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REVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY FUTURES TASK FORCE, QUEENSLAND STATE GOVERNMENT

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FOREWORD

The research on which this report is based was contracted by the Community Futures Task Force Unit from September to December 2008. An earlier, and more detailed, version of the report was submitted to the Directors of the Community Futures Task Force Unit on 19th December 2008 who provided helpful feedback and assisted in correcting factual errors and inconsistencies. Any further errors contained in this report must be attributed to the authors and not the Task Force Unit.

At the request of the Task Force Directors, this report has been considerably shortened in the following ways:

- 1) the literature review and methodology sections have been moved to the back of the report and attached as appendices
- 2) the excerpts from interviews with Task Force members, which provided much of the evidence for this report and its findings, have also been removed.

Further suggestions on the interpretation of Task Force features and activities were also provided by the Task Force Directors, and were taken into consideration. In some cases, however, it was not considered appropriate for these changes to be made. All research is a matter of interpretation and hence subject to contestation by those who hold different viewpoints about the same phenomenon. Where possible, we have presented the range of perspectives held by Task Force members on a particular issue without attempting to privilege one viewpoint at the expense of others. Nevertheless, we believe it is appropriate for the Community Futures Task Force to submit a written response alongside our findings where it considers that the views of the Task Force Unit have not been adequately represented.

The authors would like to acknowledge the support of the members of the Community Futures Task Force, the Task Force Unit and other associates who took the time to speak candidly about governance, community engagement and service provision to rural communities affected by major infrastructure proposals in South East Queensland.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document details the findings of a review of the Community Futures Task Force (CFTF) undertaken by a team of researchers from The University of Queensland. The CFTF was established in early July 2006 by the then Premier, Peter Beattie, to respond to high levels of community anxiety following the announcement that two major dams – the Traveston Crossing Dam and the Wyaralong Dam - would be built in South East Queensland as part of a broader response to concerns about water security. The proposed building of the dams meant that more than 900 properties needed to be acquired by the project proponent, initially the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water, and later Queensland Water Infrastructure Pty Ltd, impacting directly upon 2,000 people.

The CFTF was chaired by retired Major General Peter Arnison, the former Governor of Queensland, who was tasked 'to work closely with local governments, community leaders, stakeholders and other government departments to develop and implement a medium and long term plan to ensure community stability' (Department of Communities, undated: 3). Membership of the Task Force consists of the Mayors of the affected shires (Gympie Regional Council, Sunshine Coast Regional Council and the Scenic Rim Regional Council), Queensland Water Infrastructure Pty Ltd, and the Directors General or Chief Executive Officers of 11 Queensland Government agencies. The Task Force is supported by the Community Futures Task Force Unit, a team of 9.6 FTE officers, managed by the Executive Director. The Task Force has a lifespan of three years and is expected to end on 30th June 2009.

The remit of the review team was to conduct a desktop analysis of models of Government-led community engagement to ameliorate the impacts of a Government-proposed infrastructure project, as well as to: conduct an internal assessment of the Community Futures Task Force; assess the model; provide recommendations for the continuation of the CFTF until its conclusion; and, make recommendations on other models to support community adjustment. Data were gathered through interviews with 30 personnel who were currently, or previously, involved in the CFTF. Documents obtained through the Community Futures Task Force website, such as newsletters, notes of meetings and progress reports and other relevant material were also analysed.

This report highlights the CFTF approach as a very well-resourced model of intervention that was reportedly effective in terms of responding to community anxiety and uncertainty through the effective co-ordination of a whole-of-government approach and community engagement. Crucially, the CFTF was able to work across government to respond to complex issues that were raised by the community. It is also noted, however, that the aim of the Task Force to assist the community identify the benefits afforded by the dam may have occurred too early in the course of events, particularly as there was uncertainty whether the proposed dams would go ahead, and while community reactions were still strong. Moreover, while the Task Force Chair and the Task Force Unit operated independently of any dam outcome (i.e. they were neither for the dams nor against them), this could not be true for member organisations, and this occasionally lead to challenges for the Task Force. Nevertheless, as an organisation, the Task Force maintains that it continued to operate with neutrality. Finally, a future role for a scaled-down Community Futures Task Force Unit has been considered: with a focus on co-ordinating 'immediate responses' to similar projects and providing advice and leadership within Government on community engagement, particular where a whole-of-government response is required.

The recommendations from the review, as detailed on pages 30-40 of this report, are as follows:

1. Provide ongoing support to individuals, communities and businesses affected by the ongoing uncertainty relating to the Traveston Crossing Dam.
2. Continue developing strategies to assist the Mary Valley develop a viable future for itself that is

not dependent on any single dam outcome.

3. Continue to provide regular up to date information on dam developments and to respond quickly to community enquiries or concerns.
4. Continue to endorse a whole-of-government response to addressing community issues and impacts as appropriate.
5. Obtain a good understanding of the work remaining and the ongoing community engagement needs relating to the dam proposals, especially with respect to the Traveston Crossing Dam.
6. Decide on the extent to which ongoing work will require the retention of some parts of the special machinery of a Task Force (perhaps in modified form, and for how long) and which aspects can satisfactorily be transferred back to the mainstream of government activity.
7. Review current staffing levels and consider reducing the number of Task Force Unit staff to those undertaking essential activities. Staff who need to seek a new position could be allowed to leave early if their work is considered non-essential or undertake work on other community engagement activities of the Department of Infrastructure and Planning as required.
8. The Community Futures Task Force should also take responsibility for establishing the cross-agency working group described in the report and should determine the Terms of Reference for such a group. The Community Futures Task Force Unit should begin a handover process to this group, leaving agency members to concentrate on their core business in the region, including any funded projects for which they are responsible.
9. Given the findings in this review, there is a case to maintain elements of the Task Force Unit (perhaps a scaled down version of the unit) with expertise in whole of government coordination, and community engagement that could consult with, and advise, other sectors of State Government.
10. Clear guidelines need to be established to help determine when a Task Force response is necessary.
11. The Terms of Reference need to incorporate a temporal approach to ensure the Task Force has the skills and resources to adapt to changing circumstances and community needs.
12. Delay any dam adjustment processes until the outcome of the dam is known.
13. Formal assertions of the total independence of the Task Force are unnecessary and are difficult to defend. Instead, a Task Force should promote its neutrality and its ombudsman-type role.
14. The coordination of agency activities is imperative for Task Force success but whole-of-government should be used judiciously and agencies should not be included unless it is clearly in their remit to do so. Allowing membership to change over time, as occurred with the CFTF, may be an option.
15. There should be a clear articulation of the roles and responsibilities of a Task Force vis-à-vis other institutional apparatuses, including Local Government, designated Task Force Unit staff, Government agencies and other response mechanisms.

REVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY FUTURES TASK FORCE

On the 27th April 2006, the then Premier of Queensland, Peter Beattie, along with then former Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Water, announced that the Traveston Crossing site, located in the Cooloola Shire near Gympie, had been nominated as the likely site for a new Mary River Dam (Beattie and Palasczuc, 27th April 2006). As part of the proposal, it was expected that up to 900 properties would have to be acquired during three key stages of the dam's construction. The first stage requires the construction of an 180,000 megalitre dam by 2011 while the second stage involves the raising of the Borumba Dam and is due to be completed by 2025. A final stage, if required, will see the completion of the Traveston Crossing Dam in 2035. In total, the completion of the dam will require the acquisition of more than 900 properties, impacting directly on 2,000 people (Department of Communities, undated).

In their press release, the Ministers acknowledged a range of issues that would need to be explored, including the properties that would be affected by the proposed dam. Consultation with the community, including the Cooloola Shire Council, commenced soon after the dam announcement and a preliminary Land Acquisition Fund of \$50m was established to enable people affected by the proposed dam to begin negotiating the sale of their property immediately (Beattie and Palasczuc, 8th May 2006). A telephone hotline for landholders and community members seeking further details on the plan was also set up in early May.

While some landholders welcomed the proposal, it sparked considerable opposition from local councillors, landholders and residents in the region. Aside from the large number of properties that would be lost from the construction of the dam, significant community infrastructure facilities would also be inundated. Environmental groups also raised concerns that the dam would have a detrimental impact on the natural habitat of two endangered species found in the Mary River: the Mary River turtle and the Mary River cod, as well as that of the Queensland lungfish, which is considered to be a vulnerable species.

A series of meetings, rallies and petitions were organised to express opposition to the dam proposal, including a 'flotilla' of canoes and kayaks on the Mary River led by federal Greens leader Senator Bob Brown in late May 2006. The task of coordinating the protest activities was taken on by the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group Inc. Its aim, as described by the group, was to 'cause the government to overturn its decision to build a dam at Traveston Crossing now or at any time in the future' (Save the Mary River Coordinating Group Inc., 2007). The group also set up its own website and community portal, established a drop-in information and support centre at Kandanga and organised a series of community meetings and demonstrations. On the 4th July 2006 when Premier Peter Beattie travelled to the Mary Valley to announce the final details of the Traveston Crossing Dam at a public meeting, he was reported to have been met by a hostile crowd of 2,000 people who turned their backs on him as he took to the stage (*AAP Bulletin*, 5th July 2006).

At the same time, final decisions were also being made about the preferred site for a second dam, in the Logan River Catchment. An earlier site, located at Tilly's bridge on the Logan River, had already been explored and rejected because the community impacts were considered too great, and so a new site was selected at Teviot Brook some 14 kilometres north-west of Beaudesert. Along with the Traveston Crossing Dam, the Wyaralong Dam proposal was formally announced on the 4th July 2006. It was estimated that 15 properties would need to be acquired for the project at a cost of approximately \$30 million (Beattie, 4th July 2006). Together, the Wyaralong and Traveston Crossing Dams form part of the Queensland Government's overall plan to secure water for the rapidly growing population of South East Queensland region.

Recognising that community anxiety levels were high, and that the announcement of the dam

proposals would have immediate economic and social impacts upon affected landholders and residents, the Premier established the Community Futures Task Force as an independent body to help deal with some of these issues (Beattie, 7th July 2006). Retired Major General Peter Arnison, former Governor of Queensland, was selected as Chair of the Task Force, which had as its brief to address individual and community concerns about the dam proposals, and to 'to work closely with local governments, community leaders, stakeholders and other government departments to develop and implement a medium and long term plan to ensure community stability' (Department of Communities, undated: 3).

Membership of the Task Force consists of the Mayors of the affected shires (Gympie Regional Council, Sunshine Coast Regional Council and the Scenic Rim Regional Council), the project proponent, Queensland Water Infrastructure Pty. Ltd, and the directors- general / chief executive officers of 11 Queensland Government agencies. The Community Futures Task Force Annual Report 2007-2008 lists these representatives as:

- Director-General, Department of Infrastructure and Planning;
- Executive Director, Department of Infrastructure and Planning (Southern Region Division, Planning Group);
- Director-General, Department of Communities;
- Director General, Local Government, Sport and Recreation;
- Director General, Tourism, Regional Development and Industry;
- Director General, Primary Industries and Fisheries;
- Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Queensland;
- Director General, Natural Resources and Water;
- Director General, Main Roads;
- Director General, Public Works; and
- Director General, Education, Training and the Arts.
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The Task Force is supported by the Community Futures Task Force Unit, a small team of 9.6 FTE officers, managed by an Executive Director. The Task Force has a lifespan of three years and is expected to end on 30th June 2009. Many of its projects will continue as part of the core responsibilities of the project proponent and constructing alliance (should the dam proceed) and/or relevant State government departments.

Declared a 'significant project' under the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act, 1971*, the Traveston Crossing Dam proposal required an Environmental Impact Statement, which was released for public comment in October 2007 and, reportedly, attracted 16,000 submissions (Community Futures Task Force, undated). A Senate Inquiry by the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee into additional water supplies for South East Queensland also targeted the Traveston Crossing Dam proposal and investigated the issue through public submissions and hearings. However, ultimate approval for the proposals requires a statutory review process by the Commonwealth Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts. On the 25th November 2008, the Federal Minister for the Environment gave conditional approval for the Wyaralong Dam, allowing construction to proceed in early 2009 (Garrett, 25th November 2008). On the same day, the Queensland Premier, Anna Bligh announced that, on the advice of the Queensland Coordinator-General, additional mitigation work was required for the Traveston Crossing Dam site prior to Federal approval being sought, and that this would delay the construction phase of the project for several years. Although the timing of the approval process for the dam has not been delayed, the delayed construction timing, pending approval and mitigation work is likely to create further anxiety and uncertainty for affected residents.

OBJECTIVES OF THE TASK FORCE REVIEW

The project is proposed to evaluate the governance, methodology and performance of the Community Futures Task Force as a model of: engaging with communities facing major adjustment as a consequence of a 'significant project'; and working across government to develop and deliver collaborative short and long term solutions to community impacts.

The project is expected to provide recommendations on:

1. How the Community Futures Task Force model could be modified for the continued operation of the Community Futures Task Force until its conclusion;
2. What aspects of the model could be adapted to apply to other major community adjustment activities (for example, for government-community engagement on projects declared 'significant' under the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971*, or on activities to support community adjustment following major unforeseen events); and
3. What aspects should differ in any future application of the model?

The main 'deliverable' of the project was a report including:

- a) An assessment of the operation of the Community Futures Task Force against its Terms of Reference;
- b) Recommendations for the operation of the Community Futures Task Force until its conclusion;
- c) An assessment of the Community Futures Task Force Terms of Reference and operation as a model for Government to engage with communities affected by other 'significant projects';
- d) A recommendation for a preferred model for Government/project proponents to engage with communities affected by 'significant projects'; and
- e) Recommendations on other contexts relevant to governments where a Task Force model might usefully be applied.

THE TASK FORCE AS A MODEL: LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Pike (2000) the task force model has 're-emerged' in the new millennium as a means of addressing complex and multifaceted social and economic problems that cannot be dealt with adequately either by governments or their agencies. The evolution of the task force is explained by sociologists and political scientists as a product of three interrelated forces. The first is that of globalisation and the formation of both supra-national and sub-national entities such as regional bodies, rendering the nation state less important in relation to global/local relations (Jessop, 1997). Second, has been the increased pervasiveness of neo-liberal policy settings which have sought to limit the role of the state while 'devolving' activities to individuals, communities and the corporate sector – usually in partnership with the state – largely on the premise that such partnerships will provide for better outcomes than traditional departmental delivery of government activities (Herbert-Cheshire, 2000). The third global force is that of growing public cynicism with traditional forms of government – particularly in regional settings where public services have been withdrawn and/or infrastructure has been allowed to run down (Gray and Lawrence, 2001). In such circumstances, government is often viewed by local people with distrust and even contempt (Pike, 2002: 5). It makes good sense for politicians to stand at arm's length from a community in stress or crisis. The formation of a 'neutral' task force is likely to be more acceptable to the community than the intervention of politicians or public servants – especially where the former may have been implicated in the creation of the very problem being experienced by the community.

The Three Main Foci of Task Forces

The task force model can be seen, in relation to the above tendencies, as a logical attempt to deliver a targeted response to local-level problems at a time when the nation state is being expected to govern better, and to do so with limited resources. Indeed, we have identified – from the literature and from discussions during our fieldwork – three main aspects of task force activity:

- a) A whole-of-government approach to policy development and service delivery, especially in dealing with complex problems (Management Advisory Committee, 2004: 30);
- b) The attempt to address, in a timely manner, various natural, social or economic events that require an immediate and emergency response;
- c) A structure for community engagement.

Composite Features of a Task Force Model

The following features have been identified as characterising a Task Force Model. From our review, it appears that all elements were present in the Community Futures Task Force.

- a) It is a temporary body and is able to be wound down at an appropriate stage so as to allow a transition towards 'normal' government business.
- b) It involves cross-agency collaboration. It may, depending upon circumstances, have members from outside the public service.
- c) It is task specific. Usually, the essential role of a task force is to 'provide continuous oversight, coordination and encouragement to the whole structure' (Queensland Government, 2007).
- d) It has dedicated leadership. Emergency response task forces, in particular, may be headed by senior public figures. The advantage of having high-status individuals leading task forces is that of giving the task force 'distance' from government.
- e) It has full-time membership. Members are frequently engaged full-time with the whole-of-government task and work closely with the task force leader.
- f) There is a separation of members from previous roles. Public servants who have become involved

are frequently separated from line accountabilities in their regular departments.

- g) It is appointed by government. Task forces are a government response to a particular issue or problem.
- h) It reports directly to higher levels of government. Increasingly, the centre of government is playing a greater role in prioritising issues and coordinating task forces - including task force Chairs reporting directly to the Premier (see MAC, 2004).
- i) It will often report to a cabinet committee or committee of ministers, rendering it accountable at the highest level.
- j) Unlike an Interdepartmental Committee (IDC), task force decisions are not necessarily achieved by consensus. Usually the task force head accepts responsibility for all decisions/recommendations.
- k) It enables members to put their departmental interests behind them and can provide a 'neutral' space for discussion about the best coordinated way of addressing a problem or issue.
- l) It will address complex and/or urgent issues that no single department is likely to solve. As Pike (2002: 13) has suggested, task forces have a 'pronounced crisis-laden flavour'.
- m) It has the capacity to produce high-quality outcomes. By overcoming the traditional 'barriers' to cooperation between departments, by harnessing the numerous skills of a leading public figure and top public servants, and with access to specific funding, the task force is in a strong position to 'deliver' clear and focused outcomes in line with the specific objectives set for it by government.

