



THE IMPACTS AND IMPLICATIONS OF COMMUNITY PLANNING ON RESILIENCE IN RURAL AND REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

A Thesis submitted by

Janice Margaret Moriarty
BA, GDipMan, MBA

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ABSTRACT

Balancing participatory and representative democracy for collective community leadership is essential to establishing a community governance structure in the field of local government in Queensland, Australia. Community planning has been viewed by state and territory governments in Australia as the vehicle for increasing participatory democracy for local governments over the past two decades. Increasing participatory democracy and re-legitimising representative democracy through a community governance structure is critical for rural and regional communities to build capacity and resilience given the prominent role local government plays in regional community life. Currently, there is limited knowledge of maturing and proven local government community governance models that utilise the practice of community planning to build community capacity in rural and regional Queensland and Australia. This study interrogates Queensland's Central Highlands Regional Council (CHRC) Community Reference Group (CRG) model which utilises community planning as a process for establishing a deliberative community governance model. CHRC facilitates a network of 13 CRGs to undertake community planning, community engagement and community development in each of the 13 localities in the region. The large amount of verbatim data from the CRG and Council participants reveals the role agency, social and cultural capital play in building capacity between the CRG members and Council. This unique study provides authentic insights into community leadership collectives, showcasing their particular version of community planning practice in a regional/rural setting. Using Bourdieu's Theory of Practice and Wenger's Communities of Practice (CoPs) as a social theory of learning frames the CRG practice of community planning within these contexts. Constructivist Grounded Theory methodology provides a systematic and iterative process for data collection and analysis to reveal the story of the CHRC CRG model from 2013 – 2021. Over time, the CRG model has developed into a distinct and maturing deliberative community governance model for practicing community planning in the field of local government. This CRG model can be adopted by other regional councils in Australia or internationally to build authentic community capacity and, therefore, increase community resilience.

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS

I Janice Moriarty declare that the Thesis entitled *The Impacts and Implications of Community Planning on Resilience in Rural and Regional Communities* is not more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes. The thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Date: September 2023

Endorsed by:

Associate Professor Janet McDonald
Principal Supervisor

Dr Geoffrey Woolcock
Associate Supervisor

Student and supervisors' signatures of endorsement are held at the University.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CCI	Comprehensive community initiatives
CCF	Community Capitals Framework
CEDO	Community engagement and development officer
CEO	Chief executive officer
CHDC	Central Highlands Development Corporation
CHRC	Central Highlands Regional Council
CoPs	Communities of Practice
CRG	Community reference group
P&C	Parents and citizens association
Sq kms	Square kilometres
USQ/UniSQ	University of Southern Queensland
UTAS	University of Tasmania

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Scope of the study

This research study aims to understand how the Central Highlands Regional Council (CHRC) Community Reference Group (CRG) model builds community capacity and therefore community resilience in rural and regional communities. While there is ample literature about community development, community capacity building and community planning, little is known about Australian local government models for implementing community planning in rural and regional communities, such as the model practiced by CHRC in Queensland. With limited knowledge of this practice in Queensland or Australia, this study explores how a local government establishes vital community connections through community planning. Two Queensland Government policy changes provided the impetus for CHRC to develop the CRG model. These are the 2008 Queensland local government amalgamations and the requirement for local governments in Queensland to develop 10-year community plans. CHRC developed the CRG model to implement the 10-year *Central Highlands 2022 (CH2022) Community Plan* in the 13 localities of the Central Highlands region.

Central Highlands Regional Council is located in regional/rural Central Queensland and became an entity when the Queensland local government amalgamations took effect in March 2008. CHRC was formed when the four former shires of Emerald (10,364 sq kms), Peak Downs (8,364 sq kms), Bauhinia (23,649 sq kms) and Duaringa (18,201 sq kms) were amalgamated. These former shires were created in 1903, over 100 years prior, under the *1902 Local Authority Act*. The four mayors and 32 councillors of the former Shires were replaced by one mayor and eight councillors when they were amalgamated. Currently, the CHRC covers an area of 58,830 square kilometers, which is almost the size of the Australian state of Tasmania, and in 2008 the population of CHRC was 29,244 (Annual Report 2008-2009, CHRC). CHRC was established as an undivided Council which means it does not have divisions nor wards to which elected representatives are designated.

Along with the other State and Territory governments in Australia, the Queensland state government developed a strategic framework for local governments within the *2009 Local Government Act* (Grant, Dollery, Kortt & Blackwell, 2011, p. 8). This Act required local governments to have community plans (minimum 10 years), corporate plans (5 years) and 10-year financial and asset

management plans (p. 9). To meet this legislative requirement, CHRC developed the 10-year *CH2022 Community Plan*, 'Visions for Our Community: Our Region', which took effect from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2022. At the time of writing this thesis, CHRC is developing their second long-term community plan. In the absence of divisions, during the development of the *CH2022 Community Plan*, CHRC identified and formed the 13 community localities within the Central Highlands. These localities are: Arcadia Valley, Bauhinia, Blackwater, Bluff, Capella, Comet, Dingo, Duaringa, Emerald, Gemfields, Rolleston, Springsure and Tieri.

Due to a change in government, in 2012, the *2009 Local Government Act and Regulations* were reformed and the requirement for Queensland local governments to have community plans was repealed. However, after undertaking extensive community consultation during the development of the *CH2022 Community Plan*, CHRC remained committed to implementing this plan which featured an individual community plan for each of the 13 localities. By 2013, CHRC developed the CRG model to engage and partner with community members, other levels of government, industry and service organisations to implement the 13 community plans. To achieve this, the CRG model involved CHRC establishing and facilitating a CRG in each of the 13 localities. The first CRG was formed in Capella in October 2013, as a six-month pilot program, and then the next 12 CRGs were rolled out from June 2014 to May 2015.

As a Council employee (2008-2017), I was involved in developing the CRG model and the establishing the 13 CRGs. At that time, I had the opportunity to investigate the approaches other councils took to implementing their community plans in Victoria and Queensland, such as Isaac Regional Council, Logan City Council and Redlands City Council. It became evident to me that the CHRC's CRG model was unique, especially for a local government in regional/rural Queensland. This study captures a highly participatory snapshot of how the CRGs have developed from 2013 to 2021.

1.2. Researcher position and ethical clearance

From 2008-2017, I was employed at CHRC as the Manager of the Community Development Unit and in this role, I managed the project to develop the *CH2022 Community Plan* and led the project to develop the CRG model and establish the 13 CRGs. I enrolled in my doctoral course with University of Southern Queensland in

2015, while I was still an employee of Council, to pursue an academic pathway that allowed me to explore how this model might build community capacity, and therefore resilience. As a community practitioner, this research enabled me to align community planning practice with a theoretical framework, to understand the benefits of this model for CHRC, the community and other local governments. After leaving Council in 2017, I became a councillor at CHRC in 2020, which provided me with the opportunity to reengage with the CRGs. Becoming a councillor did change the dynamics for myself as a researcher, requiring additional ethical considerations.

There were two vital considerations when applying for ethical clearance with the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) for this research project. Firstly, I had to consider my professional involvement and account for potential bias in my data collection and analysis. Secondly, I had to demonstrate critical distance when conducting interviews, as well as through my ongoing interactions with CRG members and CHRC personnel. This specifically related to my current role as a councillor, given relationships and power dynamics consistently change, and as a researcher, these considerations had to be explicit and transparent. To address this, a local independent interviewer and a transcriber were engaged for the interview data collection phase of this research. I also undertook to comply with approval protocols when engaging with CHRC staff, specifically the Manager of the Connected Communities team and the Community Engagement and Development Officers (CEDOs), as they became “informants” in the interview process and acted as first contact points for interview participants. After seeking support from CHRC for this research project, I received a letter of approval and support from the Mayor of CHRC on 11 September 2020.

The University of Southern Queensland confirmed this research project met the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) on 21 October 2020 – USQ HREC ID: H20REA258. *Project title: The Impacts and Implications of community planning on resilience of regional and rural communities.* Gaining Ethics Approval and Council support afforded me essential authority and credibility when engaging with CRG members and Council staff. As Council approved support for the study and the involvement of staff, the findings of this research and this unique phenomenon will be shared with CHRC.

I believe this study provides a method of practice that other rural and regional councils may wish to use. Also, these research findings will benefit CHRC by

providing an insight into their current and future community planning practice with the CRGs.

1.3. Theoretical and methodological scope

The theoretical framework used in this research study integrates Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice (1990) as well as Etienne Wenger's significantly expanded Communities of Practice (1991) as a social theory of learning. Bourdieu's Theory of Practice is used as a sociological lens to theoretically frame community capacity building as agency, social and cultural capital within the field of local government, as detailed in Chapter 2 (Literature Review). Wenger's Communities of Practice (CoPs) social theory of learning situates individual and group practice within a domain of knowledge which is comprised of four components: meaning, practice, community and identity. For the purpose of this research study, I view each CRG as a community of practice. This theoretical framework strikes a balance between the CRG's practice of community planning and their sociological context.

This project applies a Grounded Theory methodology, specifically Constructivist Grounded Theory as advocated by Charmaz (2008). Charmaz's version of Grounded Theory aligns with my standpoint of exploring emergent practices in communities, and therefore my chosen methods of data collection and analysis are heavily influenced by this methodology. Charmaz says that Grounded Theory provides a systematic approach to collecting and analysing data that combines explicitness and flexibility (2008, p. 155). Charmaz's version of Constructivist Grounded Theory has enabled me to deploy a flexible approach and iterative process for data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3 (Research Methodology) describes the data collection, coding and analysis undertaken for this research project. The data collection consisted of two rounds of in-depth semi-structured interviews, which included an interview with the independent interviewer, transcriber and myself to confirm emerging patterns and themes in the interview responses and to check credibility of data. Forty-five interviews were conducted for this research study. The coding and data analysis process was conducted at two levels: Level 1 is data familiarisation and coding, and Level 2 links the code categories to the findings. The Level 1 data analysis (or the initial data analysis for this research) established 25 codes after line-by-line comparative analysis of the first round of interview transcripts. After this analysis, the

second round of interviews (nine) were conducted because Constructivist Grounded Theory allows for an iterative and comparative process with data collection and analysis.

Level 2 coding involved the additional layers of comparing and linking codes resulting in the development of 12 categories from the 25 codes. Memos for each category were directly generated using Charmaz's coding suggestions. As I consider the CRGs as CoPs, the four CoPs domain of practice components of meaning, community, practice and identity are used as themes to structure Chapter 4 (Findings). The 45 interviews yielded a large volume of rich data from the research participants. As Grounded Theory was used to specifically enable the capture of the emerging, living, authentic, verbatim experience of the CRGs, it will make this study important for CHRC and the other local governments.

The research topic for this study is in regard to the impacts and implications of community planning on resilience in rural and regional communities. While Grounded Theory does not recommend beginning research with already established research questions, based on my previous experience and knowledge of the CRGs as an employee at CHRC, I developed "hunches" to narrow the focus of this research project. These "hunches" are described in Chapter 3.

To the best of my knowledge, there are no other councils in Queensland that use CHRC's CRG model therefore, this study aims to provide new knowledge about the practice of community planning in the field of local government. Using Bourdieu's Theory of Practice and Wenger's CoPs social theory of learning, with a Constructivist Grounded Theory methodology, I claim to have structured an effective theoretical and methodological position, within which, I prepared for data collection, undertook data collection and coding, and conducted analysis to arrive at the significant and authentic findings detailed in Chapter 4.

1.4. Chapter summary and appendices

The remainder of this thesis is structured as follows.

Chapter 2: Literature Review is comprised of two sections. Section A explores Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice (1990) as well as Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's Communities of Practice (1991) as a social theory of learning which, together, structure the theoretical framework for this research study. Section B outlines the emergence of community planning and how this practice contributes to

community leadership, agency, social and cultural capitals. It is important to understand these concepts to determine whether the CHRC CRG model is contributing to capacity building. Section B also explains more specific detail around the evolution of local government community planning in Australia, in order to situate the CHRC CRG model.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology introduces the researcher's viewpoint and details how my position has framed the design and methods of data collection used for this research study. Constructivist Grounded Theory informed the emergent qualitative approach for this research project and provided an effective mechanism for the collection and analysis of a large quantity of verbatim data, which is detailed in this Chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings, presents the research data as four themes: Meaning 1, Community 2, Practice 3, and Identity 4, to frame the CRGs community planning practice. The themes are based on the four components comprising a domain of practice in Wenger's CoPs as a social theory of learning. As described in Chapter 2, by drawing on Bourdieu's Theory of Practice elements, the concepts of agency, social and cultural capital are used to understand how the CRG model is building community capacity within the field of local government.

Chapter 5: Conclusion, outlines the functions of the CRG model and recommendations based on the research findings in Chapter 3. This may assist other local governments who wish to adopt the CRG model and assist CRG members and CHRC with ideas to further inform CRG practices.

Appendixes: provide evidence of the CRGs and give an insight into their practices with a list of Council CRG documents and Impact Files, along with participant information, interview questions and the letter of approval from CHRC.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This research aims to understand how the Central Highlands Regional Council (CHRC) Community Reference Group (CRG) model builds community capacity and therefore community resilience. The CHRC CRG model was established by Council in 2013/15 to implement the *Central Highlands 2022 Community Plan*: most community planning is led by local government in Australia. There is ample literature about community development, community capacity building and community planning, however, little is known about local government models for implementing community planning in rural and regional communities, such as what is offered by the Central Highlands region in Queensland.

This literature review is comprised of two sections. Section A explores Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice (1990) as well as Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's Communities of Practice (1991) as a social theory of learning which, together, structure the theoretical framework for this research study. Bourdieu's Theory of Practice is comprised of the elements of field, habitus and capital and is used in this research project as a sociological frame to understand how agency, social and cultural capital contribute to community capacity building. Wenger significantly expands on the notion of Communities of Practice (CoPs), initially created with Jean Lave in 1991, as a social theory of learning which is comprised of four components within a domain of knowledge: meaning, practice, community and identity. For the purpose of this research study, I deliberately perceive CRGs as community leadership groups and CoPs. The components of CoPs will be used as an analytical lens to frame and present the research data in Chapter 4 (Findings) to best anchor the unique practice of community planning by the CRGs. Section B outlines the emergence of community planning and considers how this practice contributes to community leadership, agency, social and cultural capitals. It is important to understand these concepts to determine whether the CHRC CRG model is contributing to capacity building. Section B also explains the evolution of local government community planning in Australia in order to situate the CHRC CRG model.

2.1. Section A: Theoretical framework

2.1.1. Theory of practice

Bourdieu's theory of practice incorporates the three key elements of field, habitus and capital. Pierre Bourdieu (1930 - 2002) was a French sociologist and philosopher, who made important contributions to the study of education, culture, and class (Macionis & Plummer, 1998, p. 548). One of Bourdieu's most important and critiqued contributions is the integration of dualism in the structure versus agency debate (Mutch, 2003, p.27). To address this dualism, Bourdieu took an integrative theoretical approach that incorporates both agency and structure by means of three fundamental elements, which are field, habitus and capital (Poole and Germov, 2011, p. 55). Poole and Germov (2011) summarise these elements as "fields" being distinct social settings, "habitus" as personal dispositions and "capital" as resources (p. 55). According to Walther (2014), Bourdieu's Theory of Practice "is a flexible theoretical approach as the main elements can never be considered detached from each other" (p. 4). Walther (2014) adds "this makes it almost impossible to explain one element of Bourdieu's theory without referring to the other" (p. 4). Before discussing the elements of field, habitus and capitals, I will explain the agency versus structure context within which Bourdieu applies these elements.

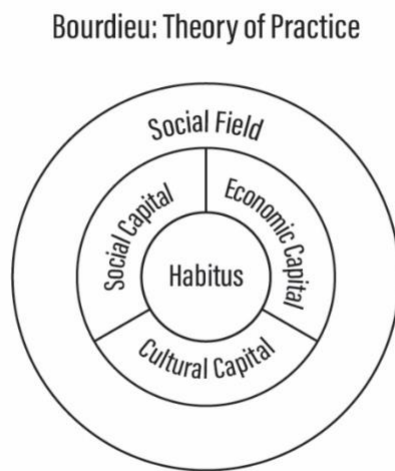
2.1.1.1 Agency versus structure

Germov and Poole (2011) say "the structure-agency debate addresses an age-old philosophical question about the extent to which humans can exercise free will as opposed to their thoughts and actions being determined by external factors" (p. 6). The classical sociologists, such as Marx (1994), Durkheim (2001), Weber (1978) and Simmel (1982) created the foundations for discussion about the relationship between the individual and society (Caetano, 2015, p. 60-61). Here the debate is focused on the extent to which individuals are free to act on the agency or whether external factors within societal structures determine individual agency. Mutch (2003) notes that:

the resolution of this tension might be sought in approaches that emphasise not the either/or of agency and structure, but the both/and, recognising not only their mutual constitution but also the need to examine the inter-relationships between them (p. 27).

For Bourdieu, “the primacy of social relations in his sociology is to address the concept of agency-structure and power within social fields” (Mutch, 2003, p. 27). According to Siisiainen (2003), structure for Bourdieu is made up of the social structures which are the rules that determine and condition an individuals’ or agents’ thoughts and behaviours (p.192). As social beings, individuals are shaped by the social structures they inhabit, create and reproduce. Therefore, Germov and Poole (2011) say it is not difficult to consider individuals who are influenced by cultural values and traditions, and that social institutions can have an impact on people’s lives (p. 6). They add that “agency refers to the choices individuals make, and the ways in which they interpret the world, rather than the assumption that they are passively shaped by it” (Poole & Germov, 2011, p. 51). While it is important not to combine structure and agency, social structures are an essential part of society and can enable people to exercise their agency more effectively (Germov & Poole, 2011, p. 6). Bourdieu, along with other theorists such as Giddens (1982, 1984) and Archer (2003b, 2007a, 2012), centres his work on defining the complex interplay between individuals and broader society to understand social change (Sadan, 1997, p. 142). For Bourdieu, social practice is participation in social life, which takes place through the interplay of field, habitus and capital to overcome the agency-structure dualities (Mutch, 2003, p. 27). Figure 1 depicts the elements of Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice as concentric circles to demonstrate how they interplay for the purpose of this study. Field as the outer sphere represents the social context, at the centre is the habitus of individual’s or agent’s and the middle sphere represents the different forms of capital agent’s utilise as resources within a social field.

Figure 1
Bourdieu: Theory of Practice



Understanding how these elements interplay in overcoming the agency-structure duality relates to the concepts of agency, social capital and cultural capital that underpin community capacity building, which is important to this research project. To summarise Bourdieu's Theory of Practice, the element of field will be used as an entry point prior to addressing habitus and capitals.

2.1.1.2 Field

One of the theoretical cornerstones of Bourdieu's sociology is the idea of society as a plurality of social fields (Siisiainen, 2003, p. 191). Fields represent the more structural part of Bourdieu's theory (Walther, 2014, p. 6). The idea of fields such as economic, judicial and political enables the consideration of openings and transformations within and across field structures as social spaces (Siisiainen, 2003, p. 191). Different fields can be distinguished from each other, and they can also be further subdivided into sub-fields (Walther, 2014, p. 6). From the Bourdieuan perspective, social struggles are carried out in different social spaces or fields (Siisiainen, 2003, p. 191). Bourdieu analysed society in terms of fields or social settings where people struggle over resources, competing and cooperating as needed (Poole & Germov, 2011, p. 55). Specific fields will often have their own forms of social control, their own structures of opportunity and their specific types of resources (Husu, 2013, p. 266). Husu (2013) quotes Bourdieu (2000) saying the social world is "the product and the stake of cognitive and political symbolic struggles

over knowledge and recognition” (p. 268). For Bourdieu, producers of the dominant cultural capital within a field control the economic capital and power (Husu, 2013, p. 268). Husu (2013) says for something to be understood as a field, it requires that “its agents are interpersonally related or oriented towards each other or that they share the same goal” (p. 269). A social field can be seen as a network, structure or set of relationships that is an historically generated system of shared meaning (Walther, 2014, p. 5).

The daily life of social agents is determined by an infinite number of interactions, e.g. discussions, negotiations or conflicts (Walther, 2014, p. 4). The closer the agents are to each other in a space, the more common properties they have (Husu, 2013, p. 266). Each field can be understood to have its own logic and fields can significantly influence other fields (Siisiainen, 2003, p. 196). Within fields, agents and institutions are integrated and interact with each other in accordance with field-specific rules (Walther, 2014, p. 5). The rules are field-specific and there are no set rules or global rule that applies to all fields (Walther, 2014, p. 6). Bourdieu describes people’s interaction within social fields as “a matter of learning the rules of the game” (Marjoribanks, 2001, p. 452).

Wacquant (2011) and Bourdieu (1983a) suggest that these rules are not formalised but are tacit in nature and need to be internalised by agents to demonstrate appropriate practices and strategies (as cited in Walther, 2014, p. 6). For Bourdieu, fields can be likened to games, such as football, where people develop various strategies to play the game to their personal benefit (Poole & Germov, 2011, p. 55). He views fields as arenas of ongoing struggle in which each agent aims to either improve or conserve his or her own position (Husu, 2013, p. 268). Bourdieu refers to individual position-taking as the possible choices that are open to social agents within a field and to stances as the practices that tend to be consistent with their actual position in a field (Husu, 2013, p. 266). Agents within a field can exercise their free will and choice to act on or exercise their agency (Husu, 2013, p. 266), and individuals are then located within fields because of the interaction of their habitus, capital and the “rules of the game” (Poole & Germov, 2011, p. 55). Social fields, like football games, provide the structure of Bourdieu’s view of society and contextualise the elements of habitus and capital (Walther, 2014, p. 6).

2.1.1.3 *Habitus*

Habitus is central to Bourdieu's theory of practice where he ties together agency and structure. Husu (2013) says it is habitus which considers the competence of individuals and groups to understand the characteristics and different dimensions of social problems within fields; field and habitus cannot be understood separately (p. 273). Fields define the interplay between the habitus of an individual/agent and their participation in social spaces (Husu, 2013, p. 266). Bourdieu uses the concept of habitus as the mental or cognitive structures, dispositions or properties through which individuals deal with the world (Poole & Germov, 2011, p. 56). In simple terms, Bourdieu explains habitus as society influencing an agent's perception of the world and then the agent influencing society in an endless loop. Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 18) describes habitus as constituting a "system of lasting and transportable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified task" (as cited by Marjoribanks, 2011, p. 451). Husu (2013) notes that "habitus stresses that the objective structures, such as institutions, social relations and resources, become embodied and internalised in the cognitive structure of agents", and that this is further realised in practice or actions (p. 266). Habitus is an endless ability to produce thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions that are set by an agent's historical and social conditioning. In this way, habitus structures new experiences within social structures based on past experiences, which emphasises the constructive role of agents (Husu, 2013, p. 266).

In Bourdieu's theory, habitus refers to socially learnt dispositions or taken-for-granted sets of orientations, skills, and ways of acting that shape behaviour or practices (Western & Baxter, 2011, p. 215). Habitus is an internalised structure that is formed in relation to sociocultural and class positioning, and in relation to specific social fields, which help determine what counts as socially valuable practices (Marjoribanks, 2011, p. 452). Mouzelis (2007) says Bourdieu's habitus is the major link between social structures, on the one hand, and practices or actions of individual agents residing within the social structures on the other (p. 1). However, Mouzelis (2007) says Bourdieu underestimates the rational, calculative and reflexive aspects of individual and group human action (p. 6). While habitus is one of the most

commented on of Bourdieu's work, Elder-Vass (2008) points out that Bourdieu has omitted, though not always, the role of conscious thought in both the development and the operation of the habitus by individuals in the field (p. 6). There is an absence of a clear explanation of how dispositions produce practices and then how consciousness might sometimes be involved in the process (Elder-Vass, 2008, p. 9). Additionally, Mouzelis (2007) refers to a reflexive habitus as actors being more reflexive and rational in strategising social games related to them in specific fields, rather than beyond taken-for-granted and exceptional states of affairs (p. 7). This is what my research will address, given the context of CRGs and CHRC within the field of local government.

Margaret Archer (1995, 2007) theorises reflexivity in terms of a distinct yet complimentary relationship between social structure and individual agency (Moffatt, Ryan & Barton, 2016, p. 33). Moffatt et al. (2016) add that Archer, "explains that one's internal conversations enable a weighing up of personal desires and motivations with the normalising structures in place to decide on the best action for oneself" (p. 30). This is in opposition to Bourdieu's tenacious retention of the socialised habitus as the guide to action (Archer, 2013, p. 5). Caetano (2014) says that Bourdieu does not acknowledge the importance of reflexivity when exercised as internal dialogues, instead he highlights practical sense which allows agents to know what to do in social contexts (p. 67). Husu (2013) also suggests that for Bourdieu (1992a, p. 209), all practices are "oriented towards the maximisation of material and symbolic profit" (p. 271). In most cases interest is not always intentional or conscious action towards calculated goals, but rather it is linked to a sense of game in which the habitus tends to be adjusted as needed. According to Bourdieu, different types and quantities of capital are accessed by agents to negotiate social fields (Husu, 2013, p. 266). Reworking Marx's notion of capital from being economically based, Bourdieu uses the terms cultural capital and social capital in addition to economic capital (Poole & Germov, 2011, p. 56). I will be using cultural capital and social capital as well as agency to help interrogate the data collected for this research in Chapter 4.

2.1.1.4 *Capital*

Skinner, Dwight, and Cowell (2008) say the concept of capitals is also central to Bourdieu's (1991, p. 230) formulation of social space where "the kinds of capital,

like trumps in a game of cards, are powers which define chances of profit in a given field” (p. 258). Skinner et al. (2008) also note that Bourdieu (1991, p. 231) refers to social positioning as distributed according to “the overall volume of the capital ... and the composition of that capital” (p. 258). According to Siisiainen (2003), Bourdieu (1986) identified three main forms of capital whose control defines the social position of actors and are important as resources for successful social practice (p. 192). These are: economic, cultural and social, and are controlled by various agents to define their positions and possibilities within any field. Siisiainen (2003) cites Bourdieu and Wacquant (1996, p. 76) saying (including their emphasis in italics):

The field of power is a *field of forces* defined by the structures of the existing balance of forces between forms of power, or between different species of capital. It is also simultaneously a *field of struggles for power among the holders of different forms of power*. It is a space of play and competition in which social agents and institutions which all possess the determinate quality of specific capital (economic and cultural capital in particular) sufficient to occupy the dominant positions within their respective fields (p. 192).

The added benefit of each form of capital is that agents can convert them into other forms of capital, in differing quantities or blends, to enhance symbolic capital or power in each social setting to gain prestige or recognition (Husu, 2013, p. 271). Bourdieu theorised cultural capital as a form of capital that under certain conditions, can be converted into economic capital (Skinner et al., 2008, p. 258). For Bourdieu, the concept of capital refers to usable economic, cultural, and social resources; he refers to economic capital as incomes and wealth arising from income-generating property and skills (Siisiainen, 2003, p. 193; Western & Baxter, 2011, p. 215). Economic capital is intimately linked with and converted into money, as well as institutionalised into forms of property rights (Skinner et al., 2008, p. 258). Economic capital consists of Marx’s sense of capital, as well as other economic possessions that increase an actor’s capacities in society (Siisiainen, 2003, p. 192). Cultural capital refers to cultural competence, or the ability to draw upon and use culture that is socially valued and rewarded in everyday life (Western & Baxter, 2011, p. 216).

Throsby (1999) says that according to Bourdieu (1986, p. 243), cultural capital exists in three states, which are a) embodied, b) objectified and c) institutionalised

(p. 4). The embodied state is a long-lasting disposition of the individual's mind and body. In an objectified state, cultural capital is turned into cultural goods such as pictures, books, instruments and machines, and in an institutionalised state, cultural capital can be in the form of an academic credential (p. 4). Bourdieu (1986, p. 249) states that "social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resource which is linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (as cited in Skinner et al., 2008, p. 258). Newman and Dale (2005) note that Bourdieu "argued that social networks are not a natural given and must be constructed through investment strategies oriented to the institutionalisation of group relations" (p. 479). Bourdieu viewed social capital as based on the social connections that people have developed and maintain to exist in institutionalised forms of social status (Skinner et al., 2008, p. 259).

For Bourdieu, individuals with similar kinds and amounts of capital have similar experiences, leading to the development of similar *habiti* (Western & Baxter, 2011, p. 216). In this way, Bourdieu's elements of capital and *habitus* can apply at individual, group and community levels. Also, Throsby (1999) notes that "when relationships between individuals and groups in society are invoked the aggregate impacts" of these connections, they become social and culture capital (p.4). Perkins, Hughey and Speer also note that social capital operates at an individual or micro-social level as well as at collective or meso- and macro- levels (2002, p. 36; Borgatti, Jones & Everett, 1998). As noted previously, for Bourdieu the *habitus* refers to socially learnt dispositions, skills and ways of acting that shape behaviours or practices of agents (Wester & Baxter, 2011, p. 215). Social practice by agents is an individual's capacity to act for their own meanings, needs and interests, which is agency (Garkovich, 2012, p. 114). According to Dale (2013), agency can be effectively exercised at multiple levels including individual, group or community, through democratic participation (p. 3). Madden (2010) notes that Bourdieu's political sociology is helpful to understand the empowerment and agency, and community capacity building within a local governance space (p. 190). As this research study is about the CHRC CRG model, the social field is local government. Therefore, drawing on Bourdieu's Theory of Practice, agency, social and cultural capital are used to frame community capacity building within the field of local government. For the purpose of this research study, Bourdieu's element of economic capital is viewed

separately from agency, social and cultural capital in relation to CRG community capacity building.

This research project integrates Bourdieu's Theory of Practice and Wenger's Communities of Practice (CoPs) as a social theory of learning. As previously noted, the CRGs were established to implement community planning in the 13 CRG localities and the CRGs are viewed as CoPs. Therefore, the aim is to understand how the CRGs exist, as CoPs, to enhance agency, social and cultural capital to build community capacity.

2.1.2. Communities of Practice – a social learning theory

Wenger (1998) notes that CoPs provide a focus on participation and what it takes to understand and support the learning capacity for individuals, communities (of practice) and organisations (p. 7-8). This section provides a brief introduction to CoPs and theory development, a discussion of CoPs components of meaning, practice, community and identity as well as practice within a landscape of CoPs, and their application in organisations and civic development. The term "community of practice" was first coined by anthropologist Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in 1991 while they were studying apprenticeship as a learning model (Wenger, 2011, p. 3). Their studies reveal a complex set of social relationships through which learning takes place, beyond the master and apprentice. For Lave and Wenger, the CoPs refers to a group of people or community that act as a living curriculum for apprentices. From this perspective, the practice of these communities became dynamic and involved learning on the part of everyone (Wenger, 2011, p. 4). CoPs is a concept for framing and analysing Wenger's social theory of learning, which enhances some of Bourdieu's ideas in his Theory of Practice, as it places learning in the context of the lived experience of people as they participate in the world (Wenger, 1998, p. 3). It is through the process of experiencing the world, and engagement within it, that humans gain knowledge and learning (Wenger, 1998, p. 51). Wenger, McDermott & Snyder (2002) state that "communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (p. 4). Therefore, CoPs provides an approach that focuses on people and on the social structures that enable them to learn with and from each other over time (Wenger, 2011, p. 4). These collective practices emerge through a shared

enterprise and become the property of a group of people or community. In this way, these kinds of communities become communities of practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 45).

