to different needs. Preservation of prime agricultural land, food distribution and water management are higher level of government responsibilities within the broader external environment. The inability of these levels of government to address these broader issues impacts municipalities and restricts local government capacity to respond significantly.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Evidence from Case Study One was analysed using a capacity assessment framework to critique local government’s capacity to respond to community food security needs.

VicHealth was attracted to working with local governments because of their procedural nature and policy development processes that could improve the health and wellbeing of vulnerable groups in the community. The councils involved varied in population size and geographical features. Council rate bases varied between participating councils but on average councils had to find over 50 per cent of their revenue from other sources. Timeframes were important in two ways: the learning over time by the lead partner about local government capacity and the experience of each participating council over the length of the project in discovering their food security roles.

Capacity building is pivotal to increase institutional capacity but systemic constraints limit its effectiveness during implementation and after it finishes. The current system of project-based initiatives reliant on external funding is a serendipitous strategy of various stakeholders across multiple levels to build capacity but a common approach in the current governance system.
One program aim at the recipient level was to strengthen capacity across numerous council departments with each understanding their role in food security solutions and working together within an integrated planning framework. In practice most councils use a siloed planning approach due to lack of fit between government levels but project officers made in-roads into achieving an integrated approach. Integrated planning across council departments seeks to holistically address external influences that impinge on local government capacity to address food security at a municipal level. Some councils were more successful at integrating their planning approach than others. Policy development was another program aim which had varying levels of success. Systemic barriers within local government centred on planning affordance for applicants under ‘by-right’ permissions in the planning schemes, the complexity of bureaucratic processes and restrictive municipal by-laws. Findings suggest strong leadership support within councils is vital to the effectiveness of food security work, particularly in promoting integrated planning, food policy development and addressing systemic regulatory barriers. Additionally, limited advocacy pathways existed for local government to inform higher levels of government about changes needed to improve effectiveness ‘on the ground’.

External influences impact local government on several fronts. In the wider political and institutional environment the state government legislative and regulatory constraints limits the embedding of food security into local government’s central activities and societal norms. Participants express concern about the lack of decision making power in land use regulation constraining local government capacity. The planning system is seen by participants to be pro-development with excessive by-right privileges resulting in poor urban design. There are no triggers to activate food security inclusions in the regulatory land use scheme. Additionally, lack of sustained funds from the state government limits local government’s capacity to address food security.

Local government relies heavily on higher levels of government to address and manage macroeconomic influences. Several participants were concerned about
the extensive influence of the corporate food sector, displayed in one avenue through liberal media advertising as well as the food transport systems that remove produce from the point of production without allowing access in those locations to fresh fruit and vegetables. Global environmental concerns challenge local government capacity to act through food system inequities, water usage and the loss of peri-urban agricultural land; all of which place pressure on the fit between government levels and local government capacity to address resulting impacts within municipalities. Complex sustainability challenges, such as food security necessitate fit between all levels of government, with resulting opportunity for local government to have sufficient capacity to address food security at the community level.
CHAPTER SIX: CASE STUDY TWO – VICTORIAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH’S FOOD ACCESS & FOOD SECURITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Five presented the findings of Case Study One. Overarching factors that affect local government capacity include an explanation of the scope and diversity of individual council contexts and the implications of timelines for the program partners. Capacity building partnerships provide opportunity to increase capacity through encouraging integrated planning, expecting policy development and supporting municipal food security programs. Yet internal and external systemic planning and regulatory barriers limit local government capacity to act. Other broad external issues including the influence of the corporate food sector and global environmental concerns challenge local government’s capacity to address municipal food security.

This chapter presents the findings of Case Study Two, the Victorian Department of Health’s Food Access & Food Security Policy Development project (2009-2011) using the same framework as Case Study One (see Chapter Five).

OVERARCHING FACTORS: SCOPE, CONTEXT AND TIMEFRAMES

Initially, the chapter briefly discusses how context, scope and timeframes, as the overarching factors that impact the project’s design, implementation and outcomes.

Scope

The purpose of the project was to support the participating local governments develop policy around food security in partnership with the North and West Metropolitan Region (N&WMR) of the Department of Human Services (DHS 2008b:1). This region was formed in 2004 by amalgamating the Northern and Western Metropolitan regions consisting of fourteen councils (DHS 2008a:1-2).

46 Initially the project was established under the auspices of the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS). In 2009 the Department of Health (DH) was formed out of DHS as a separate entity.
There are legislative requirements for the N&WMR to work with local government as explained by one of the project’s managers.

The Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 basically mandates, requires each local government to develop a Municipal Public Health Plan... In that legislation there was also the direct stipulation that local government in the preparation of those plans had to have some kind of connection or had to demonstrate input from then the Department of Human Services, now Department of Health. So that’s the piece of legislation that underpins all of our connections with local government (2M2).

Most local governments in the region have had some involvement with food security, although the level of this involvement varied.

And there are many, in fact most, that has made a reference to access to healthy food in the context of their MPHP or have alternatively focused on other issues that have an impact on food security... Most of the North and West have a focus on food security (2M2).

Three councils in the western part of the region also participated in the Food For All program (see Chapter Five).

At the same time the Department of Health and VicHealth advocated for two food security questions to be part of the Victorian Population Health Survey47.

That was really important to have questions that actually collected some data about the prevalence of food security across the state... the early stats showed one in five... that gave us a capacity (2APM1)

The knowledge provided by this data, linked with a onetime increase in financial capacity from the central office, gave N&WMR capacity to address a pertinent challenge in the region, which enabled this food security project.

Context

The N&WMR is characterised by rapid population growth, high levels of socio-economic disadvantage and culturally and linguistically diverse groups (CALD). In 2006 its population was 1.53 million or 29.7 per cent of the state’s population (DHS 2007:2)

So where we came in as the Department of Human Services... was to start at policy. We acknowledged the context, we acknowledged by then we were the North and West Metropolitan Region, instead of just West and North, each with seven local governments, we were now fourteen local governments which basically had most of

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47 The Victorian Population Health Survey, established in 1998, collects information from state, regional and local government area levels about the health and wellbeing of adult Victorians. The information is used in policy development and strategic planning (DH 2013: online).
Melbourne as we liked to call it…with five growth corridors, the most ethnically diverse, the largest number (2APM1).

Table 14 explains that the three councils involved in the project were in the metropolitan area and two have a high percentage of CALD citizens. Cities of Banyule and Darebin have similar population numbers while City of Darebin has a comparative smaller population. Population densities range from Hobsons Bay at the lower end with 1,366 persons per sq km to Darebin at the high end with 2,634 persons per sq km. Banyule has 1,960 persons per sq km. The councils averaged 64 per cent of their income from rates in 2009-10 which means that approximately 36 per cent of their revenue needs to come from other sources.

Table 14: Demographic Profile of Municipalities in Case Study Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study Two: Dept of Health Food Access and Food Security Policy Development</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Council</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banyule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darebin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobsons Bay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Slade (2013: 67)

The participating councils and lead partner met collectively, however, the project involved mostly working with individual councils, going at their pace in the policy development process (2M1). The caveat for such individually-focused activity was that each council responds to their municipal food security risk factors in different ways and to varying degrees because they have unique priorities, structures, procedures and resources (2M1). The N&WMR managers understood this diversity of local governments resulting in different approaches, structures and procedures.

48 CALD is the acronym for culturally and linguistically diverse groups whose have ‘languages and cultures that are not considered the mainstream’ (Maribyrnong City Council 2006: 7).
We didn’t say it had to be done in a particular way because we know that each council has a different culture, a different way of working, different processes, and we basically said was ‘These are what we want as outcomes, you as the council how are you going to do that?’ (2M2).

**Timeframes**

The task network is influenced positively or negatively by different timeframes according to one participant:

They [the participating councils] are totally diverse in their approach to it [the project] and they have also been moving at different speeds and for different reasons...things don’t go according to nice timelines and it does take time for them to work within their council (2M2).

And in diverse ways by the whole-of-council culture as another participant shared:

*I guess my biggest learning is that organisational culture is fundamental* (2LGO1b).

Other overarching factors can influence the best initiatives. Councils from time to time go through significant organisational changes. Every four years a new council is elected with variant priorities. Other changes occur at times in councils when the organisational management is restructured, or perhaps long-term food security champions leave. Food security capacity building within councils is not static or linear. It needs to be seen as cyclic as shared by one interview participant:

*People come and go and we lose organisational knowledge so we are going to have to keep starting from the start. It’s more circular I suppose; the approach. So we’ve started and we have done the data, we have worked with staff and built up capacity and we are at a certain stage but then there are newer people coming in and we need to go back again and go through that process almost again. Everyone is at different levels* (2LGO1b).

This strategically-focused partnership purposefully limited the scope of anticipated outcomes from policy development, based on the diversity of council contexts and the varying timeframes in which responses are made within individual organisational cultures. As a result, the capacity of local government is extended over the longer term.

**PIVOTAL LEVEL: THE TASK NETWORK**

Existing relationships between N&WMR managers and local governments in the region provided opportunity for a strong capacity-building partnership to address
identified food security needs. This section examines the partnership approach used in the task network including the rationale for state government choosing to work with local government, the process and structures involved and the results of its collective capacity.

**Theme 1: Approach to Collaboration**

The aim of the project was policy development that would lead to the rollout of a suite of food security strategies, based on the individual context of council. The approach was strengthened by strict funding pre-requisites and the development of individual strategically-focused project plans that allowed extensive local evidence collection.

Local government was seen by N&WMR managers as the logical conduit for facilitating population health planning because of its municipal scale and ability to address local food insecurity determinants (2M1). Existing external community health organisations are not as appropriate for a problem such as food security because they are mandated to work particularly with clients on an individual basis (2M1). The solidarity provided by local government’s place-based and procedural organisational culture, and ability to work with community partners was also attractive in terms of longevity of any work undertaken (2M1). Another attractor was the anticipated local government food security responses around the individual community social, economic, built and natural environments (2M1), identified through their MPHP development using the *Environments for Health* framework, as explained by a project manager:

> There was a natural fit for lots of local governments that we worked with to directly pop their food security [work into this framework]... so food security or food access initiatives have aspects of social, built, economic and so forth, so actually you can link it like a holistic project or program of work that can fit with strategies across those domains (2APM1).

Prior to the task network’s establishment a number of councils in the N&WMR were implementing specific food security initiatives but on an ad hoc basis, needing a foundational context to drive the work. These initiatives usually involved partnerships with community or health agencies but ‘didn’t look at what they could be doing internally with their own resources’ (2M1). Therefore, the
context was ripe for coordinating food security work and developing the internal
capacity of local governments to respond to food security needs within the region.

Expected outcomes of the task network partnership included council food security
activities particularly supporting high risk groups; council showing local
leadership in engaging other community sectors; and sustainable local strategies
aimed at reducing impacts of food security (Dept of Human Services 2008b:1).
Ensuring the capacity of local government to undertake this work was an essential
criterion of the project, demonstrated initially through an Expression of Interest
process. The lead partner managers knew from the VicHealth Food For All
project that senior management support within the participating local governments
was vital to the successful implementation of this work as expressed by one
interviewee:

We see it [the food security policy work] as in the organisation rather than
councillors per se. So we look that it’s the one below the CEO, the director level or
the CEO who has endorsed the work.... We are really looking for organisational
endorsement rather than the council process endorsement (2M1).

Therefore, ‘evidence of support and endorsement from relevant Senior
Management for participation in the initiative’ (Dept of Human Services 2008b:
2) became an explicit funding requirement for any council wanting to participate.
This high level support legitimised the food security work and accelerated the
development of capacity across council. Further funding criteria included the
enduring priority of councils to have food security policy development and
existing evidence of some food security work already done that could be enhanced
by this project. The lead partner wanted to see evidence of existing local
government capacity to respond to food security challenges to ensure the best
possible outcomes for the project.

The N&WR manager sought this commitment from interested councils as a result
of the expression of interest process before any money was transferred.

They [local governments] put their hands up as initially interested and then we sat
with them. This is what you need to have in place before we are going to give you
money. You have to commit to these sorts of things (2APM1).
Each council was given $40,000 initially for the first year (2APM1). This is not a
large amount of money for the work required but the councils that used existing
officers found it to be sufficient (2AMP2). Obtaining commitment to these
standards before any money exchanged hands proved very effective (2M1). The
councils had another $40,000 each to action implementation strategies in the next
year (2M1).

Once participating councils agreed to the criteria and were given the funding,
DHS staff worked with each council to develop an individual plan for the
integration of the policy work across their departments. The project initiators
observed that the VicHealth Food For All program sought to have policy
development in each of their participating councils but this had not occurred. Yet
the approach in this case study was for the lead partner to actually ask the
participating local governments whether they wanted a policy or not as their main
objective was the rollout of a suite of food security strategies. One manager
explained:

*Policies come and go. We wanted to see how local government would respond to
‘Do we need a policy to enact and initiate programs or work and strategies
underneath that or can we do that without a policy as a local priority?’ (2APM1).*

Foundational criteria for project participation necessitated councils to prove their
capacity (including higher level management endorsement and existing food
security work), available resources and priority for food security work. The
design of the project in each council was unique, based on a consensus model.
Implementation required ownership on behalf of each council and it was left to
them to work out how to integrate the project across council departments as
explained by a project manager:

*We funded them based on the EOI but then over the coming months we actually
worked with them to develop up a project brief. So we weren’t asking them to submit
a project brief straight away. We were actually just saying, ‘Have you got the
capacity, resources, the mandate to be doing some stuff and...is it clearly a priority
and then we will work with you to develop up a project brief?’ (2M2).*

Although the Expression of Interest states the aim of the project was to only
develop food security policy, in this researcher’s interviews the managers of the
project described a two-staged aim as demonstrated above. The first stage was to
build the capacity of local government to develop food policies or another type of strategic document, with a resulting second stage of implementation rolling out a suite of aligned food security initiatives into the community. Use of this combined approach strengthened local government capacity to respond to food security both in terms of policy and direct action ‘on the ground’.

**Theme 2: Partnership Processes and Structures**

The partnership was enhanced by established relationships through individual council mandated *Municipal Public Health Plan* (MPHP) development processes and the fact that food security was recognised as a designated portfolio priority of the N&WMR as explained by one of the project managers:

> In 2008 we had new public health legislation enacted. The Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 basically mandates, requires each local government to develop a Municipal Public Health Plan. In that legislation there was also the direct stipulation that local government in the preparation of those plans had to have some kind of connection or had to demonstrate input from then, the Department of Human Services, now Department of Health. So that’s the piece of legislation that underpins all of our connections with local government (2M2).

and

> In the region here, all of us, all of the regional health promotion advisors, have a portfolio of work and the three portfolios of work that were set out coming up to four years ago now, focused on the state health promotion priorities around alcohol-harm minimisation, walkability and food security (2M2).

The N&WMR staff embraced a relational response to this legislative requirement to work with local government on their MPHPs described by another interviewee:

> We did this in a partnership spirit, not as a paternalistic relationship, so again it was down to building relationships and trying to be part of a process, not big brother (2APM1).

Initial funding was available for twelve months with possible renewals and included the successful councils developing a project plan, including implementation strategies, developed in consultation with the lead partner’s staff. Work undertaken needed to be based on the best data and evidence available about the determinants of food security, vulnerable groups and health promotion actions (Dept of Human Services 2008b:1). Individual participating councils managed the project’s processes following on from its collaborative beginnings. Meetings were mostly between the N&WMR manager and the individual councils rather than all partners providing strong communication channels and opportunity
for project feedback. There were some reporting requirements needed by project officers and a small external evaluation of the project undertaken at the end of the first year (2M1).

Existing relationships between the N&WMR staff and participating councils, together with a flexible and collaborative approach, enabled this partnership an easy entrance into capacity building. Commitment to a project plan in consultation with the N&WMR staff and implementation based on the best evidence available led to participating councils receiving funds. Then, the councils managed the day-to-day processes and meeting reporting requirements and communication with lead partner. Local government capacity to respond to complex food security challenges was enhanced and supported through strategic partnership processes and structures.

**Theme 3: Impacts of Task Network Collective Capacity**

The collaborative and flexible structure of the partnership allowed individual councils to develop their project plans and corresponding strategies, around policy development. Within this supportive context each council used an evidence-based planning approach in order to target specific local needs. Evidence came from local situational analysis, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) food access mapping, community surveys, important statistical data collected by state-wide organisations about the prevalence of food insecurity, although limited in its depth, and any available evaluation reports from other food security projects. Collecting local evidence about food security needs is also a key step to integrated planning and policy development, and building capacity to respond.

Once you have got your evidence then you can trot around your council and say, ‘Look! See it’s all up to you. You’re the transport planners or you’re the sustainability people’. But a lot of Food For All programs actually just started off by going around and talking to people in council saying, ‘You should be interested in food security’. They would say ‘Why should I? And anyway even if I’m interested what relevance does it have to me? I am in infrastructure. I don’t have to take any notice of this’. So, I think it’s just such a key step. And if you do that well you have got everybody because you need to get everybody and you have got information from them but you have also got information to influence them. You’ve identified the stakeholders. You’ve identified the problems and the issues. It’s not far from that point to say ‘Well, we need policy here and we need action here’ (2APM2).
Recognition of the partnership and funding gave credibility to the food security work within the councils and legitimised it as a priority, particularly in light of the on-going problems with the devolution relationship between state and local government as one project manager explained.

_It is easier to justify some of the work that they are doing. We are actually being funded to do some of this work and therefore we have accountabilities around some of this work rather than it just being seen as state government just sort of offsetting responsibilities back to local government to do (2M2)._ 

Both the lead partner and councils acknowledged the lack of fit between state government legislation and local government capacity to respond to complex problems.

_Some of the difficulties local government experience is related to the incongruences of legislation...around what we call MSS planning, which is the municipal strategic statement, which is land use planning...they have been trying to get food security and those measures into that document...[but] the legislative requirements, the guidelines don’t necessarily support health, and those sort of things being put in there. So that sort of health and wellbeing planning is encouraging that but at the other end is this legislation around land us for planners and the Planning Act that is not necessarily congruent; they are not talking to each other. They don’t support each other. So I think there is work around some of that to ensure that state, multiple state legislations enable health and wellbeing to be looked at. (2M1)._ 

Yet, the partnerships did not focus on these system barriers but rather on building the existing capacity of local government and discovering the realistic roles local government could undertake as explained, using a planning example, by one council project officer.

_Obviously we have some role within planning. Again, at the current time the focus is quite limited. The barriers in the state planning scheme which filter down so I think we have identified a couple of things we can do in planning but I think this needs to be strengthened over time with the advocacy work. We can obviously encourage developers to consider placement of [food premises] in particular locations the best we can with the GIS maps that we have done (2LGO1b)._ 

The collective capacity of this partnership enabled policy development and furthered shared inter-departmental support and accountability for food security problems. Extensive data collection of local food security evidence provided a strong foundation for advocacy for increased response to food security problems, within council. Systemic barriers caused by lack of fit between government levels did not hinder the work of the capacity building partnership; rather the focus was
on strengthening local government capacity and then establishing its food security roles.