Refer to Appendix 1 for a more comprehensive review of the literature on the Task Force approach.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The aim of the project was to undertake a review, on behalf of the Community Futures Task Force Unit, of the governance, methodology and performance of the Community Futures Task Force. As requested by the Task Force Unit, this review was an internal exercise involving members of the Task Force only, rather than seeking to canvass the views of the affected communities or indeed community representatives such as the local Mayors.

Data for this review were generated using two main sources: internal documents, newsletters, submissions to a Senate inquiry, government websites; and semi-structured interviews with 27 participants comprised of members of the Community Futures Task Force, the Task Force Unit and other personnel currently or previously involved with the Task Force.

Ethical considerations

In acknowledging the confidential nature of the review process, it was imperative to reassure participants that their privacy would be respected. It was also important to assure participants that they should feel comfortable expressing their views and opinions, even if these were critical of the Task Force, in order to produce a report that was insightful and which offered lessons that could be applied in the future. In addressing these issues, the research was granted ethical approval by The University of Queensland's Behavioural and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee.

Limitations of the research

In all social research, there is a need to balance methodological rigour with pragmatic concerns, which invariably limits the research and data to some degree. In this project, there were three limitations that need to be acknowledged in assessing the findings and recommendations of the report. First, is that the review process was relatively short and focussed, which made it impossible to conduct a comprehensive analysis of every aspect of Task Force activities within the timeframe and resources available. For this reason, our recommendations are broad rather than specific but may be used as a basis for ongoing discussions with the Task Force Unit, as required.

Second, as already noted, this review is an *internal* review that canvasses the views and opinions of Task Force members from State government agencies only. In this respect, it was difficult to assess, with any confidence, the performance of the Task Force in terms of its ability to make a positive contribution to the affected communities. During interviews, Task Force members were able to provide their own evidence of the positive impact they were making, while also giving fairly reflective accounts on areas that needed improvements.

Finally, this research was conducted with the generous support and assistance of the Community Futures Task Force Unit. In many ways, this certainly enhanced the quality of the research by providing access to data and personnel that would not have been forthcoming otherwise. At the same time, it also represents a limitation of the research in that the review process was seen as inextricably tied to the Community Task Force Unit itself.

Whilst the initial report contained quotes to provide evidence of the common themes emerging from the interview – a shorter report that omitted these quotes was requested by the client. It is usual in sociological research to provide such 'evidence' to highlight how the researchers reached certain conclusions.

FINDINGS PART 1. KEY FEATURES OF THE COMMUNITY FUTURES TASK FORCE (CFTF) MODEL

The findings of this review are detailed in three sections of this report to reflect the major deliverables of the project. Part One examines the key features of the Community Futures Task Force as a model – this includes assessing its efficacy as a critical incident response and community engagement mechanism, its effectiveness in facilitating a whole-of-government effort and its claims of independence. Part Two of the findings evaluates the CFTF against its four terms of reference relating to ‘immediate effects’, ‘long term opportunities’, ‘community engagement’ and ‘developing linkages’. Part Three reports on future scenarios for the CFTF and the task force model including a summary of the strengths and limitations of the CFTF.

From our review of the interview data and relevant documents, the following can be identified as particularly significant aspects of the Task Force structure and operation:

The Community Futures Task Force as a Community Recovery Response, Community Engagement and Community Economic Development Mechanism

The Community Futures Task Force was established for a particular purpose: ‘to assist those impacted by the proposed decision [to build the dams] and to improve short to medium term outcomes for the affected communities’ (CFTF, 2007a: 1). The Community Futures Task Force is essentially a combined mechanism of immediate response, community engagement and longer-term development.

This Task Force model appears to be informed by the Operation Recovery Task Force established in the aftermath of Cyclone Larry in Far North Queensland, which was beginning to wind down its activities as the issues relating to the proposed Wyaralong and Traveston Crossing dams were beginning to unfold. The Operation Recovery Task Force response is seen to have been especially effective, particularly with respect to the role played by General Peter Cosgrove as Task Force Chair. This appears to have partially influenced the selection of Major General Peter Arnison to play a similar role in leading the CFTF. As is demonstrated later, the community recovery response approach led to the immediate roll-out of various individual and community support, information and adjustment services to counter the immediate effects of the dam announcements on local residents, businesses and the broader community.

Nevertheless, a community recovery response framework cannot simply be overlaid onto the Traveston and Wyaralong Dam situations. There are obvious differences between a natural disaster and an infrastructure project proposal, such as a dam, which have major consequences for the post-disaster response. In the case of the Traveston Crossing and Wyaralong Dam proposals, for example, the Queensland Government is the proponent of that project, which means it cannot present itself as the ‘saviour’ of the community as is possible with a natural disaster such as a cyclone. Moreover, in the case of a cyclone, the damage is immediate but finite and the community is able to begin reconstruction soon afterwards (see Hales, 2006: 15).

Alongside its community recovery approach, however, the CFTF also recognised that since recovery could not be forthcoming for as long as the dam outcome was uncertain, it needed to ensure that all community needs and concerns arising from this uncertainty received serious consideration and, if necessary, an appropriate policy response. As a result, two additional components were added to the Task Force activities: community engagement and community economic development.

In undertaking this community engagement, the Community Futures Task Force went well beyond

the usual notion of 'affected communities' as comprised solely of those people who are located in the immediate vicinity of the inundation area. Indeed, while the project proponent – first the Department of Natural Resources and Water, and then later Queensland Water Infrastructure (QWI) – engaged directly with those whose properties were located within the purchase boundaries, the role of the Task Force was to engage with individuals, businesses and groups from the wider area, whose lives may also be affected by the dam proposal. These activities also occurred independently of the community and stakeholder consultation process undertaken by QWI and from the Environmental Impact Statement.

The Task Force also identified assisting local communities plan for medium and long term economic development in the region a key priority of its activities. As a community of high socio-economic disadvantage, and largely dependent on primary industries for its economic base, the Mary Valley, in particular, was seen as having a number of opportunities for development, both in terms of diversifying its economic base and in building community capacity for local people to create a sustainable future for themselves. As we document later, however, this community economic development was sometimes linked to a particular outcome of the dam proposal in which affected communities were encouraged to capitalise, where possible, on the opportunities presented by the dam developments (Queensland Government, 2007b: 181).

Coordinating a Whole-of-Government Approach

Given the possible severity of the community impacts of the dam proposals, a whole-of-government approach to mitigating these effects was deemed necessary. Those agencies seen to be responsible for various aspects of the government's response were invited to join the Task Force, while others, such as the Department of Public Works, Tourism Queensland and the Department of Education, Training and the Arts, were brought on for specific projects as required. In total, Task Force membership comprised the Directors General of 11 government departments (see earlier section) as well as the project proponent, QWI. The Mayors of the affected Local Government Areas were also invited onto the Task Force at behest of Peter Arnison (*Community Futures Task Force Newsletter, Traveston, August, 2006*) and played an important role in informing the Task Force of issues arising within the local region while also assisting with the process of disseminating information back to local communities.

To ensure the Task Force aims were met in a timely and effective manner, the coordination of member agency responses was managed by the Community Futures Task Force Unit: a team of 9.6 FTE officers, seconded from various State Government departments and managed by an Executive Director. A budget of \$5.475 million was allocated for the purpose of funding the salaries, administration and other costs of running the Task Force Unit. A percentage of this (approximately \$0.5 million) was also spent on community development projects. The principal tasks of the Task Force Unit were to undertake community consultations; produce information on behalf of the CFTF for community members; identify issues affecting the communities and develop options for consideration by the Task Force and the State Government; and assist in the coordination of cross-government responses and projects and provide secretarial services for the Task Force meetings (CFTF, 2007a: 4).

It is recognised that trying to work across agency boundaries is often complex and challenging, particularly at the day-to-day level, and that instituting appropriate governance, budget and accountability frameworks can assist with this process (Management Advisory Committee, 2004: 15). In this respect, the Task Force was structured in a way that enhanced cross-agency collaboration for a number of reasons:

- a) It was (initially) located in the Department of Premier and Cabinet and reported directly to the

- Premier;
- b) This structure also enhanced its ability to draw attention to key issues for the Premier's immediate consideration;
 - c) The Task Force Chair is held by an independent, highly regarded, leader who holds authority and standing with the Premier;
 - d) Agencies were allocated a budget to deliver their projects and were held accountable to those budgets.

The Task Force Budget

For some of the agencies involved, including the Department of Education, Training and the Arts, Department of Local Government, Sport and Recreation, and Department of Main Roads, the activities of the Task Force accorded directly with their core business and the Task Force played a role in coordinating these activities. As such, these agencies were not allocated funding to undertake Task Force related activities. Other initiatives were recognised by the Government as beyond the core business of government agencies and additional resources were dedicated specifically to them. In the initial budget, for example, six government agencies received additional funding for associated projects. These included: Department of Communities (\$2.8 million); Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry (\$1.3 million); Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (\$0.6 million); Tourism Queensland (\$0.6 million); Department of Infrastructure and Planning (\$0.5 Million); and the Department of Public Works (State Archives) (\$100,000) (Community Futures Task Force, 2008a). This distinct allocation of resources outside of departments' usual operating budget provides a clear mandate for operating and mitigates some of the concerns raised by Pike (2002) where the diversion of funds had caused resentment among task force member agencies.

For the Community Futures Task Force, allocated funding above and beyond core government business provided an imprimatur, not only to 'get the agencies on side' as one interviewee put it, but also to influence the priorities set by the agencies in allocating resources to the project. During the interviews, many noted that the CFTF had quite a healthy budget to work with and that, in many respects, it was this funding – coupled with the direct link to the Premier via the Chair – that helped make the Task Force effective. Despite the clear support for the 'good work' of the Unit, questions were raised by some interviewees about its 'excessive' operational costs, which in their opinion, could have been put to better use directly in the affected communities. Nevertheless, it was pointed out by another member that the Task Force budget amounted to a mere 0.005 percent of the total cost of dam construction, and should not be seen as excessive.

Others questioned whether the Unit should have been as well resourced during the 'limbo' or 'hiatus' period while awaiting the decision on whether the dams would proceed. It was suggested that the need for community engagement waned considerably during this time and possibly did not require the number of 'high-level' staff that were being maintained by the Unit. However, the Task Force Unit's response to this is that immediate and individual engagement was only one aspect of its terms of reference and that the focus was shifted to development and capacity building activities which covered both with- and without-dam scenarios. The Unit also pointed out that its staff had undertaken work on other Department of Infrastructure and Planning community engagement projects during that time.

Accountability of the CFTF was secured through regular reporting mechanisms, including Task Force meetings where agencies had to report their progress to the other members of the Task Force, as well as annual reports that went directly to Parliament through the Cabinet Budget Review Committee. Although mechanisms of accountability were clearly in place, some interviewees suggested that the CFTF had little control over how the money was spent once it was allocated to the

various agencies, and that this was seen as particularly problematic in cases where there was some disagreement over service delivery.

Task Force Chair

One of the significant features of the Task Force was the selection of Major General Peter Arnison as Task Force Chair. There are two respects in which Arnison's appointment was seen to be strategic. First were the specific skills and characteristics that he brought to the project, while the second was Arnison's status 'outside government', being neither a public servant nor a political figure. As well as enabling the Task Force to claim some independence from government, this also brought considerable authority, which was further enhanced by Arnison's profile in the community as the former Governor of Queensland. Nevertheless, it was reported that, in the initial months of the Task Force, the community did not view Peter Arnison as an independent figure and therefore saw him as part of the problem (i.e. government) rather than the solution, or as largely absent from public view.

However, it is also recognised that the dam proposals were highly emotive and that any rejection by the community of Peter Arnison was not a reflection upon him. It was also acknowledged that in spite of this, it was still far better to have a Chair from outside the sphere of government, even if he was not initially seen as such by the community.

The Community Futures Task Force as an Independent Body

Since the Queensland Government was both 'source' and 'saviour' with respect to the dam proposals, it was imperative that any assistance measures should be seen to come from an independent body rather than from the government itself. As the single point of contact for individuals and communities affected by the dam, the CFTF, or more specifically the CFTF Unit, needed to gain community trust and acceptance and it could not do this if it were too closely aligned to the project proponent. This relates to the Queensland Government more generally, but it also relates to specific agencies and bodies that were pursuing the proposal – most notably QWI and the Department of Infrastructure and Planning.

While one interviewee described the role of the CFTF as that of a 'community guardian role', another suggested that this created an initial misconception in the community that the Task Force would actively take its side in dam debates. However, the Task Force rejected this perception, arguing that its principle role was to ensure 'fair process' had been followed rather than advocating on behalf of the community. Some interviewees suggested the terms 'honest broker' or 'ombudsman' better described the role of the Task Force, while QWI described it as a 'mechanism of complaint' for affected communities (Sinclair Knight Mertz and QWI, undated, b).

This autonomy was backed up with the use of non-government letterhead, business cards and other communication tools, and by the physical separation of Task Force information from that provided by QWI (such as those offered at local open days and community meetings).

To some extent, it is slightly confusing to describe the Task Force as independent when some member agencies were explicitly working towards the dam approval process and publicly stood in favour of the dam. Rather, it was essentially the Community Futures Task Force *Unit* that asserted the claim of independence. Moreover, it was acknowledged by those interviewed that while the Task Force had a remit of independence, it remained an arm of government and was certainly perceived as such by the community. Whilst the CFTF does consist of QWI, and therefore complicates claims of independence, officers of the Task Force Unit explicitly stated that they did not take sides in the dam debate.

In some cases, acting on behalf of the community enabled the Task Force to raise issues for consideration by government and to recommend appropriate action that might be taken. One early example of this was the recommendation made by the Task Force Chair, and accepted by the Premier, to have the Home WaterWise Rebate Scheme extended to all residents in the Cooloola region (Community Futures Task Force Newsletter, July 2006). In addition, the Community Futures Task Force also compiled a response to the Environmental Impact Statement for the two dams in which it outlined areas where the EIS had not gone far enough in identifying ways to ameliorate the social impacts of the dam, and recommended that approval for the project should not be sought until a number of issues were properly clarified.

At other times, the Task Force Unit intervened in areas where it considered fair process had not been followed – usually, although not solely, by the project proponent. This was most apparent with issues relating to property purchases and extracting correct and timely information from relevant government agencies, but also more generally in lobbying for increased funds for some projects.

As we discuss later, this ‘honest broker’ role adopted by the CFTF meant that affected communities were treated far more fairly in their dealings with the Queensland Government and dam proponents, particularly in terms of property purchase and harm minimisation. However, it also created significant tensions among Task Force members – most notably between the Task Force Unit and the project proponents – which potentially undermined the effectiveness of a whole-of-government approach, and as mentioned earlier, further confused the notion of independence.

Flexibility of the Task Force

One of the challenges associated with the dam proposals was the sheer uncertainty regarding whether the dams would go ahead. While the Task Force was initially busy in responding to the immediate concerns associated with the proposed dams, a number of interviewees reported that the CFTF and the Unit were, themselves, in a ‘holding pattern’ awaiting the announcements from the Federal Government on whether the dams would go ahead. Others advised that Task Force meetings should be postponed when there was little to report on, although it does appear that the meetings became less frequent during 2007 and 2008 in response to this. It was also identified that there would be plenty of work to maintain the CFTF once an announcement was made either for or against the dams – but that they, like the community, were unable to act decisively until a decision was made. For this reason, some interviewees suggested more flexibility in the staffing of the Unit would help respond to the varying workflows.

The Task Force Unit themselves did not recognise this to be the case, stating that their activities had moved from that of immediate response, to longer term development, and as such were applying the skills of their full complement of staff.

FINDINGS PART 2. ASSESSMENT OF THE OPERATION OF THE COMMUNITY FUTURES TASK FORCE AGAINST ITS TERMS OF REFERENCE

Here, we evaluate the Task Force against its own terms of reference. These were devised in the initial stages of its establishment by the Premier and the Task Force Chair. While we critically analyse these Terms of Reference later in the report (where we provide recommendations on ways in which they might be adapted), the aim in this section is to report on the extent to which the Task Force met its own objectives.

In assessing the Task Force against its terms of reference, several points need to be noted. First, that since the review did not involve any consultation with affected communities (including the Mayors of the LGAs), our conclusions are based on the observations of the interviewees - Task Force members or their delegates and officers of the Task Force Unit and member agencies - as well as our own interpretations based on their accounts. There is no way of testing the validity of these findings against actual community perceptions. Second, we appreciate a need to adopt a longitudinal approach to this assessment, recognising that the role and response of the Task Force changed over time according to emerging conditions such as: ongoing developments with the dam proposal; changing community needs, attitudes and expectations; and, the evolving relationship between Task Force members and the affected communities. This review takes into consideration these changes and acknowledges that certain elements of Task Force activities came to be more important at certain periods, only to be rendered less so when broader conditions altered. Finally, in assessing the performance of the Task Force, we identify various programs and initiatives that have been established to meet specific objectives. The list we provide is by no means exhaustive and it is impossible to provide a detailed assessment of each program. Instead, we highlight the main projects implemented and then provide a broad assessment of how well the Task Force performed overall.