Gobbi (2010) says that at the heart of any discussion of communities and practice are the concepts associated with interpersonal relationships, the purpose of the community, the knowledge that is explicitly and implicitly communicated within a given community, and “the thorny discussions about what constitutes practice, theory and action” (p. 145). Barab and Duffy (1998) note that at the time when theory around communities of practice was coined by Lave and Wenger, cognitive theories were moving away from a focus on individual thinkers to theories that focused on the social nature of cognition and meaning (p. 3). From an individual’s perspective this shifts the focus from the learning of skills or knowledge to developing an identity as a member of a community as the same process (Barab & Duffy, 1998, p. 4). According to Polin (2010), social learning theory itself evolved in relation to studies of learning focused on informal settings of learning on-the-job in practitioner communities and in everyday life, such as Lave and Wenger’s work (p. 165). Polin (2010) also suggests these social learning models perceive learning as a kind of enculturation of the individual into a system of practice (p. 165).

For Wenger (2010), a community of practice can be viewed as a simple social system and that a complex social system can be viewed as made up of interrelated communities of practice (p. 179). Although there are elements of the CoPs concept that may be aligned with this perspective, its roots are in the social nature of human learning inspired by anthropology and social theory, and not born in a “systems theory” tradition (Blackmore, 2010, p. 1; Wenger, 2010, p. 179). CoPs describes learning as the transformation or development of the individual which is evident in his or her changing identity and practice (Polin, 2010, p. 165). For Wenger (1998), the kind of social theory he proposes “is not a replacement of other theories of learning” but rather, “the primary focus is on learning as social participation” (p. 4). Wenger (2010) says that CoPs is part of a broader conceptual framework for thinking about building learning capacity in its social dimensions (p. 179).

2.1.2.1 CoPs components

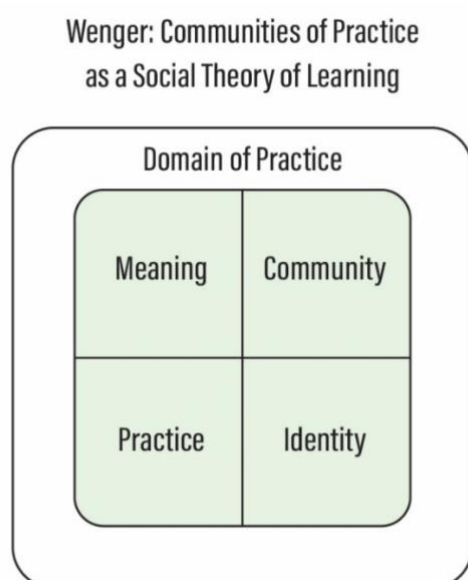
Etienne Wenger’s book *Communities of Practice: learning, meaning and identity* (1998) details his social theory of learning and sets out a structure that applies an analytical lens to learning (Blackmore, 2010, p. 103). Wenger (1998)

notes that a social learning theory must integrate components that characterise social participation as a process of learning and of knowing (p. 4-5). Wenger suggests that the four components of CoPs are:

- **Meaning** as “a way of talking about our (changing) ability both individually and collectively to experience our life and the world as meaningful”
- **Community** as “a way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognisable as competence”
- **Practice** as “a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action”
- **Identity** as “a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates histories of becoming in the context of our communities” (Wenger, 1998, p. 5, my emphasis).

Figure 2 depicts Wenger’s concept of CoPs domain of practice which comprises the four components of meaning, community, practice and identity.

Figure 2
Wenger’s CoPs as a social theory of learning



For the purpose of this research study, these four components are used as an analytical lens to structure the four themes identified in Chapter 4 and determine how

agency, social and cultural capital play a role in community capacity building. Wenger (1998) states that these components cannot be separated out from the others as they are interrelated (p. 5). These components operate within a domain of knowledge that specifically defines the practice of CoPs. In this context, Wenger et al. (2002), describe a domain as “a set of issues to create common ground and a sense of common identity ... the domain inspires members to contribute and participate, guides their learning, and gives meaning to their actions” (p. 27). Wenger et al. (2002), say a well-defined domain legitimises the community by affirming its purpose and value to members and other stakeholders; this domain guides the questions the members ask and the way they organise their knowledge (pp. 27, 32). It defines the identity of the community, its place in the world, and the value of its achievement to members and to others (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 31). What follows is a summary of these four foundational components, which, although outlined separately, exist as woven together to define the overall concept of CoPs that is pursued in this research project.

2.1.2.2 *Meaning*

As noted above, Wenger (1998) describes meaning as “a way of talking about (changing) ability, individually and collectively, to experience our life and the world as meaningful” (p. 5). Wenger (1998) adds: “meaning is located in the process of negotiating meaning, and the negotiation of meaning involves the interaction of the processes of participation and reification” (p. 54). In social contexts, negotiating meaning in practice involves a dual process of meaning making through participation and reification (Wenger, 2010, p. 180). Participation is an active and complex process that combines doing, talking, thinking, feeling and belonging (Wenger, 1998, p. 56). The concept of reification refers to the process of producing objects from the participation in experiences which become points of focus around which meaning is negotiated (Wenger, 1998, p. 58). Wenger (2010) explains reification can cover a wide range of processes that produce physical and conceptual artefacts such as “words, tools, methods, stories, documents and links to resources” (p. 180). Meaningful learning in social contexts requires both participation and reification to be interwoven to the extent that the concepts can seem blurred (Wenger, 1998, p. 62). Over time, the interplay of participation and reification creates a social history of learning which combines individual and collective aspects (p. 62). For Wenger

(2010), this history gives rise to a community as participants define a “regime of competence”, a set of criteria and expectations by which they recognise membership (p. 180). Within such a regime, “knowing” is defined as what is recognised as competent participation in the practice. This competence includes an understanding of the group enterprise, engaging productively and appropriately utilising the repertoire of resources the community has accumulated over its history of learning (Wenger, 2010, p. 180). As a result, meaning in practice becomes a way of talking about building competence and changing individual and collective ability (Wenger, 1998, p. 5). For this research project, the learning capabilities for meaning relate to active participation of members, creating a repertoire of resources and building competence in practice. These learning capabilities are discussed at length in Section 4.2 Theme 1: Meaning.

2.1.2.3 *Community*

Wenger et al. (2002) notes that a “community creates the social fabric of learning. A strong community fosters interactions and relationships based on mutual respect and trust” (p. 28). To build relationships, members must interact regularly on issues important to their domain and use each other as sounding boards to build on each other’s ideas. Wenger et al. (2002) states that “having others who share your overall view of the domain and yet bring their individual perspectives on any given problem creates a social learning system that goes beyond the sum of its parts” (p. 34). This ability to negotiate meaning allows for the experience of agency in learning within a community (Wenger, 2010, p. 190). “An effective community of practice offers a place of exploration where it is safe to speak the truth and ask hard questions” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 37), so that in the process of interacting regularly, members build valuable relationships based on respect and trust.

Members of a healthy community of practice have a sense that making the community more valuable is to the benefit of everyone in that community (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 37). Trust is the key to this process which allows meetings to be intense, rich in content, and engage members in good conversations. Effective communities are not necessarily without conflict and developing strong social bonds enables communities to withstand disagreement and can even use conflict to deepen their relationships and their learning (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 37). Diversity of members and viewpoints makes for richer learning, more interesting relationships and

increased creativity (p. 35). A community of practice is a network involving connections among members around a domain and with a commitment to learning in partnership with each other; networking and community processes have complementary strengths and weaknesses for enhancing learning capability of a group (Wenger, 2010, p. 191).

Wenger (1998) notes that communities develop over time and share three characteristics of community coherence which are mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire (p. 77). Practice resides in a community of people and their relations of mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998, 73). Mutual engagement draws on members ability to connect meaningfully and, contribute and share knowledge with each other (Wenger, 1998, p. 76). A shared repertoire, creates a distinct coherence in a community depending on joint enterprise as a process of negotiating agreement, giving the community focus, directing group energy to initiative action and becoming a resource for coordination (Wenger, 1998, p. 82). The joint pursuit of an enterprise creates resources for negotiating meaning that belong to the practice of the community. These resources, therefore, become a shared repertoire of the styles and ways individuals and communities express their membership and identities to the world as well as the discourse members use to create meaningful statements about the world (Wenger, 1998, p. 83). For this research project, the learning capabilities for community relate to membership and attendance, building networks, trust and mutual relationships. These learning capabilities as further discussed in Section 4.3 Theme 2: Community.

2.1.2.4 Practice

Wenger et al. (2002), suggests that “practice is a set of frameworks, ideas, tools, information, styles, language, stories and documents that community members share ... This body of shared knowledge and resources enables the community to proceed efficiently in dealing with its domain” (p. 28). The term ‘practice’ is used here to describe a set of socially defined ways of doing things in a specific domain which is a set of common approaches and shared standards that create a basis for action, communication, problem solving, performance and accountability (Synder & Wenger, 2010, p. 110). The communal resources include a variety of knowledge types such as stories, rules, principles, tools, articles, etc, which can be both tacit and explicit aspects of the community’s knowledge and competence (Synder & Wenger, 2010, p.

110). Practice also embodies a certain way of behaving, a perspective on problems and ideas and a thinking style: elements include its repertoire of tools, methods and stories as well as activities relating to learning and innovation (Synder & Wenger, 2010, p. 110). Snyder and Wenger (2010) add that beyond the forms of connection, the purpose of practice is to create and share knowledge, increase the community's presence in member's lives and reinforce the sense of belonging and identity for collective learning and collaborative activities (p. 10). For this research project the learning capabilities for practice relate to communication, sharing ideas and information, decision-making and problem solving, collaboration and teamwork. These learning capabilities are further discussed in the Section 4.4 Theme 3: Practice.

2.1.2.5 *Identity*

The concept of identity is an integral component of CoPs as a social theory of learning and is therefore inseparable to meaning, practice and community; and the experience of identity, in practice, as a way of being in the world (Wenger, 1998, pp. 145, 151). Identity in practice is defined as social, not merely because it is reified in a social discourse of the self and of social categories, but also because it is produced as a lived experience of participation in specific communities. Wenger says, "as we encounter our effects on the world and develop our relations with others, these layers build upon each other to produce our identity" (1998, p. 151). It is through the negotiation of meaning, we construct who we are (p. 151). In the same way that meaning exists in its negotiation, identity exists in the constant work of negotiating the self. When "we" are a full member of a community of practice, "we" are in familiar territory and can handle ourselves competently (Wenger, 1998, p. 152). When humans experience competence and are recognised as competent, they know how to engage with others and understand why they do what they do because they understand the enterprise to which participants are accountable; identity formation is a dual process of identification and negotiability (Wenger, 1998, pp. 152, 188).

Identification is used by Wenger (1998, p. 191) to define a process through which modes of belonging form and shape our identities by creating bonds and differences. It is a participatory process of "identifying with" something or someone, such as experiencing an association that defines "who we are" (Wenger, 1998, p. 191). Wenger (1998) says "negotiability among individuals and among communities

is shaped within social structures and our positions in them (p. 197). It is the way meanings and our ability to negotiate them become part of who we are”, therefore, because learning transforms “who we are and what we can do”, it is an experience of identity and not just an accumulation of skills and information (Wenger, 1998, p. 197). For this research project, the learning capabilities in this component relate an experience of identity and recognition of full group membership. These learning capabilities are further discussed in Section 4.5 Theme 4: Identity.

2.1.2.5 *Landscapes of practice*

For Wenger (2010), *Landscapes of Practice* as a concept, highlights and extends the relevance of CoPs as a social learning system (p. 137). While each community of practice can differentiate itself, they can interlock with each other as they constitute a complex social landscape of shared practices, membership, boundaries and peripheries (Wenger, 1998, p. 118). When a Landscape of Practice forms, it becomes a complex social learning structure where learning is viewed as a journey through landscapes of practices (Wenger, 1998, p. 185). Every person belongs to several CoPs or a landscape of individual CoPs at any given time, whether they are in the past or present and whether they participate as full members or in peripheral ways (Wenger, 1998, p. 137). Wenger (1998) notes that “through engagement, but also imagination and alignment, our identities come to reflect the landscape in which we live and our experience of it” (p. 185), and his Landscape of Practice is defined by weaving boundaries and peripheries at the “edges” of CoPs (Wenger, 1998, p. 105). The practice of brokering is about connecting people at the peripheries and from across boundaries who can introduce elements of one practice into another community of practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 105). According to Wenger-Trayner, Fenton-O’Creedy, Hutchinson, Kubiak & Wenger-Trayner (2014) convening a complex landscape can create new configurations of people and activities that bring new capabilities into CoPs (p. 99). Wenger-Trayner et al. (2014), use the term “systems convener” for people who forge new learning partnerships in complex landscapes featuring multiple CoPs (p. 99). From this perspective, Council can be considered as convening the 13 CRGs as a landscape of practice. I perceive the CRGs as a network or landscape of 13 CoPs that are located in multiple sites in the Central Highlands region, sharing membership and common practices. As the

facilitator of the CRG model, Council is the central point or organisation that sponsors and coordinates this landscape of practice.

Whether at individual CoPs or from across a landscape of CoPs, this phenomenon adds value by enabling organisations to adapt to emerging threats and new opportunities (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 223). CoPs are a conduit to access new capabilities of participants and knowledge that can be absorbed into the organisation (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 223). While the concept of communities of practice is not new, it provides a language to assist in expressing a process for people with expertise and capabilities to generate and implement innovative ideas (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 7). Therefore, cultivating learning capability ensures organisations are ready for the emergence of new practice and have the ability or “absorptive capacity” to make use of the potential innovations produced by CoPs (Wenger, 1998, p. 245). Therefore, CHRC has the potential to integrate and absorb information, ideas and practices developed through the CRG model or this landscape of practice to build new capabilities within the organisation. In this way, utilising the concept of CoPs as well as the elements of agency, social and cultural capital from Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice can be considered as building community capacity and organisational capacity.

2.1.3. Theoretical comparisons and application

To conclude this section, I make some comparisons between aspects Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice and Wenger’s CoP as a social learning theory and explain the application of these theories for this research study. Broadly, there are some comparisons focused on field, power and habitus that can be made about Bourdieu’s and Wenger’s theories. From a Bourdieuan perspective, communities of practice can be considered to be located in and shaped by broader fields of practice. However, CoPs domains are about the negotiation of competence in practice (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 13). In this sense, the field itself constitutes a series of integrated practices defined by different competencies. Therefore, from a CoPs’ perspective, the field is not a given, but it can be viewed as a “learning field” in a generalised context (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 14). Structural power relations have different purposes for Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice and Wenger’s CoPs as a social learning theory. Bourdieu focuses on practice to theorise about the reproduction of social stratification and is primarily about structural power relations at scale within

society (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 14). While Wenger's CoPs is a learning theory that builds a social learning theory, which is not to deny structural power relations or learning as a vehicle for their reproduction, rather, CoPs makes learning the central point of this theory, because it is a social practice (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 14).

For Bourdieu, the concept of habitus is central because it provides a way to theorise how social stratification becomes embodied in individuals in the form of predispositions that influence practice (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 13). From the perspective that learning comes first, the closest connection to habitus in CoPs is the notion of participation as practice, which provides for a degree of agency in the learning theory (Farnsworth et al, 2016, p. 15). Mutch (2003) states that "Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' is frequently drawn upon in work on learning and knowledge in organisations (p. 1). However, this use is much looser than Bourdieu's emphasis on habitus as a generative structure" (Mutch, 2003, p. 1). Mutch (2003) adds that Bourdieu's focus on practice is "clearly attractive to developing theories around CoPs" but for Bourdieu, habitus comes prior to practice, and regulates it (p. 26). Mutch (2003) notes that, in Wenger's terms, habitus possesses a "generative infrastructure" for the creation of a community of practice and habitus can be understood as having an emerging property from interacting practices (p. 26). Here Mutch is invoking the concept of group habitus emerging from practices enabled through agency and active participation in social learning by CoPs members.

Bourdieu's Theory of Practice and Wenger's CoPs as a social theory of learning are being used as a theoretical framework for this research study. Walther (2014) describes Bourdieu's element of field as the social space within which agents and institutions are integrated and interact with each other in accordance with field-specific rules (p. 5). As the CRGs are hosted by CHRC, the field or social space within which community and Council integrate and interact to practice community planning is local government. As I view the CRGs as CoPs, the four components of Wenger's CoPs social theory of learning are used to understand how the CRGs are practicing community planning. Therefore, within the field of local government, the CRGs domain of practice is community planning. While this section has outlined the theoretical approach for this study, Section 2.2 B details the evolution of community planning at the international level and the approach by local government in Australia.

2.2. Section B: The practice of community planning

Section B provides a brief overview of evolution of community planning practice and how aspects of the community planning process link to the concepts of agency, social capital and cultural capital. These concepts also underpin community capacity building, community leadership, and the implementation of community planning. This section also provides a summary of local government community planning in Australia and a description of the CHRC CRG model.

2.2.1. Community planning

According to Sadan (1997), community planning as a practice has been used by many disciplines such as urban planning, macro social work, architecture as well as in environmental, community and economic development (p. 177). Community planning in the 1960s was mainly used by town planners in urban renewal projects, yet these early community planning projects were claimed to have failed due to political and professional reasons (p. 178). Critics at the time claimed that the chaotic reality and limited achievements of the community planning process overshadowed any advantages in having residents participate (p. 178). By the 1970s, the community planning approach used by community development professionals, mainly in the United States of America, focused on comprehensive and long-range plans to implement community change efforts (Ayres, 1996, p. 22). By the 1980s, comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) sought to re-emphasise the link between social needs and human services, and that of physical infrastructure and economic development; CCIs began to incorporate different forms of governance, which emphasised collaboration among a diverse range of stakeholders (Chaskin, 2005, p. 408). Chaskin (2005) also notes the implementation of these efforts was problematic due to differing ideologies between those adopting a more “fluid grassroots” approach and the “rational-planning or bureaucratic approach common to the world of government, philanthropy, and the professions” (pp. 408-409).

However, by the 1980s another form of community planning began to emerge at the international level called strategic planning (Blair, 2004, p. 103). This form of community planning offered a structured way to actively engage key stakeholders, citizens and community leaders to help communities adjust to social and economic transformations (Blair, 2004, p. 103). Rather than being a technical document, the strategic planning process developed an action plan to articulate and communicate

the future directions of the community (Ayres, 1996, p. 23). In the 1990s, community strategic visioning emerged as a more creative approach to community planning to address the increasing complexities of community issues such as global interdependence, amount and flow of information and communications, changing demographics and increased bureaucracy, regulation and accountability (Ayres, 1996, pp. 17-18, 23). As noted by Lachapelle, Emery and French (2012), community strategic visioning is a change process used for economic and community development (p. 74). According to Paul Carlson (1990), community strategic visioning is not limited by current community resources, structures and barriers because it is focused on creating a desired future before leveraging resources to reach the vision (p. 11). For Cochrane (2015), this form of community visioning is a

... collaborative and inclusionary citizen-based community planning process in which diverse members of the community use collaboration and consensus-building techniques to determine a desired future state and to coordinate a plan and goals for achieving that future for the community. (p. 21)

Sadan (1997) says there is no single agreed definition of community planning, however, it can be described as an activity aimed at affecting social change that creates a community or reinforces an existing community (pp. 185, 190). For this research project, the terms “community visioning” or “community planning” are used interchangeably to refer to the community strategic visioning. This form of community planning was adopted by CHRC when developing the *CH2022 Community Plan*. As previously noted, the CRG model was established by CHRC to enable community members within the 13 CRG localities to actively participate in the future development of the towns and communities across the region. For Garkovich (2012), the community visioning process provides a structure for residents to build agency when defining their community vision and undertaking strategic planning (p. 166).

2.2.2. Agency

Agency improves the ability of community members and leaders to informally and/or formally come together to make decisions about community life and manage the community planning change process (Chaskin, 2001, p. 297). Agency is the force behind social action and actors must be aware that they possess agency and believe that change is possible, which creates a process of empowerment and

agency (Newman & Dale, 2005, p. 482; Horvath, 1998; Bandura, 2000). According to Chaskin (2001), empowerment is agency generating as it recognises and fosters people's capacities to define and prioritise their problems (p. 297-298). Agency is enhanced when people feel they can influence the process in which their voices are being heard, and that they can make a difference (Newman & Dale, 2005, p. 482; Dale, 2005). According to Newman and Dale (2005), there are several definitions of agency in use (p. 481). In relation to the CRGs, agency is in regard to CRG members having or gaining a voice within the field of local government and participating in a process to affect social change.

For Garkovich (2012), community planning is a participatory planning process designed to enable people to define their own outcomes and then identify ways in which they will mobilise assets to achieve local priorities (p. 114). For Cuthill (2004), community capacity building can broadly be defined as "a process for activating community potential by enhancing the individual or group ability to take informed action" (p. 429). Gibbon et al. (2002) cite Labonte and Laverick (2001a) who define capacity building as the increase in a community groups' abilities to define, assess, analyse and act on concerns of importance to their members (p. 1). According to Lachapelle et al. (2012), decision-making by the community is incorporated in community planning which creates a more participatory democratic process (p. 74).

For Newman and Dale (2005), there is not agency without the power and agents must have the ability to make choices (p. 482). For Bourdieu, the concept of agency-structure and power within a social field requires a mechanism to enable actors to exercise their agency (Mutch, 2003, p. 27). For Ife (2016), one way to empower community agency is to strengthen participatory democracy or through the idea of deliberative democracy (p. 158). Deliberative democracy seeks to establish mechanisms that enable citizens to exercise agency by participating in deliberative processes (Ife, 2016, p. 158). Ife (2016) suggests that to replace traditional community structures, local management structures will need to be established and integrated into an overall form of community governance (p. 220). Community governance is sometimes used to refer to community participation, engagement and decision-making in public matters related to local governance and participatory governance (Totikidis, Armstrong & Francis, 2005, para. 1). Community governance also has implications for addressing community needs and building community capacity (2005, p. 1). Community governance is concerned with how it is possible to

distribute community power in order for community leadership to be more inclusive (Madden, 2010, pp. 179, 183; Stone, 1989).

According to Madden (2010), Bourdieu's political field is helpful for understanding community leadership, agency and participation in deliberative governance spaces (p. 183). Madden suggests,

Agency can neither be guided by a rationality in every situation nor is it wholly random. The texture of the social space is thus structured by the struggles of the distribution of material, political, economic, cultural, and – above all – symbolic power. Symbolic power is (language, prestige, power), represents the accumulation of the resources necessary to reorder or preserve the social space, embodied in those who fulfil the local leadership role. (p. 182)

Madden (2010) also notes that distributed leadership within a community governance structure enables leadership to be distributed across the many rather than among the few, while creating a social space that facilitates agency through shared deliberations to build the capacity of community leadership of whole localities (p. 179; Gronn, 2002). For Friedman and Fraser (2015), exercising agency through active participation in deliberation comes from increased interaction amid community members, and must be present for social capital to be created (p. 117). If social capital is to be put to use, there must be agency (Newman & Dale, 2005, p. 482).

2.2.3. Social capital

Friedman and Fraser (2015) cite Vidal (2004, p. 167) as saying social capital is the “bread and butter” of community planning (p. 117). Social capital is a prerequisite for effectively working together, hence a precondition for economic and community development processes (Halstead & Deller, 2015, p. 4). Bourdieu (1986, p. 249) says the volume of social capital possessed by an agent depends on the size of their network connections and their ability to effectively mobilise their volume of capital (economic, cultural and symbolic) as well as those to whom they are connected (as cited in Newman & Dale, 2005, p. 481). According to Rogers and Jarema (2015), the three main theorists of social capital are Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam and for each theorist, social capital has three common elements, being social networks, trust and social norms (p. 23). Newman and Dale (2005) cite Putnam (2000, p. 2) as defining social capital as “social networks and the norms of

reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (p. 479). For Rogers and Jarema (2015), trust and reciprocity are developed between individuals as they interact and share information within community groups and across social networks (pp. 22, 23). It is only after trust is developed and reciprocated that individuals will invest in social relationships to be used for either individual or collective outcomes (Rogers & Jarema, 2015, p. 23). For Putnam social capital is based on “levels of social and political trust and on membership in social networks and community organisations” (as cited by Meikle-Yaw, 2006, p. 54). In relation to social networks, Newman and Dale (2005) say that several theorists make the distinction between bonding, bridging and linking social capital (p. 479). Skinner et al. (2008) say Putnam (2000) suggests that bonding social capital occurs when people with similar backgrounds, values, and interests form relationships and collaborate to achieve shared goals (p. 9). Therefore, bonding social capital leads to greater levels of trust and can be essential for relationships (Newman & Dale, 2013, p. 480). According to Ling and Dale (2014), bridging social capital connects people or bonded groups and may facilitate access to resources and opportunities that exist in one network to a member of another (p. 3). In this way, bridging social capital is not only essential for enhancing social inclusion but also for improving a community’s ability to develop. Bridging social capital allows actors to access information from outside the community with support from outside local networks (p. 3). Ling and Dale (2014) add that linking social capital plays an important and different role to bonding and bridging capital as these are concerned with horizontal social relationships as opposed to linking capital that is concerned with vertical connections between the different social levels (p. 3). Linking social capital connects the civic community to political decision-making and financial resources and relates “to the capacity to lever resources, ideas and information from formal institutions beyond the community” (Ling & Dale, 2014, p. 3; Woolcock, 2001b, p. 13). Individuals and groups need linking capital to create the networks that facilitate collective action, and a community needs vertical connections to have a voice at the locus of power where decisions are made (Ling & Dale, 2014, p. 2). For Madden (2010), Putnam’s notion of social capital considers social capital to be the basis for building community capacity (p. 178). According to Rogers & Jarema (2015), social capital capacity developed within groups of individuals, or a group of community leaders then extends to the larger community through the creation of resources to achieve socio-economic,

environmental and governance outcomes (p. 22). From this perspective, community planning can assist groups of community leaders such as the CRGs, to build social capital and play a role in broader community capacity building.

2.2.4. Community leadership

The strategic visioning process, as with other forms of community planning, creates a forum to bring leaders and citizens together with diverse perspectives to discuss, debate, and develop a future direction for the community (Ayers, 1996, p. 30-31). In this process, the narrow interests of participants are set aside in favour of the broader community that needs to establish a common direction (p. 31). Ayers (1996) adds that the role of community leaders is to facilitate the process by becoming a “constituency for change by bringing key people together, facilitating discussions, developing action plans, and implementing these plans” (p. 31). Sail and Abu-Samah (2016) note that in normal circumstances the product of a community organising process is to establish a community leadership group and develop a democratic instrument within which community members can decide or make some influence that affects their lives (p. 63). Ayers suggests that in reality, only a small portion in the community will volunteer to engage and commit to leadership roles in a community planning process (2012, p. 22). According to Lachapelle et al. (2012), leadership training is important for community members participating in a community visioning or planning process to achieve successful outcomes (p. 84). This training can cover topics such as facilitation, conflict management, communication techniques, strategic planning and visioning, and leadership assets (p. 84). Leadership training can be open to all community members and/or an established group of community leaders as part of the planning process (Lachapelle et al., 2012, p. 84). Ayres (1996) also noted that to shift thinking about leadership and to increase the success of a strategic visioning process requires the mastery of certain leadership skills (p. 31). Madden (2010) emphasised the importance of inclusive leadership, specifically distributed leadership to increase empowerment and participation in deliberative governance initiatives (p.179). Notions of “shared power and facilitative leadership necessitate a shift in thinking about leadership” to focus on ways to develop collective thought and actions involving many diverse interests (Ayres, 1996, p. 31). For Throsby (1999), cultural

capital comprises the set of ideas, beliefs and values which bind a given group of people together (p. 7).

2.2.5. Cultural capital

Cultural capital is related to the accepted ways of thinking and doing, the tacit knowledge of how things get done (Emery & Flora, 2012, p. 142). For example, community members can use the cultural capital asset related to new ways of “thinking” and “doing” to access and build assets in other capitals: “we know how to work together” is a cultural capital asset that when acted upon can build social capital by bringing in new partners which can lead to additional financial and human capital resources (Emery & Flora, 2012, p. 142). By invoking Bourdieu’s concept of fungibility, cultural resources become capital when community members can convert those resources into other forms of capital through a process such as community visioning (p. 142). This approach provides a broader view of cultural capital to demonstrate the role of cultural capital in a community change process (Emery & Flora, 2012, p. 142). Rogers and Jarema (2015) note that Bourdieu refers to the social norms that dictate behaviour as cultural capital (p. 23). When community leaders come together in a community visioning process, they can socially construct new notions of leadership that build positive cultural capital (Emery & Flora, 2012, p. 143). This social reconstruction rewrites the tacit understanding of how the community works, develops and strengthens a new or renewed positive community habitus to replace a previously dominant negative one (p. 143). For example, the transformation of the habitus in a declining community could be associated with the traditional leadership structure that embodied hierarchical and exclusive relationships to one that is more open and welcoming of new ideas and positive community change (Emery & Flora, 2012, p. 143). Throsby (1999) describes cultural capital as comprising the set of ideas, practices, beliefs, traditions and values which serve to identify and bind together a group of people (p. 7). According to Lachapelle et al. (2012), as part of a community planning or visioning process, community leaders are encouraged to understand the “personality” of their community by identifying special strengths and assets (p. 83). “Personality of place” characteristics foster a sense of human attachment and belonging which are integral to the development of a collective understanding of a community’s needs, problems and future opportunities (p. 83). For Perkins et al. (2002), “place attachment leads us to

stay and protect what we cherish most in our communities and to invest time and energy to improve aspects which we are dissatisfied with”, which in turn motivates agency (p. 42). Active participation and committed leadership are inspired by creating and empowering community settings and a participants’ own feeling of efficacy (Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum B, Wyche & Pfefferbaum R, 2008, p. 139). Lachapelle et al. (2012) note that not all community planning and visioning processes progress past the development of the plan to implementation, nor result in positive outcomes (p. 80).

2.2.6. Implementation

By establishing a leadership group and adopting techniques to engage the broader community, community planning practitioners can establish a community governance structure that takes the process beyond the development stage to implementation (Ayres, 1996, p. 22). For Lachapelle et al. (2012), some key issues that can undermine the community planning process are building a “sense of ownership” by participants involved in the process and understanding that concept of “sense of place” in terms of community interest, unique experiences and characteristics (p. 80). Community visioning is an efficient and effective means of identifying community values, prioritising goals and strategies, and then implementing community plans, policies and decisions over the longer term (Lachapelle et al., 2012, p. 74). Lachapelle et al. (2012) are highlighting here the distinction between developing the community vision and strategic community plan and progressing to the implementation, or achieving the goals and strategies set out in the community plan. For Ayres (2012), this is important given the planning horizon for a community planning project can be for 10, 20 or 30 years (p. 21). For most practitioners and community leaders, the real value of community visioning lies not with the vision statement itself but in the processes that are undertaken to achieve the vision (Lachapelle et al., 2012, p. 21). For Sail and Abu-Samah (2016), capacity building extends to both community members and change agents or practitioners who work with the community to facilitate a community change process (p. 66). It takes time and effort to build community members’ capacity so having the assistance and support of individuals with expertise is crucial; the process requires not only the development of the community’s capacity but also the capacity of change agents (Sail & Abu-Samah, 2016, p. 63).