RECIPIENT LEVEL: INTERNAL ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

This project actively worked to collaboratively support and enhance local government’s ‘in-house’ capacity to produce food security policies and convert this capacity into implementation action plans. This section explores the internal structures, processes and resources that enhance or further limit local government’s capacity to provide municipal food security. Finally, the development of policy encouraged participating councils to explore and define their food security roles within existing capacity to respond.

Theme 1: Leadership and Management

Capacity building in local government requires leadership in order to spearhead the implementation of strategies and to support capacity enhancement. One project manager shared this understanding:

*I do think it’s going to be thought of as a suite of things; it’s levels, it’s policies, it’s programs, it’s strategies, but it actually takes leadership (2APM1).*

Supportive leadership and good management are necessary elements for building local government capacity. The external evaluator’s report at the end of the project commented that one of the lessons from the project was that ‘however skilled a planner or a project officer is, their capacity to influence and act is closely tied to the support they receive from management’ (Montague 2011: 16).

Management support increases organisational capacity. Confidence in existing or latent capacity within an organisation allows exploration of new roles. Without sufficient capacity local government cannot undertake food security roles. Limitations on capacity, particularly through lack of fit between local and state governments caused by legislative and regulatory mismatches did not deter participants believing that local government has enough capacity to respond to municipal food security needs, as exemplified by one interviewee:

*We can’t implement everything but we still acknowledge that we have a role and there are local needs within the community that we can help address (2LGO1b).*
The stimulation of food security policy development capacity, which emphasised corresponding implementation strategies, brought forth innovative thinking and articulation of numerous potential food security roles from local government, outlined in Table 15. Further information can be found in Appendix H.

Table 15: Potential Food Security Roles for Local Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Roles</th>
<th>Specific Strategies</th>
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| Community Capacity Building             | • Facilitate networks and partnerships  
• Develop on-going monitoring of local food security needs  
• Be informed about best practice examples of food security work |
| Support in Emergency Situations         | • Support community-based organisations that provide emergency food relief.                             |
| Education for Healthy and Sustainable Eating | • Promote community education of food preparation, nutrition and understanding of food system impacts on natural environment e.g. through Community Kitchen Programs.  
• Work with CALD migrants and refugees with food access problems.  
• Investigate food rescue options  
• Establish a backyard gardens award program |
| Advocacy for Food Security Leadership and Resources | • Advocate for food access in State and Local Planning Provisions  
• Advocate for improved public transport options.  
• Partnerships, research and advocacy to attract resources and promote local initiatives. |
| Food Access in the Urban Environment    | • Provide improved access to affordable and nutritious food by walking, cycling or public transport.  
• Encourage placement of supermarkets and other fresh food outlets in areas of need.  
• Encourage urban food production in private and public spaces.  
• Maintenance of council cooking facilities to increase communal cooking and eating.  
• Develop policies and guidelines for community gardens. |
| Leading by Example                      | • Ensure Council’s food services promote nutritious and culturally appropriate food options.  
• Support social inclusion and celebration around food.  
• Ensure nutritional food services for children in long day care.  
• Integrate food insecurity determinants into Council policies, plans and programs.  
• Support food security initiatives through Community Grants.  
• Support community healthy and sustainable food enterprises for catering events.  
• Develop food security policies through integrated planning across council. |

Source: City of Darebin (2010); City of Hobsons Bay (2009b) and interview participants
The frequent inclusion of sustainability problems and solutions is encouraging in terms of continued priority and linking food security challenges, not only across council departments, but also with broader environmental concerns. Acknowledgement by one project manager of the potential roles of local government was a step forward. Knowing which roles gain traction within individual councils over a longer timeframe was still unknown.

*We know there are potential roles for local government, which ones are going to make the mileage for individual local governments, that’s the hard bit (2M2).*

Leadership support for food security work is vital to capacity as supportive leadership allows capacity development. Combined with capacity building, it gives confidence in existing and latent capacity to explore new food security roles for local government. These projects explored a number of potential roles, which now articulated, need to be tested for effectiveness.

**Theme 2: Financial, Human and Organisational Resources**

Change can also come when a project finishes. The closing of an externally funded project within council can have internal and external capacity ramifications. The end of the *Food For All* project brought elements of disappointment at the momentum loss and knowledge drain to participating and on-looking councils (2LG02). It is now up to individual councils to resource this food security work but without champions within the councils driving the agenda the chances of it continuing are drastically reduced. In this situation it is important to have food security principles embedded into council policies so their influence will endure and be acted upon at least until the time of policy redevelopment. For others it results in information loss.

*I think some of the councils are committed and are going to continue...[the] network of the Food For All workers were able to bring a range of local experience together. It does seem very strange to me that’s it’s all over. Well you’ve just put in all that money for three years and get all those things started, and you see that momentum that local knowledge, once they leave then it’s up to the individual councils again; how they approach, or [are] going to continue that work. So unless you have someone who is particularly passionate about it in that organisation, there are so many issues competing for funding. If you don’t have those advocates within the council it is very difficult. And also I think unless [they] have managed to get food security into their [strategies] and a range of different policies, then if you can do that then council has to act on the policies, then you have a bit better chance. Yeah,*
Recognising these problems this project sought to work with existing council officers to embed food security principles in policy, with corresponding action plans. Whilst adding extra burdens of time constraints and the stress of being pulled in a number of directions, this approach benefited from existing established relationships with other council departments, organisational understanding and knowledge, expertise in existing roles and knowledge of the local communities. The benefits were summarised by an associated project member who says ‘they have food security in their heads’ (2APM2). Coming from the experience of the Food For All project’s staffing problems, the project initiators encouraged participating councils to ‘allocate the responsibility within an existing role, don’t put it on as a project’ (2APM2). Two councils chose this model where existing officers added food security policy development to their work plans. Project-based positions can also allow other council staff to exclude themselves from responsibility for food security responses:

*I am just cautious about the project officer type position because I think or even within councils people go, ‘Oh well that’s your job then so YOU do all that rather than you are trying to work yourself out of a job because you want them to be doing the bits that relate to their work’* (2M2).

These councils saw that the benefits outweighed the time constraints and were satisfied that the project would simply take longer to implement. The third council employed a new project officer for the first year; a process that produced food security policy but only limited inter-departmental relationship building and resulted in knowledge loss and a capacity drain when the contract project officer left.

Significant human and financial resources can be focused on policy development, relationship building to embrace integrated planning and accountability and the championing of new partnerships and programs. It was noted by one participant that increasing the council staff’s knowledge of food security was cyclic in nature because some staff are always leaving and new people arriving (2LGO1b). It was difficult for the project officers to maintain the education process continually
amidst their other responsibilities. Knowledge loss and a capacity drain occur through changing staff patterns, which are serious concerns for new initiatives in local government. This can occur in several ways: the employment of contract staff as illustrated previously; changes in the organisational structures; the loss of long-term employees; or the ending of an externally funded project.

**Theme 3: Internal Structures and Processes**

The goal of this project was policy development involving other departments across council. This section examines the integrated planning processes used by councils in this project, facilitated by the *Environments for Health Framework*, and resultant policy development. Insistence by the lead partner’s managers of the rollout of food security actions from the policy facilitates capacity enhancement over the long term.

**Integrated Planning**

Integrated planning is a mechanism to improve the holistic capacity of local government through an inclusive culture where council staff from varying departments is drawn into the process of working together to respond to complex problems. The council food security officers involved in this partnership worked with other departments...

> Alerting them to what the issues are, telling them what the local evidence is, [and] helping them to see how they can do something in their work, suggesting partnerships and stakeholders in the community as well as in council (2APM2a).

A benefit of integrated planning is other council departments take some of the responsibility for food security responses as observed in one council.

> [The council food security officer is] not going to do it all, which was one of the traps that Food For All sometimes fell into. They are going to facilitate everyone else to do it. That’s what needs to happen. It’s got to be part of everyone’s thinking (2APM2a).

Banyule City Council has adopted a rather complex yet holistic system of integrated planning approaches to all policy development within council. This whole-of-council approach reaches across all their planning portfolios (2M2). Each of its five major policies and complementary strategies centre on one of five themes: People, Planet, Place, Prosperity and Participation (Banyule City Council
2009: 3) which in turn relate to each other. For example, their *Municipal Public Health Plan* concentrates on ‘People Policy’ circle (green circle in Figure 8 below) and its action plan overlaps with the ‘People Strategy’ circle (see red circle). The development of a food security policy was one of the actions from this area which would also be embedded (including an action plan) in the *Health & Wellbeing Strategy* and the *Environmental Sustainability Strategy* (2LGO3a). One project participant commented about food security principles being embedded in this planning process:

*In Banyule, it’s [food security] right through all their incredibly complicated but wonderful integrated planning* (2APM2).

Yet due to the large-scale nature of this process and wider institutional context changes the dedicated food security policy (now called the *Food Policy and Plan*) has moved much slower than the other two councils and is yet to be adopted by council (2LGO3b). Developing and/or maintaining a capacity to respond is influenced by external and internal forces, not necessarily directly related to food security, but that can result in a slowing or stalling of well-intentioned strategic capacity building initiatives.

![Figure 8: The Integrated Policy Development Model in Banyule City Council](source: Banyule City Council (2009: 3))
The *Environments for Health Framework* was used by the participating councils to explain food security across the four domains: social, economic, built and natural, to facilitate integrated planning approaches. This tool provides a clear explanation of the impacts of food security for other council departments and the relationship to their existing work.

> When we go and talk to planning we can talk to them about how the built and natural environment impacts on and the relationship with food security and therefore what’s their role in supporting food access or enabling access...or they go to sustainability and they talk about the natural environment (2M1).

and

> [The food security officer] called together people from right around council, urban planners, open space people, sustainability people, a whole range of people, about fifteen in the room and they went right through the four environments for health. They talked about what was the relevance in their area, what could they actually do, and what actions would there be (2APM2).

This project’s main aim was to assist local governments develop their internal capacity in addressing community level food insecurity through policy development and implementation. The project leaders realised that a major part of the project’s success was in the internal processes and not just the production of a document, as shared by the following participants:

> So one of the key learnings for me is not necessarily about the outcome; it’s been a lot about the process. So just this general consequence of talking to people about this and working on it things have come up along the way. I would definitely say that it is more on the agenda across council than it was by the very nature of the process that we have gone through (2LGO1b).

and

> Informally, there were three stages to the project. The first stage involves the writing of food security policies; the following stage is having specific council endorsed action plans that sit underneath the policy, translating the objectives into actions on the ground. The third stage is monitoring and evaluating the policy and actions. The mechanism that oils all these stages is the relationship-building across council departments that prevent this work from just being an initiative managed from the social or community area which was more like the Food For All model (2APM2a).

and also

> The outcome may have been a hardcopy document and a strategy...but it was actually the conversations that happened across departments [that provided a] good foundation for the work that they were doing...clear direction and evidence-based work...and guiding their partners (2M1).
The project’s concept of integrated policy development brought food security into a council framework that would ensure a level of longevity and inter-departmental accountability. Working across departments in this manner strengthened the capacity of the participating councils to respond to complex food security challenges through shared responsibility and broader, integrated service delivery.

**Policy Development**

Embedding food security principles into policy was the main focus of this capacity building partnership. Behind this focus was the main driver; to implement an action plan of strategies to address food security needs. Therefore, whether a council chose to use a policy or a strategy did not matter to the lead partner. It was the subsequent actions that were most important.

...whether it be a strategy, a policy, I am not hung up by the name but at least it describes what council’s role is in food security across the departments (2M1).

Table 16 illustrates the embedding of food security principles within council policies. Two councils have a social justice emphasis in their CPs but the main embedding of food security principles occurred in the MPHP. All three councils included food security in the MPHP, whilst the Cities of Darebin and Hobsons Bay also included food access. The City of Darebin threads social justice throughout their three high level mandated policies. Similar to Case Study One, although food access and food supply may be mentioned in some form in the MSS, this fact does not guarantee capacity to act upon their inclusion.

All three councils have a ‘stand-alone’ food security policy although Banyule City Council has yet to adopt their policy. Darebin City Council adopted their food security policy in 2010. This policy ‘merges desired health-driven community food security with environmental and sustainability issues, showing an increased ‘whole of council’ commitment and shared responsibility by other departments’ (Slade 2013: 72). City of Hobsons Bay began a process of internal and community consultations in 2008-2009 (before their partnership in this project with N&WMR) which identified food access needs in the municipality (2M3). The result was the development of their *Improving Access to Food in Hobsons Bay*
(Food Security) Policy Statement (Hobsons Bay 2009b: 1-2). This policy statement does not have a corresponding action plan that sits underneath it to facilitate reporting requirements on progress (2APM2) which runs contrary to the goals of this partnership project.

Table 16: Case Study Two - Food security Principles in Current Council Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council Name</th>
<th>Council Plan (CP)</th>
<th>MPHP</th>
<th>MSS</th>
<th>Community Plan/Vision</th>
<th>Food Security Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banyule</td>
<td>SJ</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td>FA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(Currently being prepared)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darebin</td>
<td>SJ</td>
<td>FA, FS, SJ</td>
<td>FSU, SJ</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>FA, FS, FSU 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobsons Bay</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>FA, FS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>FA, FS, SJ 2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Slade (2013: 68)

AG = preservation of high quality agricultural land
FA = food access
FS = food security (includes elements of affordability, culturally appropriate, nutritious)
FSU = food supply/sustainable food system
SJ = social justice, equitable access

The inclusion of food security principles in high level council documents improves the capacity of local government to respond to food security problems over the long term. Capacity is further extended through the implementation of strategic actions that flow down from the policies and plans. The strengths of the policy development processes in these councils rest with their discrete food security policies and embedding of food security principles within the MPHP.

BROADER INFLUENCING LEVEL: THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

This section outlines the impact of the four external environments that enable or constrain local government capacity. External factors, whether they are political, economic, social or environmental, continually impact local government’s capacity to address food security.
Theme 1: Political/Institutional Influences

The first theme examines the wider political and institutional influences, particularly focusing on lack of fit between government levels in planning and lack of state government support for local government’s food security work. This fit has the potential to either enable or constrain local government’s institutional capacity through lack of legislative and governance alignment. It is an important focus for this case study in two ways. The mandated initiative by State government for local governments to write their Council Plan within six months of the election, the Municipal Public Health Plan within twelve months and to review their Municipal Strategic Statement brought greater consistency and coherence to planning and policy development (2APM2). It was an opportune time in the planning cycle for food security advocates within local government to embed food security within the driving whole-of-council policies without having to wait extended periods of time. Yet, despite this opportunity there are inhibitors that limit local government’s progress in providing community food security initiatives. Comments from interview participants centre on the relationship of local government to the state and federal government levels concerning impacts of amalgamations and state level organisational changes in the early 1990s (2M2), and the lack of regulatory support given to local government in their food security work (2M1).

At the same time as the Kennett government was amalgamating local governments in the early 1990s, state government departments were also amalgamated and Community Services and Health were joined to become the Department of Human Services. This structure remained under the next Labor government until 2009, when it was divided once again as its size was considered inefficient. These changes also impacted municipal public health planning. Local governments were legislatively required to develop a Municipal Public Health Plan since the late 1980s but in the early years often wrote a plan to meet their obligations but with no consequential organisational or cultural changes or activity (2APM1). With the amalgamation adjustments easing and the wider institutional context rapidly changing one project manager shared her view about
the relationship between local government and their responsibility to the local community:

2010 is a much different animal...so it’s a maturing sector and external milieu; the issues arising for local government to be responsive to residents in different ways (2APM1).

Therefore, local government capacity must be flexible enough to adapt to new external governance contexts and be able respond appropriately.

Pertinent to contemporary food security initiatives in this case study is the current lack of support from the higher tiers of government. In order for local government to fully provide leadership and increase its institutional capacity in providing food security it needs legislative and policy support from these higher tiers. A number of sources expressed this concern about lack of fit between government levels, including two of the published food security/access policies developed within the project. The City of Darebin’s Food Security Policy (2010: 15) states ‘there is currently no whole-of-government approach or legislative framework in Australia that addresses food security’. According to Hobsons Bay’s Access to Food in Hobsons Bay (Food Security) Policy Statement (2009b: 2) this situation results in local government being ‘limited in its capacity to address all the determinants surrounding the food security issue’. Local government does not have the power to control food prices, or the level of entitlements people receive from a pension. They have limited control over housing access or transport planning so they are in a very difficult position (2M2).

Unfortunately local government’s power in land use planning decision making to address physical and built food security determinants is limited by the current legislative framework that governs these power relationships between state and local government. The state government can use its centralised power to dictate changes to local government land use purposes if it chooses, such as expanding the urban growth boundaries to include prime agricultural land49. This practice

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49 Participants in both case studies mentioned the contemporary example of overturning the City of Casey’s priority to preserve high quality agricultural land within the municipality that provides food for Melbourne and beyond. The State government overturned the City of Casey’s decision and extended the urban growth boundary of the capital city to include some of this prime
can be in direct opposition to local government’s priorities expressed in their Municipal Strategic Statement and other high level policies. It is a difficult situation for local government when power is given and then taken away at the discretion of the higher level of government; a dilemma described by an interviewee:

Of course State authorities can overturn local government decisions. So councils then say ‘Do we fight the good fight?’ (2APM1).

Councils then have to decide whether it is feasible to contest these decisions when they know historically that they are most unlikely to win.

The introduction of the compulsory MPHP provided opportunities for embedding food security principles within local government policies; however, this positive initiative is overshadowed by the lack of regulatory support for food security initiatives at the local level. Local government capacity is not able to address all the determinants of food insecurity and relies on the fit of priorities between itself and higher levels of government to address these root causes. Similarly, in land use planning, local government capacity is limited by an imbalanced legislative framework. Councils need to be strategic in using their existing capacity wisely.

Themes 2 & 3: Macroeconomic Pressures and Social/Cultural Environment

Broad economic pressures, as the second theme, focuses on each government level responding to food security determinants within their jurisdiction and higher levels of government addressing barriers in private development. Theme three explores the role of GIS mapping for local evidence collecting and the partnerships between local government and community groups.

Economic and social issues, local place-based determinants and potential roles of individual local governments connect to influence local government. Determinants of food insecurity such as inequitable access to food due to low incomes, disability, mobility difficulties and age are expressed through the relationship of people and the place in which they live. Participating councils

agricultural land for housing (2APM1). The City of Casey spoke out against this decision but was not successful.
sought to understand the complex nature of food insecurity within their municipalities. Local situational analysis was undertaken through community consultations and food access mapping, which identified vulnerable localities and assisted local governments to understand the implications of food insecurity. Collecting data provides evidence that gives the councils capacity to strategically focus on areas of need and to advocate to other responsible groups the importance of their work.

Participating council officers need place-based evidence of community food security problems in order to gain legitimacy and support for whole-of-council food security initiatives. Interviewees saw this evidence as the foundation of council planning and policy development as there were different combinations of food security risk factors in each municipality as explained by one project manager.