The Community Futures Task Force Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for the CFTF were as follows:

1. Address the immediate effects that the decision to build the dams has had for affected communities, and develop strategies and approaches in relation to:
 - a) the impact on health and wider social issues
 - b) property resumptions
 - c) the impact on business and industry continuity and
 - d) the prospects for regional industry adjustment
2. Develop strategies to maximise the longer term opportunities presented by the proposed dam developments to enable the communities to position themselves for a better future by:
 - a) identifying the social, economic and land use impacts of the development on individuals, businesses, community social infrastructure and the broader communities; and
 - b) developing short-term and long-term action plans to assess and manage social, economic and land use implications of the developments on individuals, businesses, community social infrastructure and the broader communities.
3. Engage the community in the Community Futures Task Force work program and provide regular community information by way of the One Stop Shop, visits, the newsletter, the websites and the 1800 number.
4. Provide linkages between individuals, communities, businesses, local governments, the Federal Government and the State Government to address issues and impacts as appropriate.

Terms of Reference 1: Immediate Effects

Address the immediate effects that the decision to build the dams has had for affected communities

Effects of the dam proposal

A key focus of the Task Force during the second half of 2006 and 2007 was to address the immediate impacts of the dam announcement. These impacts were seen as particularly pronounced for the Traveston Crossing Dam given the larger number of people and properties affected by the proposal, the strong sense of community in the region, and the generational and historic links to the area (Department of Communities, undated: 2). The Mary Valley region was also recognised as having a significant proportion of its population deemed 'vulnerable', most notably people with a disability, people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and children (Community Futures Task Force, undated).

For the Traveston Crossing Dam, it was anticipated that Stage 1 of the project would require the voluntary purchase of approximately 500 properties covering some 2,900 hectares, involving over 1,000 people. In its final stages, the dam would cover 7,600 hectares, impacting upon more than 900 properties and 2,000 people. These included not only farms and residential properties, but also churches, schools, cemeteries and community facilities. A land use profile compiled by the Department of Communities (undated) shows how the land in the dam site was currently utilised:

- Residential / rural residential (672 properties);
- Businesses – 36 businesses including shops, private hotels, service station, caravan park, etc.;
- Primary production – 182 primary producers; and
- Miscellaneous / government – clubs, churches, cemeteries, library, parks and gardens, educational institutions.

In particular, the dam was acknowledged as having significant impact on the town of Kandanga. The inundation area for Stage 2 of the proposal would effectively split the town in two (SSCRRAT, 2007b: 47), leaving many existing sporting and recreational facilities adjacent to inundation areas during Stage 1 of the dam. Stage 2 of the dam, should it proceed, will also lead to the inundation of the Kandanga Cemetery, which has created distress and anxiety for relatives of those buried at the site.

It was also recognised that the effects of the dam proposals would not only be felt by those in the inundation area, or even those located within a broader 'buffer zone', but also extended to a larger segment of the local population, including organisations, groups and businesses in geographic reach of the project's affected area, including those located downstream of the project site. As a result, the public sentiment following the announcement of the dams was reported by one interviewee as a 'public outcry'.

For the Wyaralong Dam, the impacts on the community were seen as less severe than the Traveston Crossing Dam (Community Futures Task Force, 2006), simply by virtue of the small number of properties affected: of the 8,622 people living in Boonah Shire, only 100 were perceived to be impacted, along with 23 properties (eight of which the Government already owns). According to the *Social Overviews* report compiled by the Department of Communities, most affected landholders are 'well-established, asset-rich and able to engage with government processes and respond proactively to change' (Department of Communities, undated: 21). This was rejected by a number of landholders who attended the Senate Committee hearing on the Traveston Crossing Dam on the 18th April and denied that Wyaralong was a 'low *political* impact dam' (SSCRRAT, 2007a: 12). The *Social Overviews*

report also reported that a 'minority' of well-established families were reluctant to relocate and, although the dam was perceived to be supported by the local community on economic and recreational grounds, there was recognition of community concern that the rural character of Boonah could be altered by the project.

A) Health and wider social issues

In its *Environmental Impact Statement* with Sinclair Knight Mertz, QWI reported on the findings of a survey of community members in the Traveston Crossing Dam area, which indicated that a significant proportion of the population (31 percent) said the dam proposal was causing severe stress, depression and anxiety in their household, including high blood pressure, mental health issues and hospitalisation due to exacerbation of existing conditions. Reasons for this included: purchase and potential resumption of properties leading to uncertainty; loss of existing and future livelihoods through impacts on farms and businesses; anger and frustration at the introduction of what is seen as an unviable proposal; family disruption, including effects on young people; and concerns over relocation. General practitioners also reported an increase in suicide ideation among Mary Valley patients who would not previously have been classified as vulnerable to suicide (Sinclair Knight Mertz and QWI, undated, a 123-4). Many of the submissions by local residents to the Senate Inquiry also reported on the traumatic effect that the dam proposal had upon local residents, particularly in the Mary Valley (see for example, Watt, 2007).

Within the Community Futures Task Force, the Department of Communities holds lead responsibility for providing personal and individual support to affected communities (Queensland Government, 2007b: 6) and was provided with an additional \$2.8 million from the Task Force budget to assist with this work (Community Futures Task Force, 2008a). Various community support services were established by the initial project proponent, Department of Natural Resources and Water, immediately after the initial announcement of the dam and prior to the formation of the Task Force, which was handed over to the Department of Communities shortly afterwards. In an attempt to mitigate the immediate social and health impacts of the dam proposal, a number of services and projects were initiated: including the establishment of a One Stop Shop at both dam sites (Kandanga and Boonah); counselling services, emergency relief funding and workshops on suicide prevention.

Individual case management was also offered by the Community Futures Task Force Unit, with two senior staff members dedicated to this task. A single case approach was usually adopted for affected property owners or businesses whose individual circumstances were complex or for those who were reluctant to access services via local meetings or the One Stop Shop for fear they would be criticised by dam opponents.

There are two ways to think about the case management role of the CFTF Unit. One is that given the complexity of this issue for which there are no clear public sector precedents, it can be construed as an adaptive and creative response to an obvious need that was not fulfilled by other agencies. The second perspective is that such services would perhaps be more effective if delivered closer to the region, through the agencies that already have dealings with people in those areas. Despite the review team noting this form of service delivery as an anomaly, interviewees on the whole did not raise this as a concern – although some did comment on the distance of the Unit from the Mary Valley. Our assessment is that there is evidence to show that this model was successful, with the high level of the Task Force and the strategic placing of the Task Force close to the Premier meant that this form of case management was influential in eliciting action for Mary Valley residents.

Without being able to survey local residents on these matters, it is difficult to assess the extent to which Task Force initiatives helped ease the emotional and health impacts of the dam proposals. However, agency staff interviewed – including those who had observed the working of the Task Force

first hand – were generally positive about the role the Task Force had played in this regard. There was also some indication, from the Senate Inquiry submissions, that the community appreciated these initiatives. One resident, for example, commended both the establishment of the Kandanga Once Stop Shop and the provision of Lifeline grief and financial counselling services (Watt, 2007).

In contrast to this, some residents reported in their submissions that the local community had been reluctant to access these support services precisely because they were provided by the government, believing it was that government that had caused these problems in the first place. It is acknowledged, however, that the Lifeline counsellors provided valuable support to the local community despite encountering problems associated with acceptance in the community (Hales, 2006). By June 2007, for example, the Kandanga One Stop Shop was reported to have received 2,477 inquiries, including 570 counselling appointments (including outreach), 192 community development contracts; 1,423 referrals to Queensland government agencies and 262 general enquiries. During interviews for this review, however, a few agency members made complaints about the Lifeline counsellors, stating that although they were contracted to provide independent counselling support, they began advocating on behalf of the community and no longer offered neutral and balanced advice.

One interviewee reported that, as a whole, those who had benefitted most from the work of the Task Force were property owners who were directly affected by the proposal but who were able to liaise directly with the Task Force and relevant government agencies (including QWI). In his opinion it had been much harder to support those who were affected by the proposal indirectly. This was beginning to change with the work being undertaken with local businesses and broader forms of community engagement, but otherwise this group remained most vocal in its opposition to the dam.

In April 2006, the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group (STMRCG) established its own information centre in the former Kandanga Co-op building ‘to help the people in the community cope with the emotional trauma of the announcement and to provide information and education to the community as well as to the tourists who visit ... [the] Mary Valley’ (Kandanga Information Centre, 2007). The Centre was staffed entirely by volunteers and open from 10am to 4pm seven days per week. In contrast to the One Stop Shop provided by the Department of Communities, this centre was also able to act as a focal point for people to channel their resistance to the proposal (Watt, 2007). In her written submission to the Senate Inquiry, the Centre Manager claims that initially the group was relieved that it would be supported in its activities, and pleased that the government was playing an active role in dealing with the problems created by the dam proposal. However, she later criticised the One Stop Shop for offering an ‘ineffectual solution to what the community needed’.

Clearly the Kandanga One Stop Shop and the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group Information Centre performed quite different functions in some aspects of their work but there was also significant overlap in terms of community support and counselling. Under different circumstances, the Department of Communities might have considered supporting the STMRCG Information Centre rather than providing an alternative to it although this is unthinkable given that the Centre was established, and staffed, by a group who were clearly opposed to the construction of the Traveston Crossing Dam. Nevertheless, if the Community Futures Task Force really is ‘neither for the dam nor against the dam’, it might have found ways to create a stronger synergy between the two entities.

B) Property Purchase

For those living or working in the inundation zone of the two dams, the dam proposals meant voluntary property acquisitions, and this process took effect immediately after the initial dam announcement in April 2006. Negotiations were established between QWI and local landholders regarding voluntary acquisitions, with landholders assured that they would be compensated

appropriately. As part of the agreement, property owners were also able to remain on their properties until 2011 under a 'discounted lease back scheme' with QWI. Voluntary acquisition of Stage 2 properties also commenced, which property owners could lease back until 2035.

By mid August 2006, the Department of Natural Resources and Water had received 180 expressions of interest for sale of land in Stages 1 and 2 of the Traveston Crossing Dam and had made 95 offers to purchase following evaluation. Of these, 30 had proceeded to contract (Department of Communities, undated: 11). As of June 2008, 77 percent of all properties in the Traveston Crossing Dam region had reached agreements (Community Futures Task Force, 2008a: 1). While QWI was ultimately responsible for managing property purchases, the Community Futures Task Force was still seen to have a role to play in managing community concerns about land acquisition issues and possible flooding. Two key issues were identified as matters of concern for Task Force: policy coherence between different government departments and uncertainty as to which properties were required in the early stages of the dam's planning.

A lack of acquisition policy coherence between different government departments meant that property owners dealing with QWI over land resumptions for the dam were doing so under different terms and conditions from those negotiating with the Department of Main Roads for the associated upgrade of the Bruce Highway. The Cooloola Shire Council, for example, complained to the Task Force that there were considerable variations in valuations, following reports by the Gympie Times of a difference in valuations between QWI and DMR of \$180k (Community Futures Task Force, *Notes of Meeting*, 2nd April 2007).

The second issue required considerable Task Force intervention and related to the continuing uncertainty about details of which properties would need to be purchased as plans for the dams were drawn and re-drawn. The effect is that a number of properties located within the dam buffer zone in the initial release of dam boundaries were later found to lie outside the impact area once the plans had been refined. For some property owners, this meant any initial negotiations with QWI to sell their properties ceased, leaving the property owners in a state of uncertainty. The CFTF saw this as both unfair and inconsistent, policy-wise and requested that QWI re-engage with property owners. However, one interviewee criticised this intervention into property purchases, suggesting that it led to inequitable results, with some owners reportedly receiving higher prices than others for similar properties. He referred to this process as 'action without reflection', meaning that actions were taken without a full consideration of their medium to long term policy implications.

It is not known whether members of the Task Force agencies co-ordinated their property valuations, or to what extent this was possible. Ideally, this matter should be addressed in future property purchases although the difficulty of this is acknowledged given the complexities of working across government (Main Roads) and government-owned corporations (QWI), the number of government and independent valuers involved, and the different geographical locale and intrinsic value of various properties. A recommendation is made against this point in Part Three of the 'Findings' section.

C) Impact on business and industry continuity

The impacts upon, and needs of, businesses located in the inundation area of the proposed dams were addressed primarily through land purchasing activities undertaken by QWI (Community Futures Task Force, 2007a: 7) although this did not allay fears about the overall impact of land acquisition on the viability of the region's rural industries. However, the Task Force also recognised that other industries would also be affected by the uncertainty surrounding the dam proposal and that these effects would be immediate. Some business operators were coming forward as early as May 2006 pointing out that they were already suffering as a result of the dam proposal. It was also recognised that there would be medium to long term flow on effects simply through loss of population as people

sold up and left the district. In its initial Report on Project Implementation (2006), the Community Futures Task Force estimated that in addition to those directly located in the inundation area, an additional 150 primary, secondary and tertiary businesses, employing approximately 300 workers could be affected (Community Futures Task Force, 2006).

In an attempt to offset these impacts on local businesses, various support and adjustment mechanisms were established as early as September 2006. These included: an Economic Futures Project, jointly implemented by the Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry and the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F), to address the immediate impacts of the announcement of the dams on farm and non-farm businesses, and to maximise the medium to long term economic development opportunities for these businesses; a Business Adjustment Scheme to assist eligible businesses that experienced negative impacts as a result of the dam proposals; and a business exit payment for those who have been adversely affected by the dam proposals to the point where exit is the only viable option. Two dedicated case managers were also provided by DPI&F to work with primary producers in the region affected by the dam proposals.

D) Prospects for regional industry adjustment

As well as affecting individual businesses and services, the dam proposal was also considered to have significant consequences for the future viability of regional industries, particularly in the Mary Valley where primary production is valued at over \$70 million per annum (ACIL Tasman, 2007: 21). Of the 900 properties initially thought to be affected by the dam, 182 were primary production, feature dairy farming, beef, and horticulture. According to the Queensland Farmers' Federation in its written submission to the 2007 Senate Inquiry, full inundation of the dam will reduce the total agricultural output in Cooloolool Shire by around one quarter and lead to the loss of 267 jobs directly and potentially three times that many indirectly (2007).

For the dairy industry, these challenges come on top of significant industry restructuring and emerging drought conditions over the last decade, which have already caused dairy output in the region to decline by 30 percent. With dairying the second largest rural industry in the Cooloolool Shire, the Queensland Farmers' Federation reports that the economic farm gate impacts of the dam on the dairying industry alone would amount to \$10.5 million per annum, including loss of income from associated cattle and produce sales. Approximately 60 permanent farm jobs would be lost, while the viability of the local milk processing industry would also be undermined (Queensland Farmers' Federation, 2007). The Queensland Farmers' Federation also reports that around \$4.5 million of horticulture would be lost by the full Traveston Crossing Dam, representing around 15-20 percent of horticultural production in the Shire.

Aside from immediate support mechanisms for business restructure or exit, the Traveston Crossing Dam is viewed as a catalyst for a broader program of industry adjustment in the region. The Task Force has sought to examine these prospects through various projects, including: the contracting of an economic consultancy firm, ACIL Tasman to undertake a 'Scoping Economic Futures – Traveston Crossing Region (secondary and tertiary industries)', which was released in March 2007; a Food and Fibres Futures Project initiated by the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries; and an Economic Development Strategy for the Traveston Crossing/Mary Valley area by PriceWaterhouseCoopers. If the dam is approved, a budget of \$2.7 million will be committed to the project (Community Futures Task Force, *Notes of Meeting*, 5th November 2007) to assist with scenario development for agricultural producers in the region and to identify issues, opportunities and strategies to accelerate agricultural growth (Community Futures Task Force, 2007a: 11).

Assessment of these strategies and Terms of Reference are combined with the review of Term of Reference 2 in the next section of this report.

Terms of Reference 2: Long Term Opportunities

Develop strategies to maximise the longer term opportunities presented by the proposed dam developments to enable the communities to position themselves for a better future.

According to the Community Futures Task Force in its *Comments on the Environmental Impact Statement for the Traveston Crossing Dam* (undated), one of the priority mitigation strategies of the Task Force is to ensure affected communities have access to a pre-dam announcement standard, or better, of local community infrastructure and facilities. For this reason, economic and community development have been core features of Task Force activities in two key respects.

Ensuring a stronger community

One of the fundamental principles of major project construction where local communities are likely to be affected is to ensure that these communities are not left in a worse condition than they were prior to the project development. For the Community Futures Task Force, this included preserving, where possible, the social fabric of the affected communities by seeking to maintain population levels, local services and sense of community (Community Futures Task Force, *Notes of Meeting*, 14th September 2006). The following were matters of high priority:

- Maintenance of the Mary Valley population to levels at least the same as the pre-dam announcement;
- Options for residents who have sold their properties to be relocated within the Mary Valley; and
- Opportunities for the township of Kandanga to maintain its composition of residences, commercial premises and community facilities.

The Community Futures Task Force has sought to achieve these aims in a number of ways. The first was by the provision of recommendations to the project proponent in its *Response to the Environmental Impact Statement for the Traveston Crossing Dam* on ways to mitigate the effects on social capital arising from the dam proposals. The Task Force recommended the establishment of a community leadership fund to ensure resources would be available to encourage, train and sustain new and emerging community leaders (Community Futures Task Force, undated).

In addition, the Task Force has worked with various government agencies to ensure local services levels were maintained. An example of this is the Department of Education with which it has worked to provide guarantees that funding and resources for local schools in the Mary Valley would remain at 2006 levels irrespective of movements (losses) in student numbers, and to assist schools in maintaining their existing staffing allocations.