In relation to the research study and spanning over ten years of my involvement in this field, I have observed that the process of establishing the CRG model has taken time, effort and commitment from both community members and CHRC representatives to build their capacity to affect community change. According to Cochrane (2016), there is evidence of community and local government participation in urban and community strategic planning happening in countries across the world (p. 21). As previously noted by Sadan (1997), community planning has been adopted as a practice by many disciplines (p. 177) and in Australia, community planning has mainly been practiced by local governments, albeit mainly at the behest of State and Territory governments. The following is a detailed overview of Australian local government approach to community planning.

2.2.7. Local government

By May 2006, the State and Territory Local Government and Planning Ministers Council met to discuss issues concerning the financial sustainability of local governments (Tan & Artist, 2013, p.11). In Australia, constitutional responsibility for local government lies with the states and territories that provide a legal framework for Council operations (Butler, 2005, p. 2).

Over the four years after 2006, Australian local governments became mandated through state and territory local government legislation, to develop strategic community and corporate plans (Tan & Artist, 2013, p. 9). Prior to this, local governments were required to develop short-term corporate plans to support organisational planning and drive efficiency (Prior & Herriman, 2010, p. 55). The requirement to have corporate plans emerged as local governments were shifting their emphasis from “property related” functions (or the 3R’s of Roads, Rates and Rubbish) to undertaking broader “community-related” functions such as social and economic development of their communities, especially in rural and regional areas (Worthington & Dolley, 2000, p. 11).

At the same time local governments were required to develop strategic community plans, they were also required to manage their community infrastructure through long-term asset management and financial planning (Worthington & Dollery, 2000, p.11). Traditionally, any strategic planning or longer-term planning undertaken by local governments had been concerned with land-use policy (p. 10). The introduction of new community strategic plans was designed to assist elected

members and officials to think about their local government area within a larger community context as well as provide a long-term context for the development of their annual operational plans (p. 9). There was also a push from the state and territory governments to have community involvement in the identification of priorities within the strategic community plans. This meant that local governments were required to conduct community engagement or consultation as part of the development of these community plans (Worthington & Dollery, 2000, p. 9).

The requirement to undertake community engagement aligned with the international trend, at the time, towards public participation to become an expectation in government policy and planning decisions (Cochrane, 2015, p. 18; Bingham, Nabatchi & O'Leary, 2005; Shipley & Utz, 2012). This ushered in the creation of new forms of participatory governance and inclusive participation processes in many countries (Cochrane, 2015, p. 18). More comprehensive community planning and visioning programs were being supported in the United States, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. Proponents of participatory democracy argued that citizens have a right and should be encouraged and supported to participate in a range of ways, on an ongoing basis, in decisions that affect them (Prior & Herriman, 2010, p. 50). This led to a search for better complementarities between representative and participatory democracy, giving local communities a voice into governance networks operating in and beyond their small towns and neighbourhoods (Connelly, 2011, p. 930; Prior & Herriman, 2010, p. 50; Innes & Booher, 2004). This was a way of promoting more responsible local government and re-legitimising local representative democracy (Connelly, 2011, p. 930; Prior & Herriman, 2010, p. 50; Innes & Booher, 2004).

Presently, strategic or community visioning plans are referred to by different names in legislation by state and territory governments in Australia. In Western Australia, these are called Strategic Community Plans; in the Northern Territory they are referred to as Strategic Plans; Victoria calls them Community Visions; NSW prefers Community Strategic Plans; while Queensland named them Community Plans (Grant et al., 2012, pp. 3, 16). In addition to these differences, the approaches and processes adopted by individual councils when conducting and implementing community strategic planning varies between and within states and territories (Prior & Herriman, 2010, p. 49). Different councils will adopt approaches and processes depending on their size and scale of the planning project as well as state and

territory government requirements (p. 49). Consequently, there are three types of community planning used by local government in Australia: strategic, comprehensive and place-based community planning (Cavaye, 2010, p. 5). Local governments often use either one of these types or a blend of these options. For example, the *CH2022 Community Plan* blends the community strategic visioning approach as well as place-based community planning. This plan incorporates two levels of planning which are regional and place-based plans. The regional level of the plan is informed by five regional outcomes areas, being social/cultural, economic, infrastructure, natural environment and governance, which align to the principles for sustainable development. The regional outcomes are made up from regional goals, while the regional outcomes and goals interlink with community priorities of the 13 place-based community plans as depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 3

CH2022 Community Plan regional outcomes and 13 place community plans



After the *CH2022 Community Plan* was adopted by CHRC, the 13 CRGs were developed to implement each of the place-based community and action plans over the ten-year planning horizon of the *CH2022 Community Plan*. More detail about the CRG model is provided below and in Chapter 4.

While the strategic community planning approaches and processes by individual local governments differ, research was being undertaken to understand the early challenges local governments were facing with strategic community

planning. In 2010, Prior and Herriman (2010) released a study of New South Wales councils following the amendments to the *NSW Local Government Act 1993* (NSWLG Act) requiring local governments to develop a minimum ten-year community strategic plan (p. 50). Several shifts in Australian local governance and planning influenced the emergence of these amendments to the NSWLG Act (p. 50). These amendments prioritised increased citizen participation or community engagement in the development of the ten-year community strategic plans, as well as the need to consider diversified forms of knowledge from community and other stakeholders; the consideration of the emergence of sustainability (social, economic and environmental); the need to address social justice and social planning as well as the trend towards longer-term, integrated decision-making and planning (Prior & Herriman, 2010, p. 50-58).

Following this study, Tan and Artist (2013) undertook a comparative analysis of Australian local government planning frameworks and reported on their findings. They also found there were several challenges experienced by Australian local governments when undertaking strategic and corporate planning (Tan & Artist, 2013, p. 6-7). Having more complex strategic planning and reporting requirements meant the local government Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) were commonly employing or nominating consultants, individual staff positions or units to undertake the development of these plans and reports. Therefore, a community's identification of priorities was difficult to integrate within the resourcing of Council strategies. It was also difficult for councils to make explicit how community priorities might be resourced and navigate the politics surrounding decision-making about these priorities. While the integration of state and local government planning offers an untapped resource to inform state level strategic planning, this posed issues at state legislation levels because they did not generally recognise the precedence of local government land-use and strategic community plans (Tan & Artist, 2013, pp. 6-7). The selection of indicators for councils to measure community strategic plans outcomes needed to be meaningful to the community as well as the state and territory governments in overseeing the council's performance (p. 7). These indicators were needed to be centred on the broader community measures of social, economic and environmental, rather than those monitoring the operational functions of local government. Tan and Artist (2013) suggest that for local governments to address these challenges, the next step is to understand the impacts and benefits of

strategic community planning and determine whether the requirements to have these plans have contributed to wider processes of local government reforms (p. 41).

Based on these studies, it emerged that local governments were initially experiencing common challenges, as the requirement to prepare a community plan that extends beyond the council term (usually four years) was a new consideration for local governments. Also, the requirement to conduct extensive community consultation was a novel development for local governments in Australia (Tan & Artist, 2013, p. 13). Prior and Herriman (2010) noted that the shift towards local governments integrating social, environmental and economic sustainability into these community plans posed issues due to the inclusion of health, education, electricity or telecommunications in the strategic community plans (p. 55). While these aspects of community life were important to communities, they are areas of responsibility that are not traditionally within the scope of council services (p. 55). This was made even more problematic for local governments as there was no obligation for state, territory or commonwealth agencies to support the implementation of community plans within the legislation (Prior & Herriman, 2010, p. 55). Therefore, it fell to individual councils to seek collaboration from the other levels of government to achieve the vision of communities within their areas (Tan & Artist, 2013, p.13). Tan and Artist (2013) suggested that engaging with other levels of government as well as business, industry and organisations needs to be considered as part of community engagement strategies and the ongoing implementation of community plans (p.13).

Some of these challenges were also noted by Mowbray (2011), regarding an assessment of local government community planning in Victoria by West and Raysmith (2007). Their study revealed there was a breakdown between the community vision and the implementation of community plans (Mowbray, 2011, p. 137; West & Raysmith, 2007). Mowbray (2011) recognised that the difference between the development and implementation stages of community planning can present challenges for local governments (p. 138). Mowbray (2011) stated that engaging the community to express their values, shape the community vision and set priorities is the first stage, however moving into a broader strategic framework and implementation of a community plan was another (p. 138 West & Raysmith, 2007). Mowbray (2011) also draws similarities between community planning and community development to the purpose or mission of local governments; saying most community development initiatives empower collective participation in a

democratic process to improve the lives of those whose interests they represent, which “heavily overlaps” with the efforts or functions of local government (p.140). As noted by Mowbray (2011), local governments are “portrayed as democratically constituted agencies charged with protecting or enhancing the lives, and representing the interests, of their constituents” and community planning can assist local governments achieve this purpose (p. 140). As more research is undertaken to understand the implications for local governments in facilitating community planning or strategic community planning, this may assist local governments and communities to improve their community planning processes and practice. This is especially important in rural and regional areas where local governments play a more prominent role in local community life. The following section provides information on the development of the CRGs by CHRC as an example of how both local government and community undertake participatory community planning in rural Queensland.

2.2.8. Local context

Central Highlands Regional Council (CHRC) became an entity when the Queensland local government amalgamations took effect in March 2008. According to Drew, Kortt and Dollery, forced amalgamation has not only been a ubiquitous characteristic of Australian local government, but it has also proved controversial (2016, p. 1). The Queensland forced amalgamations reduced 157 councils, with more than 1,100 elected councillors, down to 73 councils (Tiley & Dollery, 2010, p. 3). Drew et al. (2016) note that the underlying rationale by state and territory governments for amalgamation frequently resides in the assertion that larger local councils are more efficient than their smaller counterparts (p. 3). At the time, the Premier stated that there were too many struggling and financially unsustainable councils in Queensland with 88 of the 157 councils serviced populations of less than 5,000 (Tiley & Dollery, 2010, p. 9). CHRC was formed as a result of the amalgamation of four former Shires, being Emerald (10,364 sq kms), Peak Downs (8,364 sq kms), Bauhinia (23,649 sq kms) and Duaringa (18,201 sq kms) (Wikipedia). The former shire councils were created in 1903 under the *1902 Local Authority Act* (Tiley & Dollery, 2010, p. 4). The current CHRC covers an area of 58,830 square kilometres and at the time, the population was 29,244 (Annual Report 2008-2009, CHRC). When CHRC was formed the four mayors of the former Shires

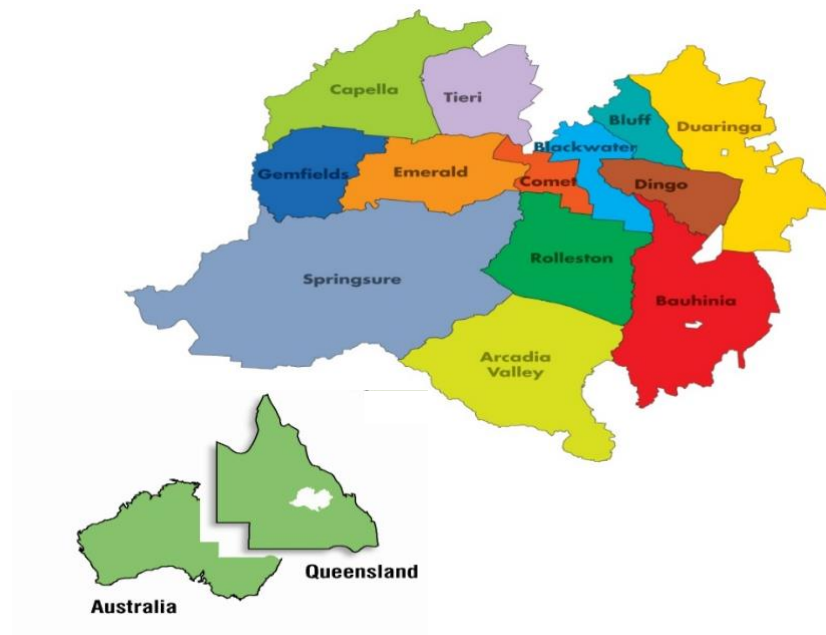
were replaced by one, and the 32 councillors of the former shires were replaced by eight. The elected representatives within the region were reduced from 36 to nine to cover a region almost the size of Australian State of Tasmania. CHRC was established as an undivided Council which means it does not have divisions and is located in Central Queensland.

Along with the other State and Territory Governments in Australia, the Queensland State Government developed a strategic framework for local governments and within the *2009 Local Government Act* (Grant et al., 2011, p. 8). This Act required local governments to have community plans (minimum 10 years), corporate plans (5 years) and long-term financial and asset management plans (10 years) (p. 9). The *2009 Local Government Act and Regulations* were reformed in 2012 and the requirement for local governments to have community plans was repealed. Local governments in Queensland are still required to have five-year corporate plans as well as 10 year financial and asset management plans (p. 9).

By this time, CHRC had adopted the *Central Highlands 2022 (CH2022) Community Plan*. This was a ten-year plan and took effect from 1 July 2012 until 30 June 2022. During the development of this community plan, CHRC identified and formed the 13 community localities within the Central Highlands. These communities are: Arcadia Valley, Bauhinia, Blackwater, Bluff, Capella, Comet, Dingo, Duaringa, Emerald, Gemfields, Rolleston, Springsure and Tieri as depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Central Highlands Regional Council – 13 CRG localities



During the development of the CH2022 Community Plan, an individual community plan and action plan was completed for each of the 13 communities as well as the overarching regional plan. The 13 Community Plans were developed following extensive community engagement and as part of this engagement local leadership groups were established in each of the 13 localities in the region. Their role was to assist with reviewing ideas and comments from the broader community as well as using this information to develop a vision, values, and priorities to inform the development of each Community Plan and Action Plan. A separate regional leadership group was established to oversee the development of the regional plan and implementation plans. All Community Plans were also released for public comment during the community engagement validation phase before the *CH2022 Community Plan* was adopted by the Council in December 2011. Figure 5 below depicts the community consultation process undertaken by CHRC during the development of the *CH2022 Community Plan*.

Figure 5
Community engagement process pathway



Although the Queensland Government repealed the legislation requiring local governments to have community plans, CHRC remained committed to implementing the *CH2022 Community Plan*. By 2013, the Community Reference Group (CRG) model was developed by CHRC as a community governance structure to implement the 13 Community Action Plans with community members and other key stakeholders such as industry, business, government and service organisations. The CRGs were designed to have multi-sector representation across business, rural, sports & recreation, arts & culture, seniors and youth. A CRG terms of reference and Nomination Form were developed by Council for community members to self-nominate to join the CRGs; membership is not restricted to a set number. The Capella CRG was established first in 2013, then the next 12 CRGs were rolled out from 2014 – 2015. The Council also developed an individual logo for each CRG to be used on their Community Plan, Action Plan or Strategic Directions as well as templates for agendas, minutes, project plans, newsletters, community profiles (asset mapping), annual reporting. Council also provided each CRG with a dedicated CHRC Community Engagement and Development Officer (CEDO) to facilitate the groups. Additionally, two elected members (councillors) are assigned to each CRG

to ensure equal representation across the 13 CRG localities in the region. More information on how this all contributes to the identity of the CRGs is detailed in Chapter 4.

2.2.9. Framing theory and practice

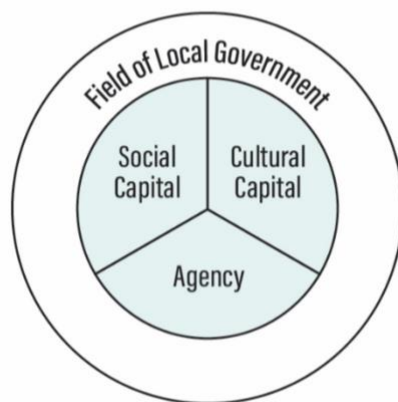
This research aims to understand how the Central Highlands Regional Council (CHRC) Community Reference Group (CRG) model builds community capacity and therefore community resilience in rural and regional Queensland. Bourdieu's Theory of Practice is comprised of the elements of field, habitus and capital and is used in this research project as a sociological lens to understand how agency, social and cultural capital contribute to community capacity building. As previously noted, the social field within which the CRGs practice community planning is the field of local government. The three concepts of agency, social and cultural capital are drawn from Bourdieu's Theory of Practice for several reasons. As noted above, for Bourdieu social practice is participation in social life, which takes place through the interplay of field, habitus and capital to overcome the agency-structure dualities (Mutch, 2003, p. 27). This is important to this research because within the field of local government, strategic community planning or visioning was introduced as a process to provide people, or actors in the field, with a voice into governance networks operating in and beyond their towns to better compliment representative and participatory democracy (Connelly, 2011, p. 930; Prior & Herriman, 2010, p. 50; Innes & Booher, 2004). As noted above by Madden (2010), Bourdieu's political field is helpful for understanding agency and participation within deliberative governance spaces and thus understand the struggles of community leaders for the distribution of resources and capital, and above all symbolic power. Therefore, within the political field of local government, agency and the potential for agents to act on their agency is an integral concept to community capacity building. As noted above by Skinner et al. (2008), Bourdieu theorised cultural capital under certain circumstances can be converted into economic capital (p. 6). For Emery and Flora (2012), by invoking Bourdieu's concept of fungibility, cultural resources become capital when community members can convert those resources into other forms of capital for the purpose of community development (p. 142). Additionally, Emery and Flora (2006) state that both social capital and cultural capital play an integral role in community capacity building and are necessary to increase other community capitals to achieve

economic and community development outcomes (pp. 20 & 33). Therefore, agency, social and cultural capital are drawn from Bourdieu's Theory of Practice as community capacity building concepts. Figure 6 depicts agency, social and cultural capital within the field of local government which are being used for the purpose of this research study to understand community capacity building of the CRG model.

Figure 6

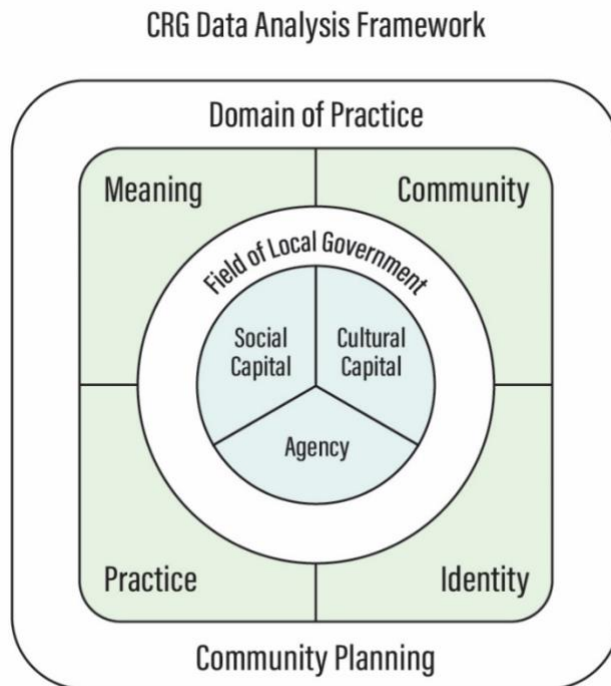
CRG community capacity building concepts within the field of local government

CRG Community Capacity Building Concepts



Wenger significantly expands on the notion of Communities of Practice (CoPs), initially created with Jean Lave in 1991, as a social theory of learning which is comprised of four components within a domain of knowledge or practice: meaning, practice, community and identity. For the purpose of this research study, I deliberately perceive CRGs as community leadership groups and CoPs. The four components of CoPs are used to frame the research findings as themes in Chapter 4 as they best anchor the unique domain of community planning practice by the CRGs. Figure 7 depicts the theoretical framework for data analysis using Wenger's four components of practice to frame the concepts of agency, social and cultural capital drawn from Bourdieu's Theory of Practice elements to understand how the CRG model is building community capacity within the field of local government.

Figure 7
Theoretical framework for CRG data analysis



2.3. Conclusion

The aim of this research is to explore how the CHRC CRG model builds community capacity and therefore resilience in rural and regional communities in Queensland. For Brown (2014), the literal meaning of resilience refers to the ability to bounce back and the common ideas and concepts of resilience include capacity, complexity, connectedness, adaption and feedback loops (p. 108). According to Roufeil and Battye (2008), being able to adapt and cope with change is a key characteristic of resilience and in keeping with the self-reliance of rural people (p. 2). Rural and regional communities can be characterised by their dispersed population, small communities, geographic isolation, and disproportionate demographics (Kennedy, Mapple, McKay & Bumby, 2014, p. 239). However, changes brought about by the gradual withdrawal of banking services, government offices and regional staff has also influenced social and economic disadvantage in rural and remote communities (Roufeil & Battye, 2008, p. 4). For Roufeil and Battye (2008), managing these changes can require considerable resilience, such as adaptive capacity, organisation, leadership and collaboration in communities (p. 3). In relation

to community leadership, Brown (2014) notes a common criticism of resilience is that it fails to account for politics and power relations (p. 114). Communities are rarely egalitarian and the power structures within a community, including power in decision-making, can strongly influence community resilience outcomes (Christensen & Krogman, 2012, p. 6). Resilience at the community level is strongly influenced by the actions and interactions of individuals and groups within the community so resilience research should pay attention to agency (Brown & Westaway, 2011, p. 329).

While there is ample information about community development and community planning, there is still limited research undertaken on the approaches local governments are taking to implementing community planning in rural and regional Queensland. According, to Cochrane, “research demonstrating how public officials can increase and improve public participation and execute a visioning process at the grassroots level remains sparse” (2015, p. 21). This research aims to address this gap in knowledge, which is important in understanding how community planning may assist community members or leaders and local governments to build their capacity and ability to collectively plan for the future and respond to change, therefore increasing community resilience. Understanding the impacts for communities and implications of local government community planning is especially important in rural and regional communities as local governments play a more prominent role in local or “grassroots” community life than other levels of government.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The overall research methodology introduces the researcher's viewpoint and details how my position has framed the design and methods used for this research study. Constructivist Grounded Theory informs the emergent qualitative approach, and it provides me with an effective mechanism for the collection and analysis of large data for this research project.

This chapter outlines the qualitative approach which incorporates the constructivist paradigm embedded in Grounded Theory. This paradigm focuses on social agency and is concerned with the way social beings make meaning from interrelating and interacting in society. According to Charmaz (2008), Grounded Theory methodology builds a series of checks and refinements into the qualitative inquiry through an iterative process of successive analytic and data collection phases of research (p. 161). Constructivists argue that researchers' perspectives will direct their attention but not determine their research (p. 160). Charmaz (2008) says "constructivists aim to make the influences of the researcher explicit as they view themselves as embedded in the research process rather than as distanced observers of empirical phenomena" (p. 160). Charmaz's version of Grounded Theory aligns with my standpoint and therefore the methods for data collection and analysis for this research project. It does not recommend commencing research with already established research questions. Three broad areas of inquiry informed my "hunches" to narrow the focus of this research project. These were based on my career, working in and around local government community planning, my prior study in the fields of sociology, communications and business, as well as my experience working for Central Highlands Regional Council leading the establishment of the CRG community governance model.

When I commenced my doctoral studies, I was an employee of CHRC and after leaving in 2017, I became a Councillor of CHRC in 2020. Approval was granted and endorsed by the CHRC Mayor and councillors, and internal protocols were established for utilising CHRC staff as informants to assist with the project, specifically with contacting interviewees. In order to adopt a confidential strategy, I appointed an independent interviewer and transcriber to provide a level of detachment from myself and the interviewees in order to transparently mitigate any

perceived conflict with the researcher also being a Councillor at the time the interviews were conducted.

This chapter details the data collection, coding and analysis undertaken for this research project. Data collection consisted of two rounds of in-depth semi-structured interviews, which included an interview with the independent interviewer, transcriber and myself as the researcher to confirm emerging patterns and themes in the interview responses and to check credibility of data. Forty-five interviews were conducted for this research study. The initial data analysis for this research established 25 codes after line-by-line comparative analysis of the first round of interview transcripts. These transcripts were again reviewed to determine the frequency of these codes and determine if there were any gaps in the data. After this analysis the second round of interviews were conducted because Constructivist Grounded Theory allows for an iterative and comparative process with data analysis. Additional layers of comparing and linking codes resulted in the development of 12 categories from the 25 codes. Memos for each category were directly generated using Charmaz's coding suggestions. Next the categories were aligned to the four CoPs components. As previously noted, I consider CRGs as CoPs, so the four CoPs components of meaning, community, practice and identity have been used as the analytic lens to understand how the CRGs practice community planning. The categories and four CoPs components are presented as themes in Chapter 4. These four themes also frame Bourdieu's Theory of Practice to understand how agency, social and cultural capital may contribute CRG community capacity building. The aim of this research project is to understand how the Central Highlands Regional Council (CHRC) Community Reference Groups (CRGs) model is building community capacity.

3.2. Overall qualitative approach

To ensure a strong research design and methodological approach, researchers must choose a research paradigm that aligns with their beliefs about the nature of reality (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006, 25). A researcher's standpoint is the way they see the world and their social position in it in relation to others and society (Walter, 2013, p 11). According to Walter (2013), the researcher's standpoint is inextricably entwined with the theoretical conceptual framework, paradigm and methods used in their research study (p. 11). Consequently, subjecting their beliefs

to an ontological interrogation from the start will illuminate their epistemological and methodological research approach (Mills et al., 2006, p. 27).

Lincoln and Guba (2000) note the researcher's assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology) and relationship between the researcher and the research participants (epistemology) inform the researcher's world view or paradigm which then guides the research process (p. 139). My ontological framework refers to my understanding of what constitutes reality and explicates my underlying assumptions about the world that are unconscious and taken-for-granted (Walter, 2014, p. 14). Rather than taking an objective reality or natural science approach to inquiry, it is appropriate in social science to view human society as mediated through the meaning and agency of individuals (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p. 17). Those who deny an objective reality assume a relativist ontological position to exploring and understanding social reality (Mills et al., 2006, p. 26). From this perspective I perceive the world as consisting of multiple individual realities in a given context. Epistemologically, the researcher views the interrelationship between the researcher and the participant as subjective and co-constructed (Mills et al., 2006, p. 26).

Therefore, at the core of this research project is understanding how CRG members and Council representatives make meaning of their agency and social interaction through their involvement with the CRG model. The paradigm or theoretical category that aligns with this research approach is the constructivist paradigm. This paradigm concentrates on social agency and is concerned with the way social beings make meaning from interrelating and interacting in society (Walter, 2013, p. 17). Creswell says constructivists view social reality as varied and recognise multiple constructions from the subjective meaning of individual experiences (2013, p. 28). Finnemore and Sikkink (2001, pp. 392-393) define constructivism as an approach to social analysis that asserts:

- a) human interaction is shaped primarily by ideational factors,
- b) the most important ideational factors are widely shared or 'intersubjective' beliefs and,
- c) these shared beliefs construct the interests and identities of purposive actors (Alder, 1997; Price & Reus-Smit, 1998; Ruggie, 1998; Wendt, 1999).

Constructivism aligns with both Bourdieu's Theory of Practice and Wenger's Communities of Practice as a social learning theory. As noted in the Literature Review, habitus is central to Bourdieu's Theory of Practice and where he ties together agency and structure. According to Husu (2013), habitus is an endless ability to produce thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions that are set by an agent's historical and social conditioning (p. 266). Agency refers to the choices that agents make and the ways in which they interpret the world (Poole & Germov, 2011, p. 6). In this way, habitus structures new experiences within social structures based on past experiences, which emphasise the constructive role of agents (Husu, 2013, p. 266). Wenger's social theory of learning places learning in the context of the lived experience of people as they participate in the world (1998, p. 3). The concept of identity is an integral component of the CoPs as a social theory of learning as it consists of negotiating the meanings as experiences of membership in social communities (Wenger, 1998, p. 145). The ability to negotiate meaning allows for the experience of agency in learning within a community (Wenger, 2010, p. 190). While the experience of identity in practice is a way of being in the world (Wenger, 1998, p. 151), these theorists align with the constructivist paradigm and Grounded Theory research method used for this research study.

3.3. Constructivist Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory method builds in a series of checks and refinements into qualitative inquiry through an iterative process of successive analytic and data collection phases of the research (Charmaz, 2008, p. 161). Charmaz (2008) states that "Grounded Theory method takes a systematic inductive, comparative, and iterative approach to inquiry and offers several open-ended strategies for conducting emergent inquiry" (p. 156). Over time, Grounded Theory has diverged into different approaches since the founders, Glaser and Strauss, developed this methodology (Mills, 2006, et al., p. 23). As a student of Glaser and Strauss, Charmaz has emerged as a contemporary proponent of Constructivist Grounded Theory, and this version aligns with my standpoint to inform the methodology and the methods for data collection and analysis.

Charmaz (2008) states "constructivists aim to make the influences of the researcher explicit as they view themselves as embedded in the research process rather than as distanced observers of empirical phenomena" (p. 160). Constructivist

Grounded Theory considers the risk of importing preconceived ideas by the researcher into the study through encouraging reflexivity and invoking Grounded Theory strategies to challenge their previously taken-for-granted actions and assumptions (p. 163). Constructivists argue that researchers' perspectives will direct their attention but not determine their research (Charmaz 2008, p. 160). Constructivist Grounded Theory is predicated on the emergent logic and fundamental method of Grounded Theory, which starts with a systematic, inductive approach to collecting and analysing data to develop theoretical analysis, it is a methodology of explication and emergence (p. 155). The objective of using Grounded Theory is to generate emergent theories from the data that accounts for the research data (p. 157). It starts with an inductive logic but moves into abductive reasoning as the research seeks to understand emergent empirical findings (p. 157). Abductive reasoning aims to account for the surprises, anomalies or puzzles in the collected data. The method builds a series of checks and refinements into qualitative inquiry through an iterative process of successive analytic and data collection phases of research, each informed by the other and rendered more theoretical (Charmaz, 2008, p 156). Grounded Theory emphasises the process of analysis and the development of theoretical categories, rather than focusing solely on the result of inquiry (p. 156). In this way, the emergent method of Grounded Theory involves creative problem solving and imaginative interpretation (p. 156). Integral to the analysis process is immersion and incubation as well as intimate familiarity with the studied phenomenon (Charmaz, 2008, p. 162).

Social research is conducted by a need to understand the social world and how it functions. My "hunches" and Constructive Grounded Theory approach have been used to gain a social understanding of the CRG model. There are three core levels of social research: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory research. Exploratory research is conducted to explore or open new areas of social enquiry (Walter, 2013, p. 8). The main purpose of descriptive research is to describe social phenomena and exploratory research provides or develops an explanation of the social world or social phenomena (p 9). While not all social research falls neatly into one level, this research study aligns more with explanatory research. Explanatory research focuses on why events occur and tries to build social theory (Neuman, 2000, p. 510), which also aligns with Grounded Theory. Grounded Theory is fundamentally linked to qualitative research methods such as interviews and

qualitative data analysis that is meaning making; it uses several forms of data collection to provide an interconnected view of social phenomena (Walter, 2013, p. 316).