*I thought maybe we will find a few overarching factors that can be the focus of activity-every single local government area within our region has a different combination of risk factors for food security. So the old truism about you can’t craft a solution in local government X and transport to local government area Y is absolutely true because there is a different combo of risk factors in the two (2M2).*

Each council must know their own community because a solution found to work in one municipality does not necessarily mean that it will work in another one.

The community surveys undertaken by both City of Darebin and City of Hobsons Bay in 2008 revealed a number of local food supply and food access problems as explained in Table 17.

Table 17: Food Security Problems from the Community Consultations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Supply</th>
<th>Food Access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Fresh fruit and vegetables are not always available. When offered are too expensive or poor quality.</td>
<td>• Difficulty in accessing shops using public transport, alternative transport or walking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Barriers to growing backyard food – space, time, physical capacity, knowledge.</td>
<td>• Insufficient money to spend on healthy food or enough food for family members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Residents are interested in fresh food markets and alternative food supply options, such as farmers markets, cooperatives, edible landscapes and food sharing.</td>
<td>• Lack of time or motivation to cook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Supply</td>
<td>Food Access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Council food services could be improved</td>
<td>• Influence of personal taste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Hard to get family members to eat healthy food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Need for education around healthy food choices and food preparation.</td>
<td>• People not eating recommended daily serves of fruit and vegetables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The need for emergency food relief and sometimes households go without meals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: City of Darebin (2008a) and City of Hobsons Bay (2009a)

GIS mapping visually reinforced the existence of physical and built barriers to accessing healthy food outlined in Table 18. Firstly, some neighbourhoods within municipalities experience an absence of healthy food retail outlets or ‘food deserts’. Secondly, some residents experience access difficulties to existing outlets. Food access mapping by the Cities of Hobsons Bay and Darebin illustrate these difficulties. Banyule City Council has also undertaken similar mapping but the maps and specific results were not available to the researcher.

The discourse around physical absence of food outlets in certain neighbourhoods is ongoing with research studies contributing differentiated findings (see Chapter Two for discussion of ‘food deserts’ literature). The following maps reveal substantial areas within the municipalities without ready access to healthy food outlets. Hobsons Bay chose to represent healthy food by bakery, butcher or fruit and vegetable outlets with two radii of 500m and one kilometre. The map in Figure 9 shows that the suburbs of Laverton, Altona North, Brooklyn and parts of Altona Meadows experience a dearth of fresh food outlets. Such impacting visualisation of this problem can be an excellent tool for planners to understand systemic food security barriers as expressed by one of the project officers.

*With the maps it’s really quite stark when you see big chunks of the municipality where there’s nothing there . . . it’s a really good visual tool for the planners to get a sense of pictorially where the gaps are and the lack of fresh food outlets (2LGO2).*

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50 It should be noted that Seabrook on the left hand side bottom corner of the map looks like a ‘food desert’ if this map is taken in isolation but regional mapping in the Western suburbs of Melbourne has shown that there is a nearby shopping centre in the adjacent municipality.
The City of Darebin is another municipality with ‘food desert’ areas. The maps in Figures 10 and 11 use green grocers and supermarkets as their representations of healthy food. Figure 10 depicts a radius of 500 metres around each outlet to depict a reasonable distance people will walk to buy food. The second map in Figure 11, demonstrates the impact of an increase in the radii from 250 metres to 500 metres, and through to 750 metres; however, even with a greater walking distance allowed significant areas in the north of the municipality are highlighted as large ‘food deserts’. The presence of food deserts reinforces that local government’s capacity to address food insecurity determinants rests heavily on its fit with the higher levels of government because it relies on federal and state governments and private sector developers to provide infrastructure currently limiting food access.
Figure 10: Visual Illustration of Food Desert Areas in the City of Darebin with 500 metre Buffer

Source: City of Darebin (2008b: 12-13)
Further GIS mapping from City of Hobsons Bay exemplifies the relationship between infrastructure barriers and food access. For example, residents with mobility problems find it very difficult to physically access Altona Gate Shopping Centre; a large retail precinct with two supermarkets and other speciality shops.
The orange circle in Figure 12 illustrates that the Westgate Freeway (a thin solid blue line running horizontally through the orange circle) separates the northern residential areas and the shopping centre. This problem was only discovered by the project officer when talking with residents.

*It actually looks on paper that it is quite well catered for in that respect but however in speaking particularly to senior residents of this area, there is a Westgate freeway between a chunk of these residents and the shopping centre. So for those who don’t drive and particularly these elderly residents, some of whom are on wheelie frames, actually access to that shopping centre is really very, very difficult. So even though it is only 500 metres away there’s a huge physical barrier and it’s also really poorly designed in terms of pedestrian access. Great for cars, of course! (2LGO2).*

The second example is from the suburb of Laverton where a four track (and in the future six track) railway line blocks access for most of the residents at the northern end of the suburb from the Aviation Road Shopping Centre on the other side of the tracks (see purple circle in Figure 12). Parents with prams, or small children, or people with limited mobility have to be able to walk that far and negotiate the railway lines in order to access food as explained by one interview participant:

*It’s the same in Laverton as well you have the physical barrier of the railway line and most of the residents are at the northern end of Laverton but most of the retail is on the other side of the railway line. It’s not just one, it’s like a four track, soon to be six track, rail line, so if you have a pram and a couple of kids you need to walk that distance and then you have to go over the railway line; it’s a bit of a nightmare (2LGO2)*

Place-based evidence provides understanding of existing food security problems. Visual mapping of these problems reveal disparities in ‘healthy’ food outlet locations and major infrastructure barriers for some groups in society. Mapping also facilitates advocacy and strategic planning of solutions. It is vital that all levels of government address systemic problems at their own level and are aligned across level in their responses to improving current inequitable food access.
Finally, the fourth theme discusses the links between global environmental issues and local government’s food security roles within a sustainability agenda. In this case study the councils made connections between global environmental issues and local food security. The City of Darebin’s *Food Security Policy* (2010:11) explains the impact of climate change and peak oil on the food chain from production to household consumption. Impacts include reduced capacity to produce and distribute food due to water scarcity, increased bio-fuel production, land degradation and loss of prime agricultural land through urban growth. Reduced capacity is evidenced in ‘increased costs of food, transport and utilities’ (City of Darebin 2010:11) which flow on to the consumer. Consequential risk factors for local food security centre on food availability, choice and price (Hobsons Bay 2009:3). Individuals will pay more for food and in some situations will find limited food choices. This situation heightens the importance of local food production, the reliance on seasonality and a reduction in meat, dairy and...
imported food consumption while significantly increasing the pressure on the disadvantaged people who are vulnerable to community food insecurity (City of Darebin 2010:11).

Participating local governments in this project acknowledge this wider environmental context. Stronger local links between sustainability and food security were embraced, particularly through policy development as explained by two project officers:

One of the reasons for doing this work and trying to set up ongoing systems is that we have to move into sustainability as a whole society, and we cannot go on like this…. In terms of it coming out of the public health plans, it fits a lot of local government’s role in terms of the community infrastructure, the prevention through to service delivery for some of the most vulnerable, and then the advocacy role (2LGO3a).

and

So a lot of action in the policy are around sustainable food so I see the policy as two-fold: 1. It is addressing current food security needs in the population particularly for the vulnerable groups, [and 2.] also about addressing more of a population health approach of future food security, so looking at a sustainable food element is a big part of it (2LGO1b).

Local government was discovering its capacity to undertake food security roles that align with sustainability. One participant believed that local government’s progress towards sustainability was more advanced that the higher levels of government; a situation that caused serious concern because of the implications of lack of governance fit.

We’ve got a difficult, very difficult situation with both the federal and state governments in terms of their attitudes to this…I think many local governments and community agencies are ahead of the state and federal, the state government that is going to building freeways everywhere forever and the terrible public transport system (2LGO3a).

A project manager explained that within a sustainability agenda, not only local government, but all levels of government will have to find their food security roles.

I think that food security issues are going to be quite significant in our future. I don’t have any doubt that everyone, including local government, will have to figure out what their role is going to be (2APM1).
CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter provides evidence from Case Study Two using a capacity assessment framework to analyse local government’s capacity to respond to complex issues. The scope of the project was discussed in the light of the on-going relationship between the N&WMR and participating councils from the region. Although geographically similar each council had, varying timeframes and individual implementation approaches strategically focused at developing local evidence and targeting specific food security problems.

The partnership at the task network found strength in its collaborative and consensual approach and was effective in developing food policy and implementing subsequent action plans in all participating councils. The project as a capacity building partnership actively worked toward supporting and enhancing local government’s internal capacity to develop food security policies and action plans.

As a result, at the recipient level, local government’s internal capacity was enhanced and attention turned to potential food security roles of the organisation within their capacity. Limiting processes involve cross-departmental relationship building, and understanding food security determinants and designing individual responses. Project participants sought to build relationships with other departments in council, although it was challenging. A whole-of-council approach to planning and policy development is necessary to unravel the latent capacity available within local government. This section examined existing and/or potential roles suggested from interview participants and document analysis that would enhance local government internal capacity to respond to complex new challenges. Exploration of new solutions requires senior management and council support; however, even with this support potentially desirable roles are limited by lack of fit between government levels.

External institutional influences limited local government capacity. The wider political/institutional context impinges on the organisational capacity of local
governments. Particular issues centre on limitations of the state level legislative and regulatory framework and its consequential discretionary withdrawal of power from local government in conflicting land use situations. Higher levels of government need to access their capacity to address problems within the food system controlled by private enterprise. Participants saw global environmental issues impacting the food system locally as significant concerns that increase pressure on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Links were made between a sustainability agenda based on environmental concerns and local government’s role in food security responses. The challenge confronting local government is to find and embrace roles that meet community needs based on existing and latent levels of institutional capacity. Food security determinants are often outside local government jurisdiction but affect internal processes and capacity. The social and cultural environment draws attention to complex combinations of food insecurity determinants that occur in individual places and the physical and built barriers to food access. Mapping of access to food in municipalities using GIS found barriers in infrastructure planning and development. Sharing the responsibility for responses across government levels and the facilitation of partnerships with service organisations and community groups relieves pressure off local government capacity and enable it to strategically focus on individualised municipal role development.
CHAPTER SEVEN: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDIES

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Six presented the findings of Case Study Two. The aim of that case was to develop and implement local government food policy through a collaborative partnership approach. The N&WMR’s recognition of diverse council contexts, varying timeframes and individual implementation approaches were foundational to this partnership, with the lead partner’s role one of support and enabling the participating councils. Within the councils, project officers worked to develop interdepartmental relationships to engender whole of council planning and ownership of food security issues. An important criterion for participation was senior management support for the work. Yet, lack of support from higher levels of government constrains local government capacity to respond, particularly in terms of land use planning and regulatory decision-making. Similarly, food security determinants are often outside of local government’s jurisdiction. Combined with the impacts of global environmental issues on the food system, misalignment between levels of government significantly constrain local government’s capacity to respond to complex, multi-level problems, such as food security.

The capacity assessment framework themes used in the previous chapters are again used in this chapter to compare and contrast the findings from the two case studies. Both case studies have the same purpose in providing insight into the problem of fit and the consequent impacts on local government capacity but they sit within different contexts (Berg 2004: 256). The epistemological driver should be optimal ‘understanding of the case rather than to generalize beyond it’ (Stake 2008: 120). This comparative analysis process draws attention to the similarities and differences between cases, providing insight into the nuances and variations of the central themes. Likewise the researcher needed to fully understand the data and its context so the most appropriate theoretical explanations was known (Gillham 2004: 2).
Therefore, the purpose of undertaking this comparative analysis includes further iteration of the data analysis towards theory development by adding to the richness and depth of understanding about the capacity needed to respond to complex sustainability challenges.

OVERARCHING FACTORS: SCOPE, CONTEXT AND TIMEFRAMES

Scope of the projects, the individual contexts of each local government and the varying timeframes experienced by the partners impacted the collective capacity of the partnerships and the resulting internal capacity of participating councils in both cases (as summarised in Table 18). This section compares and contrasts these factors across the two case studies and highlights key points from the analysis.

Table 18: Summary of Comparative Analysis of Overarching Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scope</td>
<td>Low socio-economic areas</td>
<td>CS1 – Locality, low income and mortality linked with food security.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Previous experience of lead organisations</td>
<td>CS2 – Regionally defined; council readiness; mandated to work with local government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Both capacity-building partnerships; low socio-economic disadvantage.</td>
<td>CS1 – Diverse councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeframes</td>
<td>Process of food security awareness; each council moved at its own pace.</td>
<td>CS2 – Similar councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other factors</td>
<td>Staff turnover, restructuring, amalgamation impacts, Council elections every four years.</td>
<td>CS1 – Long; under-estimated difficulty in developing policy. CS2 – Short</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before these partnerships were established the lead partners from both cases were already involved in general collaborative capacity building activities at a ‘state’ level, with VicHealth as a health promotion foundation responsible to the Victorian Parliament and the N&WMR part of the Victorian Department of Health. Similarly lead partners in both case studies had previous experience working with local government on food security problems in low socio-economic areas and understood the connection between locality, low income, mortality and food security. VicHealth was involved with the two community demonstration projects in 2001-2 and the
N&WMR was legislatively mandated to work with local government, with food security a state and regional priority. In the second case study a number of local governments in this region were ready to work on food security needs in their municipalities. Therefore, these pre-existing relationships enabled participating councils the capacity to respond more quickly to familiar food security needs using the resources and support of the new partnerships.

Although both case studies used capacity building partnerships to work in municipalities with high levels of disadvantage, the contexts were very different. The demographic profiles of councils in Case Study One were diverse when compared with Case Study Two, partly due to the larger number but also because of the councils’ locations. Participating councils in Case Study One include rural, interface, green wedges, urban and CALD communities while all Case Study Two councils were metropolitan, in relatively close proximity to each other and with commonality as members of the N&WMR. Darebin and Hobsons Bay councils in Case Study Two also have high levels of CALD residents. The population densities in Case Study One were diverse ranging from large municipalities with few residents to very small municipalities with a high number of residents reflecting the rural, interface/green wedge communities. All councils in both case studies include a significant proportion of low socio-economically disadvantaged residents; a determinant within the community that prompts the need for local government to have sufficient capacity to respond to food insecurity.

Similarly, all councils in both case studies found extra revenue outside of their rate base in order to have sufficient capacity to fulfill services and respond to municipal needs. The need to find extra revenue creates an ongoing uncertainty that makes opportunistic collaborative partnerships very attractive because they increase local government capacity to address specific and urgent needs through resources, leadership and support provision. Individual council contexts and capacity levels add
to the complexity of potential food security responses, already bounded by existing revenue collection limitations.

The lead partners set the projects’ timeframes according to resources available. The first case study, as the first such food security partnership in Australia, had an exceptionally long timeframe of five years in terms of standard capacity building initiatives. The lead partner learnt significantly about the realistic roles local government could play during this five years and this project set the stage for future work in the food security area. The initiators of Case Study Two crafted their collaborative partnership accordingly. Case Study Two became a two year project with the narrower focus of strategic policy development within three councils. From the participating councils’ perspective, each one based on their different contexts, travelled the road to food security at variant paces and success. No two councils were the same with each one on a journey of discovering their individual role/s in food security responses. Of course, such individuality can also mean that work done is not easily duplicated; an important consideration for longevity and capacity building in other councils. Developing council capacity through partnerships over the longer term is important although as Case Study Two shows, it is possible to be effective within a shorter timeframe. This case study suggests that the most important factor is strategically streamlining the project’s goals and objectives to accommodate the diversity of council internal capacity, timeframes and community needs. As a result, food security initiatives need to be customised through a collaborative process that affirms such difference.

Understanding the relationship between timeframes and contexts is important. Case Study One participants were grappling with a potentially new priority within a timeframe when little was known about community food security inside local government. This partnership had to understand the different contexts, find flexible pathways to bring change in these areas then identify the important barriers and finally work out strategies to overcome them. This is a massive undertaking. Case
Study Two benefitted from the experiences of the first case study as well as local knowledge from previous work with these councils. Thus, it is important that local governments have time to reflect on previous initiatives when undertaking new food security programs, to assimilate valuable outcomes and design ways of avoiding potential pitfalls that have occurred in the past.

Other factors can also influence local government capacity at any time. For example staff turnover impacts the knowledge base within council, restructuring can alter vertical and horizontal internal relationships, while amalgamations can still impact organisational culture. Similarly, new councils are elected every four years which can be unsettling to existing priorities. Case Study One participants wrestled with staff turnovers due to the nature of their pioneering work while Case Study Two focused on using existing staff, bringing greater assimilation and consistency in their food security work. Both case studies were affected by lingering amalgamation impacts as well as serendipitous leadership and organisational restructuring that can occur with new management. Restructuring can divert council capacity from existing priorities and programs and cause instability within departments; therefore may be detrimental to capacity building partnerships. Similarly, all council staff and programs are impacted by council elections every four years when new councillors and mayors bring differing priorities and agendas into the organisation.

**Key Points**

- Understanding the scope of the project allows a strategically-focused assessment of the partnership’s capacity to respond to food security.
- The individual contexts of each council impacts capacity within the organisation and the ability to duplicate food security work.
- Each council responds to food security challenges in their own timeframes and in their own way. Understanding their role took a significant timeframe and in some cases even at the end of the projects was not fully realised.
- Events and changes outside the control of the councils, partnerships or local government officers can enhance or limit their capacity to respond.
- VicHealth and the Case Study One councils did not have many earlier examples to follow but they learnt significantly over time about food security work in local government. Therefore, Case Study Two lead partner and participating councils benefitted from this previous experience on which to base their work.

PIVOTAL LEVEL: THE TASK NETWORK

Table 19 compares and contrasts the three emergent themes from the task network in terms of their similarities and difference, using the themes from the previously developed capacity assessment framework.

Table 19: Summary of Comparative Analysis of Task Network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approach to Collaboration</strong></td>
<td>Partnership Rationale</td>
<td>Attracted to the procedural nature of local government systems for outcome longevity; place-based; embed food security principles in policy development.</td>
<td>CS1 – No previous working relationship with every participating council. CS2 – Municipal ability to address local food insecurity determinants and work with community partners; responses identified through MPHP development but ad hoc and needed cohesion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals and Objectives</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>To work collaboratively to build the capacity of local government leadership in responding to food security challenges; to improve accessibility to nutritious food.</td>
<td>CS1 - Reduction of systemic barriers; advance integrated planning. CS2 - To support local government food policy and action plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EOI Expectations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Evidence of existing food security work; food policy development; best practice based on evidence; understanding community needs; evidence of organisational capacity to undertake the work.</td>
<td>CS1 – Commitment to integrated planning through horizontal relationship building across council departments. CS2 – Senior management endorsement; lead partner working with individual councils to develop their project plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partnership Processes and Structures</strong></td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Continued communication through meetings throughout the partnership’s life.</td>
<td>CS1 – Formal approach to accountability, project management and reporting to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Sub-theme</td>
<td>Similarities</td>
<td>Differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Requirements</td>
<td>Lead partners provide funding via contractual arrangements.</td>
<td>CS1 - Detailed work plan with extensive reporting. CS2 – Agreement to develop project plan, including implementation strategies in consultation with lead partner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Both partnerships undertook external independent meta-evaluation of project impacts.</td>
<td>CS1 - Regular evaluation; extensive external evaluation. CS2 – Less formal evaluation; small external evaluation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Capacity</td>
<td>Strong collective capacity in both partnerships with some limitations; changing organisational structures; advocacy for food security improvements; collected local evidence of food security problems.</td>
<td>CS1 - Difficult staff recruitment and retention; over-estimation of local government capacity to address systemic barriers; low level project officer position in council. CS2 - Informal collaborative approach, focussing on relationships and independent project plans; used existing staff; did not focus on systemic problems rather building capacity for role discovery.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The procedural approach of local government that provided opportunity for program longevity was attractive to both lead partners. The two projects shared common goals of building the capacity of local government leadership to respond to food security and inequitable food access. The goals of Case Study One also included the reduction of systemic barriers to food access through advocacy, integrated planning and community partnerships. The goals of Case Study Two included enabling participating councils to develop food policy and subsequent implementation strategies. The types of goals set in the two case studies indicates the difference between setting broad sweeping targets aimed at institutional change that is difficult to address, as illustrated in Case Study One, and narrowly focused goals that realistically envision council capacity to develop food policies shown in Case Study Two. The internal capacity of councils stretches to enable food policy development but the fit between external factors and local government limits its capacity to reduce...
systemic barriers. Case Study One over-estimated the capacity of local government to address these barriers.