As a way of promoting community development in the affected regions, the following projects/initiatives were put in place by Task Force member agencies:

- Appointment of a Community Development and Engagement Officer at the Kandanga One Stop Shop in January 2007 to help 'facilitate a range of local initiatives to maintain and strengthen the connections between people and communities in the Mary Valley' (Community Futures Task Force, 2007a: 8).
- Compilation of a *Draft Land Use and Infrastructure Planning Study for Traveston Crossing* by the Office of Urban Management (later part of the Department of Infrastructure and Planning).
- As well as addressing the immediate effects of the dam proposals on farm and non-farm businesses, the Economic Futures Project also sought to identify, plan and develop medium to long term economic development initiatives in the affected regions.

- An Historical Research Project for the Boonah and Cooloola Communities undertaken by the Queensland State Archives to acknowledge and document selected aspects of the historical significance of the regions and communities in the Traveston Crossing and Wyaralong Dam sites.
- The coordination of the Mary Valley and Scenic Rim Tourism Projects coordinated by Tourism Queensland.
- Support for the establishment of the Imbil Development Group. The aim of the group has been to engage with Mary Valley based businesses and other community groups to revitalise local tourism, business and community activities (Community Futures Task Force, 2007a: 8).
- Establishment of the Community Futures Fund (CFF) to support community service organisations that have been impacted by membership, funding and viability concerns (Community Futures Task Force, 2008b). To 30th June 2008, 60 grants had been approved under the scheme at a total cost of \$202,774 (Community Futures Task Force, 2008a).
- Support for local sport and recreation via funding from the Department of Local Government, Sport and Recreation, including assistance to the Mary Valley Soccer Club, provision of school camps, and \$4,000 grants to other Mary Valley sport and recreation clubs to assist with their ongoing continuation.
- The Task Force also facilitated the provision of community infrastructure and has arranged for some works to be undertaken by relevant shires and government department.

As with the services provided by the One Stop Shop, it was reported that initially people were reluctant to apply for the grants available through the Community Futures Fund because it might be viewed as an attempt by the Government to secure community compliance in return for financial support. Indeed, the Cooloola Shire Council reported that some community groups receiving grants from government were pressured by anti-dam campaigners for engaging with the government via grant applications. The Council said it opposed the view portrayed in the media that community grants are 'blood money' (Community Futures Task Force, *Notes of Meeting*, 5th November 2007). This has been reflected by the Community Futures Task Force Unit, which points to various workshops organised under the auspices of the CFF that have contributed to community capacity building and social capital development.

As a mechanism for alleviating concerns around decreasing club membership and funding following the announcement of the dam proposals, the CFF is a good initiative. It also assists with the process of shoring up social capital in the affected areas by supporting events that bring the community together. However, unless it is harnessed to very clear policy guidelines and short-term priorities, such as the above initiatives, it is entirely possible that the Fund will continue to be viewed with suspicion.

It should also be noted that many of the issues facing the Mary Valley, such as an ageing population, disadvantage, service withdrawal, decline in volunteering and community services and loss of human and social capital are prevalent throughout many parts of regional Australia. The announcement of the Traveston Crossing Dam certainly compounded these problems with the uncertainty and upheaval it created, but it is acknowledged that the Mary Valley received a great deal of support and attention that might otherwise not have been forthcoming, or that was well overdue. Aside from the criticism identified above, this also raises questions of equity regarding other disadvantaged regions which, while not threatened with inundation by a dam would, nevertheless, benefit from a redistribution of agency resources in a more equitable manner. This matter was raised by several interviewees for this review who spoke of how some agencies had expressed concern about investing so much into the Mary Valley and Boonah when there were other areas in an equal state of need, albeit for different reasons.

Helping communities capitalise on the benefits of the dam

The Task Force has made its second key priority in this area one of assisting local communities plan for medium and long term economic development in the region by capitalising, where possible, on the opportunities presented by the dam developments (Queensland Government, 2007b: 181). In line with this second goal of dam adjustment, it was asserted that the dam developments would bring long term opportunities to the two regions, both during the construction phase and upon completion of the dam through diversification of the economic base via dam-related tourism, value adding to existing primary industries and the pursuit of new, boutique industries. In addition to the wider regional changes, other benefits that were seen as potentially arising from the construction of the dam included:

- the new workforce engaged for the dam;
- the capital injected into farms and businesses, as part of the lease-back arrangements to compensate them for losses and disturbance;
- new local water allocations;
- changes to infrastructure, in particular, improved roads and access associated with the dam; and
- new recreational and tourism activities associated with the dam, in addition to the expansion of existing tourism projects such as the Mary Valley Rattler steam train.

According to QWI, 'the project and the associated infrastructure present the opportunity to create one of SEQ's premier outdoor recreational areas' (Sinclair Knight Mertz and QWI, undated, a: 113). Following construction, the project was seen to provide a number of opportunities for recreation-based tourism including boating, hiking, camping and horse riding.

As recorded in the CFTF meeting notes, there was a sense among Task Force members that 'the community needed to be made aware of the benefits of the Dam' (Community Futures Task Force, *Notes of Meeting*, 17th July 2006). Gradually, it was also conceived that the community was, indeed, ready to make the necessary adjustments and focus on community and economic development opportunities. There has been much reporting, for example, on how the demands made by the community upon the Task Force shifted in emphasis during the second half of 2006-2007 from requests for information and support for individuals in dam-affected communities towards a greater focus on medium to long term community-based projects and future social and economic possibilities (see Community Futures Task Force, 2007a: 5; Community Futures Task Force, 2008a). Some interview participants also suggested that this was related to a change in community needs and attitudes towards general opposition, but growing acceptance, of the dam (Community Futures Task Force, 2007b). This point was rejected by one community member in his submission to the Traveston Crossing Senate Inquiry (Watt, 2007), and also by the Cooloola Shire Council which reported that the community mood has changed from hostility to aggravation, and that people were still angry. Nevertheless, the Council acknowledged that the Community Futures Task Force had handled these issues sensitively (Community Futures Task Force, *Notes of Meeting*, 14th May 2007).

It is difficult to assess the validity of these claims without obtaining the views of local residents themselves. Nevertheless, the following have been cited as evidence of change in community attitude and readiness:

- The number of individual case management activities declined;
- Fewer requests were made for counselling services;
- Changes occurred in the volume and nature of inquiries at the Kandanga One Stop Shop from 1,877 in 2006/7 to 1,505 for 2007/8. Of the 2006/7 contacts, approximately 90 percent were seeking information and referral, with the remaining 10 percent requesting community

development activities. By 2007/8, this had shifted to 34 percent and 66 percent respectively. This change in emphasis was also seen to have occurred progressively as QWI reached agreement with owners of required properties (Community Futures, Task Force, 2008a: 1);

- Improved relations with, and increased willingness among, local groups to work with government on securing a better future for their community. Some groups stressed, however, that their increased willingness to engage with government should not be taken as an indication of their support for the dam (Community Futures Task Force, 2006; Community Futures Task Force, 2008a: 1);
- Reduced demand for the Boonah One Stop Shop. As a result the Boonah shop closed in March 2007 and information was transferred to the Boonah Shire Council Chambers and the Fassifern Community Centre;
- Reduction in the number of angry/abusive calls to the 1800 number; and
- A change in the composition of protesting groups away from opposition on social and economic grounds by landholders and other members of the affected community, to opposition focusing on environmental grounds by groups outside the affected region (Community Futures Task Force, 2008a: 2).

However, there has been some criticism that this aim of helping communities capitalise on the opportunities arising from the dams was articulated too early in the dam approval process, not least because of an implicit assumption that the dam will go ahead even before the EIS and other investigations had been completed. This criticism was raised in a number of submissions to the Senate Inquiry. The Catholic women's group, The Sisters of Mercy, for example, criticised the Terms of Reference of the Task Force precisely because of the assumption that the dam will go ahead (Sisters of Mercy, 2007).

Terms of Reference 3: Community Engagement

Engage the community in the Community Futures Task Force work program and provide regular community information by way of the One Stop Shop, visits, the newsletter, the websites and the 1800 number.

Community consultation and engagement activities were undertaken initially by the project proponent – first, the Department of Natural Resources and Water and later, QWI. By May 2006, even before the Community Futures Task Force had been established, a telephone hotline was set up so that landholders and community members could call seeking information on the plan, including information specific to their individual circumstances (Beattie and Palasczuc, 8th May 2006). A project website was set up and project information packs were sent to landholders and other affected stakeholders, along with project updates that were sent to 14,000 stakeholders (Three Plus, undated).

In spite of these efforts, local residents complained about the lack of available information about the dam proposal in the early months before the Task Force was established. Task Force members similarly observed an unreasonable time lag between community requests for information and the provision of that information by the relevant government department.

Given this situation, undertaking community consultation and providing reliable and timely information to the community at large became a key priority of the Task Force in the early stages of its work. The key mechanisms for these activities included: regular visits by Task Force members, including the Chair, for one-on-one and community meetings; the establishment of a 1800 telephone number, which enabled individuals to speak directly to a member of the Community Futures Task Force Unit; a regular newsletter in the communities affected by the dam proposals; and a Community Futures Task Force website to inform communities about information, resources, services and up-coming events. As well as providing information to local residents, these mechanisms were also used to facilitate access by the affected communities to government departments. In this sense, the Task Force acted as an ‘intermediate body’ between the community and the government, with information travelling in both directions. The CFTF Unit also undertook an extensive community consultation process with the support of local church groups, grief counsellors, undertakers and a forensic archaeologist on the future of the Kandanga cemetery.

These activities supplemented the community engagement activities of QWI but had the added advantage of being able to provide a ‘multi-agency’ response to community questions rather than answers derived from the perspective of a single agency. Frequently, this meant consulting with more than one government department, as one interviewee described. As another interviewee pointed out, however, this strategy created a substantial time-lag in drafting a response to community questions, not least because the political ramifications of the issues often meant they required clearance from the Premier’s Department which caused further delays.

Criticisms about the lack of timely provision of information in relation to the dams continued to be levelled at the Government following the announcement of the sites for the proposed dams. For example, in its written submission to the Senate Inquiry, the Save the Mary River Coordinating Group complained that the Queensland Government had not engaged with them to discuss and debate the merits of other water supplies; nor had it provided relevant documents in a timely manner. (These documents were, however, freely available on the DNRM website, thereby undermining this criticism.) They also referred to questions that had been raised four or five months earlier which were still on notice awaiting government responses.

The Senate Inquiry Committee also raised questions on whether documents and information had been made available to the community upon request. While the Committee acknowledged community meetings, mail-outs were effective for the general process of information sharing, it had received evidence from other groups that relevant information on the dam had been difficult to obtain, even in spite of Freedom of Information issues (p.91). This was particularly so for people requiring technical information about the dam, with the Senate Committee observing that the level of engagement with people requiring more detailed technical material had not been present.

In a 2008 discussion paper, the Community Futures Task Force acknowledged this criticism and recommended that, where possible, the Queensland government should facilitate the timely release of copies of reports and information to members of the community to achieve a transparent and open process (Community Futures Task Force, 2008a: 5). It was reported that in the early days of the Task Force, it took a while for information to filter through regarding its role and, indeed, the type of information and advice it was able to provide. Despite this, officers involved were keen to ensure that people were not given the 'run around' and further frustrated by dealing with the Government. Considering the levels of community anxiety, this operating principle was appropriate and should be commended.

Claims the community was reluctant to engage

It was reported that people were initially reluctant to attend public consultation meetings (organised first by the Department of Natural Resources and Water and then later by the Community Futures Task Force) because there was a perception in the community that questions raised during the earlier meetings went unanswered and also because of a distrust of the Queensland Government, more generally (Hales, 2006). While the Community Futures Task Force sought to rectify the first issue, they reported satisfaction with the levels of attendance at meetings (such as the Land Use Planning and the Kandanga Cemetery meetings). Any reluctance on the part of the community to attend public meetings could equally be explained, therefore, by the tensions within the community itself (between those for and against the dam) and the pressure often exerted on community members by those who opposed it. Neither can be empirically validated on the data available, however.

Whilst the Task Force and the Task Force Unit clearly had the will, the budget and the organisational capacity to work with the community, interviewees report a strong suspicion at the community level in regard to dealing with an agency that was seemingly made up of government officials, yet claiming independence. However, a number of interviewees noted that after a while, the community started to identify the Task Force for its brokerage role.

Terms of Reference 4: Linkages

Provide linkages between individuals, communities, businesses, local governments, the Federal Government and the State Government to address issues and impacts as appropriately.

One of the key functions played by the Task Force was that of an ‘intermediary’ body in which it facilitated linkages between government and community, as well as between each of these spheres. It has already been shown, for example, how the Task Force sought to provide a whole-of-government response to the impacts of the dam proposals by bringing together the 11 member agencies and coordinating their activities through various budgetary and reporting mechanisms. In addition, it also sought to foster linkages with local government in the affected areas, and to enhance regional service delivery in the Mary Valley through the Regional Services Forum.

Whole-of-government coordination

Overall, evidence suggests that the Community Futures Task Force was successful in coordinating a whole-of-government approach to its work. As outlined earlier, the regular meetings, robust reporting mechanisms, independence from any single agency, and an influential leader with a direct mandate from the Premier, all enhanced this process. As a result, interviewees for this review concurred that the Task Force model had been a good example of governmental collaboration.

Nevertheless differences in perspective did arise predominantly along the lines of whether Task Force activities formed part of their core business or whether they were considered ‘non-core’. Those agencies for whom it constituted ‘core business’ generally included the Department of Infrastructure and Planning, the Department of Natural Resources and Water, the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, the Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry, and, in terms of mitigating community impacts, the Department of Communities. With the exception of the Department of Natural Resources and Water, all received additional funding to undertake Task Force related activities. One interviewee suggested that, if anything, the coordination activities of the Task Force ‘bureaucratized’ the process, which inevitably slowed down the community response. As a counter to this perspective, another agency representative observed that while their agency would certainly have proceeded with some of its projects anyway, the existence of the Task Force assisted them to conduct their core business.

Working with local government

While the Task Force was initially designed as a mechanism of state government agency coordination, it was considered by the Chair imperative that the Mayors of the affected local government areas also be included as members of the Task Force (*Community Futures Task Force Newsletter, Traveston, August, 2006*). At the time, this meant the Mayors of the Cooloola, Noosa, Maroochy, Boonah and Beaudesert Shires although the 2008 local council amalgamations reduced this number to three: the new Gympie Regional Council, the Sunshine Coast Regional Council and the Scenic Rim Regional Council. From the start, the Mayors openly stated their opposition to the dam but expressed a commitment to working with the Task Force in order to ‘engage constructively’ with member agencies to progress the work (see Community Futures Task Force, 2008a: 18).

While relations with the Mayors were reported to be difficult, they were seen by many interviewees to bring an important local perspective to the work of the Task Force and to play a critical role by informing the Task Force of issues arising with individual constituents and issues arising regionally; contributing to land use infrastructure planning and other key activities; and assisting in identifying and realising medium to long term economic, social and other development opportunities for their

shires (Three Plus, undated: 7-8). In general, however, it was reported that the Mayors often had limited effectiveness. While acting as the 'voice of the community' it was more difficult for them to offer solutions to the challenges facing their region.

Moreover, the status of the Mayors as Task Force members is qualitatively different from that of State Government representatives, and somewhat ambiguous. To begin with, and as already noted in the methods section of this report, the Mayors were not interviewed for this review because they were deemed to be 'external' rather than 'internal' and therefore likely to be consulted only if Stage 2 of the review proceeds. Moreover, until recently, the mayors have not been attendees of the monthly Task Force meetings where the confidential issues of agency members are discussed, but join a second meeting where more publicly available issues are reported. Task Force staff gave various explanations for why this separation of meetings occurred, suggesting a) that the mayors were antagonistic towards the Directors General and this was a way of preventing such conduct; b) that there was considerable arguing among the Directors General during the meetings, which the mayors should not be witness to; and c) the meeting of Directors General was only a supplementary meeting to the Task Force 'proper' meeting to which Mayors were invited. Over the last six months, this situation has changed and the meetings are combined once more.

Coordination on the ground: The Regional Services Forum

In addition to the Community Futures Task Force, a local whole-of-government response to community needs has been facilitated through the Regional Services Forum (RSF). Established by the Department of Communities, the RSF includes representatives from Queensland government agencies in the region and is chaired by the Regional Director, Maroochydore Regional Service Centre, Department of Communities. Its purpose is to:

- 1) Inform the Task Force's work program through community feedback, thereby ensuring local initiatives are informed by local input (Community Futures Task Force, undated *Comments on EIS for the Traveston Crossing Dam*);
- 2) Deliver the work of the Task Force at the local level;
- 3) Ensure state government agencies which provide services to the Mary Valley region collaborate to ensure consistency of service delivery and address duplication (Department of Communities *Progress Report*, April 2007: 6); and
- 4) Ensure and implement recommendations of the Task Force over the medium to long term (Community Futures Task Force, 2007a: 4).

While it has not been possible to undertake a comprehensive review of the work of the RSF its role is likely to increase once the Task Force ceases to operate in June 2009.

Crowded governance?