3.3.1. Key interrogation points

Grounded Theory is a widely used approach in qualitative research (Neuman, 2000, p. 146). Grounded Theory is a methodology that seeks to construct knowledge about issues of importance in peoples' lives using a process of data collection that is inductive in nature (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006 p 26; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Morse, 2001). The researchers' approach builds and tests theory from two directions: deductive or inductive (Newman, 2000, p. 49). A deductive approach to social theory inquiry begins with abstract ideas or theory, then the researcher moves towards empirical evidence to test the ideas or theory (p. 50). With an inductive approach, the researcher begins with empirical details then moves towards abstract ideas to build social theory from the ground up (p. 51). While Grounded Theory does not recommend commencing research with already established research questions, I initially formed three broad areas of community planning inquiry to capture the areas of focus for the research topic (the impacts and implications of community planning on resilience in rural and regional communities). In relation to Local Government, these three broad areas of inquiry were:

- a) What is the effect that community planning has on local capacity building in a regional setting?
- b) What are the implications for the local government in facilitating community planning in a rural and regional area?
- c) What solutions may inform policy development and best-practice methods to improve community planning in a regional local government level?

Qualitative researchers, along with Grounded Theory researchers, remain open to the unexpected and are willing to change the focus of a research project as it evolves (Neuman, 2000, p. 146). According to Neuman (2000), the qualitative research style is more flexible and encourages slowly focusing the topic throughout the study (p. 149). As I was using qualitative research, it became obvious to me that the three broad areas of community planning, listed above, covered a wide scope

and the focus of the research project needed to be narrowed. To achieve this, I explored the different stages of local government community planning, which include development and implementation. From my professional experience with other Queensland local governments while I was employed at CHRC, it appeared most councils adopted similar approaches to developing their community plans, depending on the size of the local government. However, most councils differed in their approaches to implementing community plans. Before 2012, it was legislated for Queensland local governments to have community plans with a minimum of 10-year timeframes, however some councils were longer, for example, Redlands 2030 Community Plan (Redlands City Council). Since that time, various councils continue to have community plans such as Isaac 2035 Strategic Community Plan (Isaac Regional Council).

The Central Highlands 2022 (CH2022) Community Plan complied with the minimum timeframe of ten years, from 2012 to 2022. The CRG model used was developed by CHRC to implement the *CH2022 Community Plan*, specifically the 13 place community plans. As a Council employee at this time (2008-2017) and involved in the roll-out of the CRGs, I had the opportunity to investigate the approaches other councils took to implementing their community plans, including Isaac Regional Council and Redlands City Council. It became evident to me the CHRC's CRG model was unique, especially for a regional rural local government in Queensland. As a result, the opportunity to research the CRG model and understand if and/or how it adds value as a community governance model for local government presented itself to me when I became a Councillor in 2020. During the three years between leaving CHRC as an employee and being elected as a Councillor, I formed hunches about the CRG model that I felt would narrow the focus of this research project. These "hunches" were due to my renewed involvement with the CRGs as a Councillor and based on my prior knowledge, practice and experience with the CRGs as a CHRC employee. These "hunches" are:

- CHRC's CRG model is potentially a unique community engagement model for local government to implement community planning in regional rural Queensland.
- The model is more than a community engagement method, that it is a type of community governance structure that enables agency and advocacy so CRG

members and Council can share aspirations/ideas for future place community and regional planning, and action joint projects.

- Following Queensland Regional Council amalgamations in 2008, CHRC's community planning process and the establishment of the CRGs assisted with maintaining the unique characteristics of local towns/communities and supported residents to conceptualise and identify with the new entity of CHRC.
- Over time, the CRG model enables core members (community and council) to develop and learn leadership skills and exchange knowledge that led to capacity building.
- The CRG model had established a connected-up structure that enabled participatory community development at the place/locality and regional levels, that can contribute to community resilience.

3.4. Reflective practice

My prior study in the fields of sociology, media and communications and business also informed these “hunches”. This research project has given me the opportunity to study and understand the CHRC GRC model by applying an academic lens as opposed to understanding the model from a purely practitioner perspective. As a practitioner, I drew on my knowledge and experience to develop the rationale for the CRG model and develop the process for formalising the CRGs as a community governance model. Along with CHRC councillors, other members of the CHRC community development team and specialist consultants that formed the project team (Dr Lisa Caffery and Lyn Hopewell), we were all immersed in our practice and had previously only taken time to intermittently reflect at different stages. During the pre-study phase from 2012-2017 (refer 3.7 Research phases below), I learnt ‘on-the-job’ and through my first-hand experience with the 13 CRGs. Donald Schön (1983) in *The Reflective Practitioner* defines this type of learning as reflection-in-action and describes this as a core competence of professionals (van Aken, 2011, p. 610). According to van Aken (2011), Schön recognised reflection-in-action as a process that enabled professionals to learn *in situ* by drawing from their repertoire (p. 610). These repertoires are developed by professionals, first through formal knowledge of their discipline and then while problem-solving in the field as a “situation in reality” (van Aken, 2011, p. 610). Schön describes reflection-in-action as

an intuitive, creative process that results in experiential learning (van Aken, 2011, p. 612). Schön associated reflection-in-action with knowledge-in-action and reflection-on-action. As cited by Higgins (2010), Schön (1987) describes knowledge-in-action as the special kind of knowledge created and revealed through the everyday routines of action (p. 605). Schön describes reflection-on-action as the looking back on a situation one does with new insights (Higgins, 2010, p. 605).

Overall, the field of reflexivity emerged out of concerns about the dimensions of power in research and its importance to qualitative methods which make specific demands for the active engagement of the researcher (Walter, 2013, p. 317). Reflexivity is the researcher's self-conscious awareness of their position in the research process (p. 317). Researchers can play an overt and/or explicit role when using qualitative methods in the research process. The reflexive researcher is one who acknowledges the ways in which power can be constituted and enacted during the research data collection and analysis of data (p. 317). Reflexivity does not just comprise reflection on individual interviews, it is also a whole research approach that commences with clear understanding of oneself in the research process and concludes with a clear explication of the research method (Walter, 2013, p. 317).

Reflexivity approaches for this research study have been explicit and considered over the course of the project. An important aspect of reflexivity is how it can be used to interrogate not only the power relations between the researcher and the research process but also the power dynamics between the interview participants and the local government. This made confidentiality and anonymity a critical consideration for community and CHRC interview participants. Additionally, this was an important consideration given the small population of many towns and communities in the Central Highlands region.

For me, managing bias as familiar with the CRG model meant that I was deliberately having to be mindful of remaining objective. This mainly stems from having established relationships with most of the interview participants as I met them when I was working for Council at the time the CRGs were formed. Therefore, engaging an independent interviewer addresses the potential risk for my current position as councillor to influence the power dynamics between myself and research participants and council informants. I am also familiar with the CRG resources and tools, such as terms of reference, developed by council as I was instrumental in establishing most of these.

According to Higgins (2010), Schön also distinguishes the “swampy lowlands of practice” from the “high ground” of academia and uses these metaphors to refer to the high ground of theory and the lowly swamp of practice (p. 604). This research project enables me to bridge this divide by implementing an inductive approach to explore my above stated “hunches” to undertake “high ground” research. Consequently, the research methodology and methods for this study of the CRG model incorporate an approach that makes explicit the pre-study experiences, as well as all research project phases, and the reflexivity of the researcher’s knowledge which has significantly developed over the course of this study.

3.5. Ethical clearance

Ethics is concerned with the establishment of a set of moral standards that govern behaviour in a particular setting or for a particular group (Habibis, 2013, p 73). Ethical research is concerned with ensuring that ethical principles and values always govern research involving humans (Habibis, 2013, p 73). The focus of ethical issues extends from the needs of the project to those of the key stakeholders including the participants, the researcher, the research organisation and the scientific community as well as the broader public (Habibis, 2013, p 73). Understanding the uneven power relations between the researcher and the researched is critical to understanding the ethical concerns that are part of the social investigation (Habibis, 2013, p. 73).

As outlined in Chapter 1, I was originally employed by CHRC (2008-2017) and led the development and implementation stages of the *CH2022 Community Plan*. The 13 CRGs were established (2013-2015) in the implementation stage for Council to work with community to implement the 13 place community plans. In 2020, I became a Councillor on the Central Highlands Regional Council (term 2020-2024) and these roles have afforded me specific and particular insight into the workings of CHRC and the emergence of the CRGs. This involved two vital considerations when applying for ethical clearance for this research project. Firstly, I had to consider my professional involvement and account for this potential bias. Secondly, I had to demonstrate critical distance when conducting the interviews and other interactions with CRG members as interview participants and CHRC personnel. This specifically related to my current role as a councillor, given relationships and power dynamics consistently change and as a researcher this consideration had to be explicit and

transparent. To address this, an independent interviewer (Sally Hansen) and a transcriber (Kay McKay) were engaged for the interview data collection phase of this research. I also undertook to comply with approval protocols when engaging with CHRC staff, specifically the Community Engagement and Development Officers (CEDOs), as they became “informants” in the interview process and acted as first contact points for interview participants.

This approach was critical to securing approval from CHRC (the mayor and councillors) to endorse the research project. After seeking support from CHRC for this research project, I received a letter of confirmation and approval from the Mayor of CHRC on 11 September 2020. Once support from CHRC was obtained, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) also gave approval for me to engage with specific Council staff. This was an extremely vital component in obtaining ethical clearance for this research project.

The University of Southern Queensland confirmed this research project met the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) on 21 October 2020 – USQ HREC ID: H20REA258. Project title: *The impacts and implications of community planning on resilience of regional and rural communities*. Gaining Ethics Approval and Council support afforded myself, as the researcher, more authority and credibility when engaging with CRG members and Council staff. As Council has approved support for the study and involvement of staff, the findings of this research will be shared with CHRC. This research project is now part of the CRG journey, especially for CHRC as the facilitator and custodian of the process. CRGs have been operating for up to ten (10) years as they continue to adapt and evolve.

The guiding principle for researchers is that a person’s decision to participate in research is to be voluntary and based on sufficient information and adequate understanding of the proposed research, as well as the implications of participation (Habibis, 2013, p 79). Interview participants were given information with a Participant Information Sheet and a Participant Consent Form for this project. Transcripts of interviews were also emailed to interview participants so they could check for accuracy of their responses before the transcripts were finalised. This also gave interview participants the opportunity to add more information and confidence in the content of the information captured from their interview.

The independent interviewer was employed through USQ as a research assistant and signed an employment contract. Confidentiality was a requirement of this contract. The transcriber was employed by me and as part of this employment arrangement confidentiality was explained and abided by. The independent interviewer, transcriber and researcher worked as a team to conduct and manage the participant interviews and transcriptions.

3.6. Data storage and management

The transcriptions of personal interviews and audio recordings included consent statements from participants. The audio recordings and interview transcripts were accessed by the independent interviewer, transcriber and researcher on a password protected Google or common drive so this information could be uploaded and accessed by each research team member. A spreadsheet detailing the interview participants, contact details and interview schedule was also uploaded to the password protected common drive. As research team members did not occupy the same office or live in the same towns, this was the most appropriate and confidential way to store and access information. This reduced the need to transfer information via email, which often consisted of large files. Each team member was using a password protected computer. The transcripts were stored as individual Word documents and given a code to de-identify any information about the identity of the interview participant. Emails distributed to interview participants were stored on the researcher's computer. All emails, audio recordings and final transcripts were deleted from the independent interviewer and transcriber computers after each interview and only stored on password protected common drive. The final copies of the audio recordings, transcript word documents and interview scheduling spreadsheet were stored on a password protected hard disc drive by the researcher. Once this had been completed all common drive documents and documents on the researcher's computer were deleted. This all took place during Phases 1 and 2.

3.7. Research phases

This research project was undertaken in three chronological phases, as described below:

- **Pre-Study Phase (2012-2017):** Summarises the researcher's background experience with the CRGs up to the time of becoming a Councillor, including

the preparation and development phases of the Central Highlands 2022 Community Plan (2009-2011). It was during the pre-study phase that I enrolled in a PhD in 2nd semester 2015. I successfully completed my confirmation in 2018. Due to work commitments (while employed and CHRC and the three years after) and not being clear on my research approach my study progress was limited.

- **Phase One (2019-2021):** Data collection: While interviews were the primary data collection method, arrangements of data collection methods were used as required by Grounded Theory. During this time, I had a change in supervisor and gained a clear focus on my research focus and approach. I gained Ethical Clearance in 2020 and drafted the methodology and literature review chapters.
- **Phase Two (2021-2023):** Data analysis and thesis submission: A blended data analysis approach of Grounded Theory and thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data collected for this research study. I drafted the findings/recommendations, introduction and conclusion chapters and then completed final edits of this thesis during this phase. This PhD thesis was submitted by 30 September 2023.

Further detail on each phase appears in the Summary Table at the end of this chapter. My PhD was completed over eight years as a part-time student (six years) and with an additional 12 months leave of absence and one year of extension.

3.7.1. Data collection methods

While the primary data collection method for this project was interviews, other data sources were accessed. Grounded Theory requires a large amount of data collected from a wide range of data sources. Willis (2013) notes that along with interviews, Grounded Theory emphasises the use of memo writing and other sources of information such as newsletters, contemporary media items and observational notes that can become part of the data to be analysed (p. 327). Following is a list of data collection methods implemented throughout this research project.

3.7.1.1 *Reflective journal*

Journal entries throughout the research project provided me with a reference point to recall dates of significant events such as interview dates and a method for capturing all aspects of my research project. I used the journal to record my notes on journal articles, emergent thoughts and ideas such as designing interview questions, sketching and drawing figurative ideas about emerging social networks, capturing linkages between emerging interview data and theoretical concepts and recording drafts of chapter topics. Keeping a personal journal was critical and provided a reliable source for capturing and recording knowledge about all aspects and phases of this research project.

3.7.1.2 *Interviews*

In-depth interviews were the primary source of data collection for this research study. There were two sets of interviews conducted: 38 interviews in the first set and nine interviews in the second. The second set of interviews includes an interview with the independent interviewer, transcriber and myself. The first set of 38 interviews commenced on 18 February 2021 and completed on 26 May 2021. The second set of interviews commenced 19 October 2021 and completed on 6 December 2021. The second set of interviews were conducted to focus specifically on data gaps and to glean more information about the concepts that emerged during coding and analysis of research data. A total of 45 interviews were conducted for this research project.

The interviews were in-depth and the format consisted of semi-structured prompts to ensure consistent data was able to be sourced from the interview transcriptions for analysis. The prompts for the interviews were developed by me, based on “hunches” about the CRG model, previous knowledge and experience working with the CRGs as an employee of CHRC, the principles of community development that underpin community planning, and drawing on responses in short videos featuring interviews with CRG members about the CRGs produced by CHRC. While this research study took an inductive approach, this interview format was developed to assist the independent interviewer. As previously noted, the independent interviewer was engaged to comply with ethical clearance as the researcher was a CHRC Councillor at the time the interviews were undertaken. I also developed an interview guide for the independent interviewer so there was

agreement on all aspects of the interview process such as using prompts as open-ended questions, collecting interview participant consent forms and the process for scheduling interview times and dates. We agreed on ensuring that the interview respondents were able to build rapport with the interviewer and they felt comfortable to share their stories, ideas and thoughts. Using open-ended questions as prompts gave the interview participants freedom in their responses, as opposed to having to select from predetermined responses used in closed questions. The opportunity for the researcher, independent interviewer and transcriber to regularly meet was important for working together as we all live locally. Confidentiality of data and using password protected data management procedures to protect the anonymity of research participants was a requirement for handling interview transcripts. The interviews were recorded by the interviewer and uploaded to a password protected shared Google drive that enabled the researcher and transcriber to access the interview data.

The interviews were held face-to-face when possible, but distance was also a consideration for Central Highlands residents as the region is almost 60,000 square kilometres. Several towns and remote rural communities are approximately a two-hour drive from Emerald, which is located near the centre of the region. COVID-19 restrictions in 2021, enforced by the State government, meant that most interviews were conducted by telephone, or online using Zoom or Skype. The research participants were given the option to choose their preferred interview method.

Prior to starting the interview process, it was necessary to gather background information about the CRGs for the independent interviewer, should this information be required in the interviews. This background information on the CRGs included the dates the CRGs commenced or the first meeting dates of CRGs, the number of members per CRG and population of the CRG town/locality. Table 1 below lists the name of the CRGs, listed in alphabetical order and was prepared for the independent interviewer (as of 18 February 2021).

Table 1
CRG Information

Name of CRG	Date CRG commenced	Number of CRG members	Population of CRG locality
Arcadia Valley	18.03.15	15	64
Bauhinia	07.09.15	14	238
Blackwater	12.02.15	21	4,820
Bluff	28.04.15	21	348
Capella	22.10.13 (pilot/first CRG)	21	1,276
Comet	12.05.15	19	97
Dingo	02.02.15	29	448
Duaringa	17.09.15	20	470
Emerald	05.05.15	21	15,091
Gemfields	02.06.15	24	1,590
Rolleston	23.04.15	16	423
Springsure	10.06.14 (second CRG)	27	1,745
Tieri	20.08.15	14	1,359
		251 Total number of CRG members	28,583 Central Highlands region

Source: App.remplan.com.au/centralhighlands/community/population/age
Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Census of Population and Housing

Prior to starting the interviews, my aim was to interview two CRG members from each of the 13 CRGS (26 interviews) and six interviews with Council representatives who have different types of involvement with CRGs. For example, councillors, CEDOs and Council staff who may attend CRGs to provide information. A consideration for including all the 13 CRGs was to provide feedback from smaller, larger, and remote CRG members as well as ensure that all CRGs were given the opportunity to participate rather than perceive they were omitted.

Selecting research participants was conducted with the assistance of CHRC research informants (as described below). Prior to commencing the interviews, the procedure for contacting the CRG members was established with the Manager,

Connected Communities and the CEDOs in consultation with the researcher at the beginning of February 2021. It was confirmed the CEDOs assigned to each CRG would distribute an email inviting CRG members to self-select or nominate themselves to be interviewed. CEDOs are assigned to one or more of the 13 CRGs as follows:

- CEDO 1 – Blackwater, Bluff, Dingo and Duaringa
- CEDO 2 – Emerald, Springsure, Bauhinia, Rolleston and Arcadia Valley
- CEDO 3 – Capella, Tieri and Gemfields

In this way, invitations to be involved in the research project would be extended to all CRG members, including the two councillors who are assigned to each CRG. It was agreed that if the self-selection method did not generate two respondents from each CRG, then the Council informant or CEDO would assist the researcher with selecting CRG members that may be interested in being a research participant. Also, it was agreed my Council informants would assist with selecting and contacting other Council staff to participate as an interviewee.

To manage the distribution of invitations, four dates were set to send out invitations to a group of the CRGs, so they were not all distributed at the same time. This would ensure no CRGs were missed and provided a more controlled approach to scheduling interview times and dates and following-up with confirming transcriptions participants. As interview invites were sent to each group of CRGs, it gave me time to connect with the next CEDO to explain the process. This was repeated until all the CRGs had been contacted. Invitations to participate in the research were emailed to the members of the CRGs by the CEDOs on the following dates:

- 19 February 2021: Blackwater, Bluff, Dingo and Duaringa
- 1 March 2021: Comet, Gemfields and Emerald
- 8 March 2021: Capella, Tieri and Springsure
- 16 March 2021: Bauhinia, Rolleston and Arcadia Valley

The emails distributed by CEDOs to the CRG members also had the USQ Participant Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet attached. When the CRG members indicated they would participate, the independent interviewer

contacted them to schedule a time and date, and offer face-to-face, telephone or online/Zoom interviews options.

The CRG and Council respondents who participated in the second set of interviews were selected by the CEDOs. Grounded Theory is iterative and inductive, so the second set of interviews were conducted to glean more data about the CRGs from Council staff, as well as gain more information from CRG members about memberships and engaging with the broader community. The final interview was held with the researcher, independent interviewer, and transcriber. A total of 45 interviews were conducted for this research project from 18 February 2021 to 6 December 2021.

3.7.1.3 *Informants*

An informant or key actor in field research is someone with whom a researcher develops a relationship and can provide information or informs about the field (Newman, 2000, p. 374). An informant is totally familiar with and engages in or has engaged in the research setting (Newman, 2000, p. 374). Informants were important for contacting and distributing information to interview participants, especially with members from 13 CRGs. I was given approval in September 2020 by the (then) CHRC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to contact the General Manager of the Department of Communities to arrange a procedure for contacting staff as part of this research project. The General Manager gave approval for the Manager of the Connected Communities team within the Communities department to be my key council contact and gave permission for the CEDOs to participate in the research project. These staff members became my Council informants. As informants, they provided a valuable source of local knowledge about each CRG and assisted with the process for selecting interview participant and distributing information about the research project to CRG members.

3.7.1.4 *Council CRG related documents*

Over time, Council and the CRGs have developed a range of CRG resources and tools, which are discussed further in the themes in Chapter 4. Following are a list of some of these resources and tools to evidence aspects of the CRGs:

Since the *CH2022 Community Plan* was process began in 2010 (to the present) there has been a vast range of documents, reports and plans developed by Council. The most significant set of documents that capture the story of all 13 CRGs

are their agendas, minutes, action plans, strategic plans and project plans, which are publicly available on the CHRC website. Most of these documents are referred to in Section 4.2, Theme 1: Meaning.

- *Central Highlands 2022 Community Plan* – This plan features the regional community plan and 13 place community plans. This plan can be accessed: [CH 2022 Community Plan - Central Highlands Regional Council \(chrc.qld.gov.au\)](https://chrc.qld.gov.au)
- Each of the 13 place community plans have a Community Action Plans companion planning document which captures the short-medium and long-term actions that correspond to the 10-year place community plans. The Community Action Plans can be changed and updated by the CRG members to meet ongoing and changing community needs and aspirations.
- Central Highlands 2022 Community Plan refresh was undertaken in 2018 to refresh the Community Actions Plans, which were then referred to as Strategic Directions.
- CRG Agendas and Minutes for 13 CRG meetings have been capturing the meeting items and discussions as well as the story of each CRG community since 2013-2015. These are a valuable resource for guiding meeting proceedings and an example of a CRG Agenda and Minutes are included as Appendix 6.
- A generic terms of reference is developed for each of the 13 CRGs and discussed further in chapter 4. An example CRG terms of reference is included as Appendix F.
- Each CRG has a webpage on the CHRC website which was created by Council for the CRGs to access Agendas, Minutes and Community Action Plans/Strategic Directions and to showcase projects and initiatives. This is a resource for each CRG and for members of other CRGs and the broader community. The CRG webpages can be accessed: <https://haveyoursay.chrc.qld.gov.au/central-highlands-2022-community-plan>
- Online demographic and economic profiles are available online for each CRG locality. CHRC and Central Highlands Development Corporation (CHDC),

which is CHRC's economic development agency, have provided this resource to ensure demographic and economic statistics are available, especially for funding applications. Access to CRG profiles and statistics is via the CHRC and CHDC websites.

- CHRC hosted the annual Regional Summits prior to Covid pandemic, which brought CRG members from the 13 CRGs together for one regional event each year. The first Regional Summit was held in 2015 and the 2015 Regional Summit Report is included as Appendix 7. The Regional Summits and CRG Regional Roundups are discussed on Theme 4: Identity in Chapter 4.
- CRG Regional Roundup compiled and distributed annually which features some of the projects or initiatives undertaken by the CRGs each year. The Regional Roundups are circulated to each of the 13 CRGs each year and came about as a means to share information across the groups during the Covid restrictions for social interaction. An example Regional Roundup is included as Appendix 8.

3.7.1.5 *Impact files*

The impact files are listed below to provide an insight into the activities of the CRGs and the ways CHRC support and promote the CRGs. These impact files have been prepared for public distribution.

- CRG community notices: Each CRG has a template that features their individual logos and colours for public advertising. Included as Appendix 9 are examples of the Blackwater and Dingo CRGs meeting invitations.
- 2020 CRG promotional video clips – CHRC website. CHRC compiled a series of short video clips featuring CRG members talking about why they participate in the CRGs. These video clips are available on the CHRC website:
<https://www.chrc.qld.gov.au/community-support/community-development-2/have-your-say-community-reference-groups/>
- CHRC hosts annual Community Consultation meetings in all towns and communities in the Central Highlands region as well as the CRGs. At the Community Consultation meetings CHRC distributes community updates to attendees and these handouts include information about the CRGs in their

area. An example of the Bauhinia/Duaringa community update as Appendix 10.

- The CRGs will undertake a range of community projects and Appendices 11 and 12 are examples of two CRG projects. The flyer for the Bluff CRG Rural Addressing initiative is used by all CRGs to promote being emergency ready (Appendix 11) and the Emerald CRG Positive Ageing Forum is included as Appendix 12.

3.7.2. Coding and data analysis

This research project has drawn on Charmaz's Constructivist Grounded Theory guideline strategies (2008, p. 163-167), and Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid and Redwood's Framework Method steps (2013, p. 4 & 5), for coding and data analysis. The aim was to utilise thematic analysis as an inductive approach for qualitative data analysis that is suitable for data analysis and emerging social theory approach of Grounded Theory, specifically Constructivist Grounded Theory. According to Charmaz (2008), a constructivist approach focuses on emergence of theoretical codes to integrate researchers' theories, rather than on approaches to Grounded Theory practice that encourages researchers to force their data into extant categories (p. 161).

Charmaz (2008) adds that while there are differences between earlier versions of Grounded Theory and Constructivist Grounded Theory, they do share similar guidelines as a method to make transparent analytic choices and construction of data for research analysis (p. 161). Charmaz (2008) states that Constructivist Grounded Theory uses guidelines that emphasise the comparative and interactive nature of the emergent analysis process that includes four strategies which are coding data, memo writing, theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation (p. 163). Coding data consists of a least two phases which are initial coding and focused coding. During the coding, the researcher is looking for actions and theoretical potential in the data (Charmaz, 2008, p. 163). Memo writing provides the opportunity to capture ideas in the process of coding and analysis which enables the researcher to gather more data to illuminate categories and probe deeper into analysis for ideas to emerge. This is the intermediate stage between data collection and writing a draft (Charmaz, 2008, p. 166). The theoretical sampling enables the researcher to utilise a method of sampling data for the development of a theoretical category. By applying

abductive logic then imaginative interpretation and reasoning about experience can determine conceivable, existing and emerging theoretical explanations from the data (p. 166). Theoretical saturation occurs when gathering more data sheds no further light on the properties of their theoretical category (Charmaz, 2008, p. 167).

For this research project, I have used an inductive and analytic approach to thematic analysis to strengthen transparency which aligns with my epistemological view. This is important as I chose to undertake data analysis manually and as much as possible capture the verbatim comments of the research participants, so they have a direct voice into this research. I chose to conduct manual coding and data analysis for this study so that I did not lose the essence of the meaning when interpreting the research participants' comments. I took a reflexive approach to ensure I was always mindful of my involvement and experience with the CRGs as a council employee and now in my role as a councillor. This was made explicit through the ethical approval process for this research project. While my experience and knowledge are an advantage for interpreting meanings in the data, it is important for me to also be mindful of my role as a researcher. In this way, I am critically aware of balancing my subjective and objective points of view for coding and data analysis, and this was applied throughout all phases of this research study.

Willis (2013) suggests that Grounded Theory aims to generate theory from data, and it is closely aligned with thematic analysis (p. 327). Grounded Theory most often utilises thematic analysis and coding in a process of inductive analysis and that memo writing is important throughout the research process (p. 327). In this approach, Willis describes how thematic analysis can be utilised with the strategies of Grounded Theory, including constructivist Grounded Theory strategies noted by Charmaz. Braun and Clarke (2006) developed a series of steps for thematic analysis that align with an inductive approach for qualitative data analysis that is suitable for Grounded Theory (p. 87). For Braun and Clarke (2006), this thematic analysis approach is not tied to a particular theoretical or epistemological position but rather can be applied in a range of situations (p. 87). The Framework Method developed by Jane Richie and Liz Spencer in the late 1980s, sits within analysis methods termed thematic analysis or qualitative content analysis and is a flexible tool that can be adapted to use with many qualitative approaches that aim to generate themes, such as Grounded Theory (Gale et al., 2013, p. 1 & 3). The development of themes is a common feature of qualitative data analysis that searches for patterns to generate

descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation (Gale et al., 2013, p. 3). The Framework Method enables the use of constant comparative techniques to refine themes, however, is not necessarily concerned with the generation of social theory which is part of Grounded Theory (Gale et al., 2013, p. 3).

The Framework Method is most commonly used for semi-structured interview transcripts (Gale et al., 2013, p. 3) which compliments this research project. Research should not be tempted to quantify qualitative data using the Framework Method as its purpose is to capture diversity around a phenomenon (Gale et al., 2013 p. 3). The procedure for analysis using the Framework Method follows seven stages: 1. Transcription; 2. Familiarisation with the interview; 3. Coding; 4. Developing a working analytical framework; 5. Applying analytic framework; 6. Charting data into the framework matrix; and 7. Interpreting the data (Gale et al., 2013, pp. 4 & 5).

In coding and data analysis for this research study, I have integrated the Framework Method for thematic analysis with Charmaz's Constructivist Grounded Theory strategies. By drawing on the Charmaz Grounded Theory strategies as guidelines (2008, pp. 163-167) and Gale et al. Framework Method, (2013, pp. 4 & 5), this research project takes an inductive approach using a thematic data analysis method to compliment the generation of emergent social theory aligned to Grounded Theory.

The following provides an overview of the levels of coding and data analysis used in this research project based on the Charmaz Constructivist Grounded Theory and the Framework Method.

3.7.2.1 *Level 1: Data familiarisation and coding*

According to Gale et al. (2013), becoming familiar with the whole interview using the audio recording and/or the transcript as well as reflective notes is a vital state in interpretation (p. 4). Using large margins on the transcripts allows the researcher to record analytical notes, thoughts, and impressions (p. 4). For initial or open coding in inductive studies, by carefully reading the transcripts or narrative data line-by-line the researcher can capture as many perspectives as possible, for example particular behaviours or incidents, values that inform or underpin certain statements and beliefs as well as emotions expressed by interview respondents (p. 4). For Charmaz (2008), researchers conduct initial Grounded Theory coding by

comparing incidents or by coding word by word, line-by-line or paragraph by paragraph (p. 164). The initial codes are selected on the most frequent and/or significant codes that comes from this emergent process (Charmaz, 2008, p. 164).

For this research study, the first and second set of interviews were captured as audio recordings by the independent interviewer and then transcribed verbatim by the transcriber. Each transcript was created as a separate Word file and given a file code to de-identify the respondent. For example, CRG#1, CRG#2, etc for CRG research participants or CHRC#, CHRC#2, etc for Council research participants. I then listened to the interview audio recordings after each interview was conducted by the independent interviewer. I kept in constant contact with the independent interviewer and transcriber to discuss the content of the participant responses. I then listened to the recordings again when I reviewed the transcriptions before they were sent to the research participants for their final approval. This was important to ensure participants' references to names, places, projects, etc were correct as the transcriber was not always familiar with the CRG localities. I randomly selected ten interview transcripts and then read the narrative data word by word and line-by-line. I used the large right-side margins to capture my analytical notes, thoughts, and impressions from the narrative data. These were then transferred into my reflective journal to list the emerging codes with a description. Initially there were 70 codes and after comparing the codes for similarities and differences, I reduced these to 25 codes. This has been depicted in Appendix 1 which demonstrates open coding, 70 initial codes and 25 final codes. Engaging in reflexivity and invoking grounded theory strategies challenged any of my previously taken-for-granted actions and assumptions throughout this process (Charmaz, 2008, p. 163).