In terms of EOI expectations both case studies asked applicants to provide evidence of need and existing food security work as well as their capacity to respond, including food policy development to gauge compatibility with the goals of the projects. It was important to the lead partners not only to evaluate the councils’ understanding of community needs but their current responses to those needs. Immediate food security responses, such as emergency food relief, are important but the capacity and willingness to embed food security principles within policy was considered more important, due to its potential to increase longevity of outcomes.

Case Study One emphasised the need for commitment to an integrated planning approach while Case Study Two stressed senior management endorsement and willingness to develop individual project plans in consultation with N&WMR staff. The first case envisaged capacity building through a holistic approach to planning and policy development across various departments. This approach aimed to embrace leadership support and to capture departmental involvement; all heading towards policy development. Yet in Case Study One support from both senior leadership and/or other departments was not always forthcoming, which limited the capacity of the food security responses. The second case took a strong stance from the project’s outset requiring high level endorsement from council leadership in order to prioritise the work within the organisation, supported by an individualised approach that considered existing and potential capacity. This latter approach proved to be very effective in maximising local government capacity to extend to a food security role discovery process.

Both partnerships had contractual arrangements with the distribution of monies to support the capacity building work with the councils but ongoing partnership arrangements differed between the case studies. Case Study One involved a formal
structure of accountability, reporting, support and strategic planning. The lead partner was the instigator, manager and controller of the project although councils contributed individual flavor to the partnership. Ongoing accountability in Case Study One involved regular and at times arduous reporting and combined meetings between the lead partner and all the participating councils. There were also upward accountability requirements from the project manager to the VicHealth Board and management. Consequently extensive and meta-evaluation was very important in Case Study One. This tiered formal approach to communication, management and accountability structures constrained the capacity of the partnership and was resource consuming for both the lead partner and the project officers. Case Study Two enjoyed the benefit of prior experience, existing relationships and a smaller number of partners that enabled flexibility in their approach.

Case Study Two took a more informal yet purposeful collaborative approach, focusing on the relationship between the lead partner and each council. To promote uptake and ownership the lead partner allowed each council to develop an individual contextualised project plan, suitable to their own capacity and context. The lead partner played a supportive and enabling role in each of the council’s project plan development and implementation but ongoing responsibility for the rollout rested with the councils. There was some formal reporting and evaluation but meetings with all the partners were less significant. Evaluation, whilst considered important, took a less prominent role. This project was strategically designed to be relational and interactive between the lead partner and participating councils to allow the partnership’s complete collective capacity to focus solely on its achievable goals. Potentially, this second model offers a more effective approach to harnessing local government existing capacity to respond to complex issues given the current lack of fit in the internal and external environments.

Overall, both partnerships strengthened local government capacity to respond to food security challenges through their ongoing activities. Collection of local evidence,
particularly about inequitable food access, supported strategic allocation of resources and built the capacity of services provided by partnerships with community organisations and groups. Furthermore, this evidence provided a basis for advocacy for existing and further food security work across council and beyond. At times the evidence confronting other departments facilitated their involvement but for others, such as planners, it created a dilemma because they were unable to act fully upon community needs within current structures and using existing tools. The impact of advocacy across councils was mixed with some individual project officers finding support from other departments while others did not. The impact of external advocacy remains a grey area in which lead partners and councils may provide formal submissions and feedback to higher government levels without seeing tangible positive results. The case studies raise questions about the effectiveness of wider upward advocacy mechanisms in order to share best practice and seek increased support for existing local government work. An inconsistency between government levels is apparent that limits local government capacity through disconnected and unsupported governance priorities.

Staffing was a significant difference between the two case studies. Case Study One generally experienced difficulties in the recruitment and retention of project-based staff across participating councils. The diverse location of low socio-economic municipalities was a barrier as well as lack of a suitably qualified pool of workers. Prospective project officers needed a wide range of skills centred on knowledge of local government, community development, and even less known at that stage, an understanding of food security and its implications for municipalities. After recruitment, retention proved difficult because the project officers were situated in low level positions without extensive influence across council. The disjointed pattern of employment in some of the councils had a destabilising effect on the building of capacity to respond to food security needs. Effective capacity building requires consistent nurturing of personnel with the organisation to embrace the priority of the problem within their work and to support its place within the priorities of the whole...
organisation. Case Study Two predominantly used existing permanent higher ranking staff members to spearhead their food security work. Combined with mandatory senior leadership support, the use of existing staff provided quicker uptake of a food security response because these staff members could access and build the organisation’s existing capacity immediately. The different models of staffing in the case studies demonstrate the importance of human resource arrangements in strategically planning any capacity building initiatives and the impact these arrangements can have on a project’s effectiveness.

Case Study One’s impact was diminished by an over-estimation of the capacity of local government to address systemic and infrastructure barriers to food security. Despite previous experience working with local government the lead partner in Case Study One failed to appreciate local government’s limited capacity to address these barriers. A contribution of this case study was to highlight to a wider audience the extent of systemic problems at a municipal level by providing in-situ examples of specific barriers and explaining why local government’s current capacity is not able to overcome them. While positive in the wider context, the implications of pursuing the development of local government’s capacity to address these systemic barriers threw the focus of capacity building out of balance in this case study, thus reducing the opportunity for more realistic and timely food security role discovery. Case Study Two streamlined its approach and focused on policy development and implementation, recognising the existence of difficult systemic problems, but not allowing them to overwhelm the strategic goals of the project. Consequently, the second case study partnership allowed the participating councils to further their existing and latent capacity into exploring and clarifying potential food security roles they could undertake within the current contexts.

Key points

- Collaborative approaches to capacity-building are effective tools for strengthening an organisation’s capacity in the short term.
• Insistence of senior leadership support from partners is vital to capacity building success.
• Human resource arrangements are important in capacity building initiatives because of the significant impact staff has on a project’s success.
• A policy development approach extends capacity into the longer-term.
• The impact of external advocacy remains a grey area in which partners provide formal submissions and feedback to higher government levels without seeing tangible positive results. Strategically-focused capacity building partnerships enable the development of realistic food security roles tailored to suit local government capacity.

RECIPIENT LEVEL: INTERNAL ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

This section compares the findings from the case studies using the recipient level themes from the capacity assessment framework in relation to internal factors affecting local government capacity. Table 20 outlines the similarities and differences between case studies at this level. Local government leadership and management dictate the organisational culture, strategic priorities and subsequent role adoption. The availability of financial, human and organisational resources provide the means to enable capacity through the processes and structures available to respond to food security challenges within municipalities.

**Table 20: Summary of the Comparative Analysis of the Recipient Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership and Management</strong></td>
<td>Local Government’s Responsibilities in Food Security</td>
<td>Both partnerships believed local government contributes to the governance response towards food security.</td>
<td>CS1 – Some council staff believed responsibility lies with higher government levels – trickle down; shared responsibility with higher government levels and community groups. CS2 – Focus on local government response and implementation in community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food Security Roles</td>
<td>Explored local government roles in responding to food insecurity; looked to senior</td>
<td>CS1 – Senior management support not always forthcoming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Sub-theme</td>
<td>Similarities</td>
<td>Differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership for support.</td>
<td>CS2 – Senior management support enabled confidence in capacity to explore and articulate roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial, Human and Organisational Resources</td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Limitations of project-based capacity-building work exposed.</td>
<td>CS1 – Higher government rolling agenda of issues frustrating for local government and community; responsibility shifting to community. CS2 – Impact of end of FFA project felt by other council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human</td>
<td>Having suitable staff is vital to success of the project.</td>
<td>CS1 – Problems recruiting and retaining project officers in councils. CS2 – Used existing staff in two out of three councils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organisational</td>
<td>Changes within organisation impact project outcomes.</td>
<td>CS1 – causal relationship between funding and staffing can limit work. CS2 - council staff changes impact food security knowledge base within council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structures and Processes</td>
<td>Integrated Planning</td>
<td>Both projects encouraged an integrated planning approach through building horizontal departmental relationships. Success of this approach varied between councils.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policy Development</td>
<td>Policy development was a key aspect of the projects’ expectations through integrated planning.</td>
<td>CS1 - Difficulties in embedding food security principles into the MSS. CS2 - Stand-alone food security policies within councils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Systemic Internal Barriers</td>
<td>Developing understanding of systemic planning and infrastructure barriers within local government by the partnerships.</td>
<td>CS1 – Focused on systemic planning barriers. CS2 – Remained focussed on the development of food policy and action plans.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case Study One participants met some resistance from other department officers who legitimately questioned whether food security was a local government concern. Two points of view were proposed: firstly that local government was under enough pressure to perform with its existing priorities and service delivery areas and, secondly responsibility should rest with higher levels of government and then filter down to the local government level. Idealistically, it is true that higher levels of
government should be involved in food security responses and local government capacity is already fully expended in other issues. In practice, the mismatch between government levels means that higher support is not necessarily forthcoming, with no downward benefits to local government. In response to this limiting environment the capacity building partnerships provided an extension of local government capacity to undertake new priorities and project officers continued to work across departments to explain the relationship between existing work and food security, rather than demanding an increase in workloads.

Local government participants in Case Study Two captured existing capacity by concentrating on defining council roles as a result of policy development and action plans. This policy development process forced the assessment and articulation of realistic council roles that could be carried forward into specific actions. It required cutting through the ambiguity of possible roles to those that local government can actually progress within their existing capacity. Role definition was blurred by the emphasis on systemic barriers, often outside local government jurisdiction, disseminated by Case Study One, which focused on barriers to role discovery rather than role discovery. Case Study Two councils recognised these barriers but the policy development process required them to find with food security roles that could be enacted within local government. The positive effect of this process was the necessity of thinking through potential service areas, evaluating the capacity available or needed, and then assigning achievable roles.

Additionally, council leadership and senior management support made this process significantly easier and impacting across the organisation. In Case Study One this support was not always forthcoming. Without this support embedding of food security principles across departments and in policy development was extremely limited. Yet programs driven from the community and health departments could be undertaken and were used to promote food security awareness and establish community food security initiatives. In Case Study Two senior management
endorsement and support was an explicit criteria of funding, enabling confidence in existing capacity to explore and articulate food security roles. Support from senior leadership was vital to the ongoing effectiveness of the food security responses because of leadership authority to extend or direct existing council towards certain priorities. Whilst food security initiatives can be undertaken without senior support, embedding food security principles within policy is much more difficult. The council leadership directs the organisational priorities and culture, lending weight to resource allocation and policy directions. The action taken by Case Study Two lead partner to require active leadership agreement with the project removed barriers to increasing council capacity towards food security responses.

The limitations of externally funded, project-based capacity-building work were exposed in the case studies. Case Study One participants were particularly concerned about the reliance on short-term external funding for service provision. They were not blaming the capacity building partnership but rather the higher levels of government for not providing the necessary funds; which created fierce competition between priorities for resources. Shifting priorities based on available funds was frustrating to participants who were immersed in a particular area of work over a designated time period only to have the initiative come to an abrupt end. In turn, pressure increases on already financially stretched community groups to become the champions to drive a particular agenda. The impact of the ending of the FFA program in Case Study One was similarly felt in a neighbouring council in Case Study Two due to the loss of knowledge and resulting diminished capacity within the N&WMR when the FFA program ceased in the three ‘sister’ councils in that region.

Staffing impacts capacity and is therefore an important consideration when planning and implementing capacity building initiatives within councils. A number of staffing issues were highlighted by the case studies. As previously mentioned, the first case study had difficulty in recruiting and retaining suitable staff which restricted the capacity building impact within some of the councils. Changing staff and long
periods of time with no project officer made progress difficult. Case Study Two managers, however, encouraged existing council officers to take on the project as part of their workloads, which was taken up by two participating councils. The benefit of this latter approach was their familiarity with their individual organisations, and their existing relationships with other departments. The detractors were time constraints and the stress of managing multiple priorities.

There is no prescriptive formula to staffing problems but the case studies highlight the benefits and limitations of training new and inexperienced staff or using existing staff. At the outset (as discussed in the previous section), when strategically designing capacity building initiatives, the evaluation of staffing requirements and setting in place plans to meet those needs, is vital to success. Staffing levels, skills and knowledge directly impacts capacity. For example, a Case Study Two participant commented that food security knowledge within council needed constant updating in a cyclic fashion in order to maintain capacity as new staff arrived and existing staff left.

Another strategic consideration is the link between funding and staffing. Participants in Case Study One saw that organisational capacity within local government was diminished by the cyclic nature of project-based and externally funded initiatives, that also affected staffing. Without continual funding there will be no staff to undertake the capacity building. Reliance on external funds can be opportunistic but finding and retaining suitably qualified staff is slower and may not coincide with a boost in funds. Funding and staffing needs to be synchronised in order for local government to address these complex issues effectively.

Local government structures and processes were integral elements in the capacity building partnerships. Both case studies sought commitment to implement inter-departmental integrated planning, which met with mix success in Case Study One but was more successful in Case Study Two. This process was facilitated by the
development of cross-departmental relationships in which project officers were able to build commitment and ownership from other council areas. Across both case studies integrated planning was intended to engage departments and open the way to embedding food security principles in high level policies. This strategy met with success in the MPHP and CP across both case studies but had very limited success in the MSS. In the case of land use planning Case Study One particularly drew attention to the problem of limited local government capacity to act in terms of systemic regulatory barriers, such as zoning classifications, by-right permits and business mix. These regulations are dictated to local government by state government legislation and planning provisions. Some internal land use barriers were also encountered by Case Study One project officers in terms of the establishment of community gardens, and permission for mobile fruit and vegetable stalls on council land. Case Study Two acknowledged these systemic planning and infrastructure barriers but sought to work within local government’s existing land use planning capacity with participants remaining focused on discrete food policy development and corresponding implementation plans.

**Key Points**

- Local government has a role in food security responses.
- Senior management support is vital to policy development and elevating the status of the work within council.
- Limitations of local government capacity include funding, staffing and organisational changes.
- The impact of project-based externally funded initiatives is not optimum. Funds and support from higher government levels would be more sustainable.
- Funding and staffing needs to be synchronised in order for local government to address these complex issues effectively.
- There is no prescriptive formula for staffing choices but the matter needs to be addressed in the early stages of an initiative because of the significant impact on the recipient organisation.
- Integrated planning across departments with anticipated policy development was a goal for both projects.
- Systemic planning barriers within local government limit its capacity to respond but it is possible to work within existing and latent capacity to find realistic food security roles.

**BROADER INFLUENCING LEVEL: THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT**

This section examines the external environment using the capacity assessment framework themes encompassing the political/institutional influences; macroeconomic pressures; social and cultural elements; and finally environmental concerns. Table 21 summarises the main similarities and differences between the two case studies.

**Table 21: Summary of Comparative Analysis of Broader Influencing External Environment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political /Institutional Influences</strong></td>
<td>Misfits between government levels.</td>
<td>CS1 – focus on planning problems; emphasis on liveability, accessibility and walkability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of state government support for local government food security work.</td>
<td>CS2 – Positive step in mandating MPHP; impacts of neoliberalism on health; state government can overturn local government decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited power of local government in land use planning in food security issues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macroeconomic Pressures</strong></td>
<td>Food security determinants exist in external environment.</td>
<td>CS1 – Barriers in food industry in marketing and media advertising; relationship between higher government levels and private enterprise; disruptions to food system impact vulnerable groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government/business relations impact food security responses.</td>
<td>CS2 – Determinants of food security are diverse for each local government; requires each level of government to address barriers, including private development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social/Cultural Environment</strong></td>
<td>Mapping of food access and availability as local evidence of broader planning problems; basis of advocacy.</td>
<td>CS1 – Multiple partnerships with community groups for food programs; Phase 2 links to longevity of impacts; shared responsibility needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partnerships with community groups.</td>
<td>CS2 – Mapping evidence shows determinants outside local.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participants in Case Study Two recognised that the introduced consistency of policy development across all Victorian councils through coordinated local government elections gave increased opportunity to embed food security principles into policy in a shorter timeframe. Yet the majority of both case study findings in the political and institutional external environment focused on barriers to capacity due to lack of local government authority, caused by incongruity in power relationships with high government levels. Of particular concern in Case Study One was local government’s limited power in land use planning and regulatory decision making, with the view that the current regulation was pro development creating poor urban design and a ‘winner and loser’ society. There were differences of opinion in how far local government could test the boundaries of their authority without resulting in a Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) decision against them. To date there had been no precedent case to follow. Similarly, in Case Study Two participants were concerned about state government’s power to overturn local government land use decisions and whether local government is in a position to contest these decisions. Yet despite the enormity of these problems, partners only had the passive formal advocacy channels to higher government levels to express the need for change.

While Case Study One predominantly focused on land use planning barriers, Case Study Two interviewees also discussed the relationship between local government and state/federal government levels due to the impact of amalgamations on health policy development; the absence of holistic food security governance framework in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environment Concerns</td>
<td>Wider environmental concerns impact significantly on local government’s involvement in food security.</td>
<td>CS1- Focus on preservation of prime agricultural land, food distribution and supply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CS2- Links between global and local environmental issues, food security and a sustainability agenda.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Australia; and the lack of support given to local government in their food security work. Case Study Two participants were also concerned about the lack of funding for food security work. Local government is limited in addressing all the determinants of food insecurity e.g. does not control food prices, pension entitlements, has limited authority in housing access and transport planning and, of course, land use planning decision making. State government uses its central power to dictate changes that are difficult for local government to challenge successfully.