It has been documented in the literature review of this report, that there is a general move to regional governance. While this can democratise governance, it is sometimes characterised by the unintended consequences of crowded governance (Everingham, 2005). Montgomery (2004) notes that regional governance has been complicated by a proliferation of regional agencies and a lack of certainty regarding roles and responsibilities in this crowded arena. During the course of the interviews, there was some evidence that suggested 'overlap' or 'crowding'. In some instances, concerns were raised how the CTFF potentially complicated what was seen as 'core business' within many agencies. One example was offered where the Task Force was construed as 'interfering' in what was seen as the everyday business of member agencies and thus 'muddying the waters'.

FINDINGS PART 3. FUTURE SCENARIOS FOR THE TASK FORCE AND THE TASK FORCE MODEL

This third and final section of the review findings contains:

- Recommendations in relation to the operation of the Task Force until its conclusion;
- An assessment of the Community Futures Task Force terms of reference and operation as a model for government to engage with communities affected by other 'Significant Projects'; and
- Recommendations on other contexts relevant to governments where a Task Force model might usefully be applied.

Recommendations for the Operation of the Community Futures Task Force until its Conclusion.

As noted earlier, it is the nature of the special machinery of a Task Force that it cannot and should not need to last forever. Indeed, one of the criteria of success of a Task Force is its ability to be wound down at an appropriate stage and to make a transition towards government business as usual (Queensland Government, 2007: 13).

The Community Futures Task Force was designed to operate for a fixed three year period and is not expected to continue beyond this date, should the dams be approved. Instead it will be the responsibility of the project proponent to provide for the mitigation of community and economic impacts of the project beyond this date (Community Futures Task Force, undated: 1). Some funded projects are also likely to continue past that time and will continue to be managed by the responsible government agency. The Regional Services Forum will also remain in place 'on the ground' to ensure local services and projects continue to meet the needs of local people and to coordinate agency activities.

The Community Futures Task Force is already aware of the need for an appropriate exit strategy and has been working towards a carefully managed withdrawal from the two regions. In the Boonah Shire, where the Wyaralong Dam has received conditional approval from the Commonwealth Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, the exit process is less problematic than in the Mary Valley where the outcomes of the Traveston Crossing Dam Environment Impact Statement assessment have been delayed for a significant period. Not only does this new delay in construction, should the dam be approved, mean that the Mary Valley is likely to live with considerable uncertainty for the foreseeable future, but it also means that new waves of anger and community mobilisation in the region may be created, which, in the likely absence of the Community Futures Task Force, will need to be managed by another body. Indeed, the recent announcement of the delay of the Traveston Crossing Dam has been criticised by the local Mayor of the region (*Courier Mail*, 26th November 2008), with whom the Community Futures Task Force has had a good working relationship.

Given these broader considerations, we provide a series of recommendations below that relate to various components of the exit process. These are:

1. The ongoing community engagement activities relating to the dam proposals that will be required, including those continuing after the Community Futures Task Force has ceased its operations;
2. The work of the Task Force in its remaining six months of operation in preparing for the above; and
3. Future prospects, if any, for the Community Futures Task Force Unit and its staff.

Ongoing Community Engagement Activities Relating to the Dam Proposals

In the case of the dams proceeding, it is anticipated that all community engagement activities will be taken over by the project proponent and the construction alliance as part of their usual community engagement activities. This is likely to occur in Wyaralong where the dam proposal has received provisional approval and construction is likely to commence in early 2009. Many of the expected impacts of the project will occur during the construction phase, and QWI has extensive experience in community engagement.

In the case of the Traveston Crossing Dam, should it not be approved, the process of community engagement is less clear. When interviewed, some Task Force members assumed that the Task Force would be wound up automatically, even prior to the 30th June should the dam go ahead. Conversely, other participants felt that the impacts of the dam proposals had altered affected communities in such fundamental ways that any halt to this process would require significant restorative work to bring the communities back to some semblance of 'normality', particularly in the Mary Valley. As a result, there was some argument for the Task Force, or similar entity, to remain in place 'to put the community back together again'. Should this occur in the first half of 2009, this restorative work would become a significant component of Task Force activities and, indeed, might be used to support an argument for the operations of the Task Force to be extended for another three to nine months.

Recommendation 1: Provide ongoing support to individuals, communities and businesses affected by the ongoing uncertainty relating to the Traveston Crossing Dam

Given this ongoing uncertainty, and the likelihood that community anger and anxiety will continue to flare up as subsequent announcements are made, it is important for community support mechanisms, such as the counselling services, to remain in place. This may be provided by the project proponent should the dam be approved, or the Department of Communities may consider extending its funding for this service beyond 2009, should the dam not be approved.

The Department of Communities has already committed to the ongoing provision of these services for up to three years. While plans are made to withdraw the Kandanga One Stop Shop as at 30th June 2009, the services of the One Stop Shop will continue to be provided through the Sunshine Coast regional infrastructure (funded within core business). Also, either the project proponent or Department of Communities may consider funding a community development and engagement officer position for the Mary Valley for one year to facilitate completion/transitioning of community projects (Community Futures Task Force, 2008a: 9).

Recommendation 2: Continue developing strategies to assist the Mary Valley develop a viable future for itself that is not dependent on any particular dam outcome

It has already been argued that dam adjustment strategies were implemented too early in the project process, with communities encouraged by the CFTF to embrace opportunities arising from the dam even before approvals had been granted. This position is likely to become difficult to defend as local residents become sceptical of whether the dam will ever go ahead. Instead, we recommend the Task Force continues to focus on strategies to assist communities prepare for an uncertain future and to identify new opportunities for themselves that are not dependent upon a particular outcome.

Recommendation 3: Continue to provide regular up to date information on dam developments and to respond quickly to community enquiries or concerns.

The provision of Information is likely to become a core component of the community engagement activities of the project proponent if the dam proposal is approved. If the dam is not approved,

ongoing information updates in relation to regional development activities should be a priority given the considerable upheaval already experienced by the community. However, the limitations of a single agency approach to information provision identified earlier in this report are likely to continue once the Community Futures Task Force ceases. This may become an activity of the cross-agency working group proposed by the Community Futures Task Force (see below).

Recommendation 4: Continue to endorse a whole-of-government response to addressing community issues and impacts as appropriate.

In a Task Force document relating to the Traveston Crossing Dam Environmental Impact Statement, the Community Futures Task Force proposed a cross-agency working group be established to coordinate agencies that are responsible for a number of mitigation strategies with respect to the dams. It was suggested that the group work with QWI and the constructing alliance. The Community Futures Task Force suggested this group be regionally based, along the lines of the Regional Services Forum model, with support from executive and senior Head Office management as required. It also argued that consideration will need to be made as to which agency takes responsibility for leading the group, as well as the group's membership. The Community Futures Task Force also proposes the group includes representatives from the Gympie and Sunshine Coast Regional Councils, which reflects current membership of the Task Force, and that it seeks advice on a regular and formal basis from a community liaison group that has the support, and can speak on behalf, of all Mary Valley communities (see Sinclair Knight Mertz and QWI, undated, b).

We support this suggestion and propose that the group operate as a scaled down version of the Community Futures Task Force. Such a group could take on many of the ongoing community engagement activities still considered essential in the Mary Valley and would more likely function with a small, lean secretariat. Issues that would need to be considered include:

- Whether the group should be regionally-based or managed from Brisbane. While a regional body is often more locally-responsive, it will likely lack the authority and political clout of the Task Force and may therefore struggle to access relevant information and resources.
- Who might take the role of Chair. One of the key factors in the reported success of the Task Force was the role of Peter Arnison as chair with direct access to the Queensland Premier. It is unlikely that such a person would be necessary for a working group but a senior public servant could be required to act as Chair so the group maintains some status and legitimacy. Where possible, the Chair should also have the authority to override any single agency interests.
- The overall 'mission' of the cross agency working group. It is recommended that this cross agency working group should not be a proponent of the dam.
- How membership should be constituted - It is suggested that this group be smaller and more streamlined than the original Task Force and include only those agencies for whom dealing with the dam and its impacts are part of core business. The question of what role local government might play in this Working Group, if at all, also needs to be considered.
- How, and by whom, such a group might be funded and whether non-core business funding continues to be provided.
- Whether there is a continued role for any member of the Community Future Task Force Unit in coordinating this group. Senior Task Force Unit staff members have the skills and experience for working with such a group and – in particular – in managing the difficult task of liaising between groups and individuals who hold opposing views to the dam proposals.

The Work of the Task Force in its Remaining Six Months

In preparing for its imminent closure, the Community Futures Task Force needs to spend its remaining six months preparing an appropriate exit strategy. This is already beginning and so our recommendations, based on the observations above, are designed to assist with this process. Importantly, the Task Force needs to undertake the following (see Queensland Government, 2007a).

Recommendation 5: Obtain a good understanding of the work remaining and the ongoing community engagement needs relating to the dam proposals, especially with respect to the Traveston Crossing Dam. These needs and activities have been identified above.

Recommendation 6: Decide on the extent to which this ongoing work will require the retention of some parts of the special machinery of a Task Force (perhaps in modified form, and for how long) and which aspects of this work can be transferred back to the mainstream of government activity.

Recommendation 7: Review current staffing levels and consider reducing the number of Task Force Unit staff to those undertaking essential activities. Staff who need to seek a new position could be allowed to leave early if their work is considered non-essential or be tasked with other community engagement work within the Department of Infrastructure and Planning.

Recommendation 8: The Community Futures Task Force should also take responsibility for establishing the cross-agency working group described above and should determine the Terms of Reference for such a group. The Community Futures Task Force Unit should begin a handover process to this group, leaving agency members to concentrate on their core business in the region, including any funded projects for which they are responsible.

Future Prospects for the Community Futures Task Force Unit and its Staff

It would be expected that upon completion of Task Force responsibilities, the Unit staff would either return to their former departments or be deployed elsewhere in State government. It is recognised, however, that the Task Force Unit has developed a reputation for excellence in community engagement and it has been approached by several agencies for advice on government-community engagement practices, including the Eastern Pipeline Inter-connector Project (Stradbroke Island), the Northern Pipeline Inter-connector Project; and Ambre Energy's Felton Clean Coal Project (Community Futures Task Force, 2008a: 7-8). This leads to the question of whether there is an ongoing role for the Task Force as a dedicated body for either community engagement and/or to be in waiting for the next 'wicked problem'. While a dedicated team would certainly facilitate an immediate response to any such crisis, it runs counter to the notion of a Task Force as a temporary body comprising people with the skills and experience to deal with a specific issue. Any future issue requiring a Task Force response may need a different skill set from those found in the current model.

However, it is possible, that there is ongoing need for one or more senior members of the Task Force to remain involved in Task Force activities, particularly in terms of coordinating the operations of the cross-agency group that is intended as a replacement to the Task Force. As noted earlier, Task Force Unit staff have built up the required skills, rapport, experience and connections to engage with the Mary Valley community under difficult circumstances, and these skills may continue to be required with the Traveston Crossing Dam project for the foreseeable future.

Recommendation 9: Given the findings in this review, there is a case to maintain elements of the Task Force Unit, with expertise in whole of government coordination, and community engagement that could consult with and advise other sectors of State Government.

ASSESSMENT OF THE COMMUNITY FUTURES TASK FORCE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND OPERATION AS A MODEL FOR GOVERNMENT TO ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY OTHER 'SIGNIFICANT PROJECTS'

In this report so far, we have assessed the performance of the Community Futures Task Force against its own terms of reference. In this section, we adopt a broader, more critical, perspective of the Task Force as a model for engaging with communities affected by significant projects, such as the Traveston Crossing and Wyaralong Dam proposals. This assessment involves asking whether the Task Force was an appropriate response to the Wyaralong and Traveston Crossing Dam proposals; examining the Terms of Reference of the Task Force; and identifying which features of the Task Force worked well and which might have functioned better.

Was the Community Futures Task Force an Appropriate Response?

There are various ways in which governments can engage with communities affected by significant projects such as the Traveston Crossing and Wyaralong dam proposals. Our task here is to establish why a Task Force response was deemed necessary for these projects when other infrastructure projects have failed to receive the same level of government attention. Identifying the distinct circumstances of the Mary Valley, in particular, that warranted a Task Force response may help determine when, and under what conditions, a Task Force may be required for governments to engage with communities affected by other 'significant projects'.

For most people interviewed for this review, the Community Futures Task Force was unprecedented in terms of the nature and extent of the Queensland government's response to the dam proposals. Indeed, interviewees variously referred to it as the 'platinum' or 'gold-plated version' of a response, observing that no other project had received such a response from government. These statements prompted us to ask interviewees whether they considered the Task Force an appropriate response to the dam issues in spite of the lack of any precedence. There was a mixed response with some stating it was a useful model and entirely appropriate given the disruption in the Mary Valley in particular – while others saw it as a costly response and something of an 'overkill'.

It is also noted that other 'significant' infrastructure projects have not been accompanied by the same level of community engagement and support. As one participant pointed out, the resumption of properties for infrastructure projects, such as pipelines, airport links and by-passes is relatively common, yet a Task Force is rarely created and very few community support mechanisms are established beyond telephone hotlines and land acquisition schemes. As interview participants noted, bypasses or rail links tend to impact upon groups of individuals along a corridor, but rarely uproot a whole community and jeopardise employment and industry on a large scale as has been the case with the Mary Valley. For this reason, it was considered that while some mitigation strategies from the Task Force, such as counselling services or the provision of timely information to affected residents could be usefully applied to other infrastructural projects, a Task Force in general was not considered necessary.

Those who felt the Task Force had been an appropriate response to the Wyaralong and Traveston Crossing dam proposals explained why a Task Force was needed on this occasion and not on others. If these reasons are valid, they may assist with the process of developing an appropriate policy framework regarding the application of a Task Force model in the future. They included:

- The scale of the dam project (especially in the Mary Valley) in terms of the number of people and properties affected. Few infrastructure projects have ever affected such a significant number of properties. It was also acknowledged that the Mary Valley was excellent farming land with long- and well-established farming families living in the region;

- The proportion of the resident community that would be impacted by the dam. According to the Department of Communities, approximately eleven percent of the population in the Cooloolool Shire would be directly affected by the proposal (Department of Communities, undated: 4);
- The threats posed by the dam to the fabric of the Mary Valley community. The Traveston Crossing Dam would affect not just farms and houses but also government buildings, commercial buildings, parks and even the Kandanga Cemetery;
- The constitution of the affected population as members of a community rather than as individual property owners. This was partly due to the fact that local businesses and community services outside the impact zone were also likely to be affected by the proposal, but it also draws on popular ideologies of rural areas as comprised of cohesive communities where people are strongly attached to the place and to one another through historical ties to the area. This was contrasted with the impacts of infrastructure projects in the city where people are not seen to be integrated into a local community and where the broad community impacts are therefore absent;
- An understanding of precisely who is affected. It is also acknowledged that of all significant projects, dams are particularly contentious and often provoke high levels of community outrage and resistance, not only among those affected, but also from people living outside the area who often oppose dams on environmental grounds;
- Mitigating community anger. The Task Force should also be recognised as an attempt to minimise the political fallout of the dam proposals. When interviewed, several participants acknowledged that the Queensland government had not anticipated the scale and intensity of community opposition and that the Task Force was only established after the then Premier, Peter Beattie, attended a particularly difficult and tense community meeting in the Mary Valley on the 5th July 2006. One participant, for example, viewed the role of the Task Force as similar to that of a ‘firefighter’ attempting to hose down community anger;
- The Task Force as a new form of governance. More broadly, the Task Force, as an enhanced model of community engagement, also needs to be understood in terms of changing relations between governments and communities, and the heightened expectations that each place on the other. Contemporary approaches to governing rely on the notion of ‘active citizenship’ whereby individuals are increasingly expected to take greater responsibility for their own wellbeing, as well as that of their family and community. Yet alongside this has emerged a more active citizenry which also demands its rights to have a say and be consulted in matters of policy making (see Cheshire and Woods, 2009 forthcoming). As a result, governments are increasingly held to account for their actions and community engagement has become far more of a central part of government business than was previously the case. Thus, while the Community Futures Task Force might not have been required in the past, such a model may, increasingly, become part of the future governmental landscape.

Given these conditions, it certainly appears that the Mary Valley in particular received support and attention that would, in the past, not have been forthcoming. Whether this means the Community Futures Task Force was a policy one-off, or whether it provides a model to be applied to other contexts facing similar issues, remains to be seen.

Limitations of the Community Futures Task Force

The following section summarises some of the limitations of the Community Futures Task Force.

Timing: The Task Force occurred too late

One of the more obvious criticisms of the Task Force, which was acknowledged by several participants, is that its establishment occurred too late, when community tensions were already high. The initial announcement for the Traveston Crossing Dam was made in April 2006 but the Task Force was not formed until July that year following a formal announcement that both dams would proceed. By then, mechanisms were already in place for property purchases and a 1800 number telephone information hotline had been established. While the Task Force appears to have been set up as soon as both dams were announced, for the people in the Mary Valley it was already three months late.