I randomly selected ten transcripts to test the effectiveness of the final 25 code against the research data. This was successful, so the remaining 26 interviews were coded using the 25 final codes. Then a spreadsheet was developed listing the 25 codes and each transcript was reviewed again to log each time the codes appeared to verify the frequency of each code. Appendix 2 demonstrates the frequency of each of the 25 codes. As noted by Gale et al. (2013), researchers should not be tempted to quantify qualitative data using the Framework Method as its purpose is to capture diversity around a phenomenon (p. 3). The reason I decided to quantify the codes was to compare codes and patterns and assist with identifying potential gaps in the data. Using this analysis strategy, I decided to conduct a

second round of interviews. As noted by Charmaz (2008), an iterative process of going back and forth between collecting and analysing data can raise the emergent levels of analysis (p. 161). With the assistance of the Council research informants, a further eight participants were identified. These included three additional CRG members, one active or core member plus two members who had not attended a CRG meeting in several years to compare data amid these three interviews and with the overall. A further five council participants were identified who hold positions within the organisation. After reviewing the second round of interview transcripts, there was evidence the required additional data had been gathered, and I was satisfied the research data was complete. What became evident after analysing the second set of interviews was that the research data was not creating any new information, nor was new data emerging. With level one coding, data gathering and data analysis complete, level two was progressed. These data gathering and data analysis activities were completed in Phase 1 and 2.

3.7.2.2 *Level 2: Code categories and link to findings*

For Neuman (2000), open coding is the first level of coding qualitative data in which the researcher examines the data to condense them into preliminary analytic categories or codes for analysing the data (p. 514). The second level of coding and analysis for this research project groups the 25 codes of Level 1 into categories that link with the learning capabilities of the four components of the CoPs. These components provide a theoretical and analytical lens for understanding the community planning practice of the CRGs. This second level of coding was completed in Phase 2 as indicated in the Methodology Table below.

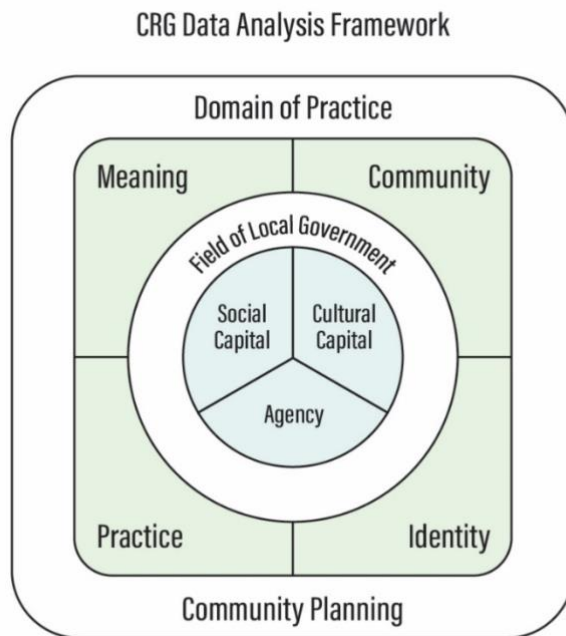
Level 2 began with comparing and contrasting the 25 codes to group them into categories. This is often referred to as axial coding by some Grounded theorists as the second coding of qualitative data after open coding (Neuman, 2000, p. 504). Here, the researcher organises the codes, develops links among them, and discovers key analysis categories (p. 504). By comparing code by code, these can be grouped into categories which are then clearly defined (Gale et al., 2013, p. 3). This systematic comparative method leads to forming theoretical categories. Using my reflective journal, I grouped and regrouped codes several times by using my knowledge of the CRGs and experience in community development and community planning to interpret and form explanations for code groups or categories. The aim of

forming categories such as this was to collate meaningful sets of grouped codes that emerged from the data.

Next, I interpreted the data codes by going back over the reflective journal notes taken throughout the analysis to gather ideas, interpretations and impressions that revealed characteristics of and difference between the codes to generate emerging concepts (Gale et al., 2013, p. 4). I then began memo writing as the categories formed. In this way, 25 codes became 12 categories. According to Charmaz (2008), memo writing shifts qualitative inquiry into an explicit analytic endeavour that explores meanings, weighting situations, and examining actions (p. 166). Memo writing can define the code or category by properties found in the data, delineate the conditions under which the code or category emerges and compare the code or category with other codes and categories in the data (p. 166). Through the process of defining categories, core categories can emerge that are linked to other codes and categories (Walter, 2013, p. 328). Each of the twelve categories identified for this research data all had links to more than one code to demonstrate interpenetration of data codes and category concepts. The final set of categories were then selected to link to the four CoPs components.

As previously noted in Chapters 1 and 2, this research project is using Bourdieu's Theory of Practice and Wenger's significantly expanded notion of Communities of Practice (CoPs) as a social theory of learning to structure the theoretical framework of this research study. The four components of the CoPs have been used to create the themes articulated in Chapter 4. These themes are defined by the learning capabilities within each of the CoPs components – meaning, community, practice and identity, as identified in the Literature Review. The 12 categories were then grouped to align with the learning capabilities to form sections within each of the four themes in Chapter 4. Appendix 4 identifies how the 25 codes are grouped within each of the 12 categories and then how the categories are aligned to each of the four themes. Within each theme in the data categories reveal the research participants' quotes and comments that are evidenced against aspects of community capacity building drawn from Bourdieu's Theory of Practice which are agency, social capital and cultural capital. Figure 8 depicts how CoPs domain of practice components are used to frame the research data analysis to understand how the CRGs are building capacity within the field of local government, as previously explained in Chapter 2.

Figure 8
Data analysis framework



3.7.3. Detailed phases

Table 2 sets out the research phases for this research project to concisely summarise the methods used to gather data and timing of data analysis within each of the Phases: Pre-Study, Phase 1, and Phase 2. This table describes the processes undertaken throughout the project relating to Grounded Theory methods and outcomes.

Table 2
Methodology table

Phases	Activity description	Data collection	Outcomes
Pre-study phase			
2009-2017	CHRC – Central Highlands 2022 Community Plan • Preparation phase • Development phase • Implementation phase Researcher resigned from CHRC in 2017		• 13 place communities formed in Central Highlands Regional Council area • 13 Community Reference Groups (CRGs) established in 2013/15
2017-2018	• Literature review drafted • Identified multi-case method • Theoretical concept – community resilience • Research questions • Confirmation • Re-confirmation • Theoretical concept – community capacity building for resilience • Change of supervisor	Reflective journal	• Confirmation completed March 2018 • Met with Isaac and Barcaldine Regional Councils to investigate case study support
2019	• Abandoned the use of multi-case study approach • Research focus narrowed to CHRC 13 CRGs model • Ethics application started • Constructivist Grounded Theory methodology	Reflective journal Formed research hunches	• Research study focused on CHRC 13 CRGs model • Ethics application started

Phases	Activity description	Data collection	Outcomes
2020	• Researcher became CHRC Councillor • Letter of support from CHRC (11 September 2020) • Ethics approval (21 October 2020) • Pre-interview planning started • Independent interviewer and transcriber sourced and interview guidelines developed • CHRC CEDOs informants approved and identified	Reflective journal	• CHRC support and Ethics Approval confirmed • Independent interviewer, translator and CHRC informants engaged
Phase 1: Data collection			
2020/21	Pre-interview planning: • Interview format and prompts/questions formed • Participant interview sheet • Consent form • CRG Introductory emails drafted • Interview schedule developed with independent interviewer and CHRC informants • Transcription process developed with transcriber	Reflective journal	• CHRC informants distributed email invitation to research participants
	<u>First Round</u>: 18 February – 26 May 2021 Interviews with CRG members, councillors and CHRC staff <u>Second Round</u>: 19 October 2021 – 6 December 2021	38 interviews 9 interviews	• 38 interviews and transcripts completed • Consent forms collected • Eight interviews and transcripts completed

Phases	Activity description	Data collection	Outcomes
	Interviews with four (4) CRG members and (4) CHRC representative Interview with independent interviewer and transcriber – 6 December 2021 Methodology chapter drafted		- Consent forms collected - One interview and transcript completed
Phase 2: Data analysis and thesis submitted			
2021	Coding First Round: Open coding: Line-by-line – and note taking x 38 transcripts. 70 – 25 codes. Frequency of 25 codes. Coding 9 second set of transcripts.	Reflective journal	First Round Coding completed
2022	Coding Second Round: - Selective coding linking 25 codes to 12 categories - Draft literature review chapter reviewed - Review of Wenger's four practice components to align with 12 categories for data analysis - Draft Methodology chapter reviewed - Identifying and collecting Council CRG documents and impact files	Reflective journal Analytic memo writing for 12 categories	- Second round of coding completed 12 categories finalised - Data analysis structure developed

Phases	Activity description	Data collection	Outcomes
2023	Confidential interim report to Council on CRG findings as part of CHRC Community Engagement Review January 2023 Draft chapters completed: • Introduction • Literature Review • Methodology • Findings • Reference list Submit dissertation: 5 September 2023	Reflective journal Analytic memos Impact files Council CRG related documents	• Confidential interim report to CHRC • Reviewed data analysis structure to intergrate theoretical framework for data analysis

3.8. Conclusion

This project applied a Grounded Theory methodology, specifically Constructivist Grounded Theory as advocated by Charmaz (2008). Charmaz's version of Grounded Theory aligns with my standpoint and therefore the methods of data collection and analysis I adopted for this research project. As previously noted, Charmaz (2008) says that Grounded Theory provides a systematic approach to collecting and analysing data that combines explicitness and flexibility (p. 155). Charmaz's version of Constructivist Grounded Theory also allowed for me the flexibility to take an iterative and comparative process with data analysis.

As a practitioner of community planning and community development and based on my, previous and current, knowledge and experience with CHRC and the CRG model, I took a reflexive practice approach. This was necessary to ensure this research study was explicit and considered the implications for myself as a previous employee and a Councillor, as the researcher, the research participants and the local government. To overcome any professional and ethical barriers and to gain Ethical Clearance, an independent interviewer was engaged and protocols for working with CHRC informants were established. The outcome from the 45 interviews was a large volume of qualitative data which is evidenced in the depth and richness of the findings, detailed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the qualitative primary data collected from research participants interviews. The theoretical framework used in this research study integrates Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice (1990) as well as Etienne Wenger's significantly expanded Communities of Practice (1991) as a social theory of learning. Bourdieu's Theory of Practice is used as a sociological lens to frame community capacity building as agency, social and cultural capital within the field of local government, as detailed in the Literature Review. Wenger's Communities of Practice (CoPs) provides a social theory of learning that situates individual and group practice within a domain of knowledge as practice comprised of four components: meaning, practice, community and identity. For the purpose of this research study, as the 13 CRGs are groups of community leaders practicing community planning, I view them as CoPs. The four components of CoPs have been used as themes that structure and present the findings which emerged from the research data to understand CRG community capacity building.

4.1.1. Data coding and analysis process

As noted in Chapter 3, the key research methodology for this research study is Grounded Theory, specifically Constructivist Grounded Theory as advocated by Charmaz (2008). Charmaz (2008) says that Grounded Theory provides a systematic approach to collecting and analysing data that combines explicitness and flexibility (p. 155). The Framework Method by Gale et al. (2013) is also used to verify code frequency to confirm emerging patterns in the data.

Chapter 3 describes the data collection, coding and analysis undertaken for this research project. Data collection consisted of two rounds of in-depth, semi-structured interviews, which included an interview with the independent interviewer, transcriber and myself as the researcher to confirm the emerging patterns and themes in the interview responses and review the credibility of data. There were then 45 interviews conducted for this research study.

The coding and data analysis process was conducted at two levels: Level 1 is data familiarisation and coding, and level 2 links the code categories to findings. The Level 1 data analysis or the initial data analysis for this research established 25

codes after line-by-line comparative analysis of the first round of interview transcripts. Appendix 1 demonstrates how the 25 codes were created from open-coding. These 36 transcripts were also reviewed to determine the frequency of these codes and identify patterns and determine if there were any gaps in the data, as detailed in Appendix 2. After this analysis the second round of interviews were conducted as Constructivist Grounded Theory allows for an iterative and comparative process with data analysis.

Level 2 coding involved the additional layers of comparing and linking codes resulting in the development of 12 categories from the 25 codes as detailed in Appendix 3. Memos for each category were directly generated using Charmaz's coding suggestions. As previously noted, I consider the CRGs as CoPs, so the four CoPs components of meaning, community, practice and identity comprising a domain of practice were used as themes to structure and present the findings of this research study. The 12 categories that emerged from the coded data and the learning capabilities of each CoPs component are used to structure the detailed and substantiated findings within each theme to understand the role agency, social and cultural capital play in building community capacity within the CRG model, as detailed in Table 5 below.

4.1.2. Findings chapter structure

The findings from this research project are framed by the four themes as evidence of Wenger's social theory of learning and comprise the practice domain of CRG community planning. As noted in the Chapter 2, drawing on Bourdieu's Theory of Practice elements, the concepts of agency, social and cultural capital are used to analyse how the CRG model is a specific practice of community capacity building within the field of local government. From this perspective, it became evident when writing these findings, that the context for the domain of community planning practice sits within the field of local government and not the other way around. Figure 9 depicts the findings structure for this research project to demonstrate how agency, social and cultural capital are framed by the four themes of community planning practice within the field of local government.

Figure 9
Findings structure



Table 3, below, sets out the findings structure to explain the links between the theoretical framework, 12 data categories, themes and sections as well as the community capacity building. For Bourdieu, the elements of field, habitus and capital are used in this research project as a sociological lens to further analyse how agency, social and cultural capital contribute community capacity building. As previously noted, the social field within which the CRGs practice community planning is the field of local government and for Bourdieu, social practice is participation in social life, which takes place through the interplay of field, habitus and capital to overcome the agency-structure dualities (Mutch, 2003, p. 27). For Wenger, social learning builds capabilities that relate to the four components of practice (1998, p. 5). The learning capabilities, for this study, are listed in Table 3 with the four CoPs components of meaning, community, practice and identity. The 12 data categories

are grouped and listed as they relate to the four components and learning capabilities. The themes and sections column within Table 3 demonstrates how the findings are structured within the theoretical framework using the 12 categories to determine how the concepts of agency, social and cultural capital emerge from the data.

Table 3
Theoretical framework and findings structure

Bourdieu's Theory of Practice	CoPs Components and Learning Capabilities	12 Data Categories	Themes and Sections	Community Capacity Building Concepts
Structure - Agency	Meaning	Agency	Theme 1: Meaning	Agency
Field	Active participation	Skills	Active participation	Social capital
Habitus	Creating a repertoire of resources	Knowledge	Building competence	Cultural capital
Capital	Building Competence	Resources & tools		
Social	Community	Membership	Theme 2: Community	
Cultural	Membership	Social connections	Membership	
Economic	Attendances	Relationships	Social connections	
	Relationships			
	Practice	Communication	Theme 3: Practice	
	Communication	Information	Communication	
	Information sharing	Decision-making	Collaboration	
	Problem solving	Collaboration	Collective outcomes	
	Working collaboratively			
	Identity	Creating place	Theme 4: Identity	
	Identity		Connection to place	
	Competence		Future vision	
	Full membership		Regional link	

4.1.3. Chapter themes

As noted in Table 3, the four themes and sections of this chapter are summarised as:

- **Theme 1: Meaning** includes two sections: Active Participation and Building Competence. The Active Participation section covers aspects of agency and advocacy which enables community to have a voice into Council, while the Building Competence section uncovers the CRG tools and resources as well as the new skills and knowledge gained by community and Council.
- **Theme 2: Community** includes two sections: Membership and Social Connections. Membership covers CRG membership and sector representation to understand who and how community are involved in the CRGs, while the Social Connections section explores the types of social networks and how relationships have been formed through the CRGs over time.
- **Theme 3: Practice** expands on three sections: Communications, Collaboration and Collective Outcomes that organically emerged from the data sets. Communication covers the communication methods or ways CRG participants share information internally and externally. Collaboration sets out the parameters to decision-making established by the CRGs' participants, while the Collective Outcomes section describes the process of collective action adopted for project planning, community ownership and CRG project outcomes.
- **Theme 4: Identity** includes three sections: Connection to Place, Future Vision and Regional Link. Connection to Place explores the relationship between place-identity and agency. The Future Vision section addresses collective agency and envisioned futures, while the Regional Link section covers aspects of connecting the CRGs at the regional level.

The 45 interviews yielded a large volume of data which provides a vital verbatim substantiation to the themes. Uniquely, these give direct representation to voices and lived experiences of the CRG members and Council representatives who participated in this project.

4.2. Theme 1: Meaning

4.2.1. Introduction

Wenger's CoPs as a social theory of learning is used to frame and summarise the data for this research project to understand how the CRGs practice community planning. As noted in the Literature Review, the learning capabilities in the meaning component of CoPs relate to active participation, creating a repertoire of resources and building competence (Wenger, 1998, p. 62). Based on the research data, Theme 1: Meaning includes two sections: Active participation and Building competence. The Active participation section covers aspects of agency and advocacy which enables community to have a voice into Council, while the Building competence section uncovers the CRG tools and resources as well as the new skills and knowledge gained by community and Council.

From a CoPs perspective, active participation in meaning making is a mutual learning process, where the participation of members in two-way communication or conversations can produce physical and conceptual artefacts to be used in their specific practice (Wenger, 1998, pp. 5, 56 & 62). For Wenger (1998), active participation is a complex process that combines doing, talking, thinking, feeling and belonging (p. 56). Therefore, face-to-face interactions and words affect the negotiation of meaning as CoPs members participate in two-way communication and conversations (Wenger, 1998, p. 5). Within the field of local government, strategic community planning or visioning was introduced as a process to provide people, or actors in the field, with a voice into governance networks operating in and beyond their towns to better compliment representative and participatory democracy (Connelly, 2011, p. 930; Prior & Herriman, 2010, p. 50; Innes & Booher, 2004). For Bourdieu, the concept of agency-structure and power within a social field requires a mechanism to enable actors to exercise their agency (Mutch, 2003, p. 27). Bourdieu's view is that the texture of a social space is structured by struggles in the distribution of political, economic, cultural materials, but above all symbolic power (Madden, 2010, p. 182). For Madden (2010), the nature of local authority leadership is largely shaped within a governance space that is structured by the interests of those in power, which includes elected representatives (p. 183). However deliberative governance structures create social spaces that facilitate community agency (Madden, 2010, p. 183). In this context, agency is enhanced when people

feel they can influence the process in which their voices are being heard and they can make a difference (Newman & Dale, 2005, p. 482). Through enabling agents to exercise their agency and interact within deliberative governance spaces, community leaders can structure shared rules so that power is redistributed amid the many rather than the few (Madden, 2010, p. 183). For Ife (2016), the idea of participatory and deliberative democracy is to empower community agency and requires active participation by informed citizens in local governance (p. 158). For Bourdieu, within fields, agents and institutions are integrated and interact with each other in accordance with field-specific rules (Walther, 2014, p. 6); and cultural capital produced within each field tends to define the specific logic of the field (Husu, 2013, p. 286). In this way, agency and active participation in deliberative social spaces does empower community leaders to engage in meaning making that can influence the logic of the field and therefore build cultural capital.

According to the research participants, the CRG tools and resources as well as acquiring new skills and knowledge have enabled the CRG members and Council to negotiate meaning in the process of building competence in their community planning practice. For Wenger (1998), meaning making is located in the process of negotiating meaning and “the negotiation of meaning involves the interaction of the processes of participation and reification” (p. 54). While Wenger views active participation in meaning making as two-way communication and being present in conversations, he views reification as the points of focus around which meaning is negotiated (Wenger, 1998, pp. 56 & 58). Therefore, reification can cover a wide range of practices that produce physical and conceptual artefacts such as “tools, methods, stories, documents and links to resources” that become enablers of mutual learning for individual and collective practice (Wenger, 2010, p. 180). Wenger et al. (2002) say that knowledge “resides in the skills, understanding, and relationships of its members as well as the tools, documents, and processes that embody aspects of this knowledge” (p. 11). For Bourdieu, acquiring new forms of capital improves an agent’s chance to succeed within a field, and capital can be used as resources like trumps in a game of cards (Skinner et al., 2008, p. 6). Learning how to utilise tools and resources as well as gaining new skills and knowledge are embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu in Wester & Baxter, 2011, p. 216). These forms of cultural capital build cultural competence, which is the ability to know what is socially valued and rewarded in everyday life. For Sail and Abu-Samah (2016), capacity building through

a group of community leaders is about gaining new knowledge, meaning and skills in order to be able to utilise tools and resources to enable and improve practices (p. 64).

Based on the research data, the Active participation and Building competence sections outline how the CRGs are enabling agency and advocacy within the CRG community's governance structure, and accessing the tools, resources, new skills and knowledge for community members and Council to collectively make meaning as they practice community planning in the field of local government.

4.2.2. Active participation

For Wenger (1998), participation in meaning making is active engagement in conversations with other CoPs members committed to the same enterprise within a domain (p. 5); during face-to-face interactions, words affect the negotiation of meaning through a process of participation in two-way communication (p. 62). Therefore, exercising agency through having a voice and engaging in dialogue is located within the orientation of social learning (p. 10). The research participants verified that the CRGs provide a forum for community to have a voice into Council; enable participation in two-way communication; provide the opportunity for community members to have regular contact with councillors and Council staff; and the presence of a CRG in all 13 communities within the CHRC region gives each community equal opportunity to have a voice into Council.

4.2.2.1 Voice to Council

The research data acknowledged that the CRGs do enable community members to have a direct voice into Council so they can share their opinions, ideas and advocate for their communities. CRG participants confirmed the CRGs are “the voice of the community” which they clarified as a “direct voice of the community” into council and, give “everyone in the community a voice” (CRG#12, 16 March 2021, p. 2; CRG#15, 4 March 2021, p. 1). While CRG#17 described the CRGs as a forum “to link community with the council” through which “a small group who have an interest in their community” can have a voice (4 March 2021, p. 2). Other participants noted the CRGs provide the means for community members to “all come together and express our views on subjects that are important to us and the local community” (CRG#2, 26 May 2023; CRG#3, 23 March 2021, p. 2). While another CRG participant felt the CRGs do motivate community members “because you can voice

your opinion and any concerns ... to the council representatives" (CRG#1, 30 April 2021, p. 2).

Other research participants described the CRGs as being "at the table", or "where people can come to the table", and everyone can "come along and sit at the table" (CRG#5, 25 February 2021, p. 1; CRG#24, 12 March 2021, p. 6). These references imply that agents and actors attending the CRGs feel they can equally participate and have a voice around the table with Council. This was confirmed by another CRG participant saying that everyone can "have a say" and although "not everyone has the same opinion everyone at the table can voice an opinion and be heard" (CRG#28, 26 March 2021, p. 2). In this way, the research participants confirmed the CRGs are a forum or space where people can exercise their agency by having an equal voice at the CRG table into Council. As noted by Lachapelle et al. (2012), active participation by citizens gives meaning to the term democracy (p. 75; Fisher, 2000, p. 259).

Other participants suggested their voices were being heard by Council and that Council does listen. One participant explained, "the CRGs are our pathway into Council ... it provides a voice into Council, and I know they [Council] listen to us, so that's good" (CRG#35, 28 October 2021, p. 3). However, another participant warned "so long as Council listens to the broader community then this process helps ensure the town gets the best possible outcome" (CRG#8, 23 March 2021, p. 3). These quotes highlight that CRGs do create a pathway for community to have a voice into Council, and when community and Council both actively participate in the process, the CRGs become an effective means for community advocacy.

From Council's perspective, CHRC#8 explained about the CRGs "the main thing is that there is a consistent and regular way for the community to know that Council has a mechanism where they can be heard" (2 November 2021, p. 5). Then added, the CRGs are "a guaranteed we [Council] are going to sit down and listen to you" and "it is like a failsafe, to make sure that even when Council is getting other engagements wrong, we've got this consistent, strong presence in the community" (CHRC#8, 2 November 2021, p. 5). Another Council participant acknowledged that having the CRGs as a regular presence in the community "just helps you keep a better community perspective in your mind ... just a reminder that what you think might be a community concern is not necessarily the case" (CHRC#3, 19 March 2021, p. 3). These views acknowledge that Council has deliberately created the

CRGs as spaces to empower community agency and actively participate in regularly listening to the voice of community.

Other CRG participants added “it is really good that we are having the CRG meetings and it’s definitely better to have them than not. They have been a big help ... to get your point across because you just don’t get heard otherwise”, and “otherwise none of us would have any say about our communities into Council” (CRG#2, 26 May 2021, p. 5; CRG#35, 28 October 2021, p. 2). CRG#12 summed up by saying, “I think it’s a good exercise for Council and it’s a very important exercise for Council ... if you could work out a way of increasing that capacity that would be a very good outcome” (16 March 2021, p. 2 & 3).

Based on the interview data, the CRGs do provide a link or platform for the community to equally exercise their agency around the table and have a direct voice into Council. The CRGs enable the community to actively make meaning about their local needs and wants with Council as they advocate for their communities. By establishing the CRGs, Council has created a deliberative space or mechanism to empower community to actively engage in participatory democracy. From Bourdieu’s perspective, by actively participating in dialogue, both the community and Council are able to negotiate meaning and influence the rules of the game within the local government field. Along with having a voice into Council, active participation also includes engaging in two-way communication and conversations.

4.2.2.2 *Two-way communication*

For Wenger (1998), words affect the negotiation of meaning in face-to-face conversations (pp. 5 & 62). In the interview data, research participants verified that the CRGs are an opportunity for community members and Council to actively participate in two-way dialogue at the face-to-face meetings. CRG participants acknowledged the CRGs create an “open line of communication” for community and Council to talk, and the CRGs are “very personalised” so “you get your point across a lot better” in a face-to-face setting (CRG#1, 30 April 2021, p. 2; CRG#2, 26 May 2021, p. 3). Other participants verified “the dialogue between Council and the community goes both ways” at the CRGs, and “there is a lot of discussion”, which can include “Council providing information or providing answers” to questions raised by community members at the meetings (CRG#8, 23 March 2021, p. 3; CHRC#5, 16 March 2021, p. 3). A CRG participant shared an example of two-way communication

to emphasise the benefit of meaning making at the CRGs. CRG#28 said there had been “a bit of a debacle with the rates” and “Council representatives at the CRG meeting were able to explain the cause of the problem ... but without Council people telling us, we wouldn’t know” (26 March 2012, p. 3). Another CRG participant highlighted that Council actively encourages and supports two-way communication and conversations at the CRGs. CRG#16 explained,

... whenever we are working on something and need specific information about a topic people from [Council] departments come and talk to us... the CRG gives us an opportunity to actually speak with Council representatives so we can just ask any questions. It makes a big difference. (11 March 2021, p. 2)

While from Council’s perspective, CHRC#10 noted the CRGs are,

... a tool to gain community feedback and then it’s a two-way situation ... It’s an avenue for us to provide information and an avenue for the community to give Council feedback on what they’re doing or raise issues they may have concerns with. Both positive and negative I should say. (19 October 2021, p. 3)

This quote confirms CHRC do utilise the CRGs to exchange information with community members and that the CRGs are viewed by Council as a tool for community engagement. It also highlights that the conversations are open and honest at the CRGs and therefore community is comfortable to interact with Council in a meaningful way. As noted by Madden (2010), when community leaders interact and exercise their agency in deliberative spaces, shared rules facilitate the redistribution of power, especially symbolic power (p. 183). In relation to the CRGs, Council has created a social space where power is reordered through agency and meaning making in a way that symbolic power is embodied in those who fulfil the local leadership roles (Madden, 2010, p. 182). The CRGs are not just about community members having a voice expressed through their agency, Council is acknowledging community leaders in the meaning-making process and their rights to advocate for community needs at each of the CRGs. As the CRGs meet regularly, new meaning making keeps evolving through two-way communication between

community and Council. As noted by CHRC#10, the CRGs are an organised means for “the political side of things to hear about what concerns might be in the community ... through two-way communication” (19 October 2021, p. 4). The ability to speak directly with councillors and advocate for their communities on a regular basis emerged as important to the research participants in this study.

4.2.2.3 *Advocate to councillors*

As noted in the Literature Review, CHRC has nine elected members which includes the mayor and eight councillors, and the Central Highlands region is almost 60,000 square kilometres with a population of 27,836 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 census). As an undivided Council, CHRC does not have councillors designated to represent specific geographical areas or divisions. The 13 CRG localities form a patchwork of connected areas covering the entire region and two councillors are assigned to each CRG. Having councillors personally visit all CRG communities to meet with community members on a regular basis and being able to advocate directly to their elected representatives emerged as important for the research participants. For Connelly (2011), community planning gives local communities a voice directly into larger governance networks and can be seen as a way of promoting responsible local government and re-legitimising local representative democracy (p. 930).

The CRG research participants indicated they valued having councillors visit all the communities in the region, particularly the smaller towns and communities. They also acknowledged the effort made by councillors and staff to travel long distances to attend the CRG meetings. One CRG participant noted that having the CRGs means councillors “regularly and physically visit” their towns and rural communities (CRG#14, 1 April 2021, p. 2). While another suggested that having the CRGs and a Councillor present at the CRGs enables smaller and rural communities to feel connected and be part of the bigger region, saying “councillors give updates on what is happening in the greater shire ... so you are not feeling like you are left in the dark” (CRG#1, 30 April 2023, p. 3). For CRG#9, the benefit of the CRGs is having councillors “just get out in the community and get more of a feel of what the actual small communities want” (2 March 2021, p. 3). CRG#1 also recognised the effort that councillors and Council staff make to attend the CRGs in outer rural areas

saying, “it is two and a half hours back to Emerald from [name of location] so it is a long way to travel down and back for the CRG meetings” (30 April 2021, p. 3).

While Ayres (2012) notes in community visioning it is important for elected officials, professionals and citizens to participate in conversations as equals to acknowledge their agency (p. 25), the research participants highlighted having councillors regularly visit gave their communities better agency into representative democracy. For CRG#10 having the CRGs “puts a spotlight on the town a little bit more each time the councillors are here, and we can tell them what’s happening and what we need” (CRG#10, 1 April 2021, p. 3). This point was reiterated by CRG#28 saying, “We discuss the pros and cons of our community at the CRG meetings and hopefully our councillors that attend can then, on our behalf, take that a step higher within Council” (26 March 2021, p. 3). Others said the councillors attending the CRGs are their “voice back into Council” and that councillors and Council staff “can take queries or questions back to Council meetings”, and “put forward what is happening down in these smaller communities” (CRG#9, 2 March 2021, p. 3; CRG#1, 30 April 2021, p. 2). These quotes emphasise the expectation by CRG members that councillors will listen to their voices and advocate for each community inside Council, especially giving them representation in decision-making. Therefore, meaning is actively created, shared, and relayed from the local communities through the councillors into the Council. Another CRG participant clarified that “people can write as many emails as you want, but when it is portrayed to a Councillor and the wider group, I think it [CRG] has helped the community a lot because they [councillors] take that information back to the Council” (CRG#2, 26 May 2021, p. 4). These quotes demonstrate that CRG participants view the CRGs as a deliberative democratic mechanism that enables community to engage with their elected local government representatives.