Many food security determinants stem from the external environment and rely on the relationship between higher government levels and private enterprise. Participants in Case Study One were concerned about barriers in the food industry, particularly concerning the weakness of legislation for media advertising and marketing, and the possibility of a major disruption in the food system affecting food insecure people more significantly than the general population, due to their reduced resilience. Case Study Two findings indicate that the diverse food security determinants evidenced in municipalities require all levels of government to address barriers, particularly relationships between government and private enterprise. Uncoordinated planning and governance leadership allows the private sector to self-regulate and fails to consider social needs at the municipal level in order to address sustainability challenges, such as food security.

Both case studies valued understanding local food security needs and collecting evidence through community consultations and surveys, food access mapping and comparative food prices to strengthen their practice. The GIS mapping of food access resulting in evidence of ‘food desert’ areas in municipalities where residents face infrastructure barriers to fresh food access due to unsuitable retail placements, limited public transport, and poor urban design. Certain neighbourhoods within both case studies were highlighted visually in the mapping as having no healthy food retail outlets within walking distance. This evidence was used for advocacy purposes across council departments and to other responsible entities. Case Study Two participants
acknowledged that it also gave legitimacy and support to their food security work. Local evidence is a vital foundation to develop appropriate responses to food security needs.

Partnership arrangements with service organisations and community groups to deliver services were the most significant strategy used in both case studies to respond to community food security needs. Numerous programs functioning in this way heightened awareness of food security issues inside council and outside in the community. Findings from Case Study Two explained that if councils contribute existing leadership and resources to such sharing arrangements, the pressure they felt to be responsible for all food security responses is somewhat relieved. Yet shared responsibility for effective food security responses is required from all government levels as well as community partners.

Both case studies linked global environmental challenges to local food security. Issues mentioned include climate change, peak oil, water scarcity and loss of productive agricultural land to urban sprawl. While these are global concerns the impacts will be felt locally and places will be impacted in different ways. All levels of government need to respond and local government has a role to play. The question is really whether the whole of government will work together to build a response at all levels because local government can only respond within their existing capacity. They need the support of higher government levels which includes making changes to planning regulations and leadership in decision-making. Food availability, choice and price will be affected by such environmental impacts and it heightens the importance of local food production, seasonality and the extra pressure that will placed on people who are vulnerable to food insecurity. Local government needs the tools to encourage local food production and mitigate climate change impacts as well as provide services for their citizens who are food insecure.
Key Points

- Local government authority is limited by State government legislation. When conflicts arise state government can overturn local government decisions e.g. in land use. It is difficult for local government to challenge these decisions successfully.
- Many food security determinants lie outside of local government’s jurisdiction.
- Problems in the governance relationships between higher levels of government and private enterprise, as well as government levels, impact local government’s capacity to respond to food security problems.
- Local government has a partnership role with community groups and service organisations to provide food security initiatives.
- Local evidence is used for advocacy across councils and to other entities to highlight food security problems. Yet advocacy channels to higher government levels are limited by present structures and processes.
- There are emerging links between local government capacity to define its food security roles and a sustainability agenda.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter draws together a comparative analysis of findings from the two case studies using the conceptual framework from the previous two chapters.

The scope, context and pertinent timeframes of the two case study projects were discussed in the first section. Both lead partners had previous experience working with local government on food security issues and were drawn to its procedural nature, policy development processes and ability to address some food security determinants. The demographic profile of Case Study One participating councils was more diverse than in Case Study Two but organisational cultures vary considerable among all individual councils examined. Overall, the first case study had a long
timeframe for capacity building initiatives but the consensus approach of the second case study allowed variant timeframes for milestone completion within individual councils. Capacity building partnerships require flexibility to adapt to individual timeframes and contexts. Otherwise, capacity building efforts may not be the most suitable, waste precious resources, and fail to strengthen local government capacity effectively.

The chapter then examined the pivotal level of the task network. The capacity building partnership in the first case study took a formal approach partly due to the lead partner’s own organisational accountability and the scope of the project. Evaluation was important with regular meetings and meta-evaluations. The second case study approach was more flexible, although there was some formal reporting and evaluation. Based on strict entrance requirements guaranteeing high level management endorsement and evidence of prior food security work, each council developed their own individual implementation plan. Both case studies collected extensive local evidence to support practice and promote advocacy. Pathways available for local government feedback to higher government levels are usually limited to formal submissions that restrict the development of a shared government response, and therefore contribute to the lack of fit between different levels.

Thirdly, the chapter discussed the recipient level of local government. Internally, senior management support was vital to project effectiveness through integrated planning, policy development and cross-departmental relationship building. Both projects undertook extensive local data collection in order to improve practice and give foundations for internal advocacy. The targeted approach of Case Study Two concentrated on internal capacity building for policy development which prompted questioning about realistic roles local government could undertake and highlights misfits between government levels to build the necessary capacity to respond. Both case studies encouraged integrated planning which in the first case study drew
attention to systemic regulatory barriers and in the second case study improved the
good of the policies developed.

The impacts of broader external environment issues are discussed next. Both case
studies highlighted the lack of local government authority. In the first case study land
use and regulatory decision making, barriers in the food industry and weak media
advertising legislation were significant challenges. In the second case study attention
turned to the impact of amalgamations, the absence of a holistic food security
governance framework and the lack of support for local government initiatives.
Complex economic and social food insecurity determinants, food supply concerns,
and the evidence of ‘food deserts’ are connected with wider place-based issues and
political institutional capacity. Global environmental issues affect local spaces and
necessitate local food production, seasonality and relief for those vulnerable to food
insecurity. Links are drawn between environmental concerns and local government
food security roles. Connections were built between environmental and social
consults that test local government’s capacity and reinforce the need for food
security to be addressed vertically at all tiers of government, and horizontally, across
council departments.

Both case studies experienced lack of fit in the interplay between government levels
and the participants desired improved higher level leadership, more effective
legislative frameworks and increased support for local government initiatives in
response to complex issues. Food insecurity determinants are broad and complex,
often outside local government control. Without higher government intervention
these determinants will continue to limit capacity. Participants want alignment of
government priorities, addressing of systemic barriers and increased support for food
security work. Local government capacity is constrained by external influences
because many food security determinants sit outside local government jurisdiction.
Improved fit between government levels would build local government capacity by
addressing these determinants and enable it to organise itself internally to develop targeted services and policy development.

In conclusion, key themes of understanding about the fit between government levels and the internal capacity of local government are drawn from the case studies. One theme focuses on the serendipitous nature of externally-funded projects, such as capacity building initiatives which indicates generally short-term change to capacity. Yet another theme concerns the challenges facing local government in maintaining and/or building financial, human and organisational capacity when external barriers remain unchanged. All themes join in the concept of institutional adaptive capacity with institutional referring to a joining of organisations for a common purpose, with flexibility to embrace different times and contexts but, at the same time, pursuing sufficient capacity to addressing new multi-level challenges. A wider institutional response is needed but is not forthcoming under the current lack of fit in government levels.
CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Seven provided a comparative analysis of the two case studies following the conceptual framework from previous chapters. The capacity building approach in the second case study was a flexible collaborative approach that adapted to the capacity of individual council partners. Both case studies experienced misfits between government levels and desired increased higher level support for their food security work. Further, food insecurity determinants were often outside local government control. The inability of higher government to address these determinants constricts fit between government levels, which in turn constrains local government capacity to respond. A number of changes are needed to improve this fit, particularly focusing on aligning government priorities, addressing systemic barriers and increasing higher government support for food security work. Without this alignment, capacity building partnerships strengthen local government capacity in the short-term but internal and external challenges limit the impact of such initiatives. An adaptive institutional capacity response is needed to address complex multi-level problems.

This chapter discusses the results from the research in relation to the scholarly literature framing the research questions. Utilisation of the new capacity assessment framework synthesised and adapted from four previous scholars’ frameworks provides opportunity in this research to explore and critique the impact of capacity building partnerships on the capacity of local government to act in respond to complex sustainability challenges. Furthermore, the application of this theoretically grounded framework to food security as an exemplar problem across government adds to existing knowledge about institutional capacity barriers that impinge on local government capacity to respond.
The first part of this chapter explains how the findings answer each of the research sub-questions and the literature that helped form these questions. This section explains the impact of capacity building partnerships within the task network on local government capacity and then discusses the internal limitations of local government that overshadow gains in capacity. Next it discusses the impact of external environment influences on council capacity. The chapter continues by drawing out the implications of the problem of fit for local government capacity caused by the limitations in the internal and external environments, as well as the influence of capacity building initiatives within the context of fit. The chapter ends with a discussion about drawing all these parts together through alignment of and adjustments to the fit between government levels. It introduces the concept of value-changing feedback loops for local government with higher government levels that would improve fit and strengthen its capacity. It considers the tension that exists between capacity and role discovery that, if resolved, would reinforce local government’s performance and identity, enhancing its capacity to respond to new challenges.

IMPACT OF THE TASK NETWORK ON CAPACITY

Food security is an example of a sustainability meta-problem requiring inter-organisational attention to find new solutions (Trist 1983: 270) facilitated in this research through capacity building partnerships. The pivotal nature of the collaborative capacity building task network cannot be overestimated. Scholars recognise capacity building as a key solution to problems of limited institutional capacity (see Gargan 1981; Honadle 1981a & b). Health promotion literature, for example, portrays institutional capacity building as a positive opportunity to create synergistic partnerships that extend beyond single organisational capacity (Gray 1989: 5) to address complex and extensive intersectoral issues (Trist 1983: 270). The case studies in this research show these capacity building initiatives improved the capacity of local government.
Yet, this research found that capacity building initiatives can be strengthened by increasing a project’s strategic focus during its inception and planning stages. Comparing and contrasting the two case studies used in this research suggests strategically-focused capacity building initiatives could improve effectiveness when all pertinent influencing external, internal and capacity building partnership relationships are considered. Whilst scholars call for rigorous evaluation of capacity building processes (Harrow 2001: 226, Healey et al. 2002: 22; Ivey et al. 2006: 946), this research encourages a step back to embrace the strategically-focused design of initiatives. A strategically-focused design not only enables better use of resources, it specifically ensures that outcomes are realistic in light of the existing capacity of the recipient level.

The fit-for-purpose alignment framework introduced in Chapter Three conceptually explores the relationship between objectives, context and effectiveness (Rijke et al. 2012: 74) involved in an effective capacity building partnership. This three-step framework evaluates the purpose of the initiative, maps its context, and matches the expected outcomes and fit with that original purpose and context (Rijke et al. 2012: 76). This research shows that strategic capacity building needs to align the food security objectives with an understanding of the recipient local government context in order to produce effective outcomes. For example, the second case demonstrates the effectiveness of the fit-for-purpose linkages through setting strategic objectives that fitted neatly with the individual council contexts, and thus resulted in effective outcomes. A strategically-focused capacity building initiative does not get side-tracked from its purpose. The alignment between purpose, context and expected outcomes is vital to strategically-focused capacity building. It stresses the importance of realistic decision-making and consistent follow-through when responding to complex sustainability problems. Understanding influences in ‘the bigger picture’ allows capacity building designers to purposefully avoid systemic problems if they are insurmountable or outside the scope of available resources and feasible outcomes (Boyne 2003: 390).
In the long-term, however, Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995: 443) question whether ‘organizational strengthening’ and/or ‘training activities’ are the best approach to capacity building because these activities assume that individual organisations can improve performance and fail to consider fit between the organisation and wider influencing contexts. Whether the amount of resources expended in capacity building equals or exceeds the positive impacts delivered is open to question. The assumption is that recipients are better off because of their participation in the capacity building partnership. Partners can extend their vision and create a synergy beyond their own capacity (Gray 1989:5; Thompson & Stachenko 1994: 21) that ‘creates something new and valuable together’ (Lasker et al. 2001: 184). Practically, capacity building is a financial and human resource intensive activity. It is cyclic in nature, with a beginning and an end. The momentum rises, hopes are high and then the initiative comes to an end, the funds stop and the people employed move on. Despite these limitations, this research shows that capacity building can be a significantly positive influence in building local government capacity within the current constractive neoliberal governance environment but equally there are internal and external influences that need to be considered as discussed below.

INTERNAL INFLUENCES ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY

The relationship between capacity and the discovery, definition, and articulation of partner roles drives the internal influences on local government capacity within the case studies. In order for local government to respond to complex sustainability problems it needs capacity to discover its role/s. Gallop (2005: 13) suggests that ‘traditional models of service delivery…are simply insufficient if we are to deal with…broader issues’ and new roles are needed. Once the roles are discovered it takes further capacity on local government’s behalf to perform these new roles. Within the current governance system, capacity building initiatives provide an extra boost of capacity strengthening to assist local government to move into responsive roles.
This research found that human resources across council often limit role discovery and the capacity to respond. The importance of human resources to capacity is recognised by all the capacity assessment frameworks used in this research. Individual technical skills, knowledge and expertise (Brown et al. 2006: 5-2), and managerial and professional training and career aspirations influence overall performance (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995:447). In particular, managerial styles affect goal setting, work structures, and power relationships that shape an organisation’s culture and performance (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 447). Batley and Larbi (2004: 18) describe similar internal capacity elements as ‘decision making and control structures’, ‘authority relationships’, and ‘management style and leadership’. Leadership and management capacity directs an organisation’s existing capacity and filters the impact of any capacity strengthening initiatives. The authors of VicHealth (2010:1) shared publicly at the end of the FFA program that ‘without senior level support, doors do not open, other priorities will dominate and the person with allocated responsibility may find the challenges too great’ which reflects on the experiences of participants within councils. The research findings agree with current literature that developing the capacity of leaders and managers to support responses to complex challenges is essential.

Further to leadership and management capacity, horizontal relationship building across departments using integrated planning to develop policy improves whole-of-council capacity. This strategy increases ownership of food insecurity problems between different departments. Food policies are not just concerned about food itself but production, equitable access and consumption which requires a collaborative approach (Lang et al. 2002: 75-85). Embedding food security principles into policy provides a definition and articulation of role development and further capacity. Horizontal relationship building across departments, integrated planning and policy development are vital components of capacity development.
Capacity building and role discovery rely on human resources. Strong leadership and senior management capacity that facilitates a whole-of-council food security vision and encourages inter-departmental collaboration in planning and policy development strengthens local government’s capacity and enables role discovery to respond to new sustainability problems.

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY

The external environment is becoming increasingly complex (Dollery et al. 2003: 2) with significant challenges across all levels of government and beyond. This section examines the influence of the external political and institutional, economic, social and environmental spheres on local government.

Many food security determinants emanate from the external environment and are influenced by higher political and institutional decision making. The lack of fit between government levels, as well as between government and other stakeholders within the external environment, indirectly and directly impacts local government. For example, if higher government levels do not focus on food security and continue to allow market-driven neoliberalism to be an essential driver of economic and social advancement (Cheshire & Lawrence 2005: 436; Brady et al. 2013: 124) then local government is indirectly impacted. Or if they do not acknowledge that the absence of certain regulation on private enterprise negatively impacts on food security, local government capacity is directly affected because of the impact on citizens in its municipalities. These shortcomings not only hinder local government capacity but devalue its social contribution to the community (see Adams & Hess 2001: 13; Wiseman 2005: 72; Mowbray 2011: 145).

As such, food security is a social justice and equity concern that values food access as a basic human right and seeks to eliminate hunger through an equitable and just food system (Allen 1999: 119; Pothukuchi et al. 2002:5). Some people in sophisticated western societies are still unable to fulfil their basic human right to healthy food (see
Rosin et al. 2012). Food insecurity is known to reduce an individual’s health status, both physically and mentally, due to stress, anxiety, social disruptions, a reduced nutrition intake and potential eating irregularities (Booth & Smith 2001: 150). Rates of obesity are higher among those with lower incomes or little education (Cummins & Macintyre 2005: 100). It seems a paradox that hunger and obesity could be linked (Dietz 1995:766) yet people with limited incomes tend to buy bulky poor quality foods with little nutritional value but an oversupply of energy, fats and sugars in order to curb hunger (Burns 2004:15). It is suggested by Allen (1999:118) that the food security concept replaced the 1980s medical model of hunger when it became obvious that it was better to take a preventative approach and concentrate on the determinants of hunger, rather than take a reactionary approach when hunger and malnutrition occurs. Yet Winne et al. (1997:6) argue that both concepts co-exist, with anti-hunger initiatives focusing on short term and immediate food provision, while initiatives at a community level primarily address community capacity building and redesigning the food system. A neoliberal perspective results in local government shifting from service provider to service facilitator (Batley & Larbi 2004: 39) through partnerships with service organisations and community groups to respond to community needs through service provision. Given the current external environment, these partnership arrangements are not an effective method of using local government’s limited existing capacity through sharing responsibility for resourcing service provision.

Further problem complexity and pressure on capacity arises from the newer links made between local food security needs and wider environmental sustainability problems (Koç et al. 1999:1-2). This perspective brings an increasing focus on community resilience and self-sufficiency when addressing municipal food security problems and triggers local government to reflect on its existing capacity to respond. These increasingly dynamic and complex problems draw heavily on local government capacity and will continue to do so. On the one hand, local government is intricately linked to global, national and state relationships and problems, and on the
other hand, is required to connect with the community to provide leadership and services. Local government is in a precarious and difficult ‘middle’ position with limited capacity to respond. Yet, this research shows that this level of government as the closest to the community is in a unique position to respond to food security needs through a continuum of potential roles (see the explanation of the stages in the Food Security Continuum in Chapter 2 and later in this chapter).

Local government capacity to respond to municipal food security needs is constrained by the inability of higher government levels to examine and improve their own capacity to address systemic food system problems, including the power of corporate interests. Furthermore, global and national environmental problems transcend local communities demanding increased local government capacity to respond to such complex challenges.

PROBLEMS OF FIT IN RELATIONSHIP TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY

This research found that while capacity building partnerships can build local government capacity to respond to complex sustainability challenges, gains are significantly overshadowed by internal and external problems that limit local government’s capacity to respond. Aligning the connections across levels within a context of change can be problematic and is referred to as ‘the problem of fit’ (Folke et al. 2007: n.p.). The concept of ‘fit’ recognises the interdependence of different systems to make ‘a new systemic totality’ with drivers of change recognised in the internal and external environments (Folke et al. 2007: n.p.). Internal constraints focus on human resources while external constraints are more diverse.

Internal Problems of Fit within Local Government

Council leadership and senior management should engender strategic decision-making and organisational cohesion, and improve the impact of capacity building initiatives. Strong senior leadership has whole-of-organisation benefits. Part of good
leadership is recognition of the work in front of co-workers, finding funding avenues, increased access to human and organisational resources, identifying high level advocates and exploring new governance boundaries. Scholarly literature acknowledges the importance of leadership capacity in improving organisational performance (Burgess 1975: 706-707; Andrews & Boyne 2010: 450-451). Likewise, managerial capacity is a foundational requirement for effective performance (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 445). Ingraham et al. (2003: 15) emphasises the role of management in utilising existing capacity that includes strategic leadership (Eisinger 2002: 117). This research found the presence of strong proactive upper level support gives credibility and recognition to food security work, reinforcing a supportive organisational culture. High level endorsement and on-going support from leaders is vital to the effectiveness of any initiative.