There is evidence to support this view. In a submission to the Traveston Crossing Dam Senate Inquiry, for example, a local resident described the Task Force response as 'belated' and complained that the Chair 'was seeing too few people too late' (Watt, 2007). One group suggested that the social impacts of the dam had not been properly considered by the Queensland Government until the Premier made his visit to Gympie on the 5th July 2006 and saw for himself the level of public outrage (Save the Mary River Coordinating Group Inc., 2007). Another claimed that the Premier admitted to underestimating the impact of the decision on local people, and suggested that the Community Futures Task Force was a reaction to community protest (Hales, 2006). Regardless of the motive for the formation of the Task Force, the effect of this delay was that a great deal of anger and anxiety had been brewing in the community since the initial announcement in April, which had not been properly addressed and which had compounded during that time (see SSCRRAT, 2007a: 29). This would have made the job of the Task Force more difficult, as several members noted.

The absence of a temporal approach in planning and design

In undertaking this review, it was frequently asserted to us that a temporal view of the Task Force would be necessary to understand how its activities evolved over time in response to changing community needs and expectations. With hindsight, this certainly appears to be the case although the evolutionary process appears more of a response to unanticipated changes in the affected communities than part of any initial process of planning and design. Indeed, some interviewees described how the Terms of Reference for the Task Force had quickly been put together in a matter of days by the newly appointed Chair. Given there were few precedents for this kind of Task Force, apart from those designed as an emergency response, it is perhaps inevitable that the design of the Task Force and its Terms of Reference were not underpinned by any coherent policy framework and were ultimately described by one participant as 'action without policy'.

In contrast, the Northern Territory Emergency Response, for example, was designed with a three-phase process, which allowed for changes over time to be reflected in Task Force planning and priorities. As we recommend later, a phased roll-out of the Task Force, taking into account anticipated changes over time, would have overcome a number of limitations that the Task Force faced. As it was, some interviewees for this review noted that attempts by the Task Force to adapt to changing circumstances in the affected communities had not been entirely successful and that the Task Force had done better in the early days as an immediate response mechanism than more

recently in working with a community that had moved on but which was still angry¹.

Problems with combining emergency response with dam adjustment

A second issue relating to the design and Terms of Reference of the Task Force relates to its attempts to combine its immediate response framework with dam adjustment strategies by helping affected communities identify potential opportunities arising from the dam proposals. This point has already been made elsewhere in this report and, as argued, is likely to have eroded both community support for the Task Force and its claimed independence from the State government. In the following section, we provide recommendations on how such contradictions might be avoided in the future.

The Task Force was seen as too large

Another criticism of the Task Force that emerged from interviews is that there were far too many agencies involved and that, as a result, the Task Force became overly bureaucratic. Moreover, some of these agencies appear to relate to the purview of the Task Force only indirectly. When asked how he became involved in the Task Force, one member described how his agency had been approached with the question ‘what can your department contribute?’, thereby prompting that agency to search for ways to make a contribution that were not immediately obvious. As well as supporting the criticism that certain features of the Task Force were developed with little policy coherence, the result, according to one agency representative, was that the Task Force lost focus and involved too many agencies for whom the Task Force was of secondary interest. One of the most immediate effects of this, as identified by one interviewee, was that the Task Force meetings became overly long and somewhat irrelevant.

Another person also noted that while the Task Force was initially given top priority and was attended by high-level officers from member agencies, as the issue became less heated, Directors General were often represented by delegates, thereby ‘watering down’ the effectiveness of the Task Force. Reportedly, this reduced status of Task Force meetings meant that issues identified as ‘road blocks’ could not be immediately dealt with due to the absence of senior staff. However, it was acknowledged by interviewees that until an announcement was made on whether the dams would proceed, there was little need to maintain the high level focus of meetings.

Some interviewees felt that the Task Force would have been more efficient had it been streamlined and involved three or four key agencies only – in this case, the Department of Natural Resources and Water, the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, the Department of Premier and Cabinet and statutory bodies such as the Queensland Water Commission. In this interviewee’s opinion, any future Task Force should only involve core agencies but should establish various reference groups which can be called upon on a case by case basis.

Criticisms of the Task Force being too big also extended to the Task Force Unit itself, with its 9.6 FTE officers. However, the issue here was not that Unit staff were unnecessary, or difficult to coordinate – indeed the Unit was often complimented for being such a well-integrated team. Instead, there were complaints about the Task Force Unit being over-resourced, with a significant proportion of the overall budget (almost \$5.5m) being allocated to staff salaries and administration costs rather than going directly into the affected communities (bearing in mind that a proportion of this money was allocated to various community projects). This is quite different from the Operation Recovery Task

¹ The Task Force Unit disagrees with this assertion, and cite evidence of a successful engagement with various community groups in the Mary Valley.

Force which worked on minimal organisation and human resource overheads in keeping with its coordinating rather than executive role (Queensland Government, 2007: 9). Interviewees also suggested that Task Force staff did not have enough work to do, especially now demand for the immediate response mechanism and individual case management work had declined.

One final, broader, point is of particular importance. Many Task Forces have been established to solve targeted problems but have found themselves addressing the symptoms, rather than the causes, of the problems they have been asked to fix. For example, financially supporting displaced workers from regions in economic decline is a laudable goal, but it does not address the broader structural problems of why the workers lost their jobs in the first place. 'Band aid' solutions to deeper structural problems are unlikely to provide the longer term benefits that governments and communities may be expecting via the formation and activities of a Task Force.

Key strengths of the Community Futures Task Force

The strengths of the CFTF model have been noted throughout this report, however, it is useful to reiterate them here. While there were some useful critique of the model and the deployment of resources, most interviewees were positive about the day to day work of the Task Force Unit. For instance, many officers interviewed reported to have built very good rapport and positive working relationships with the Task Force Unit, whom they praised for their case work and community engagement skills, and for their ability to coordinate multiple government departments and hold them to account. A number of features of this particular Task Force model are to be commended. These include:

- The organisational structure of the Task Force within the State Government - which was positioned close to the Premier allowed for greater effectiveness;
- The high level of funding to address the fall out of the announcement of the dams;
- The Task Force as an immediate response mechanism - once it was in place;
- The 'bigger picture' case management approach which enabled responses to community queries that were complex and involved numerous agencies;
- Combined leadership of Chair, Peter Arnison and Steve Mill – as well as what was cited on many occasions as a hard working, effective and cohesive Task Force Unit;
- The impartiality expressed by the Task Force Unit despite being situated within the State Government; and
- The effectiveness of the Task Force in co-ordinating a whole-of-government approach.

RECOMMENDATION FOR A PREFERRED MODEL FOR GOVERNMENT/PROJECT PROPONENTS TO ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY 'SIGNIFICANT PROJECTS'.

According to the Management Advisory Committee (2004:30), a Task Force should only be used as a model of community engagement when necessary since it is costly and time consuming, and because competing political and community agendas can undermine its objectives. Indeed, a Task Force may not be the preferred approach for dealing with routine, straightforward issues and should be used judiciously. In establishing various recommendations for a preferred model we consider a) what lessons can be learnt from the experience of the Community Futures Task Force; b) whether a Task Force constitutes a preferred model for community engagement in the face of significant project proposals; and c) under what conditions might this model be adopted in the future?

In considering these issues, and in light of the observations laid out in earlier sections of this report, we suggest that the Community Futures Task Force model is worth replicating, with some amendments as outlined below:

Recommendation 10: Clear guidelines need to be established to help determine when a Task Force response is necessary

The Community Futures Task Force may have changed the landscape of community engagement permanently when it comes to large 'significant' infrastructure projects, and may enhance expectations that a similar response will be forthcoming for other projects in the future. Yet it has already been admitted by various Task Force members that, in some ways, the Task Force was not only unusual, but would also be difficult to reproduce given the unprecedented level of resources that accompanied its establishment. Moreover, given its unprecedented nature, the Task Force has been an experiment in advanced community engagement that was not entirely connected to any policy framework. Reflections on its operations provide an opportunity for clear policy guidelines to be established that determine the appropriate nature and extent of government community engagement strategies for future significant projects.

While it is impossible from this short review to provide any coherent guidelines for formulating such a policy framework, we would be willing to engage in ongoing dialogue with the Directors of the Task Force to assist with this process. We recommend the development of an assessment tool to help determine when, and under what conditions, a Task Force model might be required and when a more modest response might suffice. While the Queensland government outlines the criteria for declaring a project a 'significant project' in terms of its strategic significance, level of investment, anticipated opportunities and complex approval processes (see Queensland Government, 2007b), similar guidelines need to be provided for anticipating the differential impacts of these projects and the various mitigation response mechanisms required. At the minimal level, community consultation and information provision through public meetings, newsletters and telephone hotlines are required for most significant projects but, depending on the social, health and community effects, counselling services might also be needed. In cases where the community impacts are broad and likely to flow on to those located beyond the impact zone, an immediate response plan will be required. Decisions also need to be made about the appropriate membership and the need for an independent chair.

The Management Advisory Committee (2004: 11) provides guidelines in helping determine what kind of response is required, suggesting that each situation or issue should be assessed on a case by case basis. Some initial questions in this process may include:

- Why do existing policies and programs not deal adequately with the problem?
- How does the problem relate to the government's core priorities?
- What are the likely client or community expectations about a solution?

- Which other agencies are affected by the problem and/or possible solutions?
- What joint planning, delivery and accountability arrangements would be appropriate?
- What are the risks of not adopting a whole-of-government approach to the issue?
- What are the likely costs and benefits of a whole-of-government solution?

Recommendation 11: The Terms of Reference need to incorporate a temporal approach to ensure the Task Force has the skills and resources to adapt to changing circumstances and community needs

In making this recommendation, we respond to a range of criticisms about the Task Force operating in the absence of policy, failing to adapt fully to changing conditions, and combining an immediate response mechanism with dam adjustment strategies at a time when such a combination was not appropriate. While the Task Force did well to respond to changing temporal conditions, these need to be built into the overall planning and design of the Task Force over time.

One solution is to implement a phased roll-out of the Task Force so it is explicitly designed, from the start, to respond to the changing needs of the community over time. For example, the Northern Territory Emergency Response Task Force was designed with three specific phases in mind: stabilisation (Year 1); normalisation of services and infrastructure (Years 2-5); and the provision of longer term support (Year 5 onwards). Any future response plan like the Community Futures Task Force might consider a similar three-phase strategy as follows:

1. Stabilisation: addressing immediate effects (focussing on individual case management, information provision, property resumptions etc).
2. Normalisation of services and community development, including some future planning for business and industry regardless of whether or not the project goes ahead.
3. Dam adjustment. Assisting the community capture the opportunities from the project. Stage 3 should only proceed in the event that the dam takes place.

Recommendation 12: Delay any dam adjustment processes until the outcome of the dam is known

Consistent with some of the complaints expressed through the Senate Inquiry, we suggest that, in future, encouraging communities to capitalise on project-related opportunities should not form part of any Task Force Terms of Reference at least until the project has been approved and certainly not before any impact assessment has taken place. There are various ways that a Task Force could manage this issue in future. These include:

- Having the independent body of a Task Force focus on immediate response mechanisms, thereby leaving the adjustment strategies, such as industry sector reform, to the project proponent for whom there is no conflict of interest and no requirement to adopt an independent stance.
- Providing support to affected communities in moving towards a more sustainable future without foreshadowing any particular outcome of the dam. The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries' Food and Fibre Futures Project is one example of the kind of assistance the Task Force provided which support community development in this way.

Recommendation 13: Formal assertions of independence are unnecessary and difficult to defend. Instead, a Task Force should promote its neutrality and its ombudsman-type role

The Community Futures Task Force appears to have invested significant energy into promoting itself as an independent body in order to secure community legitimacy and confidence. As outlined earlier in this report, these claims to independence were sometimes rejected by local communities,

particularly in the early months of its establishment, and were often undermined by the political realities of the dam proposals and the premature goal of assisting communities capitalise on the benefits of a dam that had not yet been approved. In reality, it is difficult to defend any claim to independence made by the Task Force in spite of the non-government role of the Chair. For the community, it was a political response to intense community protest generated by a governmental decision to investigate new water storage sites. It was also funded and supported by the Queensland government; managed by Queensland government staff; and comprised of Queensland government departments, including those advocating strongly in favour of the dam. Moreover, while the Task Force was willing to engage with opposition groups, it could not support them, even when they provided invaluable community support and information such as the Kandanga Information Centre.

In spite of this, the Task Force Unit staff certainly operated with a considerable degree of integrity and concern over the impacts of the dam proposals upon affected communities, even to the point that tension arose with the project proponent. The 'honest broker' or 'ombudsman-type' role played by Task Force Unit staff was certainly important in assisting communities and landholders deal with the impacts of the dam proposal, and in securing a fair process took place. This role can be maintained without appeals to independence by the Task Force and enables such a body to be open and reflexive about its limitations when it forms part of the machinery of government. Moreover, the trust that appears to have developed between the Task Force Unit and the local community has built up over time, which is far more important than any initial, and untested, claims to independence.

Recommendation 14: The coordination of agency activities is imperative for Task Force success but 'whole-of-government' should be used judiciously and agencies should not be included unless it is clearly in their remit to do so

While the coordination of a whole-of-government response was one of the key strengths of the Task Force, it is important for those establishing such a body to ensure it is not so large that it becomes overly bureaucratic, slow and unwieldy. Such is the nature of a Task Force that it should be able to by-pass standard bureaucratic procedures and act quickly and flexibly. At the level of the Task Force Unit and Chair, this was certainly the case, with Peter Arnison and the Executive Directors able to leverage support and policy changes in a relatively short time frame. However, for the Task Force as a whole, the inclusion of 11 agency representatives was seen to slow down Task Force activities, especially through wrangling over competing political demands and through the inclusion of agencies for which the Task Force was not part of core business. A future Task Force model could be scaled down to include only essential staff and agencies, with perhaps a broader reference group linking to other agencies as required.

Recommendation 15: There should be a clear articulation of the roles and responsibilities of a Task Force vis-à-vis other institutional apparatuses, including local government, designated Task Force Unit staff, government agencies and other response mechanisms

With the contemporary landscape of governing becoming increasingly 'crowded' (Everingham, 2005), it is important that there is clear articulation of the different roles and responsibilities of different governing structures and mechanisms, including those of a Task Force. In the case of the Community Futures Task Force, praise for the whole-of-government coordination by the Task Force was tempered with criticisms of duplication as well as uncertainty among a considerable number of interviewees over the relationship between the Task Force and the Task Force Unit. Agency staff frequently referred to the Task Force as a separate entity rather than viewing themselves as constituent members, and often conflating the Task Force with the Task Force Unit. Part of these problems arise from the size of the Task Force but also from a lack of clarity about the relationship of the Task Force vis-à-vis local government and core agency business. These issues should be clarified from the start of the Task Force and built into its terms of reference.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON OTHER CONTEXTS RELEVANT TO GOVERNMENTS WHERE A TASK FORCE MODEL MIGHT USEFULLY BE APPLIED.

As has been identified throughout this report, the Task Force model is particularly well suited to situations in which an emergency response is required and where, to achieve this, a military-style of operation (often led by a person with military credentials) is launched. Immediacy of response is at the forefront of government efforts, and it is usually always envisaged that the Task Force will be disbanded once its mission has been accomplished. Such Task Forces have received strong public endorsement when they have been established to address calamities such as natural disasters. Communities that have suffered extensive damage and/or loss of life perceive the Task Force to be a coordinated effort by government acting on *behalf of* the community. In such circumstances the Task Force is not a neutral body, but a pro-community, action-oriented unit of government with a specific mandate to assist the community/region to recover from devastation.

The Traveston Crossing/Wyaralong Dam Task Force was not established to address a natural disaster, but to provide support to communities which had the potential to 'suffer' from a decision of government. While the general conclusions are that the establishment of the Task Force was an appropriate decision in the face of community hostility (particularly in relation to the Traveston Crossing Dam proposal), and that mechanisms such as the 1800 hotline, one-stop-shop and the presence of a strong, independent leader, all combined to mitigate the degree of public anger and disillusion, it has been questioned – by some – whether the Task Force was a politically-driven over-reaction to community opposition. Unlike circumstances of a natural disaster, the Community Futures Task Force was not formed to address the problem of physical devastation. Rather, it was established to assist community to identify new opportunities for the future. In this sense, it was pro-community but, because it was addressing a 'problem' that had, itself, been created by government, it may never be judged as successful as, for example, the Cyclone Larry Task Force where the government was the 'saviour' rather than the source of the problem (bearing in mind community assessment of the Task Force is yet to occur). The question begging is this: is the Community Futures Task Force model one that should accompany any government announcement that has the potential to disrupt community?

As has been suggested, given the relatively high cost, extensive logistical arrangements, and 'disruption' to the normal work of government in the target community/region, there should be 'judicious' application of the Task Force. This is not to say that a scaled-down (or scaled-up, as circumstances dictate) version of the Community Futures Task Force model would not have a place in future government decision-making. But what it does suggest is that considerable thought should be given to launching a Task Force. There might be other ways of fostering a whole-of-government approach to solve a particular problem of concern to a community. In particular – and especially in relation to the current evaluation of the Community Futures Task Force – it may be easier to implement a Task Force in cases where government is not the proponent of a significant project since this would help to overcome the problem of the government being both 'source and saviour' of the problem.