From Council’s perspective, CHRC#7 shared about the CRGs, “I think the councillors enjoy that connection with the community. Spending that time with them and listening to them and working together to progress a project or have things done” (28 October 2021, p. 3). While a Councillor participant confirmed that “I regard myself as a CRG member” and “I’m there to listen” and find out about “where the people want the town taken” (CHRC#3, 19 March 2021, p. 2). These quotes highlight from a councillor’s perspective that they view their role at the CRGs as being community members. However as previously noted by research participants, the

councillors share information about Council, they would also have the option of playing a dual role. The councillors can actively participate at the CRGs as representatives of Council and/or engage as members of the community. In this way, they have the opportunity to make meaning in conversation when it is appropriate as advocates of Council or as advocates of the community.

The research participants noted the CRG meetings are held four times a year in each of the 13 community localities and acknowledged they value the regular contact with Council compared to the once-a-year community consultation. Along with the CRG meetings, CHRC hosts a community consultation meeting once a year in each of the towns and communities in the region, which include the towns and smaller communities within the CRG areas. Therefore, CHRC hosts approximately 22 community consultation meetings outside of the CRG meetings. The annual consultation meetings provide the opportunity for the mayor and all councillors as well as senior council staff to visit all towns and communities in the region. The aim of these meetings is to share Council information with the community and give the whole community the opportunity to raise issues or concerns about Council services. While these meetings are valued, one CRG participant stated about the annual consultation, “I think it took about 18 months for the mayor and CEO to actually come and visit us, and if we didn’t have the CRG you wouldn’t have any contact whatsoever with councillors or know what was happening in the Central Highlands” (CRG#4, 25 March 2021, p. 4). For CRG#2, having the CRG meetings “four times a year” means councillors are visiting their community “on a regular basis” (26 May 2021, p. 3). Then CRG#1 compared the CRGs with the annual Council consultation meetings saying that “you are getting your views across of what’s happening and what’s new” on a regular basis instead of having to wait until “your annual meeting once a year” (30 April 2021, p. 2). Another CRG participant explained that since having regular CRG meetings in their community, the annual consultations are not as adversarial saying,

... before the CRGs the main community consultation from Council was once or twice a year where the mayor and others from Council ... came out and the community bombarded them [Council] with questions and “what have you done”? Most of those turned out to be anger sessions, it was always about

problems, and everything was wrong and why aren't you fixing it? (CRG#24, 12 March 2021, p. 5)

These views indicate that while the annual community consultations are valued, the CRG meetings provide the opportunity for community members to regularly act on their agency so community and Council can make meaning of issues, concerns and actively participate in progressing community projects.

CRG research participants also pointed out that having regular CRGs provides the opportunity for advocacy and to hold elected representatives to account. CRG#1 said, "instead of having our once-a-year consultation which goes nowhere; you are sort of onto Council every three months. I am sure they are well and truly sick of us but anyway we just keep going. We are like a dog with a bone" (30 April 2021, p. 1). This was reiterated by CRG#10 who said,

I just let the Council know that you are elected in there for a reason ... not in a negative way but try to find a bit more accountability from the councillors.

They have got an accountability to do their job and if they can't, the same with us at the CRG meeting, they have got to find a solution. (1 April 2021, p. 3)

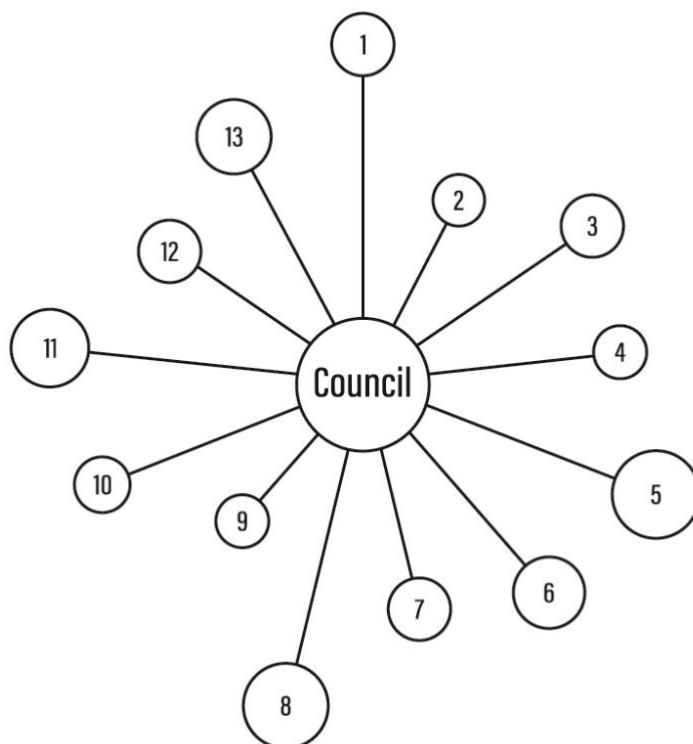
Then, CRG#28 said, "the CRGs are an opportunity to make more use of our councillors and to interact with them more ... and we need to pat them on the back when they do something good" (26 March 2021, p. 3). This comment highlights that through the CRGs, Council and community can create positive attitudes and relationships that strengthen participatory practices. In short, these are meaning-making social spaces, and by facilitating the CRGs, Council enables community members and councillors to engage in a deliberative democratic process. As previously noted, the CRGs offer a community planning process that gives community a voice into governance networks and compliments representative and participatory democracy (Connelly 2011, p. 930; Prior & Herriman, 2010, p. 50; Innes & Booher, 2004). The CRGs demonstrate a practice for councillors and community interacting in the field of local government. Along with having regular access to councillors, the research participants also viewed having a CRG in all 13 localities as essential to meaning making as singular CRGs, and their meaning as a group of 13 CRGs.

4.2.2.4 *Equal representation*

Interview data revealed the importance of Council hosting CRGs in each of the 13 localities to provide equal representation. By drawing on the CoPs Landscape of Practice concept, the CRGs can be viewed as a network of 13 CoPs. As the CRGs are located at multiple sites, this network is comprised of individual CRGs linked to each other and each linked into Council as the central facilitator or convenor within this landscape. While the research participants perceive the CRGs as giving each CRG an equal voice into Council, they also acknowledged that each CRG locality is unique and has different priorities. The data also demonstrated an understanding that each CRG is part of and linked into the larger CRG network. Figure 10 depicts the Central Highlands CRG network as representative of the unique communities across the region, large and small, as they connect to CHRC.

Figure 10
Central Highlands CRG Network

Central Highlands Community Reference Group Network



The CRG research participants acknowledged the purpose of the CRGs is for Council “to engage with each community so there is equity across the CHRC”, and by having the CRGs each town or community can “put up ideas and develop with the input from community members”; Council created the CRGs “to engage with each community so they can find out what’s going on and how they can help each community in the shire ... to improve in their own little way” (CRG#34, 28 October 2021, p. 2; CRG#10, 1 April, 2021, p. 3). Other participants also recognised that each CRG community is different and unique and that each CRG can prioritise goals and projects to meet their distinct individual community needs. Participants said, “I love the fact that we have a different CRG for each area, because each area has its own needs, wants and its strength”, and the CRG localities “are very unique and they have very unique issues, socio-economic issues or issues of distance” (CRG#21, 1 April 2021, p. 2; CHRC#5, 16 March 2021, p. 3). While each community is different, another participant described how the CRGs give each community the opportunity to represent their unique characteristics and develop in response to their own needs and issues. CRG#19 explained,

It [the CRG] gives individual communities the way to put forward their ideas from their area because not everybody’s area is the same. If you sit down and think we can do this here, but Dingo wouldn’t want to do that. We’ll do what suits this town and Dingo can do what suits their town. Bluff can do what suits their town, and we are not feeling obliged to say we have got to do the same as this other one because that’s what we decided beforehand. You’re got choices of what goes on in your area ... Yes, it is definitely the local voice. Every little town is completely different to the next one. (CRG#19, 12 March 2021, p. 1)

While the research participants recognised that CRGs give each community a voice into Council, other respondents said equal representation was needed to ensure the smaller communities are not overlooked. Participants noted the CRGs do give all 13 localities an equal voice into Council, “including our smaller communities”; “you do struggle in small communities to get your voice heard out here ... outside of Emerald”, and “we feel sometimes the little communities are a little bit

disenfranchised outside the main part of Council areas” so the CRGs are important (CRG#34, 28 October 2021, p. 3; CRG#10, 1 April 2021, p. 4; CRG#17, 4 March 2021, p. 3). While CRG#2 said that through the CRGs they do feel their small community is connected with “what is happening as it is a massive shire ... I think it is really good that we are having CRG meetings and it’s definitely better to have them than not” (26 May 2021, p.4).

The data confirmed the CRG model does give all 13 localities, small and large, equal representation into Council and that each CRG can represent to their unique and different priorities and goals of each community. The participants also recognised that having the CRGs provided the means for each community to feel connected to Council (not isolated) and to each other within a larger network or landscape of CRGs. Through establishing the CRG network, CHRC has constructed a new way for each CRG community to be connected to each other with and through their local government. The CRGs enable towns and communities, especially smaller towns and remote rural communities, to be recognised as unique and equally valued within the larger CRG network. For Emery and Flora (2012), aspects of cultural capital are not fixed or static and are changeable when communities activate positive thinking and doing that supports community agency (p. 142). In this way, the CRGs are enabling community members to engage in meaning-making conversations that build cultural capital through positively promoting the uniqueness of each locality within the Central Highlands region. Through establishing the CRGs, Council has created the presence of a larger CRG network, within which the 13 communities co-exist through their shared experiences of agency and practice within this deliberative governance approach.

4.2.2.5 *References to amalgamations*

The research data revealed that participants perceived the CRGs as the means for community members from the former shires to link with CHRC after the 2008 Queensland local government amalgamations, which took place almost 13 years prior to this research study. In relation to the amalgamations, participants viewed the CRGs as an important way for local towns and communities to have a voice and link into the newly formed regional Council after the four former or legacy shires (Bauhinia, Duaringa, Emerald, Peak Downs) were dissolved. People who identified themselves as residents of the former shires, were faced with

conceptualising the Central Highlands region and identifying with CHRC; thus, having to make new meanings about where and how they resided in their post-amalgamation communities. One research participant noted, “People were still reeling after the amalgamation. It was still very bitter for people in the [Name] Shire and this [CRG name] was the opportunity to have a voice and to move forward” (CRG#34, 28 October 2021, p. 3). This also implies the CRGs provided a way for the communities from the former shires to have a voice within the new council and be connected so they can resolve or move past the amalgamation. Prior to the amalgamations there were four mayors and 32 councillors, or 36 elected representatives. These were replaced by one mayor and eight councillors, or nine elected representatives in the Central Highlands Regional Council. CRG#17 said, “it [the CRG] is the link between the community and the Council because with the Council becoming regionalised [amalgamated] it means the community probably didn’t have as much interaction with their local councillors anymore” (4 March 2021, p .1). This quote was in reference to the reduction in elected representatives after the amalgamations. Another CRG participant described their concerns as a result of amalgamations about the former shires, saying “when we all became Central Highlands Regional Council, we all lost our individual identities” (CRG#28, 26 March 2021, p. 2), adding that the CRGs provided community members with the opportunity to “be the eyes and ears of our old shires and to keep the feedback going to the Central Highlands Council” (p. 2). One research participant summed up by saying,

I feel the purpose of CRGs is - since we are all in such a large shire now and since it’s been amalgamated - is to help the 13 communities to liaise or at least put forward to Council things they feel are important to their area. And without that feedback from little community groups like the CRGs, Council could just look at the bigger picture and forget about the communities a little bit. So, we see it as part of important feedback for them. (CHRC#2, 11 March 2021, p. 3)

These quotes provide an insight into how these research participants view the CRGs as playing a role post amalgamation to connect communities with Council.

Based on the research data, the notion of active participation highlights how the CRGs do enable community to have a voice into Council and participate in two-

way communication with Council at the face-to-face CRG meetings. Also, the CRGs provide the means for community members to meet with councillors on a regular basis to advocate for their towns and communities directly to their elected representatives. Additionally, the interview participants felt it was important for Council to have a CRG in each of the 13 localities to provide the opportunity for each community to have equal representation into Council. From Bourdieu's perspective, the CRGs encourage agency and are embedding new beliefs and values that promote deliberative democracy in the field of local government. By hosting and facilitating the CRGs, Council has created an opening in the field to restructure the way power is shared and redistributed through community planning. In this way, community and Council can interact within an established deliberative community governance model where agency enables community leaders to reshape the rules of the game based in meaning related to place. From the research data, it became evident that the CRG model has the capacity to change and build community cultural capital, especially symbolic capital, by activating community agency and advocacy to demonstrate what it means to live in the rural regional towns and communities, within the CHRC.

4.2.3. *Building competence*

This section outlines the CRG tools and resources, new skills and knowledge that emerged from the research data.

4.2.3.1 *CRG tools and resources*

From a CoPs perspective, the CRG tools and resources are a repertoire of shared physical artifacts that become enablers of mutual learning for individual and collective practice (Wenger, 2010, p. 180). The process of meaning making requires active participation and reification which is utilising points of focus around which meaning is negotiated (Wenger, 1998, p. 58 & 58). To enable the CRG members to act on their agency and actively participate in the practice of community planning, the CRG tools and resources were developed as points of focus to negotiate meaning for CRG members and Council. The CRG tools and resources are a set of shared resources developed by Council to provide the processes and community planning tools to collaborate on progressing community projects. Progressing and delivering CRG projects is discussed in Theme 3: Practice, below. By providing

these resources, the agents/actors have the tools to be upskilled in their practice as well as link into the internal processes of Council.

Through developing and providing the resources and tools for the CRGs, CHRC is legitimising the CRGs and giving authority to members and community participants to make meaning and act on their agency to fulfil their purpose. According to Lachapelle et al. (2012), within a community visioning process, it is important for community participants to have practice tools and the authority to act by the sponsoring organisation and/or organisers of the project (p. 75; Fischer, 2000, p. 259). If this does not happen then the role of community participants is only consultative and merely a gesture of tokenism (p. 75; Fisher, 2000, p. 259). Therefore, having resources and tools endorsed by Council, such as the CRG Terms of reference and place-community plans, symbolise the authority to act and legitimacy of the CRGs. Having practice tools and resources for CoPs are regarded as important for other reasons. From the CoPs perspective, the CRG resources and tools provide a level of transparency in their practice not just for CRG members but also for Council's accountability as the CRGs operate outside of Council's internal processes. Snyder and Wenger speak about the dual need to meet accountability requirements of sponsoring organisations as well as meeting the need for CoPs to be self-managed (2010, p.110-111). Wenger et al. (2002) refer to this as the need to manage formal organisational requirements and informal aspects of a community of practice (p. 218). They also add, the transformative potential of CoPs in organisations hinges on the paradox of cultivating informal structures, as opposed to managing them in conventional ways. (2002, p. 217). In this way, the resources and tools, such as CRG minutes and project plans, support the CRGs to be self-managing and provide the evidence of the CRG activities required to meet the formal processes and accountability of CHRC internal requirements. Within Council, the CRGs are supported through the Department of Communities, Connected Communities team. This team is responsible for the community development and community engagement of CHRC. The CRGs are not formalised as statutory groups or advisory groups of CHRC. For Council, the CRGs are regarded as a community engagement tool (as previously noted by CHRC#8, 2 November 2021, p. 5; CHRC#10, 19 October 2021, p. 3) and through the practice of community planning are a vehicle for Council to undertake community development projects and initiatives with community members. Therefore, the CRGs are similar to CoPs

because they are informal and not managed in the conventional way. However, Council does resource the CRGs by providing CEDOs to facilitate the CRGs and ensure from a community development perspective, there is a level of self-organisation. As noted by Westoby and Owen (2010), in the real world the delivery of community development programmes means people-centred community practice is much messier than clearly named social and technical processes (p. 72). To ensure there is a balance in the social and technical aspects of the CRGs, Council has provided the resources and tools which play a key role to negotiate meaning in practice.

Most of the CRG tools and resources were developed by Council prior to rolling out the establishment of the 13 CRGs from 2013 to 2015. While they were developed to give legitimacy to the CRGs, the tools and resources were mainly developed so the CRGs were not hindered from the start and could commence their practice straight away. The first CRG was set up by Council in Capella to pilot and bed down the CRG resources and processes over six months before establishing the next 12 CRGs. The community survey template was the only tool to be added to the CRG resources when it was raised by the Capella CRG as a need to support their project planning. Following is a list of the tools and resources the research participants referred to in their interviews.

As noted in Chapter 2, during the development stage of the *CH2022 Community Plan*, there was extensive community consultation. It was during this development stage that the 13 place community plans and action plans (later called strategic directions) were developed with and by the community. These plans are the guides that gave direction to the CRGs practice and captured the voice of the community about the steps needed to create the future they envision. During the development stage, logos were also developed in consultation with each of the 13 communities, as depicted in Figure 11.

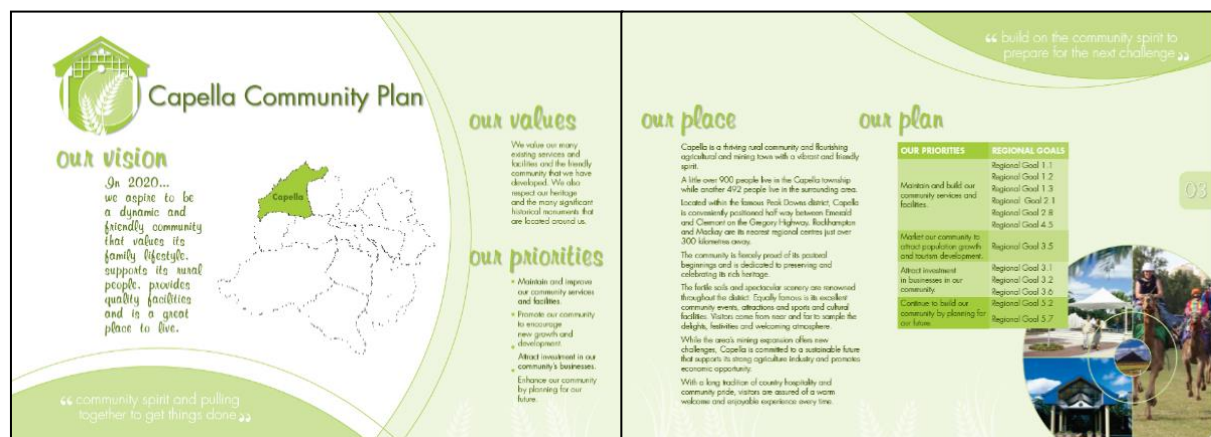
Figure 11

Current logos for the 13 Community Reference Groups



- Each CRG has an individual logo and colour. A logo was developed, and a colour allocated for each CRG to use on their documents such as community plan, minutes, agendas, letters of support, etc. Each community's logo was designed to feature a unique physical aspect of their locality through the consultation process in the development stage of *CH2022 Community Plan*. As the documents produced for the CRGs are standardised, the logo and colour ensure each community can be recognised as distinct from the others as well as designed to be part of a set. CRG#26 noted in their interview, "I know we use the logo ... I think that is great" (20 April 2021, p. 7). Figure 11 highlights the individual logos for the 13 communities which feature a unique aspect of each CRG area. Figure 12 depicts the Capella Community Plan to demonstrate the content and layout as an example of the 13 place community plans.

Figure 12
Capella Community Plan within the CH2022 Community Plan



- Within the CH2022 Community Plan each CRG has a community plan developed within their own communities, and included the community vision, values, priorities mapped back to the regional goals in the *CH2022 Community Plan*. CHRC#8 noted that the community plans help with “explaining to community how the CRGs link into their place community plans and how the community planning process works” (2 November 2021, p. 6). Figure 2 is an example of the Capella place community plan and demonstrates the format used for each of the 13 community plans in the *CH2022 Community Plan*.
- Each CRG has developed an action plan or strategic directions plan which guides the implementation phase of the *CH2022 Community Plan* over the ten-year life of the plan. The place community plans within the *CH2022 Community Plan* are static so the companion action plans were developed as separate documents. In this way, the action plans/strategic directions are organic as they can be reviewed, modified and changed to reflect changing priorities and innovative community ideas. These implementation plans capture and set-out the short-, medium- and longer-term actions for each CRG. As noted by CHRC#7,

A key part of the CRGs is to document the aspirations of each community and these aspirations make up our strategic directions document, which each CRG has one. The idea is, we document these aspirations to drive

improvements in each of these communities, like advocacy and projects.... the community wants to achieve, and then throughout the meetings they can take those steps towards achieving them. (28 October 2021, p. 4)

Prior to commencing the CRGs, it was necessary for Council to develop terms of reference to set-out the purpose of the CRGs and the resources for advertising when publicly calling for people to become CRG members. At the time and now, there is no limit set on the number of CRG members. The CRG nomination process and membership is discussed further in Theme 2: Community.

- A generic terms of reference was developed for the CRGs to ensure a standard approach across each community. Each CRG has their terms of reference badged with their own logo and colour. The terms of reference sets out the purpose of the CRG, membership, meeting procedures and conflict resolution. Also, within the CRG terms of reference, it is suggested the CRG membership be representative of different segments of the community: youth, seniors, business, industry, rural, cultural, sports and recreation groups. CRG#23 referred to the terms of reference when speaking about sector representation on the CRGs, saying Council “wanted to make sure they had coverage across as many different parts of the community as they could. That is actually in the terms of reference” (1 April 2021, p. 2). Sector representation is discussed further in Theme 2: Community.
- The CRG member nomination or membership application form also has a standard format and badged with the unique logo and colour of each CRG. The form and nomination process were developed for the establishment of the CRGs. These are no longer used as the CRG membership is more informal, which is explained further in the Theme 2: Community. CRG#24 explained about the CRG nomination process, “you had to be nominated or apply for a position around the table, and that relaxed a lot over the years” (12 March 2021, p. 6).

To provide for accountability and transparency as well as practice resources, templates and procedures were developed for CRG agendas, minutes, project planning, communication plan and CRG website pages. These resources provide the means for CRGs and Council to capture and communicate the topics, projects, ideas

and concerns that are discussed at the CRG meetings with members, Council and the broader community. The agendas and minutes for all CRG meetings are publicly available on the CHRC website, which are discussed in more detail in Theme 3: Practice.

- The CRGs have a standard format for agenda and minutes which are badged with the unique logo and colour of the individual CRGs. These documents have the same format so there is consistency for listing agenda items, recording meeting discussions and capturing and reporting back on meeting actions. CRG#21 said, “I love that fact that we get the minutes ... that keeps me connected which is very helpful” (1 April 2021, p. 3). While CHRC#7 explained a few weeks before the CRG meetings, “we send out a call for agenda items ... so that when compiling the agenda, it is community led” (28 October 2021, p. 3).
- The CRGs use a standard project plan template that was developed for use by the CRGs. The project plan defines the purpose of the project, project team, benefits of the project to the community, milestones and timelines. One Council participant described how the project plan template is used, saying the CRGs “have a project plan template to use for planning projects that the CRGs want to happen in their communities” (CHRC#7, 28 October 2021, p. 4). Project planning is discussed in Theme 3: Practice.
- Each CRG developed a communication plan to set out the most appropriate methods of communication within the group and externally to the broader community. Each community is unique so too are the opportunities to reach audiences and engage with different segments of the community on an ongoing basis. CRG#25 noted that “I have kept the CRG informed and that was part of our communication plan” (21 May 2021, p. 3).
- A survey template was developed by the CRGs so they can garner community opinions and views from the broader community, particularly with regard to CRG project planning to ensure it is of value to the community. CHRC#6 said that as part of project planning “you demonstrate engagement within the local community ... sometimes that is done through surveys” (29 March 2021, p. 7).

- Each CRG has a newsletter template which is badged with unique logo. A newsletter format was developed for CRG to share information about CRG projects and community events can be shared with the broader community. CHRC#33 said the CRGs use “the newsletter to update the community on the CRG initiatives or projects they were looking at” (23 November 2021, p. 9).
- Each CRG has a page on the CHRC website to share information such as agendas and minutes to ensure this information is available for members of other CRGs and the broader community. CRG#24 said, “you can get on the website, and it is all there. Your action plans and everything is there on the website ... you can look it up to see what other CRGs are up to or what their plans are for the next five years” (12 March 2021, p. 8). CRG#13 said they had recently added a photograph when undertaking a project “on our website ... our [name of CRG] website on CHRC” website (18 March 2021, p. 4).

The CRG tools and resources developed by Council for the CRGs emerged from the research data as important for the practice of CRGs. The CRG tools and resources form a repertoire of shared artefacts as focus points around which meaning is negotiated at the CRG meetings and are central to enabling CRG members to actively participate and effectively act on their agency. These tools and resources symbolise Council's recognition of the legitimacy of the CRGs and community governance structure. They also provide a level of transparency and accountability for CHRC, given the CRGs operate largely as self-managing groups outside the organisation to assist Council with community engagement and encourage participatory community development. This repertoire of shared resources is utilised by the CRG members and Council to build competence and make meaning in their practice of community planning. As noted by Green (2011), community development providers, such as CHRC, can build the capacity of residents to address their own issues through a democratic process that nurtures local leadership skills and knowledge (p. 77).

4.2.3.2 Skills development

Based on participants' responses there is a contextualised mutual learning inside and between the CRGs that indicates an acquisition of situated new skills and knowledge building “on-the-job” over time. The research data provides evidence the CRG members and Council have built their competence in practice as individuals

and as an ensemble in an organic way through their agency and active participation in meaning making. As noted by Wenger, within a community of practice, a “regime of competence” is negotiated, and competence is accumulated over its history of learning and meaning making (Wenger, 2010, p. 180). Over time, the interplay of participation and reification creates a social history of learning which combines individual and collective aspects as members define a “regime of competence” (p. 180). Participants identified several skills that they gained while being involved in the CRGs. Drawing on Bourdieu, through the CRG members acquiring new skills and knowledge, the CRG members are accumulating different kinds and amounts of capital which equate to trumps in a game of cards and improves the chances of agents succeeding in the field (Skinner et al., 2008, p. 6). In this way, the CRGs enable members and Council to accumulate new skills and knowledge as capital to negotiate and make meaning of their practice. From a capacity building perspective, Sail and Abu-Samah (2016) says that over time, a group’s capacity develops concurrently with the development of the group member’s confidence, abilities, skills, knowledge and experiences (p. 63). Following is a list of key skills the CRG participants identified throughout the interview data.

The research participants indicated they had learnt various communication skills, such as listening and being a better communicator, through their active participation at the CRGs. CRG#21 simply said learning to be “a better listener” was the main skill they developed from being part of the CRGs (1 April 2021, p. 2). Another participant said, “I feel I have learnt to be a better communicator, a better listener and instead of being someone who jumps in ... I have found that it has helped moderate me or just made me stop and think about other people’s perspectives” (CHRC#2, 11 March 2021, p. 3). Others emphasised the need for CRG participants “to be prepared to communicate” with others and also being “a good listener” is important, while “public speaking” at CRG events and functions was another skill gained from participating in the CRGs (CRG#4, 25 March 2021, p. 4; CRG#34, 28 October 2021, p. 3; CRG#14, 1 April 2021, p. 3). One participant stated that the CRGs are “not just toolbox meetings” and learning “people skills” had helped them because they are talking with industry, Council and state government representatives at the CRGs (CRG#2, 30 April 2021, p. 3), and another said, “I have learnt how to better communicate with others which is a skill that certainly helps with everything” (CRG#10, 1 April 2021, p. 4).

Then CRG#24 explained to learn new skills they had to first gain confidence to speak in front of others saying,

... eight years ago, I went in [to the CRG] as an almost shy-ish person and not being able to speak in the group, and now I consider myself confident. I have gained a lot of confidence over the years. Now, I am not afraid of telling people what my vision is and what my personal view is on things, so having confidence. (12 March 2021, p. 4)

Other research participants acknowledged they had learnt more about chairing meetings as at the CRGs the role of chairperson is rotated around CRG participants. CRG#25 explained the role of chairperson is rotated at the CRG meetings, saying “it is a good opportunity for people to sit in that role and understand how to run a meeting and some of the difficulties associated with being the chair” (21 May 2021, p. 4). While CRG#24 said, “initially we did a revolving chair, and I would still like to see it happen that people put their hand up and everybody gets a chance to chair the meetings” (12 March 2021, p. 3). This research participant added about learning to chair meetings, “I’ve learnt how to keep the conversations going and not lose track of the actions. Those are real skills, it might not sound like much, but it’s helped me in my involvement with other community groups not just at the CRGs” (p. 3). CRG#34 verified, they had improved their skills as a chairperson “now after being involved” at the CRG meetings “because sometimes I am the chairperson (28 October 2021, p. 3).

Project planning was also identified by research participants as a skill they have learnt through their active participation in CRGs. CRG#11 noted, “I’ve learnt how to fill in a CHRC project plan proposal” and that in the process of project planning they also learnt more about “what issues and projects as going on in the community” (19 March 2021, p. 2). CRG#31 said learning about project planning at the CRGs meant this knowledge was “transferable across with my role in day to day” aspects of work (30 March 2021, p. 3). CRG#24 also described each step of the project planning process they had learnt as a CRG member (12 March 2021, p. 2), which is described in Theme 3: Practice. Another research participant said about project planning that there are several steps as part of learning to do project planning (CHRC#6, 29 March 2021, p. 7).

While other participants noted a variety of skills they had learnt as part of their active participation at CRGs. CRG#13 said, “I’ve learnt a lot of writing skills” when referring to compiling the history of the community for a CRG tourism project (CRG#13, 18 March 2021, p. 2). CRG#32 said learning to work “alongside others is probably the skill set I gained and just collaboration ... so that group work is what I’ve gained from going to the CRG” (20 April 2021, p. 3). While CRG#22 said they had learnt “problem solving because there are lots of people with varying opinions” (2 March 2021, p. 2). For CHRC#4, being involved with the CRGs has given them,

... engagement skills, facilitation skills, then negotiation skills, and understanding what information is critical or important to that CRG and making sure that I am informing myself and then thinking how to communicate that. Because as a Councillor you get information at a technical level and it’s about trying to work out how to communicate it so that everyone understands the position of Council. (12 March 2021, p. 3)

CHRC#8 added that the CEDOs as CRG facilitators and in their community development roles have learnt a variety of skills in assisting with all the different projects or initiatives “that our community brings to us in the CRG meetings” and depending on what the idea is the CEDOs try “to work out who to talk to because there is no rule book and they literally have to work it out and be very creative” (2 November 2021, p. 12). CHRC#8 gave the example of a CRG wanting “to get an old helipad up and running as it was not compliant with the regulations” (p. 12). Then adding that the CEDOs “have to be really open-minded and have learnt really good critical thinking and problem-solving skills as nobody has ever done some of these projects before” (p.12).