Current internal leadership and management capacity, however, can restrict the overall capacity of local government to respond to food security when it does not embrace such complex challenges as a whole-of-council priority; rather food security is considered as simply a health or community services responsibility. One way to improve the standing of a new priority such as food security is to devote policies to the matter. The case studies in this research showed the benefits of embedding food security principles in policy. Policy development instruments are part of institutional capacity (van de Meene et al. 2009: 1922). Embedding food security principles into policy in turn strategically extends capacity over the longer-term. Policy development that is based on local evidence increases local government capacity to respond to complex problems. Policies provide a repository for food security priorities and support the facilitation of capacity through links to other policies and corresponding action plans. When policies are created without an authentic embracing of individual new priorities across the whole council the work is still confined to social, health or community services. At the same time, however, it is also possible through policy development processes that councils deepen their understanding of realistic food security roles they can play. Leaders and managers have the capacity to steer the
organisation in either direction. This research argues that senior leadership and management can use policy development to embed sustainability priorities, including food security responses, across the whole organisation.

Despite public sector capacity literature focusing on organisational functions and processes (Cornforth & Mordaunt 2011: 341-342), there is less research about the need for collaborative processes within an organisation. Institutional capacity building literature extensively discusses management ability (Honadle 1981a:1) and human resource development (Wakely 1997:1) but little is discussed about strengthening of staff relationships within organisations. These processes can be intangible but the outcomes evidence trust and solidarity within an organisation. Interpreted as internal capacity building, or calling into action latent capacity (Eisinger 2002: 116-117), strengthening staff relationships fits comfortably into this context because capacity to act in response to complex problems requires cohesiveness, trust and facilitating norms and networks (Putnam 1993: 167). This research found that the development of internal cross-departmental capacity results in participation and ownership, integrated planning, accountability and the clear understanding of the role of each staff member in a whole-of-council response. NPM culture alienates collaborative networks across departments within local government through the disaggregation of work units (Hood 1996: 269). Departments are siloed; each with assigned responsibilities to fulfill creating barriers to collaborative interactions across departments (Hood 1996: 269). It takes concerted effort to build relationships across departments to generate interest, calm fears of extra workloads and/or address any disagreement that food security should be a priority area. This research suggests that internal organisational cohesiveness in addressing complex problems is crucial. Under current circumstances it requires skilled practitioners to be change enablers and depends on the receptivity of other council officers.

Responding to complex sustainability problems requires senior leadership and management support within local government, combined with inter-departmental
relationship building across council. These problems demand, not only extra capacity building boosts from synergistic partnerships, but development of extra internal capacity to resolve the problem of internal fit within government. Furthermore, this new agenda requires problem resolution in the fit between government levels.

**External Problems of Fit between Government Levels**

Food security is complex, multi-sectoral and cross-departmental, with limited guidelines and regulatory mechanisms for incorporation and implementation (Mendes 2008: 942-943). Finding the ‘right’ scale to suit a problem is considered a conventional response, but Pritchard et al. (1998:19) argue that these complex problems cross and link scales and therefore need to be tackled simultaneously at multiple levels. At a systems level this research highlights food security is only one aspect of a greater set of food system problems involving misalignment of governance levels, fragmented policies and a silo portfolio approach. The impact of this system failure upon individuals means that although western society is regarded as socially and economically sophisticated, it is unable to provide all people with regular access to food and fulfil their basic human right to healthy food (see Rosin et al. 2012). These problems can create a dilemma for local government. Tension arises for local government when neoliberal governance is mixed with communitarian approaches because of compliance responsibility to the state on one hand and its commitment to the community on the other (O’Toole 2005: 289). Dollery et al. (2003:2) observe that local government is kept in a continuous state of change or ‘constant flux’ exacerbated by its responsibility to individual state and territory government legislation and regulatory processes. Local governments can feel powerless to make changes and are hesitant to increase regulation in what is perceived as an already heavily regulated system, contextualized within a complex legislative framework (Allender et al. 2009: 3). This pressured and complex situation combined with the problems of fit between governance levels blurs local government’s capacity to respond and conversion of this capacity into appropriate roles to meet the needs of their individual municipalities.
Neoliberal goals include increased managerial efficiency with anticipated improvements in effectiveness. Such conventional ‘tight fit’ management is considered successful due to efficiency outcomes but constricts diversity and resilience in government responses (Pritchard et al. 1998: 16). As Pahl-Wostl (2009: 355) explains, path-dependency management limits change and results in ‘lock-in situations’ with a preferred pathway, which is in this case a command and control path, leading to inferior performance and not looking for alternative approaches. An adaptive perspective of institutional capacity promotes flexibility (Rijke et al. 2012: 76) that accommodates uncertainty (Pritchard et al. 1998: 28). This approach creates a tension with the existing hierarchical system (Rijke et al. 2012: 76) under neoliberalism. This research suggests that new sustainability challenges necessitate adjustments to incorporate adaptive capacity within institutional structures and processes.

Local government relies on its relationship with other government levels to address the source of food insecurity but food system responsibilities are spread across numerous levels and departments. For example, food policy in Australia is spread across macro and microeconomic policies, financial regulation, infrastructure provision, trade practices regulation and health and welfare systems (DAFF 2011: 5). The three levels of government have individual food policy and regulatory responsibilities. Inconsistencies, overlaps and gaps exist in this fragmented structure (DAFF 2011: vi). Consequently, food problems are not addressed in an integrated and coordinated manner resulting in decisions at one level of government having significant undesired ramifications in other areas (PMSEIC 2010: 2, 45). This research found that failure to address food security determinants and barriers in higher government and the resulting lack of fit between different government responses is a major barrier to local government capacity in responding to complex sustainability challenges. Participants perceived this lack of fit as higher level
disinterest in important community needs and looked for improved leadership, support and resources from the federal and state governments.

A further question arose as to whether all local governments should be involved in food security as a service provision area. Only certain local governments have identified food security as a community need and made it a priority. If local government had an overall policy direction, with funding and leadership provided by state government, then more local governments would have the opportunity to take up the challenge. At this stage this research shows very limited connection between these two levels of government in this regard outside of the two case study projects. In actual fact there is ongoing disagreement between state and local governments over the use in high quality agricultural land in the City of Casey. Local government finds it very difficult to challenge state government decisions.

The lack of fit between government levels is complicated further by the inability of higher government levels to address the power of corporate food enterprises. Neoliberalism advocates reduced government interference in business activity, collective action and social programs (Cheshire & Lawrence 2005: 436; Brady et al. 2013: 124). Neoliberalism allows the market to ‘determine both the price and the value of everything’ (Tickell & Peck 1996: 398) including government structures and processes. Therefore, within this market-driven system external institutional, economic, social and environmental environments influence local government capacity. In particular social outcomes take a back seat to ‘the market’ which is ‘the dominant policy-making logic’ and ‘public sector paradigm’ (Wiseman 2005: 72). Local government is considered a relatively disempowered level of government as a result (Aulich 2005: 194). Food insecurity determinants stem from macro level market-driven food systems (Rosin et al. 2012: 219-222). Pothukuchi (2004: 360) realistically states that ‘for better or worse, the corporate-dominated market food system is here to stay for the foreseeable future’. While perceived by some as interference in business activity, increased government involvement in fundamental
food system decisions, such as food pricing, food retail market share and media advertising (Cheshire & Lawrence 2005: 436; Brady et al. 2013: 124) is necessary to provide a strong and coordinated government stance on food security matters. This research showed that higher levels of government withdraw from confronting these corporate neoliberal drivers; a situation that has implications for local government. Similarly, government needs to ensure that locally grown food is affordable in its own area rather than have private enterprise dictate the processing, transportation and distribution of food. For example, this research highlights that local produce grown in rural municipalities goes to centralised distribution areas and then returns to retail food outlets in the original locations. There is no opportunity for direct retail outlets for this food in these municipalities. Government allows the private sector to self-regulate and fails to consider municipal social needs, such as food security.

Furthermore, at other times the authority devolved to local government is withdrawn by the state. For example, this research showed that local government policies were set in place to protect agricultural land but were overruled by state government acquiring the land for urban housing expansion. Pini and McKenzie (2007:33-36) observes that a tension exists between authority given and subservience to state oversight. Consequently, if conflict arises, the state dominates (McNeill 1997: 24) and local government’s purpose becomes predominantly the service provider of state government (Dollery & Marshall 1997:4).

Systemic land use planning barriers also demonstrates the problems of external fit within local government that limit its capacity to respond. Access to healthy food needs to be available to residents within walking distance from their homes, particularly in low socio-economic areas where car ownership and public transport is limited (Parham 2007:11). Walkability and cycling are enabled in planning schemes but food supply or access does not have triggers. Local government can only ‘encourage’ the development or establishment of healthy food outlets in particular locations as planning regulation does not dictate business mix. Case study
participants found that local government planners were hesitant to push the boundaries of current planning schemes because they did not have the regulatory authority to insist that retail outlets include healthy food or developments for example, include community gardens. Local government planners need increased legislative and regulatory tools from state government to enforce food security principles in land use decisions (Budge & Slade 2009: 6). The institutional implications of encouraging urban food production in public spaces are still emerging. Recommendations by Wheeler (2004: 207-208) suggest that local government use zoning regulation to permit urban agriculture (UA) in existing open space, but in Victoria (as in other Australian states), planning schemes are authorised by State government. Currently there are no specific zones for UA. Therefore, legislative and regulatory alignment between government levels would improve the facilitation of municipal food security and help to align government priorities towards the sustainability challenge rather than the existing lack of fit demonstrated through statutory and philosophical gaps.

Further complexity stems from an alignment of local government food security needs and roles with the wider environmental sustainability agenda. A political ecology approach ‘links theories of ecology and political economy’ to explain and analyse structural causes and effects of ‘social/ecological problems’ (Thrupp 1999: 47-48), such as food producing and processing activities (Atkins & Bowler 2001: 187). This approach links environmental problems and social justice issues, assessing impacts from global to local scales (Thrupp 1999: 49-51). Environmental concerns are also embraced in an ecological sustainability perspective. Global environmental issues, such as climate change, affect the entire food system. Locally, issues involve the struggle to protect prime agricultural land in peri-urban areas and the development of a sustainable food system. This move towards sustainability is also discussed by Koç et al. (1999: 1-2) who emphasises a social justice food system perspective that provides for basic human needs but does not compromise ‘the ability of future generations to meet their needs’, and maintains ‘ecological integrity’ by integrating
‘conservation and development’. The widening complex web of food security elements demands further strengthening and extension of local government capacity in order to effectively address diverse but inter-related sustainability challenges. An ideal response would be that local government acts within a consistent institutional framework, with all public sector organisations aligned, working together towards common goals through consistent processes.

Local government also facilitates partnerships with service organisations and community groups which are part of the external environment. Findings from the research reinforce the importance for local government’s use of partnerships to facilitate a broad food security focus (VicHealth 2010:2). Whilst part of a broader economic efficiency model, partnerships between local government and community-orientated groups provide one positive strategy to enhance capacity to respond to complex issues. Important to local government to maintain this capacity opportunity is the consistent availability of community partners to share responsibilities. Otherwise, responses to municipal needs can be jeopardised by constant pressure on local government to deliver with less resources and increased bureaucratic processes. Acknowledging a restricted resource context, local governments in this research strategically used resources to build evidence of local food security needs in order to inform decision-making within these community partnerships. Again, local government relied on external resourcing to initiate new responses, especially those outside the immediate priorities handed down by state government. Expecting local government to continue with ‘business as usual’ in meeting community needs without addressing under-resourcing is not sustainable (Bell 2007: 173). Local government needs the full support of higher government levels to consistently facilitate food security responses in partnership with community groups and organisations in the longer term; however, at the moment there is a lack of fit between state and federal expectations and local government responsibilities to their municipalities.
Unresponsiveness from higher government levels is highlighted by the evidence of ‘food deserts’ (as explained in Chapter Two) discovered in areas within municipalities without healthy food access. Yet these councils are virtually powerless to encourage changes in business mix, zoning and can only advocate changes to public transport routes. A feedback loop through advocating these types of changes to address this problem to higher levels of government hits a bureaucratic ceiling and local government is left to continue under the same circumstances and mandate. This lack of effectiveness of the feedback loop means that local government capacity to respond remains insufficient and higher government levels miss the opportunity to appropriately utilise and align their responses based on informed community practice; thus exacerbating the implications of lack of fit.

Added to unresponsiveness and potential revoking of authority, the demand for increased service provision continues, either from community pressures (Johnson 2003:40), changing local government priorities and/or demands imposed from higher government spheres (Commonwealth Grants Commission 2001: xiv). All options have financial implications. Local government capacity to successfully embrace new responsibilities is limited by its revenue collection opportunities (Pini et al. 2007: 162). Further, Johnson (2003: 40) observes that ‘the community expectation/funding gap’ is increasing between declining local government revenue and increasing community pressure for services. Not only are service responsibilities increasing but the type of services is increasingly towards new areas of human services (Bell 2007: 177). Local government capacity is stretched and relies further on external funding and resources (Bell 2007: 177).

In summary, the problem of lack of fit between government levels blurs local government’s capacity and food security roles. Problems of fit stem from a number of causes. Lack of higher government regulation of corporate food advertising, market-share, food distribution further contributes to problems of fit as does the disaggregation of food system responsibilities across government departments and
levels. Widening environmental problems and limitations of land use legislation and regulation further complicate the fit between government levels. Various challenges, such as the existence of ‘food deserts’, state government overturning local government land use decisions and limited resources provided for local government priorities expose the problem of fit. This research highlights that these extensive external problems of fit are major contributors to the limitations of local government capacity to respond to complex sustainability problems, such as food security.

**Implications of Capacity Building Partnerships within the Context of Fit**

As a result of task network activity some external and internal pressures are temporarily relieved for participating local governments, giving them the opportunity to explore food security problems and to evaluate if they fit within their internal organisational priorities, policies and programs. Yet empirical evidence from Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995: 448) reveals ‘remedies introduced at the human resource, organizational, or interorganizational level may not produce improvements if constraints along other dimensions of capacity are more binding’. Similarly, Batley and Larbi (2004: 19) comment that capacity building can fail if the whole operational context, including external influences is not considered. It is a matter of consistent fit across all levels. The problem of fit jeopardises building local government capacity.

Project-based work that relies on external funding is a common mechanism used to increase capacity; however, this strategy is only a short-term solution and has negative implications for local government and community partners when the project ends. In this research, the longevity of the capacity building work was in doubt when all the resources were used up and the task network partnerships ended. Responsibility for the ongoing work then rests on councils finding extra resources or already under-resourced community partners. For local government, capacity to embrace increasing human services roles (Bell 2007: 177) is linked to revenue collection streams (Pini et al. 2009: 162). Different local governments have varying capacities to raise finances themselves but all are reliant on higher levels of
government as well (DITRDLG 2009: 13). The research draws out the problem of fit and how it affects ongoing capacity building. The impact of project-based externally funded initiatives on local government capacity is not optimum. Consistent funding from higher government levels over the longer term provides stability for local government to build its human resource and organisational capacity. Although external capacity building initiatives opportunistically strengthen local government capacity to respond to food security challenges, improvement in the fit between government levels is required for consistent ongoing solutions to such complex sustainability problems.

BRINGING THE PARTS TOGETHER: ALIGNMENT AND ADJUSTMENTS IN GOVERNMENT FIT

Adaptive capacity implies openness to process and structural alterations in response to societal changes (Pahl-Wostl 2009: 355). There is a call for aligned governance to provide an adaptive approach to complex institutionally-related problems (see Pritchard et al. 1998; Folke at al. 2007). Within an institutional context this means organisations collaborate to respond to and manage complex problems (Polk 2011: 187). Implementing adaptive institutional capacity at one government level is difficult because of the organisation’s relationships with other parts of the institution. Public sector organisations are part of an open organisational system (Honadle 1981b:3) and therefore influenced by external public and private sector environments, as well as their own existing internal capacity. An institutional capacity perspective implies connections between organisations that influence the institutional framework (North 1990:5), where individuals, organisations and regulatory instruments work together for a common purpose (van de Meene et al. 2009: 1922).

While local government currently has potential roles within its capacity to respond to food security needs, increasingly complex problems in the external environment pressure this capacity and demand more. Higher levels of government need to address
institutional misfits in alignment between government tiers. Without this foundational alignment it is increasingly difficult for local government and its associated partners to address complex food security needs, particularly in light of global environmental challenges.

**The Importance of Value-Changing Feedback loops**

This research shows that food insecurity determinants are multiple and diverse, often originating outside local government jurisdiction. Institutional constraints overlay these determinants and appropriate responses. Currently there is a lack of higher level leadership and a legislative framework that provides inadequate support for local government food security responses. Integrating food security responses across government departments and sectors would ultimately develop a holistic food security governance framework in Australia that addresses systemic barriers and increases support for capacity building work at the local level.\(^{51}\) The state government needs to work with local government to address the complex mixture of determinants in each municipality and help design individual responses. As a recipient of external impacts, local government’s internal structures and processes can be misaligned and disjointed, weakening capacity to act. Local government lacks authority from higher government levels to tackle complex problems. Power under NPM is centralised in state governments using efficiency mechanisms, expecting uniformity and valuing top-down processes (Aulich 2005: 194). Communication and authority in government is one-directional in a downward devolutionary context (Aulich 2005: 194) with opportunities for limited feedback from local government upwards. Participants directly involved in local government human services experience the impacts of top-down processes, higher level leadership absence and the disempowerment of a weak legislative framework. They lack the opportunity for simultaneous feedback to higher level government about their capacity needs through advocacy loops that are characteristic of systems thinking for sustainability, such as the food security agenda.

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\(^{51}\) An inherent danger in a document such as the emerging National Food Plan is the propensity to have system-changing rhetoric without the capacity to extensively enact those changes across all government levels.
A question arises as to how local government can influence alignment within a hierarchical government system. While local government is a recipient of higher government decision-making and other external impacts, there is limited opportunity for it to feedback to state and federal government valuable knowledge and experience from the community interface. Formal advocacy is traditionally one available option. Yet the impact of advocacy remains a grey area in which local government and partners provide formal feedback to higher government levels without necessarily seeing tangible positive change. Pathways to feed upstream knowledge and experience gained through local projects and other food security initiatives is restricted usually to formal submissions to ‘Inquiries’ instigated at the higher government levels or via state local government associations. Participating councils in this research consistently collected enlightening local evidence about food security. Whilst this evidence is used within council to advocate for support and collaborative work opportunities, its use upwards to higher levels of government is limited. Capacity literature is not forthcoming about advocacy roles. Local government is limited within NPM and is predominantly a service provider for state government (Dollery & Marshall 1997:4).