The above points notwithstanding, there have been many, many, instances where task forces have been mobilised to address issues of public concern. Lagging economic performance has been one such issue addressed. In the UK, for example, a variety of Task Forces were established to coordinate economic development of the north-east region of England. This region has undergone economic restructuring associated with the decline in coal mining and textile industries – with considerable social and economic impacts having been experienced by a population that was viewed as already vulnerable (Pike, 2002: 14). And, where there had been development in the region, it was of the branch-plant variety, subject to the 'vagaries of external control and foreign ownership', with factory

closures being a prominent problem (Pike, 1999: 568). Regional development was seen as a priority, and this was believed to be best achieved by coordinating various levels of government: the issue was viewed as being beyond the capacity of any one government, or any one government department, to solve (Pike 2002). The Task Forces were dominated by the presence of local authorities (local government and regional development bodies) and local business leaders – forming a partnership between public and private spheres.

Another focus for a Task Force is that of modernising local government. A Local Government Modernisation Task Force was established in Northern Ireland in 2006 to modernise (streamline) local government by reducing the number of councils from 26 to 7, and ensuring the new, larger, councils were actively involved in higher level responsibilities relating to planning, transportation, road planning and maintenance, emergency services and community relations (Improvement and Development Agency, 2006). In other words, its role was to revitalise governance at the local level. The Task Force's activities were viewed as successful – to the stage where a second Task Force was formed to carry on the work of the first. In the recent Queensland Local Government amalgamations here in Australia, a Task Force was not established and this does not appear to have been detrimental to the process.

It has been suggested that the actual focus of a Task Force can differ according to need, with some being advisory (collating information to assist in government policy formation) and others being formed to roll out funding (actually implementing the policy of government) (Pike, 2002). Of course, they can have both roles. They can also be formed in an effort to overcome fragmentation in the delivery of public goods, and they can be especially effective in seeking private input into local-level decision-making. Given that agency culture (especially bureaucratic ritualism) can be a hindrance to joined up approaches to governing (see Lawrence, Loechel, Cheshire and Oliver, 2008), the Task Force can re-form relations between State agencies at the local/regional level, thereby repositioning agency personnel and, subsequently, promoting a more targeted approach to service delivery. They can also bring high-level expertise to bear on issues of specific interest, and can achieve this with efficiency and in a timely manner.

The variety, and uses to which task forces have been put, are considerable. In Australia, Task Forces have been established to investigate workplace bullying; fish and fish products; child care; violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; urban renewal in Brisbane; Aboriginal education; housing; amalgamations in higher education; and the sexualisation of girls.

It is clear that most of these fall in the categories of the identification of new options for economic development, and possible solutions to specific social issues and problems. Just why they were addressed by Task Forces rather than other forms of investigatory and reporting bodies is beyond the scope of this study. However, it is clear that there is a wide range of possible applications for the task force model. It is also a 'given' that collaboration between agencies is a logical and necessary requirement when complex problems are being addressed by government - with task forces playing an important role, here. Other crucial issues relate to: what parties are to be brought to the table; leadership; goal setting; decision-making processes; accountability; and continuous improvement (Cranwell, Kolodinsky, Anderson and Schmidt, 2004). Pike (2004: 2141) has also commented that the emergent 'heterodox' approach to governance in globally-focused nation states has a very important place for the Task Force as a mechanism for 'genuine experimentation and innovation'. It is clear from this review that the CFTF strongly exhibited the latter features.

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APPENDIX 1. THE TASK FORCE AS A MODEL: FULL LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Pike (2000) the task force model has 're-emerged' in the new millennium as a means of addressing complex and multifaceted social and economic problems that cannot be dealt with adequately either by governments or their agencies. Beginning in the Thatcher years in the UK, their purpose was explicitly for government bodies to assist other stakeholders in attempting to solve problems lying outside the domain of any one department or agency. With Thatcher, the aim was to reduce the power wielded by departments and to promote community input into local decision-making in line with the call for increased 'entrepreneurialism' (Pike, 2000: 89). The Thatcherite neo-liberal agenda included creating so-called Quasi Autonomous Non Government Organisations (QUANGOS) by removing some of the functions of government and bringing the private sector in to form public/private partnerships. It was not, according to Pike (2000), a policy decision which proved to be overwhelmingly successful. Unfortunately, there were problems – QUANGO-style partnerships were fragile and failed to deliver the integration at the regional level that had been hoped for (Pike 2000 citing Peck and Tickell, 1995). Yet, the public/private partnership model was reinvigorated under the British Labour Party in a slightly different way, and for a slightly different reason: the objective was – in the face of the complex machinery of government at the local level – to coordinate economic development across the UK. Different agencies were responsible for aspects of economic development. This required a body to manage, in an adaptable way, the varied functions of state-based agencies (Pike, 2000: 88).

The British Labour government that came to power in 1997 was one influenced by Giddens' (1998) 'Third Way' vision which considered that traditional Leftist, and new neo-liberal Rightist, approaches could not address the emergent needs of an increasingly globalised society. Rather, a new mode of thinking about, and delivering, government was viewed as crucial for both strengthening democracy through social inclusion, and efficiently delivering programs via 'joined up' approaches to government (Giddens, 1998). Instead of QUANGOS, with their statutory functions, Labour favoured a task force model that would integrate a variety of diverse groups (and diverse opinions) and do so in line with a number of set principles. The task forces would be:

- set up at short notice;
- expected to report quickly on matters of specific concern;
- multi-agency in structure;
- comprised of a small number of invited members;
- viewed as having a finite life (but with the flexibility to continue activities if required);
- non-statutory;
- flexible in approach and delivery;
- able to provide a 'rapid response' to identified issues and problems; and
- able to work across a range of levels (local/regional) and of stakeholders (employers/employees/government) (see Pike, 2000: 91).

This is, then, a partnership and task-focused model which is at arm's length from the government body that created it but which usually - if not always - reports to a relevant department or minister.

The evolution of the task force is explained by sociologists and political scientists as a product of three interrelated forces. The first is that of globalisation. Global forces have led to the formation of supra-national bodies along with sub-national entities such as regional bodies, rendering the nation state less important in relation to global/local relations (Jessop, 1997). This is connected to the so-called 'hollowing out' of the state thesis which posits that as capitalism becomes more global, sovereign statehood is challenged with responsibilities moving to higher entities as well as to lower

levels in an effort to enhance the effectiveness of governance (see Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton, 1999).

Second, has been the increased pervasiveness of neo-liberal policy settings which have, at one and the same time, sought to limit the role of the state (through fiscal discipline) while 'devolving' activities to individuals, communities and community/business/government partnerships at the local level – largely on the premise that such localised 'self help' will provide for better outcomes than traditional departmental delivery of government activities (Herbert-Cheshire, 2000). Yet, this process carries the risk that the state will not be able to respond to issues in the same way that it did, in early times. When local-level problems emerge and the state is called on to act, it may not, in its scaled-down form, have the resources on the ground, nor the political will, to provide the necessary support to communities and might 'react' by establishing a task force in lieu of departmentally-driven government actions (Pike, 2002). In other words, it has moved from providing 'government' to that of encouraging a more multi-layered and hybrid form of 'governance' (Jessop, 1998; and for Australia see Cheshire, Higgins and Lawrence, 2007).

The third force is that of growing public cynicism with traditional forms of government – particularly in regional settings where public services have been withdrawn and/or infrastructure has been allowed to run down (Gray and Lawrence, 2001). In such circumstances, government interventions of the sort 'we are from the city and we are here to help you' are viewed by local people with distrust and contempt (Pike, 2002: 5). Politicians and civil servants will often be viewed as the 'enemy'. It makes good sense for politicians to stand at arm's length from a community in stress or crisis. The formation of a 'neutral' task force is likely to be more acceptable to the community than the intervention of politicians or public servants – especially where the former may have been implicated in the creation of the very problem being experienced by the community.

The Three Main Foci of Task Forces

The task force model can be seen, in relation to the above tendencies, as a logical attempt to deliver a targeted response to local-level problems at a time when the nation state is being expected to govern better, and to do so with limited resources. Indeed, we have identified – from the literature and from discussions during our fieldwork – three main aspects of task force activity:

- a) A whole-of-government approach to policy development and service delivery;
- b) The attempt to provide an immediate response to a tangible problem; and
- c) A structure for community engagement.

The first seeks to bring government departments together in novel ways so as to circumvent 'stovepipes' in the conceptualisation of problems and in service delivery. The second seeks to enhance the speed of delivery of actions/services by bypassing traditional/conventional means of 'doing' government business. The third seeks to ensure that the target community will be part of the decision-making processes. Each of these foci are discussed briefly, below.

A) Whole-of-government approaches

According to the Management Advisory Committee (2004:1) whole-of-government denotes:

...public service agencies working across portfolio boundaries to achieve a shared goal and an integrated government response to particular issues. Approaches can be formal and informal. They can focus on policy development, program management and service delivery.

There are two major imperatives that make whole-of-government work increasingly important.

These are:

- the pressure to offer sophisticated, comprehensive, policy advice which encompasses a range of stakeholders' views; and
- the necessity to respond to complex policy challenges such as environmental or rural issues. There are pressures to 'join up' program management, including security threats and intractable social issues such as drug dependence.

There are also rising community expectations for easier access to government – something that can be achieved (or, at least, attempted) through integrated service delivery (Management Advisory Committee, 2004: 1). In the past, whole-of-government activities have been carried out through interdepartmental committees and various 'partnerships' – with task forces becoming only one (more recent) avenue to bring departments together as a means of addressing problems.

Interdepartmental Committees

According to the *Queensland Cabinet Handbook* (2006) the term 'Interdepartmental Committees' (IDCs) is used generically to describe any committee with membership from two or more departments. IDCs are seen to be effective in coordinating action, assigning responsibilities for shared tasks and documenting agreements, including crisis management, and in producing policy outcomes. Their representative nature and consensus approach to decision making can make them less useful for dealing with difficult policy issues where there is deep contention between portfolios (or in the community) and tight time limits (Queensland Cabinet Handbook, 2006: 19). For example, in recent years, the Queensland Government has established Interdepartmental Committees to address a variety of issues, including the:

- IDC for the Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program;
- Mental Health IDC to formulate a response to the COAG National Action Plan on Mental Health 2006-2011;
- IDC on Citrus Canker;
- The IDC for Assisted Reproductive Technologies and Cloning Issues; and
- The IDC on Biotechnology.

Long experience has shown, however, that IDCs can be less useful in joint problem solving in areas of policy contention where there is not an accepted factual and analytic base and where departments are responsive to the views of external stakeholders with conflicting objectives. IDCs typically have little capacity to do original analysis or research in their own right. They rely on the line agencies to do the work and report to the IDC. Whether the resources are made available by the line agencies in a timely and open way can itself become a matter of concern (Queensland Cabinet Handbook, 2006: 27-8).

Partnerships

More recently, IDCs have been complemented by more frequent use of formal partnerships, and special purpose agencies created outside the normal departmental structures to develop and/or deliver whole-of-government products (Queensland Cabinet Handbook, 2006: 25). These mechanisms are thought to be best for policy development, program design and review, program management and service delivery and crisis management.

Successful examples of such mechanisms are seen in the Cape York Partnerships (CYPs). Here, the Queensland Government developed a whole-of-government approach to the issues facing Indigenous communities in the Cape York region. The aim of the CYPs is to support Indigenous individuals, families, clans and communities to reduce their reliance upon welfare and to take more responsibility for their own and their community's future. Social 'recovery' is seen to occur as people

participate actively in their community and in the wider economy. In addition, CYPs aims to work with private as well as public agencies, including various philanthropic enterprises and the Commonwealth Government.

Task Forces

Since the mid 1980s Task Forces have addressed a range of issues in Australia such as public service reform, income security, and microeconomic reform. In the 1990s, they made major contributions to government directions in relation to investment and employment, and to the development of policy on native title, forest policy, salinity, land clearing, water reform and so forth. These issues are all characterised by a high political priority, complexity, an impact on the responsibilities of a number of portfolios, and frequently by conflict within the community and sometimes between portfolios (see MAC, 2004: 30).

An overseas example is that of the NZ Ministerial Task Force on Sport, Fitness and Leisure. Sam and Jackson (2004) describe the establishment of this task force by the New Zealand government in June 2000. As the authors argue, government-appointed inquiries and task forces can play an important role in policy development because of their strong link to public sentiment. Most have a mandate to seek public input through hearings, interviews and submissions and can therefore ensure that policy-making is achieved with the interests of the community in mind (Sam and Jackson, 2004: 205).

According to the Management Advisory Committee (2004: 30), however, a strong message from the literature and case studies is that whole-of-government approaches to complex problems should only be undertaken when more conventional approaches have failed. Although there is a conviction about the effectiveness of whole-of-government approaches, there is also a warning about its judicious use. It can be costly and time-consuming. Moreover, it can compete with existing political and community structures and agendas. As such, it may not be suited to situations in which routine, straightforward, issues and problems are being addressed.

Its worth can be demonstrated, however, in attempts to resolve complex problems that appear to defy conventional government approaches. These are the so-called 'wicked problems' of government, the solutions to which will often require the ignoring of jurisdictional boundaries and the removal of bureaucratic obstacles (MAC, 2004: 10). It may also be suitable for a limited time to ensure a particular issue is given joint priority and attention by relevant agencies. In some cases it may be appropriate to establish new structures and ongoing cross-agency linkages with substantial information infrastructure so as to deliver integrated services responsive to particular clients or communities. The investment involved, however, must be justified.

B) Immediate response mechanism

In addition to a task force as a way of achieving whole-of-government action, task forces have also been commonly implemented as a response to various natural, social or economic events that require an immediate and emergency response. Depending on the scale and severity of the event, a particular form of response plan will be triggered. These include the following:

Government / Immediate Response Plan

A Government Response Plan was activated in response to outbreaks of Avian Influenza in 2005, when highly pathogenic strains of the influenza were circulating in domestic poultry in a number of Asian and Eastern European countries. As part of its response, the Queensland Government took various measures to heighten biosecurity in Australia and to develop a comprehensive, inter-agency, response plan to respond to, and to control an outbreak - should one occur. In cases such as this where the threat of an event is impending, an *immediate response plan* may be required. While such

an event may not be considered an emergency, action is required without delay and can be activated on a case-by-case basis.

One example of this is the *Immediate Response Plans* chaired by the Queensland Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry (Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry, 2008). The aim of the IRP is to help reduce the impact of business closure and cutbacks in areas where a significant proportion of the population is employed by the affected business. Senior officers of relevant government agencies are brought into the response plan and are required to deploy resources to the plan as required.

An Immediate Response Plan was activated in Toowoomba in 2006 following the relocation of KR Castlemaine's smallgoods production line to Victoria. The closure of the factory triggered the loss of 350 jobs from the region (*Courier Mail*, 14th September 2006).

Emergency Response Plans/ Emergency Response Task Forces

At times, the severity of events, or the consequences arising from them, are of such magnitude that the situation is declared an emergency and a rapid response is required. This is usually, although not always, the case when lives are in danger. While not all emergency response requires a Task Force (such as the emergency response plan immediately established upon the discovery of fire ants in Queensland in 2001), two most notable emergency response mechanisms in recent years have involved the establishment of a Task Force. These have been the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) and the Operation Recovery Task Force.

Northern Territory Emergency Response

The NTER was established by the previous Australian Government to deal with child neglect and family violence in remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory (NTER, 2008: 2). The trigger for the Task Force was the release of the *Little Children are Sacred* - the report of the NT Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse (Anderson and Wilde, 2007) - which reported instances of child abuse that were seen to require emergency measures. The NTER was chaired by Dr Sue Gordon but also had an Operational Commander in the form of Major General David Chalmers who was responsible for ensuring 'rapid, coherent and coordinated on-the-ground rollout of the response and operational effort' (NTER, 2008: 4).

At its peak, the Task Force had a total of 44 staff seconded from eight Australian and Northern Territory government agencies. It also received over \$1.3bn in Federal government funding between 2007 and 2009 (NTER, 2008: 14).

The NTER was initially designed with three phases:

1. Stabilisation – the current phase to introduce emergency measures (year 1)
2. Normalisation of services and infrastructure (years 2-5)
3. Longer term support based on the same norms and choices that other Australians enjoy (year 5 onwards).

Operation Recovery Task Force

On 20th March 2006 Cyclone Larry caused widespread damage to 17,000 square kilometres of northern Queensland. A state of emergency was immediately declared for the cyclone-devastated region, with emergency service workers, non-government organisations, and local and extra-local volunteers, quickly mobilized to provide a coordinated relief and recovery effort – one that continued for many months (see Queensland Government, 2007: 6).

To assist the community in its recovery, the Premier appointed a Task Force to oversee and help deliver the recovery program. Effective on-site leadership was a key ‘ingredient’ – allowing all involved to focus on a speedy and effective recovery of affected communities. The Task Force supplemented the existing State Disaster Management Group (SDMG) which is the peak disaster management body in Queensland, and which continued to play a pivotal role in developing a government policy response to the issues identified by the Task Force.

However, it was acknowledged by the Premier that given the extent of the devastation, a special team would be required to coordinate and manage a recovery operation on a daily basis in the disaster area and to report on the evolving situation and recommend a full range of recovery measures. It was also seen as important to provide ‘a publicly visible focal point for recovery as a means of creating community confidence’ (Queensland Government, 2007: 8). Major General Peter Cosgrove was given the task of coordinating the recovery effort. According to many sources his physical presence on site, and his well-honed leadership skills, combined to give the community confidence that all efforts were being made by the Government.

Unlike the NTER, which had three phases of stabilisation, normalisation and longer-term support, the ORTF – as a post-disaster response – made its sole priority supporting the community in the rebuilding of homes and infrastructure (Queensland Government, 2007: 11).