In relation to skills development of the CRGs, only one research participant mentioned formal training or skills development, noting “I’ve not seen any professional development for my community groups to up skill them” (CHRC#6, 29 March 2021, p. 5). This research participant did give an example of how informal or mutual learning takes place at some CRGs around project planning, saying “as a Councillor, I’ve got my groups doing project plans, but I’m the main driver of doing those by encouraging them and reviewing and giving advice on how to develop them and make them stronger”. Given the number of comments in relation to skills being

acquired at the CRGs, this quote verifies that skills development is largely informal, mutually beneficial learning and on-the-job upskilling. It appears this incidental learning is mainly convened through those that participate in more than one CRG. As previously noted by Polin (2010), models of social learning are focused on informal settings of learning on-the-job which are a kind of enculturation of the individual into a system of practice (p. 165). For Sail and Abu-Samah (2016), capacity building as on-going learning happens when people are able to exercise their skills and at the same time gain new experiences and knowledge which then leads to new practices (p. 65). They also noted the need for practitioners to be considerate of the andragogical approach when facilitating adult learning (Sali & Abu-Samah, 2016, p. 69). As noted by Wenger (2010), competence is accumulated over the history of learning and meaning making within a community of practice (p. 180). It is evident, that the CRG members and Council staff have built their regime of competence within and from across the CRGs through their active and authentic participation in CRGs.

4.2.3.3 *New knowledge*

As with skills development, based on the research data knowledge has accumulated over time for CRG members and Council through ongoing mutual and informal learning. For Wenger et al. (2002), knowledge is more than an exchange of static information (p. 9); both tacit and explicit knowledge is accumulated through the actions, thinking and conversations of a community of practice (p. 9). Barab and Duffy (1998) explain that explicit knowledge is evidenced by tools and forms of practice, while tacit knowledge is linked to meaning making as learning through social interaction that is socially and culturally constructed (p. 3; Lave, 1991). For Emery and Flora (2012), cultural capital is related to the accepted ways of thinking and doing, and the tacit knowledge of how things get done emerges because of social construction (p. 142). Both informal and formal behaviour frames ways of thinking and doing which can be referred to as group habitus (Emery and Flora, 2012, p. 142; Erel, 2010). Therefore, the tacit knowledge gained by CRG members and Council through social interaction becomes embedded in the CRGs habitus and emerges as new ways of thinking that influence forms of their practice. Based on the research participants' responses, new knowledge gained through agency and active

participation by CRG participants is summarised into two categories: community learning about Council and Council learning about community.

The CRG participants' responses demonstrate community members have gained knowledge about a variety of aspects relating to Council such as the organisational structure and the positions within departments; how and from whom Council receives external funding; legislation and regulations that governs Council operations; about the internal processes of budgeting and long-term planning; and the physical assets Council owns. CRG#1 verified at the CRGs, "I am always learning inside knowledge about Council" as well as "what's coming up such as any upcoming opportunities with grants, community grants or recreational grants" (30 April 2021, p. 3). CRG#14 gave an example about gain new technical knowledge about Council assets saying,

A few years ago, we had a water infrastructure problem where pipes had burst and it's only because of the age of the actual infrastructure...of course we think, "Oh well, just come and fix it". Well, it is not that easy. In our mind it's just get the council to come and fix it. We [the CRG] invite specifically the water infrastructure people to come and talk to us and they can explain the process that it takes to enable them to look at the infrastructure and say, "if it is viable to fix it or does it have to be replaced?" (18 March 2021, p. 4)

In addition to this, CRG#20 explained they have gained new knowledge about what Council is responsible for saying,

The CRG has given me a broader understanding of the holistic picture rather than just going Council ... I think a lot of people would do that because they don't have a broader picture of just how much support we get from Council. It's not just about rates and roads. It's about spaces and liveability, capacity building, community building. (12 March 2021, p. 2)

While other CRG participants acknowledged the CRGs have given them "a fair and better understanding of Council workings and how they are restrained by certain policies and restrictions"; "I've learnt a lot more about how Council works ... I'm learning a lot of the processes behind the scenes", and "the steps and hoops Council has got to jump through to get stuff done, and what Council's opinion is on

different things” (CRG#26, 20 April 2021, p. 2; CRG#31, 30 March 2021, p. 3). While from Council’s perspective, CHRC#5 said, “I think it has been an eye opener for people as they have become CRG members and then suddenly, they have gone it is not as simple as, “I demand this, and you [Council] will do it”, and they realise there is a protocol, a system and a way of doing things” for Council (16 March 2021, p. 4).

For others, they gained knowledge about how and where Council sources external funding and how this impacts Council’s forward planning saying, “I’ve gained a bit more of an insight” into how Council gets funding and “know how hard it is in some cases for Council to source external funding” (CRG#19, 12 March 2021, p. 3). While another CRG participant added about what they have learnt from participating at the CRGs,

I would probably say a better understanding of Council in regard to their budget and grants. I have found out it is not a quick process because everything is so forward planned. You might plan something, and it might not actually happen for a couple of years so that was a big moment for me understanding how they have to work in the future...it’s not short term, it’s long term. (CRG#16, 11 March 2021, p. 3)

Other CRG participants noted in regard their knowledge about how Council’s longer-term planning process that “things stay on the table for a long time, and we think “is this ever going to happen?” But there is “it’s happening!”, it is slow as there is a lot of stuff in the background being checked out and worked on” (CRG#24, 12 March 2021, p. 5). Then CRG#4 explained they have learnt to be patient with Council processes and planning,

... you have got to learn to be a little bit patient with it. Be a little bit respectful I suppose but sometimes it’s very hard when things aren’t happening and being done. Sometimes you’ve got to realise other priorities take precedence over what we need to have done so you’ve got to learn to just sit back and be a little bit patient about it. (25 March 2021, p. 4)

While the research data indicated the new knowledge gained by CRG members over time about Council, it also emerged that once the CRG members are aware of Council’s processes and have information about specific Council services

they then become advocates for Council in the community. One participant said, “people around town say “Ah, it took them [Council] so long to come and fix up this or that” but I say, “you know when you look into it, there are all rules and regulations that have to be followed so Council is getting there as fast as it can” (CRG#14, 18 March 2021, p. 3). For this CRG participant, having the knowledge and understanding of specific issues or of Council services meant they were then able to share this factual information to inform others within the community, thus promoting meaning through active social participation. Finally, a CRG participant confirmed the role of community members at the CRGs is to “contribute by giving advice as to what is needed within the community...we contribute our knowledge of what happens in the community” to Council (CRG#4, 25 March 2021, p. 3).

Data from Council participants expressed how they gained local knowledge about each of the 13 CRG communities, such as their priorities and concerns, and developed a broader network of community contacts as well as a better understanding of the physical towns and natural environments. Council participants described the new knowledge they have gained from and about communities through participating in the CRGs. CHRC#9 summarises several points saying,

... for me, the main skill and knowledge that I’ve learnt is probably around understanding the diversity of the skill sets we have got in our community. It never ceases to amaze me some of the people who turn up to these CRGs. The skill sets these people have got, whether they have come from a social background, environmental background, business background and mining background ... Also, I have made some really good contacts in those communities and there are some real doers in the community as well. From my perspective and my role, I like to, not so much align, but certainly make contacts in community that are natural leaders and I tend to go to them to get stuff done or ask for advice, or whatever it may be. The biggest thing I have gotten out of the CRGs is information about those people who are the real fabric of the community (26 October 2021, p. 2).

Further to this, CHRC#8 said,

I think that we [Council] have gained a better appreciation for what the community wants and needs to progress....and some of these CRGs have really spoken loudly about where Council hasn't been stepping up to the mark, or where community really requires something and it just allows Council to, in some situations reprioritise based on the community voice. (2 November 2021, p. 11).

CHRC#10 notes, "There's no point us being here as a Council if we don't listen to community and ultimately do things the community wants...it's about understanding what's important to them in their communities" (19 October 2021, p. 4). Another Council participant added,

It's different perspectives too, so being a local Emerald person and when you think of the Council you think of the area you live in ... whereas going out to Springsure that is very different, and then even further out to Rolleston. But then going out to Arcadia Valley and Bauhinia and those two rural places have a big emphasis on roads and waste disposal and things that we just take for granted in Emerald. It opened my eyes to the different challenges that other people have within the region, and you find out what is important to them. (CHRC#11, 28 October 2021, p. 3)

While these quotes from Council participants verify the information, they have learnt about communities in the region, another CRG participant confirmed that Council has learnt more about their community through the CRGs saying, Council have learnt "more general knowledge of [name of town] and of what's happened around the area" in relation to the history of the town (CRG#34, 28 October 2021, p. 3). One CRG participant shared a story about how Council staff attending the CRGs have built a relationship over time with a CRG member to gain local knowledge about a dirt road in their rural CRG locality. CRG#1 explained a CRG member had been sharing information with Council staff at the CRGs for several years "about what would work and what wouldn't work" on the road, and "now they [Council] do communicate with [name of CRG member] and will meet on the road to get his ideas because he knows where the water runs and doesn't run" (30 April 2021, p. 2).

Based on the research data, there is evidence that, over the six to eight years of their existence, the CRGs have created the opportunity for community members and Council to gain new knowledge: community about Council and Council about community. As previously noted, for Bourdieu agents and institutions within a field integrate and interact in accordance with the field-specific rules (Walther, 2014, p. 6). Sharing explicit and tacit knowledge has forged specific rules and practices at the CRGs which have benefited community and Council. As noted by Sail and Abu-Samah (2016), capacity building extends to both community members and change agents or practitioners who work with the community to facilitate a development process (p. 66). Through community members and Council representatives sharing explicit and tacit knowledge, new skills and new knowledge gained through their mutual learning has reshaped the rules of the game for community planning practice within the field of local government.

Based on the research data, the building competence section focuses on the shared repertoire of CRG tools and resources developed by Council to support ongoing meaning making in the community planning practice of the CRGs. The research data provides evidence that skills development and new knowledge have been gained organically over time through mutual learning and on-the-job upskilling as CRG members and Council representatives actively participate in the CRGs. From a CoPs perspective, a “regime of practice” is negotiated, and competence is accumulated over its history of learning and meaning making (Wenger, 2010, p. 180). Reification covers a wide range of practices that produce physical and conceptual artefacts that become points of focus around which meaning is negotiated (Wenger, 1998, p. 56 & 58). These points of focus become the enablers of mutual learning for individual and collective practice (Wenger et al., 2002, p.11). In this way, the CRG tools and resources used in meaning making and active participation in practice has built competence as new skills and knowledge. As noted for Bourdieu, the accumulation of different forms of capital improves an agent’s chances to succeed within a field (Skinner et al., 2008, p. 6). Therefore, by accumulating new skills and knowledge the CRG members and Council participants are, individually and collectively, are building competence over time and cultural capital as they act on their agency and adopt new ways of thinking to make meaning of their community planning practice.

In summary, based on the research data, through active participation and meaning making the CRGs have enabled community and Council to act on their agency within a deliberative community governance structure that enhances participatory and representative democracy across the 13 CRG localities. Utilising CRG resources and tools, gaining new skills and knowledge over time has ensured community and Council are improving meaning making about place their communities in the region, and in the process is building cultural capital amid community leadership in the region.

For Wenger et al. (2002), participation in social learning is enabled through valuable relationships that are built within a CoPs community (p. 34). While Theme 1: Meaning explains active participation and building competence, Theme 2: Community summarises the research participants' responses about CRG membership and their involvement as well as the social networks and relationships that have been formed through the CRGs.

4.3. Theme 2: Community

4.3.1. Introduction

Wenger's CoPs as a social theory of learning is used to frame and summarise the data for this research project to understand how the CRGs practice community planning. As noted in Chapter 2, the learning capabilities of CoPs related to the community component for the purpose of this research project are membership, attendance, networks and relationships (Wenger et al., 2002, pp. 28 & 34). Theme 2: Community includes two sections: Membership and Social connections. Membership covers CRG membership and sector representation to understand who and how community are involved in the CRGs, while the Social connections section explores the types of social networks and how relationships have been formed through the CRGs over time.

For Wenger et al. (2002), the community component is critical for an effective knowledge structure which creates the social fabric of learning (p. 28). A strong community of practice fosters interactions and relationships based on mutual respect and trust (p. 28). According to Wenger (2010, p. 19), a community of practice involves a network of connections among members that identifies with a domain and is committed to a learning partnership. To build relationships, CoPs members must interact regularly and actively participate in conversations about aspects important to

their domain of practice (p. 34). Wenger et al. (2002) also note that working together as a community on a common vision with others who share your overall view of the domain allows members to build trust (pp. 33-34). According to Rogers and Jarema (2015), the three common concepts of social capital are trust, social norms and social networks (p. 23). The three main theorists of social capital are Bourdieu, Coleman and Putman (p. 23). Bourdieu distinguishes between the social networks that an individual is embedded in and the social capital that precipitates or emerges as social relationships out of those social networks (DeFiippis, 2001, p. 783). According to DeFiippis (2001), Bourdieu views social capital as constructed by social networks and relationships, which he never disconnects from the element of capital (p. 783). Bourdieu views social capital as something that accumulates and is later traded for other capitals (Rogers & Jarema, 2015, p. 19). He viewed social networks as not a natural given and which must be constructed through investment strategies (Newman & Dale, 2005, p. 479). For Putnam, the types and density of social networks or abundance of socially connected groups can be used to improve the efficiency of society facilitating coordinated collective action used in achieving community goals (Rogers & Jarema, 2015, p. 19). Therefore, social capital capacity developed by groups of community leaders can extend to the larger community to create resources for achieving socio-economic, environmental and governance outcomes to achieve community development (Rogers & Jarema, 2015, p. 22). From this perspective, understanding the social networks accumulated through the CRGs can highlight the volume of social capital accessed by CRG members and Council to collectively undertake ongoing community planning and action community projects.

From Bourdieu's (1986, p. 247) definition of social capital, each member of a group accumulates social capital from their individual social networks which can then be aggregated to form social capital collectively owned by the group membership (Rogers & Jarema, 2015, p. 18). For Bourdieu, social fields can be seen as a network, structure or set of relationships that is an historically generated system of shared meaning (Walther, 2014, p. 5). Husu (2013) says for something to be understood as a field it requires that "agents are interpersonally related or oriented towards each other or that they share the same goal" (p. 266). Bourdieu also notes that the closer the agents are to each other in a physical location, the more common properties they have (Husu, 2013, p. 266). He views a durable network of relationships as being established through repeated social interactions and

reinforced through obligations (Rogers & Jarema, 2015, p. 19). Bourdieu describes these obligations as feelings of gratitude, respect and friendship, which Coleman and Putnam later described as trust and reciprocity as elements reinforcing relationships (p. 19). For Putnam, social capital is formed through a perpetual cycle of social interaction out of which trust, social networks and social norms are developed (p. 19). While social networks enable the facilitation of information, social norms dictate attitudes, social values and expected behaviours of a group, community and social field (p. 19). Bourdieu describes the social norms that dictate behaviour as cultural capital (Rogers & Jarema, 2015, p. 23). Putnam extends on this to introduce the notion of civic mindedness to describe factors influencing individuals to become engaged in democracy (p. 23). Putnam suggests that social capital creates a civically minded society where trust and reciprocity forms from the interaction of individuals (Rogers & Jarema, 2015, p. 19).

Based on the research data, this theme will explore CRG membership, and the ways community members and Council are involved in the CRGs, as well as understand the social networks and relationships that have formed over time through the CRGs. Butler notes that social capital literature distinguishes between different types of social capital: bonding, bridging and linking (2005, p. 9). The aim is to also understand how the different types of social capital contribute to CRG capacity building.

4.3.2. Membership

Membership is a key finding for this theme because it summarises aspects that emerged from the research data relating to who and how community members, Council and other stakeholders are involved and actively participate at CRGs. Understanding the bespoke participation provides the basis for understanding the social networks and relationships that specifically generate social capital at the CRGs. The membership section discusses the evolution of CRG membership and sector representation as well as describing the different ways community members are involved in the CRGs. To give context to the following section on membership, it is pertinent to recap aspects of the CRGs and provide background about the CRG membership.

As noted in Theme 1, the CRGs were set up between 2013 and 2015 by Council to implement the 13 community and action plans with community members.

These ten-year plans detail the projects and initiatives that were identified by the community through extensive consultation during the development of the *CH2022 Community Plan*. As CHRC does not have divisions (Theme 1), it was during the development stage of the *CH2022 Community Plan* that the 13 localities within the region were formed by Council as areas where residents shared a collective sense of identity. The geographical boundaries of the 13 localities were then aligned to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census areas (now changed to statistical areas) so that demographic data could be accessed for community planning. As noted in the Literature Review, in 2012 the Queensland state government legislation repealed the requirement for councils to have long-term community plans. However, CHRC remained committed to working with the community to implement the *CH2022 Community Plan*. To achieve this, the CRG model was originally developed by the CHRC councillors, senior staff, and myself as the Manager of Community Planning and Engagement. Forming the 13 CRGs was based on the success of engaging with a group of community members in each of the 13 localities to prepare the 13 place community plans and action plans during the development stage of the *CH2022 Community Plan*. After becoming the CRG project lead at the time, it was my responsibility to oversee the nomination process to establish the CRGs. The CRG nomination or application form, the CRG's terms of reference and other resources and tools (as noted in Theme 1) were developed by Council, including with councillors, prior to advertising for CRG members. This process included publicly advertising for community members to apply to Council to join the CRGs. No limits were set by Council for the membership of the CRGs. Several of the community members who participated in developing their place community plans and action plans applied to be members of the 13 CRGs. Their knowledge of how these plans were developed was beneficial to progress into the implementation stage. While the CRG membership was open for all community members to apply, the formal membership application process was later relaxed, as described below by the research participants.

Wenger et al. (2002) notes that members may self-select to join a community of practice, and, in this sense, membership is voluntary (p. 36). While participation is encouraged, the type of personal investment that makes for a vibrant community of practice is not something that can be invented or forced because the success of the community of practice depends on the energy the community generates itself, not on

an external mandate (p. 36). Ayres (2012) notes that only a small portion in the community will volunteer to engage and commit to leadership roles in a community planning process (p. 22). The research data revealed that most community members volunteer their time to attend the CRG meetings unless they are participating as paid employees to represent organisations, government or industry. One participant said, “we all go there [CRG meetings] out of our own time. You take out of your own day, or your own business for the betterment of your community” (CRG#10, 1 April 2021, p. 5). Another CRG participant described themselves as a volunteer at the CRGs as well as in the community, saying “I’m big into volunteering” and joined the CRG “because I am passionate and have a love for the community” (CRG#17, 4 March 2021, p. 2), CRG#34 reiterated with, “it is important to value and remember that people who are participating in the CRGs are volunteers in this ... people are giving up their time and are not paid to be there” (28 October 2021, p. 5). This reinforces that community members are participating in the CRGs out of civic mindedness and doing so by investing their time, effort, and goodwill. Others said, “I have been lucky to be able to be part of it. It’s given us a chance to actually, pretty much, have a say in what goes on in your community”, and “I’ve been appreciative to be involved in the CRG and with the people who participate” (CRG#15, 4 March 2021, p.3; CRG#6, 25 March 2021, p. 4). These views align with agency and democratic participation as well as the human quality of generosity in giving without expecting anything in return (Anderson, 2014, p. 309), which is discussed in Theme 4: Identity. Another CRG participant did acknowledge they gained a sense of satisfaction from knowing “the community appreciates what we have done” (CRG#35, 28 October 2021, p. 6). What emerged from the data was that, over time, CRG membership has evolved from being formal and membership based to an open invitation for all community members to participate.

4.3.2.1 *Evolving membership*

For Wenger et al. (2002), the CoPs do change over time in “structure and characteristics as they grow” and develop (p. 35). As described by the research participants, CRG membership is now open to all community members and sector representation is relaxed, especially for smaller communities. Membership and community involvement in the CRGs has evolved since they were first established in 2013-2015, between six to eight years before the research data was conducted.

Within the research participants' responses, they have used the words "diversity" and "inclusion" to describe several aspects of the CRGs membership that encompass the variety and number of different viewpoints, sectors and residents participating at the CRGs, not specifically in reference to gender, culture, or ethnicity.

Based on the research data, membership of the CRGs has evolved from the original formal membership-based approach developed by Council to an open invitation to the broader community. This membership approach was modified approximately four years after all the CRGs were established, in 2019. According to the research data, this change was made when the CRG members and Council agreed to relax the formal membership nomination or application process to encourage more participation at the CRGs. The CRG participants acknowledged that "originally, we were invited" to apply for membership and the CRG "was a little bit contained" to members (CRG#6, 25 March, p. 2). Another participant described the formation and evolution to open membership of the CRGs, saying,

Initially, the members who represented the group [CRG] were the only ones who came to the table ... It started out that way but not intentionally to keep people out, it was just to create the flow to get it happening ... the CRGs came from the community groups Council started when they did 2022 Community Plan. Those people and the community were invited to apply. You had to be nominated or apply for a position around the table ... and that relaxed a lot over the years. Now anybody is welcome, at least in our CRG, to come along and sit at the table. And I think that's the way it has to be. (CRG#24, 12 March 2021, p. 6)

The research data indicated that over time, the CRGs have evolved from the initial Council membership approach, of advertising for community members and completing application/nomination forms to join the CRGs, to being more informal and having an open invitation for all community members to participate in the CRGs. The research participants saw this as a wholly positive aspect for their communities, saying, "you got invited but it is not like that now ... it is very inclusive, very welcoming", and "it has changed over the years. When I started, I was brought along as a member, but it was always really just members who turned up" (CRG#6, 25 March, p. 2; CRG#12, 16 March 2021, p. 1). A Council participant explained, the

CRGs have “evolved to make it a little bit more inclusive, so we [Council] essentially invite anyone who feels like they want to be involved in the community reference group” (CHRC#7, 28 October 2021, p. 2). Another Council participant explained how Council has supported the CRGs to be more inclusive of the whole community, saying,

It is still supposedly membership driven, so they [community members] would be invited to become a member, but I suppose we [Council] have loosened the reins on that as it turned people off a little bit. They didn’t want the commitment of membership, they wanted to be able to come to drive a cause, or they might have a passion for a certain thing and that’s why they would come. So that is how it has evolved. So, it’s more open to whoever wants to participate now. (CHRC#6, 29 March 2021, p. 2)

Other CRG participants confirmed, “anyone who feels like they are interested in coming along to these meetings, they’re definitely welcome to”, and “I get excited when new faces come. So, it’s really good. I think they are from all walks of life ... I have to take my hat off to the Council, I think it is a broad invitation” (CRG#6, 25 March 2021, p. 2; CRG#20, 12 March, 2021, p. 2). Modifying the membership approach and being more inclusive of the broader community demonstrates the CRG members and Council have adapted their thinking and practices. Additionally, not having a formal membership approach is removing barriers for community members to participate at the CRGs.

A CRG participant did share their view of what can happen when the CRGs are exclusive and closed to the community saying,

... it goes back to that diversity too ... if the same people continually go to these [CRG meetings] and then it becomes seen by the community as a private organisation. Whereas if you open the door then you get that diversity happening a bit better”. (CRG#24, 12 March 2021, p. 3)

Emery and Flora (2012) point out that exclusive processes do exclude those voices that are often not heard and can result in continual opposition to attempts to implement the goals of a community plan (p. 138). CRG#24 emphasised the CRGs “cannot exclude anyone who wants to come and hear what’s going on or maybe put

in a suggestion or a complaint” (12 March 2021, p. 2). This aligns with Ayres (2012, p. 22), who stated, in theory, that all people in a democracy are entitled to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Therefore, within the field of local government adopting an informal nomination approach and having an open invitation to the broader community to attend the CRGs enables community members to exercise their agency within a democratic process. It also means more people can connect into the CRGs as social networks and then by interacting and engaging with others it is contributing to social capital. Also, by changing to a more informal and open membership approach, the CRGs are accepting new social norms and practices that then influence the behaviours of CRG participants. In this way, new adapted practices are shaping and building the cultural capital of the CRGs.

4.3.2.2 *Sector representation*

To extend on the evolution of CRG membership, the research participants commented on the relaxing of sector representation as outlined in the CRG terms of reference. As noted in Theme 1: Meaning, the CRG terms of reference suggest that membership includes representation from youth, seniors, business, industry, rural, cultural, sports and recreation groups to ensure voices from different segments of the community can be heard. For groups such as the CRGs, installing a multi-representation and a mixed-participatory model of community planning has several purposes (Chaskin, 2005, p. 412). Chaskin (2005) notes that by bringing together a wide range of participants with different experiences, different fields of expertise, and different access to information and resources, means everyone around the same table is on an equal footing to connect with the broader systems that impact on community planning initiatives (p. 412). Here, Chaskin is referring to participant’s agency as well as the resources that can be accessed through connecting and linking into different social networks of sectors to implement community planning projects.

While the research participants viewed having multi-sector representation as positive at the CRGs, they also acknowledged this is not always appropriate in smaller communities. Many small towns and remote rural communities do not have representation of all the community segments suggested in the CRG terms of reference due to their smaller population sizes. As a result, the CRG members and Council took a more flexible approach to accommodate for the unique composition of

the CRGs' towns and communities. One CRG participant explained about sector representation,

... they [Council] wanted to make sure they had coverage across as many different parts of the community as they could. And I think that is actually in the terms of reference ... an actual list of sectors. They wanted to get you to select which parts of the community you are involved in and what you can bring to the group. So, they are trying to get coverage across all of the community". (CRG#20, 12 March 2021, p. 3)

Council participants recognise the sectors are reflective of the unique communities and add diverse viewpoints, saying, "the range of different sectors or community interests differs depending on the local community profile and economic drivers ... some CRGs are in predominantly rural communities" and others are in mining areas, and "having a diverse range of viewpoints from different sectors adds value to the group, it is critical ... the more diverse stakeholders in the groups that we can get the better" (CHRC#11, 19 October 2021, p. 4; CHRC#8, 2 November 2021, p.10). Another Council participant acknowledged the initial intention by Council was for CRG meetings to "have different stakeholders, so people were invited who represented different sectors within the community" (CHRC#7, 28 October 2021, p. 4). However, another Council participant noted that Council recognised a more flexible approach was needed in small communities, explaining,

... sector representation has evolved over the years. Originally it was very sector driven. Now it is more open to whoever really just wants to come along. The purpose behind that was that we [Council] experienced a drop off in attendance when it was sector driven, and some communities couldn't or actually didn't have representatives for each of the sectors ... in a small community like Capella, there was a long period of time when we didn't have any health workers in the community. So, it works well in a larger area to be sector driven but for small communities and Bauhinia, where this is no actual township, it just didn't fit. (CHRC#6, 29 March 2021, p. 1)

Other Council participants confirmed that sector representation is "not always going to work, particularly in these smaller communities. It may work in the larger

ones. To me it is a great concept, but it's not necessarily going to work that way" (CHRC#3, 19 March 2021, p. 4; CRG#4, 12 March 2021, p. 2). A Council participant also warned that Council needs to be "mindful of the silent majority and try to make sure there are representatives from different groups at the CRGs" (CHRC#9, 19 October 2021, p. 5). CHRC#11 also added that they thought "having representation of different sectors or diversity is part of the success of the CRGs" (19 November 2021, p. 5). Based on the research data, CRG members and Council recognised the value of having multi-sector representation at the CRGs and the need to take a more flexible approach in smaller communities. Over time, the CRG members and Council are further embracing new practices that ensure the CRGs, where possible, can engage with a variety of sectors and accommodate for the maximum number of people to attend the CRGs in smaller towns and communities. This approach is shaping meaning making at the CRGs that enables them to increase active participation that is in turn building social and cultural capital.

4.3.2.3 *Involvement*

While individual membership and sector representation has evolved over the years, the research participants also referred to aspects of how community members participate and are involved at CRGs. The CRGs provide the opportunity for community members to participate and be involved in ways that suit their own interests in advocating for and developing their communities. The research data indicated that there are core members who attend the CRG meetings regularly for the purpose of progressing projects, while there are other community members who irregularly or rarely participate to share and gain information, as well as those from the broader community who may only attend the CRGs once to raise a community issue or concern. This was confirmed by CRG#12 who described the "the dynamic nature of participation" at CRGs, saying,

... the CRG meetings these days, the ones I've been to of recent times, there are the members or the stalwarts of the CRG membership who have a pet project or have a particular interest, plus people from the community who have a bone to pick. So, it's been a good mix". (16 March 2021, p. 1)

CRG#11 reiterated that people usually attend the meetings "who have an issue they want to see resolved or they want to take a project forward" and while "we

don't discourage anybody from coming ... we have a lot of people join in if there is an issue people in the community want to bring forward" to Council and the CRG members (19 March 2021, p. 1). The quotes verify the different ways community members participate at the CRGs which enables them to pursue and achieve their own interests for the community. Wenger et al. (2002), describes CoPs as having three main levels of participation: core membership, peripheral membership, and outsiders (p. 57). The core membership are the active members who take on group projects, make up the heart of the group and account for approximately 25 – 35% of the participation level at CoPs (Wenger et al., p. 56 & 57). The peripheral members are those that irregularly or rarely participate and make up the remaining membership (p. 56). These people stay engaged from the sidelines and are not as passive as it may appear because they learn in their own way from informal discussions and accessing distributed information (p. 56). Finally, there are the outsiders who are not members but have an interest in the group and issues that affect them (Wenger et al., p. 56). Based on the data from the participant responses, these three levels of participation can be used to describe the ways community members are involved in the CRGs: core members attend regularly, irregular members attend *ad hoc*, and the broader "outsider" community attends to raise issues or concerns.

The CRG participants referred to the "core group" as those who attend the CRG meetings regularly. They confirmed "there is usually a core group" who attend the CRGs regularly, and there is "pretty much the same core group that go to every meeting" (CRG#7, 23 February 2021, p. 1; CRG#11, 9 March 2021, p. 2). CRG#11 confirmed, "there are a core few working on projects" (19 March 2021, p.1). For Schumaker, local leaders are the single most important factor in successful community effects to organise and carry out projects in a strategic visioning program (1996, p. 98), which aligns with Wenger (2002, p. 56), who states that the core group are the active members who take on the group projects. CRG#2 said, "we have been regulars the whole time and you get a few that come and go" (26 May 2021, p. 2). They added it is important to have "consistent, dedicated membership" so the CRGs can regularly share information and progress projects (26 May 2021, p. 4). Consistency in relation to core members and regular attendance at the CRG meeting emerged in the research data and is discussed in more detail below.

The research participants referred to those who irregularly or rarely attend who, based on CoPs participation levels, can be identified as peripheral members. Participants explained that those who attend meetings irregularly as “local community members occasionally drop by. They are not there normally, they don’t come regularly”, and “some come on a regular basis, and some can’t always get there, like the policeman he comes when he can. Sometimes he gets called out in the middle of a meeting” (CRG#30, 26 March 2021, p. 2; CRG#19, 12 March 2021, p. 2). Then CHRC#1 explained that a CRG group is “often having new members come in, or some members may not come for three or four meetings”, adding “in Blackwater we have a member who has been there since the first meeting ... and he comes to the meetings when he can, depending on other commitments” (22 February 2021, p. 3). Other data highlighted the passive involvement of peripheral members, saying there are members who “keep up to date because they are on the email distribution list, so they receive the agendas and minutes regularly”, and “I haven’t actually attended a meeting for a while, but I look at the agenda all the time ... I’ll attend when there is something I want to put forward ... but I do read the minutes” (CHRC#1, 22 February 2021, p. 3; CRG#5, 25 February 2021, p. 2). Further, CRG participants acknowledged they cannot always attend the meeting for various reasons, saying that “I can’t regularly go to them all [CRG meetings]” as a business owner, and “people cannot always attend because of their work commitments and other commitments” (CRG#18, 9 March 2021, p. 2; CHRC#3, 19 March 2021, p. 3). Others added they have changed meeting days and times to attract more people to the meetings, saying “to accommodate people we have shifted meeting times”, and most agreed if you “are keen enough you will make time” (CRG#35, 28 October 2021, p. 3; CRG#15, 4 March 2021, p. 1-2; CRG#2, 26 May 2021, p. 4; CRG#31, 30 March 2021, p. 4).