Some insight comes from the work of Argyris and Schön (1996:21) who distinguish between single and double loop learning in organisations. Feedback offers an organisation the opportunity to change their strategies or assumptions (single-loop learning) or, more importantly, chances to evaluate and change the values behind the strategies (double-loop learning) in combination with their actions (Argyris & Schön 1997: 20-21). Double loop learning brings about shifts in organisational values through feedback loops that connect the strategies and associated values. Feedback loops, in this case, are the conduits for the flow of knowledge from one level (local government) to another (higher government). There are no double feedback loops that allow local government to input their interpretation and experience of complex food security issues to higher government levels. Currently, feedback occurs mainly
through formal submission and report writing with limited opportunity for value changing. Advocacy roles by participants did little to change systemic problems because opportunity is not provided for genuine valuing changing feedback. Such a ‘tight fit’ management approach, according to Pritchard et al. (1998: 16) is seen in terms of success and efficiency but limits diversity and resilience of the participating organisation. This approach can result in ‘lock-in-situations’ where traditional response patterns do not necessarily result in high performance, and additionally may exclude other approaches (Pahl-Wostl 2009: 355). The case study participants in this research were frustrated at the lack of fit between government tiers because of its impact on their work. Those involved at a community level in tackling new human service issues are confronted by the impacts of government decision-making and regulation and can provide constructive input into changes needed from a local governance practice perspective. The fallback position for local government is to weave their role discovery processes through the stumbling blocks and barriers created and perpetrated by lack of fit.

Contemporary complex challenges require flexibility and resilient institutional capacity. Traditional feedback methods will not return vital knowledge and experience in a timely fashion to respond quickly to new situations. Links are being forged between environmental and social resilience (Folke 2006: 260; Adger 2000: 347) which necessitate adaptive institutional capacity. Local government needs feedback loops to higher government levels in order to achieve an aligned, timely and flexible response. Lack of value-changing feedback loops highlights a systemic devaluing of local government by higher government tiers (O’Toole 2005: 2880) within a neoliberal paradigm and consequential inequitable power relationships that frame policy development and service delivery (Pini & McKenzie 2007: 33-36; Dollery & Marshall 1997:4). This type of governance arrangement fits nicely into a neoliberal ideology. A long-term ideal is a collaborative governance approach which values and constitutionally recognises the role of local government. In the short-term new approaches to communicating feedback need to be explored.
This research suggests there are limited consistent and authentic opportunities for local government to provide feedback to higher levels of government. Participants did not have a solution to this problem. Usually, they saw advocacy based on a collection of evidence as the mainstream method of feedback. Advocacy takes enormous efforts over long periods of time by many different groups with no guarantee of success. In case study one, VicHealth was an influential delegated organisation responsible to the Victorian Parliament but it was not able to bring about institutional change. Perhaps if stronger citizenship models existed within the community there would be capacity to draw on citizen advocacy more effectively as a collective voice of voters. This option would require a ‘concerted repoliticisation’ of complex social issues to engender open dialogue and participation (Holden 2012: 528-529, 539-540). Out of the findings in the first case study, the external evaluator suggested the formation of a Food Policy Alliance to lobby state government on food security issues; however, local government was initially excluded from this Alliance. Even so, there is no guarantee that double-loop learning takes place; it may result in another single loop. Receptivity to feedback that potentially changes existing governance values is essential when systemic authority (might) view feedback as dissension (right) (Flood & Romm 2000: 71-75). Higher levels of government need to see value in local government’s opinion crafted from ‘on the ground’ experience within the municipalities and provide a diversity of feedback pathways.

The subsidiarity principle is an option for strengthening local government’s position (Bell 2007: 173). In practice this principle seeks to link the appropriate size of an organisation to functionality with responsibility given to the lowest tiered and smallest capable organisation (Reid 1999: 178-180). Decision making as close as possible to the recipient is recommended (Gallop 2005: 17). The principle of subsidiarity requires a comprehensive understanding of current capacity and roles, combined with a shared meaning of preferred devolution of authority. Ideally, it would give local government legitimacy, recognition, authority to act and
opportunities to advocate for local priorities and be heard. Enacting the subsidiarity principle would provide opportunity for local government to fulfil existing and new food security roles with confidence in an interactive and consistent government response. Whilst this idea has benefits for local government capacity, its implementation is futuristic. Currently, in terms of food security as an exemplar of other complex sustainability challenges, the relationship between higher levels of government and local government is top-down and one dimensional which inhibits any ‘feedback from the consequences they engender’ (Pritchard et al. 1998: 21). On the ground subsidiarity requires radical value-changing shifts in Australian governance towards increased recognition of the capacity and roles local government has in response to food security needs, before any implementation would be possible.

Top-down processes, the absence of higher government level leadership and a legislative framework that gives the balance of power to the state level disempowers local government. Yet traditional advocacy pathways are not adequate to feedback back vital knowledge and experience in a timely fashion to respond quickly to new situations. Value-changing feedback loops provide opportunity for a consistent and collaborative government response. Contemporary complex issues require flexibility and resilient institutional capacity. An aligned governance approach which values and constitutionally recognises the role of local government is necessary in the long-term.

**Relationship between Capacity and Roles within Local Government**

This research shows the importance of local government capacity to address food security problems within their municipalities, where capacity is defined in terms of ‘ability to perform appropriate tasks’ (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 445). Currently, capacity can be seen as ‘a platform for performance’ (Ingraham et al. 2002: 2) yet little is said in capacity literature about role discovery, definition and articulation of existing and new roles and tasks to address complex human service problems as part of the process in attaining these outputs. This research adds another dimension to the scholarly literature that links capacity to performance by suggesting that capacity is
also needed for role discovery and task articulation before maximum performance can be reached. Leadership is a vital element in such a process (Andrews & Boyne 2010: 450-451) as well as the collaborative capacity gained through partnership arrangements.

Yet against a backdrop of neoliberalism there is little opportunity for local government to reflect on building capacity in a way that includes role discovery for new initiatives. Mandated obligations and reporting accountabilities consume local government capacity (Broomhill 2001: 116; Gallop 2005: 5-6). Capacity building partnerships in the task network tends to fill this gap in identifying community needs from their own perspective and linking with local government to strengthen capacity. In these partnerships opportunity is provided to build capacity focused to respond to community needs outside traditional local government roles. Even so, weaving the path of capacity building towards role discovery within these partnerships can be difficult. For example, in this research’s first case study the focus on barriers inhibiting role discovery grew over time, making it very difficult, if not impossible, in the current governance context, to whole-heartedly pursue realistic roles for local government. Strategic resolve is necessary to remain focused on the original objectives of the partnership (see previously discussed strategically-focused capacity building early in this chapter) in order to strengthen capacity needed for role discovery.

The case studies show that role discovery is not an easy process with tension existing between capacity and roles because of their dynamically linked relationship that is muddied by lack of fit in government levels. In this research, discovery, definition and articulation of food security roles that local government could perform required understanding about existing capacity. This process was slow because the amount of existing capacity available was masked by the problem of fit. Pressures and limitations from various misfits cause local government to be ‘in a state of flux’ particularly in terms of human services. Local government is struggling to find its
responsive place because its capacity tools are limited by internal and external misalignments. Problems of fit between different levels and within local government affect this capacity. Limited capacity results in limited responsive roles.

In a rapidly changing external environment role discovery processes need to be facilitated by flexible and adaptive capacity strengthening strategies in order to keep pace. Understanding and enacting current roles is one concern but increasing capacity for future role enactment places further demands on the fit between government levels. Misalignment between government levels, as well as private enterprise, and increasing environmental problems demand more capacity from local government. The three-stage Food Security Continuum adapted from the Provincial Health Services Authority (2008:7) and McCullum et al. (2005: 279) introduced in the second chapter, facilitates role identification, clarification and articulation. The first stage of the continuum focuses on immediate hunger relief while the second stage moves to transitioning changes in the food system through capacity building. Finally, the third stage seeks to redesign food systems towards sustainability. Although designed specifically for improving triple-bottom-line sustainability, the continuum is helpful in designing, understanding and assessing capacity and roles. Institutions have important roles within the food system that need not only the capacity to respond but the capacity to act over the long term to sustain their response (Miewald et al. 2007:4-5). This continuum highlights, in line with literature and this research, potential misfits particularly in Stage Three. Local government food security roles in this study extend across the three stages with the third stage being the optimal result for sustained change.

In recent times local government itself is raising questions about the misfit between government levels as well as its capacity to act strategically over the longer term. Fulfilling important roles in response to challenging sustainability problems impacts local government’s identity. For example, McKinlay (2010: 1) records a series of
deep concerns raised at the first *Future of Local Government Summit* in Victoria in 2005 that included:

- Most major decisions about local government are taken by other levels of government – local government cannot (or is not allowed to) think for itself.
- What does local government aspire to achieve? No one knows.
- Local government is usually consumed by day-to-day issues – the urgent crowds out the important.
- Councils have long-term plans, but the local government sector does not have a strategic long-term direction.
- The local government identity crisis – who are we?

Five years later the focus of the summit in 2010 was on local government’s role and its vision for the future with the challenge given by McKinlay (2010: 2) as the theme of his presentation that:

> While many people are involved in the local government sector, there is typically very little time spent in assessing its role and producing a vision for its future in a rapidly changing world. Many of the key issues faced by the sector are role-related.

Such critical reflection goes to the core of local government’s role in changing times. Understanding and subsequent articulation of its own capacity allows local government to clearly assess its current status and consequently plan for the future and its relationship with higher authorities. Yet it is challenging for local government to undertake this assessment process when its capacity to respond is restricted by inter-governmental lack of fit that blurs understanding of existing capacity and complicated role definition in any new initiative.

**CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

Within this efficiency-based system, capacity building is seen as opportunity to boost capacity, explore solutions and evaluate fit. Externally funded project-based initiatives are used to boost local government capacity. These initiatives are temporary breaks in maintaining neoliberal pathways and give local government opportunity to explore solutions to complex issues and evaluate fit. Capacity building can be reactionary to the problem of misfit with interested stakeholders wishing to work with local government to introduce new priorities. This research aligns with the literature that purports the whole operational context, including the external and
internal fit, needs to be carefully explored and evaluated for the capacity building to be effective. Strategically-focused capacity building partnerships focus on alignment between goals, context and outcomes, thus improving effectiveness. These partnerships should be seen as part of a holistic strategy and not as substitutes for consistent funding and support from higher government levels for local government food security work.

The relationship between capacity and the discovery, definition, and articulation of partner roles drives the internal influences on local government capacity. Human resources across council often limit role discovery and the capacity to respond. These research findings agree with current capacity literature that developing the capacity of leaders and managers to support responses to complex challenges is essential. Furthermore, horizontal relationship building across departments using integrated planning to develop policy, improves whole-of-council capacity. This strategy increases ownership of food insecurity problems between different departments. Strong supportive leadership within council is vital to developing and activating latent capacity. Strategies include building cross-departmental relationships to ensure joint ownership of these complex issues. Capacity is currently measured by outputs and performance but consideration is needed of the processes behind the outputs that strengthen local government capacity and result in appropriate roles.

Local government sits within a complex legislative framework, with responsibilities to state government on the one hand and to the community on the other. A diverse range of influences on local government capacity exist in the external environment. Higher levels of government need to address external concerns across economic, social and political sectors because they impinge on complex and multi-level issues that affect local government capacity. Building institutional capacity for food security is not advanced. A neoliberal approach seeks efficiency and hopes for effectiveness at the expense of social outcomes. Decision making at the higher government levels impacts local government whether it concerns private enterprise in the food system,
legislation and regulation or environmental issues. Constrictive systemic problems within the broad external environment cause misfits that limit local government capacity.

The misfits in the external environment are the biggest barriers to local government’s capacity to respond to complex issues. Opportunity for local government to feedback its experience and knowledge to higher government levels is limited. Value-changing feedback loops would enable local government to share its experience and knowledge with higher levels of government and open up the opportunity to align government responses to complex sustainability challenges. Similarly, tension exists between capacity and role discovery for local government. This relationship is dynamic but muddied because of problems of fit in government levels. Existing capacity to enable role discovery boosts local government’s identity and responsiveness towards new and challenging sustainability problems.

Overall, this research argues that while strategically designed capacity building partnerships can build local government capacity to respond to complex sustainability challenges, gains are significantly overshadowed by the lack of internal and external fit between government levels that limits local government’s capacity to respond. As such, increased leadership and managerial support within local government to facilitate cross departmental integrated planning and policy development, together with value-changing feedback loops with higher government levels would improve local government’s capacity to respond to complex challenges.
CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Eight discussed the findings from the case studies in light of scholarly literature. Lack of fit between government levels creates internal problems for local government by limiting its capacity to respond to complex issues. Externally funded project-based capacity building initiatives are used to boost capacity but positive long term impact is not guaranteed. Within the problems of fit local government’s understanding of its capacity and conversion to role implementation is blurred. It takes time to discover food security roles that fit within existing capacity. Strong leadership within local government can facilitate cross-departmental integrated planning and policy development. Local government desires to include other roles but their capacity to enact regulatory changes and address determinants outside their jurisdiction is not possible within the current institutional system. Value-changing feedback loops for local government upwards would improve governmental fit.

This chapter provides a brief overview of the research and its significance. The first section briefly recounts the research problem and then outlines the rationale and methodological responses. It continues with an explanation of the use of the new heuristic capacity assessment framework and lastly, reiterates the main findings from the research analysis. The next section of the chapter highlights the contribution of the research to the theoretical concepts of capacity, and knowledge of local government’s relationship to food security. The chapter acknowledges the limited representative scope of this qualitative case study methodology and brief final conclusions are drawn.

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Sustainability challenges such as food security are multi-level and complex. Food security is an exemplar of these challenges that lack a ‘clear jurisdictional home’ and have ‘few policy roadmaps to follow or regulatory tools to support their...
implementation’ (Mendes 2008: 943). Yet such challenges require innovative responses at all levels of government. The role of government in food security is vital as it can activate, organise and control new responses (Farmar-Bowers et. al. 2013b), through legislation, policies, regulation, funding and programs. A key challenge is having the institutional capacity needed to deliver required outcomes at each level within the current neoliberal context. Little is known about the capacity of government to undertake these tasks successfully. This research focused on local government’s capacity to respond to food security needs within municipalities. It explains how and why local government in particular can be constrained by limited capacity to respond to food security as one of these complex sustainability problems. Therefore, this research’s contribution is a timely addition to scholarly literature and theory development.

This research used a constructivist ontological and epistemological approach to explore the capacity of local government to respond to complex sustainability challenges. A case study methodology facilitated the collecting of a rich understanding of this complex problem and qualitative methods to draw out multiple perspectives. The two case studies in this research used inter-sectoral capacity building partnerships where funding and project management was provided by an external organisation. Although pivotal to strengthening local government capacity these arrangements may only be only opportunistically available depending on the priorities of the lead organisation or higher tiers of government.

A newly development heuristic capacity assessment framework, based on scholarly literature, analysed the data collected according to a number of appropriate themes, focused on the task network, the recipient internal level and the wider external environment. The central theoretical perspective of this research was institutional capacity because local government is part of an institutional system in which organisations influence each other (Honadle 1981b: 3). Similarly the institutional structure influences the individual organisational structures and functions (North
1990: 5, 73-74). Institutional capacity infers the idea of fit between different levels of organisations as well as internal workings of individual organisations when undertaking a task (van de Meene et al. 2009: 1922); in this case responding effectively to complex food security problems.

The research found that whilst the task network capacity building partnerships boost capacity temporarily, any gains for the recipient capacity of local government are diminished significantly by internal organisational limitations and misalignment between government levels, coined the problem of fit’ (Folke et al. 2007: n.p.). This research proposes that the capacity of the recipient local government level would benefit from increased senior leadership and management support and the facilitation of cross-departmental relationship building in integrated planning and policy development.

Furthermore, while local government is a recipient of higher government decision-making and other external impacts, there is limited opportunity for local government to feedback to higher government levels valuable knowledge and experience from the community interface. Feedback offers an organisation the opportunity to change their strategies (single-loop learning) or, more importantly, chances to change the values behind the strategies (double-loop learning) as well in combination with their actions (or something like that) (Argyris & Schön 1997: 20-21). This research argues that value-changing feedback loops where local government facilitate upward communication and knowledge sharing is vital to improved fit between levels. A long term ideal is a collaborative governance approach that recognises the role of local government. In the short-term authentic value-changing feedback opportunities are required to improve governmental fit so local government capacity is available to respond effectively.
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

This section addresses the research aims stated in Chapter One and reflects on the significance of this research. Critically, this research contributes new insights into the knowledge about the relationships between food security, local government and institutional capacity.

Contribution to Theory about Capacity

This research contributes to institutional capacity and public administration discourses in a number of ways. It developed a new theoretical capacity assessment framework grounded in international development, sustainable urban water and ecosystem management literature. Brown et al. (2006) contributed to capacity literature about quality of capacity while Batley and Larbi’s (2004) stress the importance of fit between levels within national reforms in developing countries. This research extends Batley and Larbi’s (2004) concept of fit by strengthening the focus on the task network as the pivotal level and directing the results of the fit towards local government at a recipient level. Furthermore, this new framework incorporated overarching factors, including time, indicated as an omission in capacity literature by Christensen and Gazley (2008).

The framework examined the fit between levels in response to the main research question and sub-questions asking whether current systems and processes help or hinder this fit between collaborative capacity building task networks, recipient local governments and their external wider environments. Findings from this research contribute to theory refinement and formation within the institutional capacity theoretical discourse and advanced the current knowledge base by adding insights into the impact of the problem of fit on local government capacity. Additionally, the new framework included environmental concerns as a separate theme within the external environment, in keeping with sustainability challenges facing contemporary governments.
Complex problems that cross multiple governance levels require adaptive capacity that Pahl-Wostl (2009: 355) describes as potential alteration of processes and structural changes if needed to respond effectively. Such flexibility needs to be incorporated into current institutional capacity in order to develop resilience, both environmentally and socially (Adger 2000: 347; Folke 2006: 260). This research embraced these links between environmental and social issues suggested in broad environmental planning, resource governance and sustainability literature to articulate adaptive institutional capacity. By articulating these links this research has opened dialogue for future discussion and collaboration between scholars (and practitioners) involved in researching relationships between environmental concerns, food security and governance.

**Contribution to Local Government Knowledge**

Another aim of this research was to contribute to the research base about local government because it is a neglected area of scholarly attention (Mowbray 2011:43). Furthermore, research linking local government and food security is embryonic. Understanding government capacity to respond to complex food system problems, evidenced particularly at a local level, is little understood. This research responds to the call for further in-depth research (Yeatman 2008: 1406) that encourages institutional change (Allender et al. 2009:7). Finally, this research contributes to the work of Mendes (2006, 2007, 2008 & 2012) concerning the role of local government in food security, as a social planning and policy challenge.

This research explains why and how local government is constrained by limited capacity to respond to complex problems. It articulates theoretical and empirical explanations of misfits that occur in the alignment of government levels. It reveals governance misalignment, legislative challenges and the impacts of a siloed portfolio approach. It shows the lack of value-changing feedback loops required to build resilient institutional capacity. Adaptive institutional capacity will not be effective without feedback. The current system is a one-way feeder from state government to
local government based in the legislative relationship between these two tiers of
government, with State government dictating terms of practice for local government.
Authentic feedback opportunities for local government with higher government levels
give opportunity to improve the fit between levels, enabling local government
sufficient capacity to respond effectively to complex challenges within their
municipalities.