C) Community engagement

Most whole-of-government activities are about addressing the cumulative impact of government policies and programs on particular communities, industry sectors, regions or categories of individuals. The common concern of these whole-of-government activities is to optimise the benefits to particular regions, communities or industry sectors, as well as to understand how policies and programs delivered by different departments and agencies come together (MAC, 2004: 91). Whole-of-government approaches are often far more responsive to community needs for better coordination of services or policies because they help avoid duplication.

In reflecting upon task force implementation in the UK, the Improvement and Development Agency (2006) identified a number of critical success factors, including the:

- creation of a shared vision for the future;
- building of trust and confidence;
- building of the capacity of key individuals among those affected by change;
- engaging, through enhanced communication, a broad array of stakeholders in the work of the task force; and
- ensuring the public is ‘on side’.

Composite Features of a Task Force Model

It has been argued that the term ‘task force’ is simply a change of nomenclature from that of ‘Interdepartmental Committee’. The MAC (2004) rejects this view, arguing that the latter term is normally restricted to a different, less representative, form of cross-departmental structure. What, then, have been the main features identified as belonging to a task force? The following are pertinent:

It is a temporary body. For example, the final report of the Operation Recovery Task Force argues that ‘it is the nature of special machinery that it cannot and should not need to last forever’ (Queensland Government, 2007: 13). Indeed, as it is also argued, one of the criteria of success of a

Task Force is its ability to be wound down at an appropriate stage and to make a transition towards 'normal' government business.

It involves cross-agency collaboration. It may, depending upon circumstances, have members from outside the public service.

It is task specific. It is established with specific objectives which aim to produce a clear outcome. Usually, the essential role of a task force is to 'provide continuous oversight, coordination and encouragement to the whole structure' (Queensland Government, 2007).

It has dedicated leadership. Emergency response task forces, in particular, may be headed up by senior public figures. The advantage of having high-status individuals leading task forces is that of giving the task force 'distance' from government. The leaders are more likely (than via a governmental/departmental-led approach) to be able to build trust amongst the community members, to listen impartially to their concerns, to represent community wishes to government, and to find novel (joined up) ways to address the main concerns of those affected.

It has full time membership. Members are frequently engaged full time with the whole-of-government task and work closely with the task force leader.

There is a separation of members from previous roles. As part of the attempt by governments to demonstrate the independent nature of the task force, and in an attempt to 'free' up the time of those involved in task force activities, those public servants who have become involved are frequently separated from line accountabilities in their regular departments.

It is appointed by government. Task forces are a government response to a particular issue or problem. Their formation via an elected government allows – in a democratic manner – for public resources to be harnessed and for any actions to carry the imprimatur of the state.

It reports directly to higher levels of government. Increasingly, the centre of government is playing a greater role in prioritising issues and coordinating task forces - including task force Chairs reporting directly to the Premier (see MAC, 2004).

It will often report to a cabinet committee or committee of ministers. With cabinet ministers involved, the task force activities are made accountable at the highest level and there is greater likelihood of coordinated action across departments if signals are seen to come from 'the top'.

Unlike an IDC, task force decisions are not necessarily achieved by consensus. Usually the task force head accepts responsibility for all decisions/recommendations.

It enables members to put their departmental interests behind them. For reasons outlined above, the task force can provide a 'neutral' space for discussion about the best coordinated way of addressing a problem or issue – irrespective of what impacts might be felt by any particular department.

It will address complex and/or urgent issues that no single department is likely to solve. If an issue is at a 'lower level' then IDCs or single 'lead' departments are the most likely basis for action. It is only when it is clear that a cross-departmental, coordinated, effort is required that the task force approach is usually considered. As Pike (2002: 13) has suggested, task forces have a 'pronounced crisis-laden flavour'.

It has the capacity to produce high-quality outcomes. By overcoming the traditional 'barriers' to cooperation between departments, and by harnessing the numerous skills of a leading public figure and top public servants, and with access to specific funding to help address the issue at hand, the task force is in a strong position to 'deliver' clear and focused outcomes in line with the specific objectives set for it by government.

Limitations of a Task Force Model

One disadvantage of the task force model is that it is often expensive (particularly when compared with IDCs). Monies are dedicated to the task of problem solving, and the time of many public servants is required – often over a considerable period of time. It has been found that Ministers will only devote time and resources needed if the matter is a key priority for the government. Indeed, in most cases, the Prime Minister or Premier’s backing has been critical to success (MAC, 2004: 31). They can also distance an employee from his or her home agency and substantive position – thereby removing them from high level responsibilities in their own department, and potentially causing that person to miss out on the normal opportunities for promotion.

Ways of improving the task force model have been proposed, for the UK, by Pike (2000). The two main problems that have been identified are those of the overuse of the model – something that can create the very duplication and inefficiencies it was established to overcome – and that of the boundary problems between the task force and other emerging (in particular, regional) decision-making bodies. Both problems might be addressed, according to Pike (2000: 89) by placing the task force within existing regional structures – particularly bodies that are democratically elected. For the UK, these would be the well-funded bodies such as the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh and Northern Ireland Assemblies and, in non-metropolitan England, various regional chambers. There does not appear to be an equivalent to these bodies in Australia, with statutory regional authorities possibly coming closest. The ‘danger’ of this for Australia, however, would be the possible loss of control of State governments. Given that it is usually a State government that would establish a task force, locating organisational power at the regional level might militate against overall State control of the processes and actions of the task force.

Another issue that arises in relation to task force performance is that of funding. Pike (2000) has argued that if funds are extracted from existing departmental budgets to allow the task force to conduct its whole-of-government activities there is likely to be some resentment. That is, funds once allocated for particular activities will have been diverted – with a subsequent loss of funds for planned departmental business. It is also possible for accountability to become fragmented when departmental funds are applied to new areas. The claim, too, that the task force is community-inclusive and pluralist in its deliberations is often undermined by the lack of minority voices (women, ethnic groups, youth, unions) in decision making (Pike 2002: 9). Indeed, in the UK, Pike (2002: 10) has quoted critics who have suggested that the proliferation of task forces has been designed to ‘neutralise political opposition’, bring the public to a consensus over New Labour directions, and to govern through a system which bypasses both the public and the parliament. If this were so, the task force model could be viewed as a threat to democracy and democratic processes, rather than a way of expediting outcomes and achieving community-based benefits through a novel form of governing. They can also be criticised for being – in Pike’s (2002: 23) words – ‘short-term, ‘quick fix’ and ‘ad hoc’. As Pike (2002: 21) goes on to note:

At worst, the Task Force may be interpreted as a short-term, reactive and perhaps politically expedient organisational fix....[drawing] upon a relatively exclusive and limited membership. Their specific and narrowly conceived focus, time-limited and resource-bound nature, coupled with concerns regarding their leadership, transparency and accountability may serve to undermine their potential effectiveness.

In relation to the latter point, there is some disquiet about the issue of the task force being an unelected body which spends public money in a manner that is potentially less accountable than in the wider public sphere.

The above concerns notwithstanding, the task force has shown its value as an organisational apparatus that government can readily assemble, employ immediately, and to which clear and time-linked aims can be given. As such, a government can gain public support not only because of its immediate and sympathetic attempt to address critical issues, but also because it represents a means of going about problem-solving in a different manner from traditional government processes. The public, too, may be less cynical of the task force because it is headed by a leading public figure – someone who is instantly recognisable, and has credibility as a person of political neutrality. The presence of such a person can bring immediate legitimacy to the task force, particularly if he or she is seen as an advocate for the local community.

It would seem, then, that in judging the efficacy of task forces, it is necessary to examine the effectiveness of their activities in terms of the aims/objectives and time-lines set out at the time of their establishment. It is apparent that it is difficult to generalise about the task force model without reference to the success, or otherwise, of specific task forces in completing the work they were established to do. It does remain the case, however, that the task force model – in its broadest sense – is of great significance for scholars of the state as it appears to represent a new, hybrid, and multi-layered way of achieving the aims of government through a mechanism which combines a variety of new actors in a genuine attempt by the state to govern better (see Cheshire, Higgins and Lawrence, 2007).

APPENDIX 2. FULL PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The aim of the project was to undertake a review, on behalf of the Community Futures Task Force Unit, of the governance, methodology and performance of the Community Futures Task Force. As requested by the Task Force Unit, this review was an internal exercise involving members of the Task Force only, rather than seeking to canvass the views of the affected communities or indeed community representatives such as the local Mayors.

Data for this review were generated using two main techniques of secondary data analysis and semi-structured interviews, which we outline below.

Desktop analysis of relevant documents

Secondary data provided excellent insights into the policy framework of a Task Force model, including historical antecedents and more recent examples of the Task Force approach. These were generated from a review of government-related discussion papers; academic articles on Task Forces and other modes of whole-of-government operations; government reports; and relevant government websites.

More specific data on the operations of the Community Futures Task Force were accessed through a number of means. First, publicly available data were obtained through the Community Futures Task Force website, such as newsletters, notes of meetings and progress reports. Details of the Community Futures Fund, and various agency reports were also available via the website, including the Department of Communities' *Social Overviews Report: Traveston Crossing and Wyaralong*; the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries *Overview and Future Scenarios for Dairying in the Mary Valley* (2008); and PricewaterhouseCoopers' *Economic Development Strategy: Traveston Crossing / Mary Valley Area* (2007).

Other relevant material, including reports and discussion papers, were generously provided by the Community Futures Task Force Unit as part of their contribution to the project. These provided considerable depth and detail into the operations of the Task Force, its limitations, achievements and challenges. Such material included relevant sections of the Environmental Impact Statement prepared by Sinclair, Knight, Mertz and QWI; Task Force responses to the EIS process; Community Futures Task Force *Annual Reports* and discussion papers.

Broader contextual information relating to the dam proposals was also obtained from a review of Queensland government media releases as well as from the website of the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport, which conducted an inquiry into the Traveston Crossing Dam in 2006-7. As well as obtaining copies of the final report from the inquiry and the transcripts of public hearings, the Senate Inquiry also prompted a significant number of submissions, which were all publicly available through the website. Since it was not possible to review all 246 submissions, a search was conducted for documents that referred to the Community Futures Task Force rather than simply to the Traveston Crossing Dam proposal. Those selected included the submission by the Queensland Government as well as those of various private individuals or community organisations, all of whom commented upon the work of the Task Force. Submissions by various agricultural organisations were also examined to obtain data on likely impacts of the dam proposals upon the regional (mainly agricultural) economy.

Semi-structured Interviews with Task Force Members

In order to retrospectively examine the performance of the Task Force, it was considered necessary to access the views and opinions of those who had worked most closely with the Task Force since its

establishment. This was achieved through the use of qualitative, semi-structured, interviews that sought to understand how people make sense of their experiences rather than to statistically test whether those experiences are generalisable to a broader population (Schwandt, 1994). Such an approach is based upon an interpretivist paradigm in the social sciences that acknowledges people construct meanings of the world, which are socially and historically contingent (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Thus, different people are likely to hold different views of a particular phenomenon depending on the context in which those views are formulated. Within such a paradigm, the role of the researcher is not necessarily to determine which statements are more accurate than others, but rather to understand how it is that different actors come to see the world in different ways, and to portray those competing views in all their complexities and contradictions. This is reflected in the report where we examine a variety of viewpoints on the same issue before offering our own interpretation based on these, and our own, views of the situation. A semi-structured interview is considered most appropriate for this approach because it has a fluid and flexible structure that ensures the 'conversation with a purpose' remains targeted on specific issues, but allows unexpected insights to emerge as interviewees direct the discussion towards matters that interest them most.

Sampling

Interviewees were sampled using a purposive framework which involves selecting people on the basis of their relevance to, and involvement in, the topic under study. In this case, there were various groups that could have been sampled for this review, including community members who had received support from the Task Force through case management work, property purchase and general inquiries. Nevertheless, given the rather controversial nature of the dam proposal, particularly in the Mary Valley, the Task Force Unit felt not only that inviting community participation in the study at this time could potentially inflame the situation, but also that community views regarding the effectiveness or otherwise of the Task Force would be skewed by local opposition to the dam proposals. While the project methodology adopted would have been able to deal with such skewed opinions, while still providing important community insights, we fully acknowledge the sensitivity and confidentiality of the issues and concurred with the Task Force's position. A second stage of the review which broadens the scope to include the Mayors and the community is currently under consideration.

As a result, prospective interviewees were selected from Task Force State Government member agencies. Task Force representatives from local government were not to be included in the review for similar reasons as those provided above. Unfortunately, this means that their views and experiences have not been canvassed, which has limited the study to some extent.

Selection of the interviewees occurred on the specific recommendations of Task Force Unit staff who provided a list of 58 people who were currently, or had been involved in the Task Force. From this list, 30 were identified as having been most active in the Task Force and therefore as being most representative and in a position to say something meaningful about its performance. These individuals were broadly representatives of all member agencies, plus additional agencies that had been included on specific projects, as required.

Initial contact was facilitated by the Chair of the Task Force, Peter Arnison, who wrote to each potential interviewee introducing the research team and explaining the purpose of the review. This was followed up by a letter from the research team inviting people to participate, which was subsequently followed up by an email or telephone call to individuals to arrange an interview. In some cases, the Task Force Unit staff assisted with the scheduling of interviews and provided an interview room for use in the Executive Building. Interviewees were also sent a participant information sheet, which outlined the nature of the research and what participation would entail; the ethical procedures adopted by the research team and assurances of privacy and confidentiality.

One person declined to participate; another failed to return the researchers' calls and a third had left the Task Force and was difficult to track down. This left a total of 27 individuals willing to participate. These were overwhelmingly male (19) and a combination of senior agency staff and more junior staff working on specific agency projects.

The Interviews

Interviews generally lasted from 45 minutes to an hour and a half and, with the permission of participants, were tape recorded and later transcribed. Some interviewees declined to be recorded and notes from the interview were hand-written. Most were conducted face-to-face with one or two members of the research team although two interviews were conducted by telephone. The majority (24) were Brisbane-based. One interview was conducted as a group with three staff. At the beginning of each interview, participants were provided with an opportunity to discuss the project and ask questions before signing a University Informed Consent Form. The interviews were structured around a number of key themes, including: the establishment of the Task Force; the nature and extent of agency involvement; interviewee experiences with other models of community engagement, including those associated with other significant projects or emergency responses; the performance of the Task Force against its four key terms of reference; lessons learnt from the Task Force experience; and future applications of a similar community engagement model.

Ethical considerations

In acknowledging the confidential nature of the review process, it was imperative to reassure participants that their privacy would be respected and that they would not be harmed in any way through being attributed to particular viewpoints and opinions. It was also important to assure participants that they should feel comfortable expressing their views and opinions, even if these were critical of the Task Force, in order to produce a report that was insightful and which offered lessons that could be applied in the future.

There are standard mechanisms in place for protecting participant privacy and confidentiality, and these were adhered to as part of the ethical approval process granted to the project by The University of Queensland's Behavioural and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee. Frequently, this involves de-identifying the information provided by removing names and other identifying details, such as departmental affiliation, from interview transcripts and all subsequent documentation and publications. However, 'internal confidentiality' – whereby individuals are unidentifiable to other members of a group to which they belong – is often difficult to achieve with entities such as the Community Futures Task Force since individuals are easily identifiable given the limited membership of the group and by the official positions people hold. Additional strategies were therefore put in place to address this issue. First, participants were fully advised of the potential confidentiality issues arising from this research and invited to discuss any concerns with the research team. Second, they were assured that anything disclosed 'off the record' during interviews would not be used and the audio recorder would be switched off upon request. Third, in the written report, some contextual details have been omitted from, or changed, in certain quotes to prevent the speaker from being identified. Some participants, for example, described particular meetings they had attended which, if accounted in detail, would render them easily identifiable to others who had been present. Finally, where interview excerpts are usually attributed to people, either by pseudonym or departmental affiliation, these have also been omitted from the report to further protect individual identities.

Limitations of the research

In all social research, there is a need to balance methodological rigour with pragmatic concerns, which invariably limits the research and data to some degree. In this project, there were three limitations that need to be acknowledged in assessing the findings and recommendations of the report. First, is that the review process was relatively short and focussed, which made it impossible to conduct a comprehensive analysis of every aspect of Task Force activities within the timeframe and resources available. For this reason, our recommendations are broad rather than specific but may be used as a basis for ongoing discussions with the Task Force Unit, as required.

Second, as already noted, this review is an *internal* review that canvasses the views and opinions of Task Force members from State government agencies only. In this respect, it was difficult to assess, with any confidence, the performance of the Task Force in terms of its ability to make a positive contribution to the affected communities. During interviews, Task Force members were able to provide their own evidence of the positive impact they were making, while also giving fairly reflective accounts on areas that needed improvements.

Finally, this research was conducted with the generous support and assistance of the Community Futures Task Force Unit. In many ways, this certainly enhanced the quality of the research by providing access to data and personnel that would not have been forthcoming otherwise. At the same time, it also represents a limitation of the research in that the review process was seen as inextricably tied to the Community Task Force Unit itself. While the research team emphasised the independence of the review and operated according to standard academic, methodological and ethical procedures, a number of participants were very cautious about being involved in the process because of confidentiality issues. Moreover, interviews were conducted with those who had been recommended by the Task Force only, which meant that other, alternative perspectives were possibly excluded from the final account.