Furthermore, this research highlights the internal barriers to local government’s
capacity to respond, drawing attention to the critical need for council leadership
support for food security work within their organisations through facilitation of cross-
departmental relationship building, integrated planning and policy development.

**Contribution to Food Security Knowledge**

Although local government capacity to respond to complex sustainability challenges
is part of current institutional capacity literature, using food security as an exemplar
case study is new. The use of food security provides an excellent testing ground for
the current knowledge base and internationally published literature.

This research provided an in-depth account of work undertaken in two recent health
promotion partnerships. Whilst appearing to be contained in a narrow food security
focus based on equitable access to healthy food, these partnerships unlocked insights
into broader issues that impinge of food supply, access and entitlement. Food
security is a complex issue. The data collection process by the researcher followed an
iterative learning process in which participants articulated their perceptions as a
continuous learning process. The relationship between food security, local
government and community development principles was new at the time of the data
collection phase and no participant had all the answers. Research participants
articulated their perceptions of what was happening in the various levels but the
situation was too raw, new and large for them to adequately fit all the pieces all
together. The struggle of articulation was not just about food security but the misfit
between levels and the importance of an integrated governance approach. The research is unique in capturing this pioneering work as well as benefitting from two case studies within similar jurisdictions and timeframes that allowed for comparison.

Not only does this research give insight into food security work within the recipient local governments but it furthers understanding of the role of intersectoral capacity building partnerships generally and specifically in food security. Strategically-focused capacity building initiatives consider the influence of a wide range of external and internal forces that impinge upon the effectiveness of the capacity building initiatives. This research provides evidence to develop a more robust process for strategically-focused capacity building when addressing complex problems which can be tested in future research.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This research suggests that local government needs to further discover and implement its food security roles, the insistence on strategically focused capacity building planning and the embedding value-changing feedback loops with higher government levels remains future research opportunities.

Furthermore, in light of future research, two particular activities of the task network need to be highlighted here. This research suggests that the collection of local food security evidence is an underutilised and undervalued resource, which through no fault of the collectors, currently has limited access to appropriate audiences. Future research into dissemination of this evidence to a broader number of strategically target audiences and investigation of potential alternative uses would be beneficial. Secondly, policy development merits brief discussion. It was a strategically-focused decision on behalf of the task network that all participating councils should develop food security policy to ensure improved long term outcomes. Yet this was a challenging task which drew out many of the systemic capacity problems around food security work in local government recorded in this research. A longitudinal research
approach could use baseline data from this research to examine the collection of new council policies, plans and strategies for 2013-2016 to see if food security is still an embedded priority.

Similarly, the new theoretical framework offered in this research to critique capacity building not only assists in the design phase but also during implementation and evaluation phases, whilst facilitating ongoing reflection on capacity. Future research could refine this process using the heuristic capacity assessment framework from this research, either in other food security contexts or in addressing other complex governance issues. Further research may also investigate other options rather than the traditional capacity building models as ongoing complex sustainability problems will require further adaptive responses.

Finally, this research acknowledges the importance of recognising diversity when addressing food security. Literature reinforces the empirical evidence that diverse responses are required of individual council contexts and the complexity of issues involved. No two councils have the same organisational culture, resources and community mix. In particular, food security determinant clusters within each municipality are complex and varied. This research however reveals that many of these determinants exist outside local government authority and rest with the higher levels of government. Findings place food security within the new agenda of complex sustainability problems demanding an aligned response across all government levels that recognises the urgent need for local government capacity to enact new roles.
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APPENDIX A: DETAILS OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS


This framework’s five dimensions depicted in Figure 13 are:

• **The action environment** is the wider economic, political and social setting around government. Factors that can affect the public sector include economic growth or decline, the labour market, global economic relations, political leadership and institutions and social conflict, class structures and the organisation of civic society (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 445-446).

• **The institutional context of the public sector** includes the regulatory obligations for government, responsibilities for development, policies, formal and informal structures which can either enable or constrain tasks (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 445 & 447).

• **The task network** is all organisations working towards a particular task. Performance is influenced by communication process, coordination and implementation of responsibilities. Not all organisations may be in the public sector (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 447).

• **Organisations** involves how the ‘structures, processes, resources and management styles’ affect goal establishment, work structure, power relations and incentives. These factors ‘affect organizational output and shape the behaviour of those who work within them’ (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 447).

• **Human resources** focuses on how employees are recruited, utilised and retained in the public sector, particularly in terms of ‘managerial, professional, and technical talent’ and the influence of training and career aspirations on overall performance (Grindle & Hilderbrand 1995: 447).

Batley & Larbi’s (2004: 18-19) framework (see Figure 14) has three levels of analysis: internal in an organisation; then a wider network of organisations; to the broader ‘social, political and legal’ external contexts. The authors stress the importance of fit between levels requiring adaptable organisational responses to changing institutional contexts (Batley & Larbi 2004: 19-20).

According to Batley & Larbi (2004: 18) the internal level includes human resources, organisational and administrative structures and procedures, and finally the organisation’s assets and resources. The wider network level includes the coordination arrangements, for example roles, decision making and finances, within networks performing together on certain tasks. Lastly, the wider institutional context can either enable or constrain an individual organisation’s capacity through mechanisms and macro-policies and systems. These influences can be within the
immediate institutional context by way of rules and regulations and the relationship between political control and public administration. They can also exist within a broader environment such as ‘the state of the macro-economy, the strength of civil society and the private sector, the stability of the political system, technological change, the legal framework and its enforcement’ (Batley & Larbi (2004: 18-19).

![Figure 14: A Framework for Analysing Capacity](source: Larbi (1998: 164) (Permission for use given by the original author, Dr George Larbi); Batley & Larbi (2004: 19) (Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan 5/10/2013)

Brown, Mouritz and Taylor (2006)

This CAF emphasises that institutional practice ‘is dependent on the quality of capacity for effective action both within and between’ four institutional aspects (see Figure 15). These aspects are:
• **Human resources** available;
• **Intra-organisational capacity** within appropriate organisations
• **Inter-organisational capacity** gained from cooperative networks and relationships between organisations
• **External institutional rules and incentives** including regulation, policies and incentive schemes (2006: 5-2)

Furthermore, the framework link institutional capacity with capacity building interventions. Whilst acknowledging the traditional human resource methods of capacity building these authors argue that delivery of more effective outcomes also requires an assessment of the capacity of relevant organisations and the ‘broader institutional context’ (2006: 5-2). A participatory approach to assessing the quality of existing institutional capacity is recommended because it captures experiential knowledge and collective problem formulation, articulation and diagnosis (Brown et al. 2006: 5-3). Five capacity building interventions are proposed as a multi-pronged strategy (see bottom of Figure 15).

![Figure 15: Aspects of institutional capacity and capacity building interventions for promoting WSUD](image)

Source: Brown et al. (2006: C5) in publication by Engineers Australia (It is reprinted here with permission granted by Engineers Australia 25/9/2013)
van de Meene, Brown and Farrelly (2009)

Succinctly as shown in Figure 16, van de Meene et al. summarises the Brown et al. (2006) framework as comprising ‘four nested capacity spheres’ which ‘links each sphere to capacity building interventions’ (2009: 1923). Using the Brown et al. (2006) framework as its foundation, this approach uses a case study methodology to identify ‘characteristics of good capacity’ in order to ‘inform the assessment of capacity deficits’ (van de Meene et al. 2009: 1922). The aim of the assessment is to gain further knowledge of existing capacity in order to develop appropriate and effective capacity building interventions to advance SUWM. The research from the case study found that the intra and inter-organisational spheres lack of trust and cohesiveness which hampers progress. Acquiring this knowledge enables capacity building strategies to focus on these constraints (van de Meene et al 2009: 1927).

![Figure 16: Institutional Capacity Assessment Framework and Capacity Building Initiatives for SUWM](image)


Christensen and Gazley (2008)

This article explores the relationship between performance and organisational capacity, focusing on ‘the resources and conditions necessary to achieve effectiveness’ (Christensen & Gazley 2008: 265). It explores the potential of an agreed meaning or capacity framework relevant to public administration research
The authors discuss the scholarly discourse about critical elements of capacity and various existing frameworks (see Eisinger 2002; Forbes et al. 2005) as the basis for developing their own framework (Christensen & Gazley 2008: 268). Figure 17 displays the four functions required for capacity: organisational infrastructure, human resources, financial resources and management systems, and the external environment which includes political and market influences (Christensen & Gazley 2008: 268). The framework recognizes the relationship between the internal and external but omits a separate task network context, unlike the previous two frameworks. Secondly, the article makes a special point of discussing the importance of time and context variability but these two factors are not included in the framework diagram.

![Figure 17: Material and Spatial Dimensions of Organisational Capacity](Image)

Later in the article these four capacity dimensions are further analysed using two categories: ‘structures, resources and functions’ and ‘strategies and processes’ that list variables and measures of capacity (Christensen & Gazley 2008: 273). However, this two stage analysis makes the framework difficult to operationalise as the variables and measures lists are extensive and not particularly clearly categorised.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE IN FOOD SECURITY RESEARCH PROJECT

INFORMATION SHEET

Christine Slade and the University of the Sunshine Coast appreciate interest and involvement in this project

What is the research project about?
A postgraduate research project is underway that is exploring the emerging role of local governments in providing greater community food security in their municipalities. This thesis will include case study projects that illustrate some of the ways in which local government is participating in food security initiatives, whether it be from a health, economic, environmental, social or cross departmental/holistic approach.

Who is conducting the project?
Christine Slade will be undertaking the research as part of her Master of Arts studies at the University of the Sunshine Coast. Dr Jennifer Carter, Senior Lecturer in Geography, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, is the principal supervisor of the project and Dr Claudia Baldwin, Lecturer in Regional and Urban Planning, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, is co-supervisor.

What initiatives have been chosen and why?
Between four to six food security projects, involving local government participation, have been selected. Predominantly, they are situated on the east coast of Australia. These projects have been chosen because they represent a diversity of strategies being used to tackle local food insecurity issues and offer increased understanding of emerging local government roles within this critical, complex and contemporary issue.

What do we want to know?
We want to hear from leaders/partners in these food security initiatives about the role/s that local government have played in setting up the projects, their continued involvement and possible future contributions that this level of government can offer. Areas of interest include barriers that have been overcome, current problems being experienced as well as the benefits at various community levels that are evident now as well as to be realized in the future.

How can you participate?
There are two ways you may be involved in this research project:

1. A semi-structured interview (approximately 30 minutes) at a time and place that is convenient for participants. If this is not possible face-to-face, a telephone interview can be arranged. If you would like to take part in an interview please call Christine on XXXX XXX XXX or email her at XXXXXX
2. Provide the researcher with any relevant information concerning the following:

   - Written material e.g. reports, articles that detail the case study food security projects.
   - Details of associated public meetings or events that could be observed.

Please note that participation is voluntary. Participants can discontinue participation at any time without the need to explain and may request that all traces of their participation are deleted from the project’s records up to four weeks following the completion of their participation in the research.

What are the benefits of participating to you, your organization and the community in general?
The project findings will contribute to the knowledge of how local government can be involved in local community food security projects. This project will give participants increased publicity for their initiatives, placing them within the wider context of this contemporary area of critical interest and acknowledgement of the creative, yet hard earned examples of what can be achieved at a grass roots level that others can follow. These pioneering works offer practical, evidenced-based undertakings, provide understanding of barriers to involvement, problems to be overcome as well as sharing the community benefits of initiatives that strengthen local food security.

Is it anticipated that there will be any inconvenience to you?
The only inconvenience anticipated is the time involved in participating in the interview or providing requested information.

Will information collected be kept safe?
Data will be recorded in interviews through note taking and audio taping. Interviews will be audio taped for the purpose of maintaining accuracy in data collection and
subsequent data analysis. The complete transcripts will not be published in any dissemination of results. However, the consent form gives participants the option of having their names identified. Participant information collected will be kept in a secure place at all times.

**How will the research results be shared?**
The findings of this research project may be published in an academic thesis, research reports, presented at various conferences and/or journal articles. Names and specific personal details of interview participants will not be referred to in any such use or publication unless prior written consent from individual participants is received. However, the names of individual food security projects and organizational partners, such as local governments may be published.

The results of the study will be available to participants upon request.

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**Any questions regarding this project may be directed to Christine Slade**

*On mob: XXXXXXXXXX email:*

*Or the project principal supervisor, Dr Jennifer Carter on ph: XXXXXXXXXX email:*

*Or co-supervisor, Dr Claudia Baldwin on ph: XXXXXXXXXX email:*

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*If you have any complaints about the way this research project is being conducted you can raise them with the Principal Researcher or, if you prefer an independent person, contact the Chairperson of the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of the Sunshine Coast: (c/- the Research Ethics Officer, Teaching and Research Services, University of the Sunshine Coast, Maroochydore DC 4558; telephone (07) 5459 4574; facsimile (07) 5430 1177; email humanethics@usc.edu.au).*
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE IN FOOD SECURITY RESEARCH PROJECT

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

I _______________________ (print name in block letters) have read and understood the information sheet about this project, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the project in my professional capacity, realizing that I may physically withdraw from the study at any time and may request that all traces of my participation are deleted from the project's records up to four weeks following the completion of my participation in the research. I agree that research data provided by me or with my permission during the project may be included in a thesis and/or reports, presented at conferences and published in journals.

☐ I give permission for my name to be published (a draft will be given to you for comment before publication) OR

☐ I DO NOT give permission for my name to be published (please tick appropriate box)

Participant’s Name (block letters): __________________________________________

Organisation: ______________________________________________________________

Signature: __________________________________________________________________

Date: ________________

Investigator’s Name: ________________________________________________________

Signature: __________________________________________________________________

Date: ________________ 269
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDELINES

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE IN FOOD SECURITY RESEARCH PROJECT

INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

Initial Involvement in the Project by Local Government.

- Need for Project
- Aims/Objectives
- Structures Used
- Barriers to Initial Involvement

Project Progress Over Time

- Strategies and Implementation
- Defining of Roles for Different Organizations Involved
- Problems Encountered
- Surprise Benefits that Occurred

Benefits of the Initiative to:

- Your Organization
- The Community
- Wider Public

Evaluation of the Project

- Benchmarks
- Possible Improvements
- What worked well
- Options for the future for this project
- Options for local government involvement in other food security issues programs
Ms Christine Slade  
Planning Area  
School of Social Sciences  
La Trobe University – Bendigo Campus  
BENDIGO, VIC. 3550.

Dear Christine,

Re: Your modifications to your application for ethics approval:

FHEC No.: #801-09  
Research Project Title: Breaking New Ground: The Emerging Role of Local Government in Providing Greater Community Food Security  
(Student application): Master of Arts  
Supervisor (if applicant is a student): Mr Trevor Budge, Planning and Development, Bendigo Campus

Thank you for submitting your modifications for your project. The proposal has now been considered by the Committee and given final approval to 12 May 2010, subject to final formal ratification by the University-level committee. You can commence your research immediately and no further information is required.

Please also note the following conditions of approval:

- You should immediately report to the FHEC any unforeseen event that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project, or any changes that you wish to make.

- If the project is likely to continue beyond the approved date, you need to contact the FHEC Secretary for advice regarding an extension or resubmission of the ethics approval.

- The FHEC requires you to submit a report(s) concerning your project as per the attached proforma.
If you wish to discuss any further concerns relating to your project, please contact your supervisor (if you are a student) in the first instance, the Secretary (Ms Lorraine Chai on 9479 3505), or myself as the Chairperson (9479 5797; s.gifford@latrobe.edu.au).

We wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sandy Gifford
Chair, Faculty Human Ethics Committee.

cc: FHEC Secretary
    Supervisor: Mr Trevor Budge, Planning and Development, Bendigo campus
APPENDIX F: ETHICS PERMISSION UNIVERSITY OF THE SUNSHINE COAST

21 April 2010

Ms Christine Slade
PO Box 4040
Gundale Qld 4554

Dr Jennifer Carter
Dr Claudia Baldwin
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Dear Christine, Jennifer and Claudia

Expedited ethics approval for research project: Local government role in food security research project (S/10/248)

This letter is to confirm that on 20 April 2010, following review of the application for ethics approval of the research project, Local government role in food security research project (S/10/248), the Chairperson of the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Sunshine Coast granted expedited ethics approval for the project.

The Human Research Ethics Committee will review the Chairperson's grant of approval and the conditions of approval at its next meeting and, should there be any variation of the conditions of approval, you will be informed as soon as practicable.

The period of ethics approval is from 20 April 2010 to 31 May 2011. Could you please note that the ethics approval number for the project is HREC: S/10/248.

The standard conditions of approval for this project are that you:

1. conduct the research project strictly in accordance with the research proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments required to be made to the proposal by the Human Research Ethics Committee (except as subsequently amended and approved by the Committee or approved by delegated authority exercised by the Chairperson or a Sub-committee).

2. Inform the Human Research Ethics Committee immediately of anything which may warrant review of ethics approval of the research project, including: serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants; proposed changes in the protocol; unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project; and a written report of any adverse
occurrence or unforeseen event that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the research project must be submitted to the Chairperson of the Human Research Ethics Committee by no later than the next working day after recognition of an adverse occurrence/event.

3. provide the Committee with a written Annual Report on the research project by completion of the project on 31 May 2011 using the proforma ’Annual Report on Approved Research Project Involving Humans’.

4. if the research project is discontinued, advise the Committee in writing within 24 hours of the discontinuation.

5. make no change to the project as approved in its entirety by the Committee, including any wording in any document approved as part of the project, without prior written approval of the Committee for any change.

6. comply with each and all of the above conditions of approval and any additional conditions or any modification of conditions which may be made subsequently by the Human Research Ethics Committee.

You are advised that failure to comply with the conditions of approval and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans may result in withdrawal of approval for the project. You are required to advise the Committee in writing within 24 hours if this project does not proceed for any reason.

Should you require an extension of ethics approval, please submit a written request for this purpose using the proforma ’Annual Report on Approved Research Project Involving Humans’ (see Section 9). An Annual Report on this activity will be due by no later than 31 May 2011.

An electronic version of ’Annual Report on Approved Research Project Involving Humans’ may be accessed on the University of the Sunshine Coast portal at: Research and Research Training > Research Ethics > Human Research Ethics > Forms > Annual Report Form.

If you have any queries in relation to this ethics approval or if you require further information please contact the Research Ethics Officer by email at humanethics@usc.edu.au or by telephone on +61 7 5459 4574.

I wish you well with the success of your research project.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Barbara Palmer
Manager, Office of Research
APPENDIX G: EXAMPLES OF STEPS INVOLVED IN USING AUSTRALIAN FRUIT AND VEGETABLES FROM THE ‘WELCOME KIT’

Figure 18: Buying Fruit and Vegetables Illustrations from ‘Welcome Kit’

Source: Brimbank City Council (2006)

Figure 19: Preparing Fruit Illustrations from ‘Welcome Kit’

Source: Brimbank City Council (2006)
Figure 20: Preparing Vegetables Illustrations from ‘Welcome Kit’

Source: Brimbank City Council (2006)
APPENDIX H: POTENTIAL FOOD SECURITY ROLES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Source: City of Darebin (2010)