The research participants described those who rarely or never attend the CRGs from the broader community are perceived as outsiders based on the CoPs levels of participation. The data revealed that members of the broader community who never attend the CRGs will get involved or attend a CRG to raise local issues or concerns, saying “we have community members drop by if they have any issues or if they want to raise a concern with the CRG group”, and members of the general public will come along to find “out a particular thing from Council or wish to find out about a particular aspect of living in the Council area or how to deal with a

centralised Council structure in Emerald” (CRG#30, 26 March 2021, p.2; CRG#12, 16 March 2021, p. 2). CHRC#6 provided an example of when the broader community attended the CRG to air their grievances with Council,

... it was to do with waste management and the reduction in the hours that the dump sites are open. It was put to the general community that we have the CRG and that is where you go. So, I had about thirty people who had never been to a CRG before ... I had to control all that and we turned it all around. (29 March 2021, p. 3)

This participant also said that everyone stayed after this topic was discussed and “I was surprised as I thought everyone would leave, once they had vented, but they stayed and went through a project plan we had. They gave great input” (p. 3). Other participant data expressed how the CRGs give local people an avenue to raise issues or concerns, saying that people attend particularly when there is an issue “as the community sees it as a way of getting their voice heard through a CRG”, and this kind of participation does benefit the community “because if there are concerns at the local community level, and then it is raised at the CRG, from there it goes to the Council” (CHRC#3, 19 March 2021, p. 3; CRG#22, 2 March 2021, p. 3). These quotes verify that the CRGs provide an avenue for community to exercise their agency in their local towns and communities and participate in the CRGs as a democratic process. As noted in Theme 1: Meaning, strategic community planning was introduced as a process to provide people with a voice into local government through governance networks operating in their towns (Connelly, 2011, p. 930). By having a more informal and flexible membership approach or strategy ensures the CRGs continue to evolve as a participatory governance model.

Another segment of the broader community that may be considered as outsiders are those people who no longer participate at the CRGs. CRG#26 noted that there are also community members who were members of the CRG and have now “left or walked away” because “it’s not seeing outcomes so people just walk away” and also people leave for “obvious reasons too, not everyone can stay in there forever. They have got other things to do” (20 April 2021, p. 4). CRG#1 recognised that “some people used to participate but they have achieved their projects and are no longer attending” (30 April 2021, p. 2). While the CRGs report

themselves as open and welcoming of new participants and the broader community, these quotes highlight that, over time, people get involved and then leave the CRGs for a variety of reasons. It is expected that over the almost eight years since the CRGs were established (to when the research interviews were held) there will be a changeover of new and older CRG members. Based on the research data, the CRGs offer the means for CRG members and the broader community to be involved in different ways. Using CoPs levels of participation people can get involved as core members who regularly attend to exchange information and progress projects; as peripheral members who attend the CRGs on an irregular basis but stay engaged from the sidelines; or as outsiders who are members of the broader community who may attend their local CRG once to raise issues or concerns. By providing the opportunity for CRG members and the community to be involved in the CRGs in a variety of ways, people can engage in the CRGs to progress community development projects or initiatives, come along to exchange information or locally access a forum at which they can exercise their agency through a participatory democratic process. In this way, the CRGs create a deliberative forum where the CRG members, Council and the broader community can regularly interact and strengthen social connections which contributes to building social capital.

4.3.2.4 *Consistency*

As previously noted, the CRG have core members who regularly attend meetings. Having consistency in core membership and of Council representatives attending the CRG meetings emerged as important for the research participants for several reasons. As previously noted, for Bourdieu social capital forms as a result of a durable network of relationships being established through repeated social interactions (Rodgers & Jarema, 2015, p. 19). Also, as previously noted by Wenger (2010), to build relationships the CoPs members must interact regularly to build trust and therefore competence in the domain of practice (p. 34). Based on the research data, it was revealed that consistency and regular member attendance at the CRGs as well as consistency in Council staff and councillors attending the CRGs contributed to shared meanings and built competence in CRG practices over time, particularly amid longer-term CRG members.

The research participants commented on the benefits of consistency related to having regular members participate at the CRGs. For CHRC#7, “having

consistency in the members that turn up is really important ... as they are a little bit more proactive with things getting done” adding that “if we don’t have the consistency in key players things sort of get stuck” (28 October 2021, p. 3). While CHRC#1 confirmed, “I find in the towns with the higher turnover” of CRG participants “every meeting is like ground hog day” (22 February 2021, p. 4). This Council participant added,

... when there are consistent members attending meetings, it is a lot better and flows more, especially when you are giving the answer to the actions from the previous meeting ... it means you are not giving the history as well as trying to give the response. For example, in Blackwater, someone was asking a question about the railway crossing, but you have to go backwards to say last meeting we were asked about the railway, and this meeting we are going to give you the answer”. (p. 4)

This demonstrates that having regular attendance by the CRG members can ensure meeting actions and projects are making consistent progress. This was confirmed by CRG#3, saying “you need active community participants” to attend consistently to achieve CRG ideas and projects (23 March 2021, p.1). They then added, “I hope that attendance might increase at our CRG so we keep attracting active members” (p. 2). CRG#17 said, “we have had ups and downs in different meetings” when referring to attendance (4 March 2021, p. 1). From Council’s perspective CHRC#3 noted,

... sometimes the groups and number of CRG members can wax and wane from time to time. At Blackwater there was only a few people coming to meetings but now there has been an increase in the number of people attending meetings. People are there because they want to be there and we recognise that numbers can vary. (19 March 2021, p. 4)

While CRG#23 noted their CRG “started with 13 or 15, it was quite unwieldy, which makes sense for the size of Emerald, but it doesn’t make sense for trying to get anything done” (1 April 2021, p. 5). From Council’s perspective, CHRC#1 said there are the core CRG members who are consistently “there at every meeting ... which can be between three or maybe ten core members” and then the other

community members will attend occasionally (22 February 2021, p. 4). A CRG participant said, “it is good to have more people attend other than the core group to bring in new ideas and points of view” (CRG#10, 1 April 2021, p. 5). Based on the participants’ comments about the numbers of community members attending the CRGs, it appears on average six to ten community members attend the CRGs unless several community members attend to raise a community issue, which can then be up to thirty extra people (CHRC#6, 29 March 2021, p. 3). According to Wenger et al. (2002), “some communities of practice are small and intimate, involving only a few, while others consist of hundreds of people and can be up to a thousand members” (p. 25). For Woods (1996), a group of community leaders may be a small group of five to ten persons that take on the community responsibilities of a strategic visioning initiative (p. 86). Mackay (2014) said that five to eight is the most efficient and practical size for a working group (p. 65). Therefore, it can be assumed that attendance by CRG community members is appropriate, given seven communities have populations less than 500 people; four are less than 2,000; one is less than 5,000; and the largest community is approximately 15,000 people (noted in Table 1).

CRG participants commented that councillors and Council staff positions can change due to staff turnover and elections resulting in a loss of consistent knowledge about the history of the group’s activities and projects being progressed by the CRGs. CRG#4 explained that Council staff from the different departments are invited to come to the CRGs to provide information and “we will meet somebody, and they will be gone next time” (25 March 2021, p. 4). While CRG#26 said, “even with Council elections you get a new councillor come in and you have got to pick everything up again and that has been very frustrating” (p. 4). CRG#28 reiterated that over the time, Council “have changed a few councillors so we have had to educate the next lot” (26 March 2021, p. 4). As noted in Theme 1: Meaning, two councillors are assigned to each CRG and therefore every four years after the local government elections new councillors join as new CRG members unless they are returned to office and stay involved with the same CRGs. Based on the research data, there is evidence that the longer-term CRG members have gained explicit and tacit knowledge over time that has contributed to their competence in community planning practice. This knowledge has accumulated in the CRGs’ habitus and can be communicated as “this is the way we do things here”. For Emery and Flora (2012),

cultural capital is related to accepted ways of thinking and doing, and the tacit knowledge of how things get done is the result of social construction (p. 142). Cultural capital resulting from individual agency can be communicated through sharing stories which can transform the group habitus of community leaders (p. 143). Therefore, over time, consistent and repeated interactions by CRG members and Council have resulted in shared stories of practice being embedded in the CRG habitus as cultural capital.

As noted in Theme 1: Meaning, the CRG facilitators who are Council Community Development and Engagement Officers (CEDO) were recognised as playing an integral role in coordinating all aspects the CRGs by research participants. As previously noted, a CEDO is assigned to each CRG and may facilitate several CRGs, which was highlighted by CHRC#11, saying “I look after Springsure, Rolleston, Bauhinia and Arcadia Valley and about to take over Emerald as well ... with staff changeovers, I have also been out to, as one offs, to Comet, Gemfields, Tieri, Capella and Duaringa. I think I’ve been to most of them at least once” (19 October 2021, p. 1). As a longer-term CRG member, CRG#26 shared,

I have experienced changes in Council officers [CEDOs] who come to us, every three years or four years or even less, every two years they might have a position change. Someone has moved on and we have a new council member [CEDO], and you seem to start from scratch again. That is a real stall. (20 April 2021, p. 4)

CHRC#11 noted “that although there are staff changes, having consistency with CEDOs is important because it is a lot about us building trust and relationships with CRG members” (19 October 2021, p. 7). The CRG participants wholly valued the CEDOs and the role they play in supporting the CRGs for both Council and the community. In Theme 3: Practice, aspects of the CEDOs’ facilitation roles are further discussed. CHRC#1 summed up the consistency from the perspective of local knowledge, saying within the CRG meetings “community members tell us the history”, then adding that,

... as Council or as industry, whoever is making decisions for the futures of our community, quite often those positions are for five years, ten years. Whereas our community is the constant. They know the history; they know the

background; they are the generational farmers; the generational community members. So, they know the history as to why things were done a certain way and when we have new decision makers come in to redo a park, or even a new industry, we [Council] doesn't know the history because we have only been in our roles for however long but our community is the constant ... and our communities have longer memories than industries and Council and even government. (22 February 2021, p. 2)

Based on the research data, consistency of community members and numbers attending meetings as well as consistency of councillors, CEDOs and Council staff allows the CRGs to more consistently progress meeting actions and community projects. Over time, the regular attendance and consistent membership of core longer-term CRG members has resulted in the deliberate accumulation of knowledge which members steward and share about "the way the CRGs do things". This tacit knowledge is accumulated by members as cultural capital. From a Bordieuan perspective, the collective knowledge of practices by the CRG members and Council has created a group habitus demonstrated through membership that is more resilient to change.

In summary, the membership section has demonstrated how the CRG members, and the broader community are involved with the CRGs in ways that suit their own interests in developing and advocating for their communities. Core members regularly attend CRG meetings to progress projects, others attend to share and gain information irregularly or rarely, while the CRGs provide a local avenue for community members to raise issues or concerns and act on their agency that allows for democratic participation. The membership approach or strategy has evolved over time, now community have an open invitation to attend the CRGs and multi-sector representation has relaxed to accommodate smaller towns and communities. Consistency in CRG members and Council representatives participating in the CRGs has accumulated explicit and tacit knowledge of CRG practices over time. From a Bordieuan perspective, this collective knowledge has been embedded in the beliefs and practices of the CRGs' habitus as cultural capital. Also drawing on Bourdieu (Rogers & Jarema, 2015) and Wenger (2010), a durable network of relationships is established through repeated social interactions that build trust and competence in

practice. As a result, consistency is contributing to building social capital and ensuring the CRGs are more resilient and adaptive to change.

4.3.3. Social connections

While Wenger et al. (2002) note that a CoPs community creates the social fibre of learning by fostering interactions and relationships to build members' trust (p. 28), this section of Theme 2: Community aims to make explicit who the CRG membership is and reveal the social networks that have been formed at the CRGs. As previously noted, Bourdieu views the social capital that each member of a group accumulates from their individual networks as being aggregated to form social capital collectively owned by the group membership (Rogers & Jarema, 2015, p. 18). Based on the research data, there is evidence of the width and breadth of the social networks formed by CRG members and other key stakeholders who are involved in the CRGs. Also, as previously noted, Bourdieu distinguishes between social networks and the social capital that emerges from social relationships (DeFiippis, 2001, p. 783). Based on the research data, this section will also cover the social relationships that have emerged from CRG social connections. By knowing who the CRG members are and understanding the social networks formed through the CRGs, it is possible to determine how social capital is created from within the CRG membership.

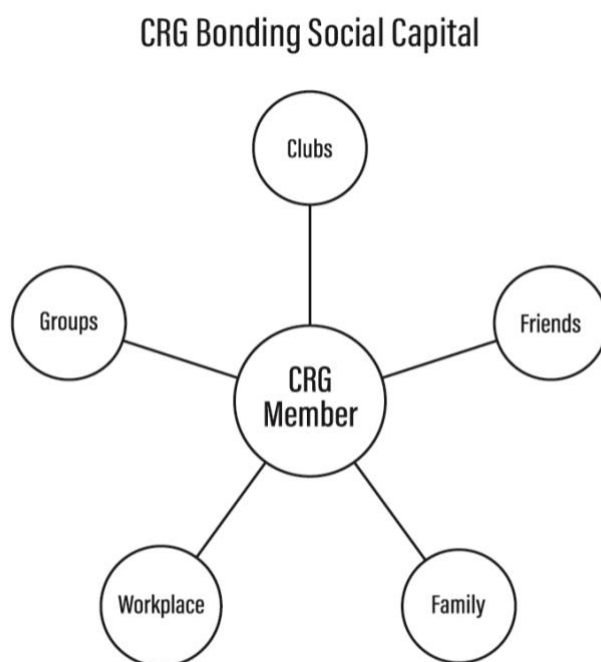
4.3.3.1 CRG networks

The research participants described the different community members who attend the CRGs and how they are connected in the community as well as elaborated on the other key stakeholders who are involved in the CRGs, such as state government departments and resource company representatives. This resulted in a large amount of data which is summarised using the concepts of bonding, bridging and linking social capital to demonstrate how social capital is created through the CRG membership. Allen et al. (2012, p. 57) note that having these different types of social capital and the relative amounts of each in a community strategic visioning process can have implications for activating collective action within communities (Flora et al., 2004; Woolcock, 1998). Allen et al. (2012) say that bonding social capital relates to individual social networks and bridging social capital relates to the network formed within groups, while the notion of linking social capital refers to those in networks with access to power (p. 53). This research data is

presented firstly relating to bonding and linking networks to capture individual networks as well as identify the other key stakeholders who attend the CRGs. Then bridging social capital will be discussed to reveal how social networks are connected and formed within the CRGs.

Skinner et al. (2008) note that Putman (2000, p. 9) says that bonding social capital occurs when people with similar backgrounds, values and interests form relationships and is required when community members collaborate to achieve shared goals. According to Ling and Dale (2013), bonding social capital refers to relations among family members, close friends and neighbours and is characterised by dense multifunctional ties and strong localised trust (p. 3). This social capital arises out of repeated and ongoing contacts, such as familial interactions, religious groups and sporting or recreation groups (Newman & Dale, 2005, p. 479). Luloff and Bridger (2016) cite Putnam (2000, p. 23) as saying bonding social capital is a “sociological superglue” as it is found in dense social networks (p. 211). Figure 13 depicts a potential bonding social network for a CRG member within their community.

Figure 13
CRG Bonding social capital



Approximately 60% of the CRG research participants indicated that they have lived in their communities most or all of their lives and the people who participate in the CRGs have a variety of personal, recreational and professional networks within the communities, which is regarded as bonding social capital for this study.

Some research participants noted they had lived in the community all their lives or for several years in relation to knowing people and having family connections in the community. For example, CRG#9 said, “I’ve pretty well lived in the town all of my life ... the community is always changing of course but the core community, I am definitely familiar with all of them” (2 March 2021, p. 2), CRG#4 stated, “I’ve lived here for 43 years” and “I have my children and grandchildren” living in the area (25 March 2021, pp. 3 & 8). CRG#13 provided an example of their connectedness within the community, explaining, “there are probably 250 people in the district and when COVID hit I had people from across the community ring me and ask, ‘can we help you?’” (18 March 2021, p. 5). This demonstrates the extent of personal and family connections of the CRG members, given the small population of most towns and communities in the Central Highlands region.

Other research participants described the different organisations and groups they are involved in as well as the people in their community who are members of the CRGs which provides an insight into the individual CRG member networks. CRG participants explained they have CRG members involved in “sporting clubs, the school P&C, the local shop owners ... and then just the local residents, not only in town, but out on the surrounding properties”, and “we do have a cross section in our community ... the local shopkeepers, ambulance officer, a couple of property owners and a few of us community members that are involved in lots of different clubs” (CRG#28, 26 March 2021, pp. 1 & 2; CRG#35, 28 October 2021, p. 1). These quotes demonstrate how the CRG members are connected and involved in community life through recreation, sporting, professional organisations and businesses as well as capturing the representation of rural people in the CRG towns and communities.

Other research participants also commented on the different people who attend the CRGs, saying, “there is someone from the school ... the golf club is another”; “also one of the health representatives and we have got playgroup members. We’ve got people who are working in the community”; “we are starting to get some of the high schools to attend, or if not attend, put forward presentations on

what they would like to see within the community”; “the local newsletter ladies that come in”, and “a member of our [name of town] School of Arts” (CRG#18, 9 March 2021, p. 3; CRG# 31, 30 March 2021, p. 3; CHRC#11, 19 October 2021, p. 2; CRG#17, 23 February 2021, p. 1; CRG#13, 18 March 2021, p. 2).

To provide examples of the extent of some CRG member’s social networks, the following have been drawn from the research data. One research participant as a business owner explained,

we have a lot of people coming in and speaking to us. I used to get people in all the time saying, “why aren’t we [the CRG] doing this or that?” ... because they don’t come to meetings. I do bring these things up at the meetings and then, can keep people updated .(CRG#16, 11 March 2021, pp. 4 & 5)

Then CRG#5, as a business operator in the tourism sector, noted that they pass on positive information about the community to tourists coming in by sharing what “we are planning” and doing at the CRG (25 March 2021, pp. 2-3). Other CRG participants also described how they connect into their social networks, saying, “I like to keep people updated in the Lioness Club about the CRG meetings”, and “whatever happens at the CRG, I go back and talk to my mother’s group because we are all there for different reasons ... I go to the CRG to give a mum’s perspective about the schooling and different facilities” (CRG#18, 9 March 2021, p. 2; CRG#21, 1 April 2021, p. 2).

Other participants noted that CRG members are often in several groups, especially in smaller towns and communities. CRG#32 said, “while it [the CRG] is a diverse group, it is the same group that we see around town with community groups all the time” (20 April 2021, p. 2). While another said that the reality of living in small communities is that “sometimes people who are drawn to a reference group are in all sorts of other groups” (CRG#24, 12 March 2021, p. 6). CHRC#3 noted that now in some smaller communities, “community members are invited to attend the CRGs because they are involved in the community or several different groups, which means these people can have a voice for several groups” (19 March 2021, p. 5). One CRG participant said, “I go to tennis club meetings, rodeo club meetings, race club meetings, cattle club meetings” (CRG#15, 4 March 2021, p. 1), adding that because of declining populations in rural communities, “you see the same people at

everything ... it's nearly all the same people" (p. 3). These research participants' responses reflect the density or number of social connections the CRG members have within their social networks in their towns and communities. By describing who attends the CRGs, it is possible to understand the amount of bonding social capital that members contribute to the CRGs. As noted by Newman and Dale (2013, p. 3), bonding social capital leads to greater levels of trust and can be essential for building relationships within a community.

The other type of social capital that is created in the CRGs is linking social capital. Linking social capital connects the civic community to political decision-making and financial resources, and relates "to the capacity to lever resources, ideas and information from formal institutions beyond the community (Ling & Dale, 2013, p. 3; Woolcock, 2001b, p. 13). Allen et al. (2012, p. 53) explain that both bonding and bridging social capital are referred to as horizontal relationships, while linking social capital resides in vertical linkages to resources and authority (Szreter, 2002; Woolcock, 2000). Linking social capital plays an important and different role to bonding and bridging capital as these are concerned with social relationships that are formed across or horizontally within groups and communities (Ling & Dale, 2013, p. 2). Linking social capital is concerned with vertical connections between the different levels of social strata (p. 2). These vertical connections can include individuals entirely outside the community and provides access to wider networks, especially to people in power (p. 2). An individual needs linking capital to create the networks that facilitate group or collective action while a community requires linking vertical connections to have a voice at the locus of power where decisions are made (Ling & Dale, 2013, p. 3). It emerged from the research data that a number of organisations can be described as those that enable linking social capital at the CRGs, including Council.

The research participants described the range of government, industry and other key stakeholders that are involved in the CRGs in a variety of ways. Some are core or regular members such as Council and others attend the CRG meetings on an irregular or once-off basis similar to peripheral and outsider levels of participation. One participant noted that the local state and federal members of parliament as well as state government departments attended the CRGs to share information or speak about a specific topic at the request of the CRGs (CHRC#1, 22 February 2021, p. 2). As previously noted above, there are police officers, school principals, health and

ambulance officers that participate in the CRGs both in their official capacity as state government representatives and as community members who live locally. CHRC#1 stated that industries that participate in the CRGs are those that are “unique to the community”, which can be “people from the mining industry, agricultural industry and Aurizon who represent the railway” (p. 1). CRG#7 noted that “the Environment Protection Agency came as a guest speaker to their CRG meeting. There is a BHP/BMA representative that comes into the meetings” (23 February 2021, p. 1). CRG#1 also noted National Parks and Santos representatives participate at their CRG (30 April 2021, p. 1).

One participant highlighted the intermediary role Council plays between state government and community members to advocate on behalf of the CRG community projects. CRG#14 said when the CRG raised an issue about a state government road, “someone came from Council who can liaise with Main Roads to our meeting to explain how the issue was being addressed” (1 April 2021, p.2). CRG#8 said,

I’m representing one of the larger employers in the area ... so I am keen to participate in dialogue both ways; where I understand what’s going on in the local community I feed that back to my workplace, but also I engage from an organisational perspective to see if there’s initiatives or things that might be done that could help benefit the community and/or liveability for the workforce in the area. (23 February 2021, p. 1)

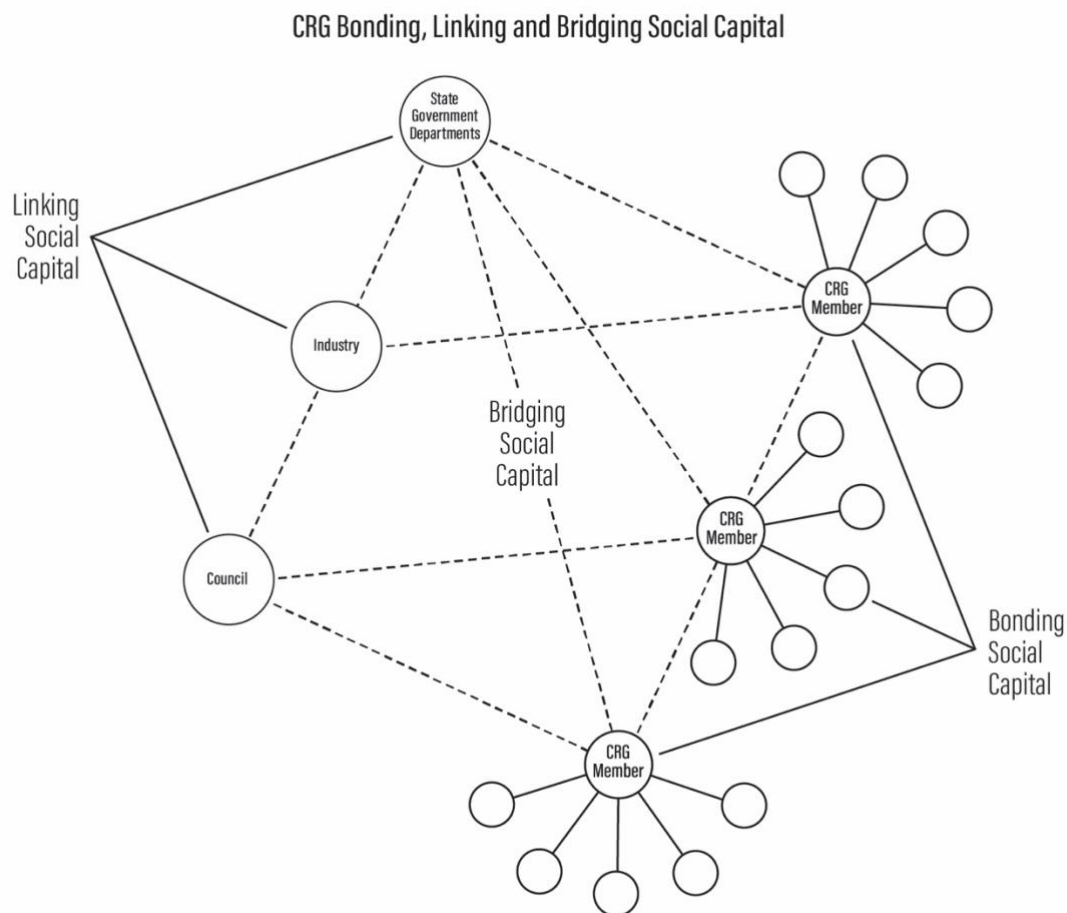
Another participant who works for a mining company said, “being the resources sector and the nearest mining company to [name of town] ... our community investment program, is essentially between what we want to do anyway as part of good corporate assistance and what the charter is of the CRG” (CRG#30, 26 March 2021, p. 2). CRG#25 shared that they are a business owner and member of the CHDC’s tourism advisory panel; “I have kept the CRG informed and that was part of our CRG communication plan” (21 May 2021, p. 3-4). Central Highlands Development Corporation (CHDC) is the economic and tourism development arm of CHRC. Additionally, CRG#27 also noted they had a CHDC tourism officer present at a CRG meeting to talk “about progressing tourism for the town” (26 March 2021, p. 2).

Based on this verbatim data, there is evidence of linking networks that connect into organisations, industry and government. According to Allen et al. (2012), “a community rich in linking social capital is in a strong position to bring economic or political resources to bear on issues of common interest for the community” (p. 58). While Council is facilitating the CRGs and councillors participate as members of the CRGs, for the purpose of this research study, Council is considered to be an organisation that contributes to linking social capital at the CRGs. This is because of the power or influence Council has over mobilising political support in decision-making as well as accessing funding and resources to progress the CRG community projects and initiatives. Sadan (1997) suggests that when local government or councils are involved in community planning, they give authority to the process (p. 184). It would then be expected this authority is further extended through the involvement of state government and industry representatives in the CRGs. As noted in the Literature Review, when the state and territory governments made it a legislative requirement after 2006 for local governments to undertake community planning for their communities, towns and cities, there was no mandate for state or federal government departments to partner with local governments to deliver on projects, program or initiatives (Tan & Artist, 2013, p. 6). Based on the responses in the data, it is evident that several representatives from the state government, business, industry and organisations are participating in the CRGs. Along with Council, these representatives enable access to resources and decision-making as linking social capital to implement community planning across the 13 CRG localities.

Along with bonding and linking social capital networks, this research data provides evidence of bridging social capital. This capital can be recognised as connecting the bonding and linking social networks to form one CRG network. Bridging social capital connects people and may facilitate access to resources and opportunities that exist in one network to a member of another network (Ling & Dale, 2013, p. 3). Individuals who are connected through bridging social capital have a greater range of associations and greater opportunities for broader community engagement (p. 3). Bridging social capital is therefore not only essential for enhancing social inclusion but also for improving a community’s abilities to develop (p. 3). Bridging social capital can allow actors to access outside information and change social norms with support from or outside the local network (Ling & Dale,

2013, p. 4). Figure 14 depicts how bonding and linking social networks of CRG participants are connected through the bridging social network formed by the CRG.

Figure 14
CRG bonding, linking and bridging social capital



In relation to this, the research participants commented about the value of connecting with each other at the CRGs; “it’s a great networking opportunity for people who don’t often meet with each other to get a different perspective of why you need something in your community, or why something is not working in your community”, and “people need to be connected. We are human beings, we’re not islands so we need that connection” (CRG#24, 12 March 2021, p. 1; CRG#34, 28 October 2021, p. 5). Others said about the CRGs that relates to bridging networks, “it is just talking to different people that you don’t normally mix with otherwise” in the community; “connecting with the diverse groups ... the businesses, the farmers, the

government and others”, and “having a good cross section of the community, from large employers, small employers, even non-profit groups, individuals within the community that are passionate about their community” (CRG#15, 4 March 2021, p. 2; CRG#33, 11 November 2021, p. 2; CRG#8, 23 February 2021, p. 2). While CRG#11 said the CRGs are an opportunity to welcome newcomers to town so “they can meet others from different sporting or groups in town ... they can see what’s going on and also have input” (19 March 2021, p. 5). This was supported by CRG#31 who as a newcomer to town said, “not really knowing anyone, I’ve made quite a few connections through the group, so that’s been really, really handy and I’ve had to lean on a few of them in my role working in the community” (CRG#31, 30 March 2021, p. 4). These responses provide evidence that the CRGs are playing a role in connecting people from across the community and therefore building bridging social capital. As noted by Bourdieu, social networks are not a natural given and must be constructed through investment strategies (Newman & Dale, 2005, p. 479). Therefore, bridging social capital is the core strategy for constructing the CRG membership.

To describe how the social networks are bridged and mobilised in community visioning groups like the CRGs; Morrison (2012) says if ten people come together to collaborate on a project, there are more than ten people at the table (p. 167). According to Morrison (2012), “each participant also represents an invisible network of people. With the right inspiration and direction, the people at the table can mobilise their networks and align them toward a common outcome” (p. 167). Morrison (2012) adds that if each person has a network of 30 people then a group of ten people has an opportunity to mobilise a network of 300 people (p. 167). Morrison’s example of mobilising personal social networks assists with highlighting the ability of social networks and social capital to build community capacity through a community governance structure such as the CRG model. Morrison’s example and using the concepts of bonding, bridging and linking social capital also assist with understanding the width and breadth of the social connections and networks created by the CRGs, especially in smaller towns and communities. For Bourdieu, the volume of social capital possessed by an agent depends on their network connections and their ability to effectively mobilise their volume of capital (economic, cultural and symbolic) as well as those to whom they are connected (Newman & Dale, 2005, p. 481; Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249). By understanding the volume of social

capital created by the CRGs, it is possible to determine the capacity of CRGs to access resources for developing the communities. Luloff and Bridger (2015) suggest the communities that strike a healthy balance between bonding and bridging social capital should be most likely to undertake successful collective actions (p. 211). From a community development perspective, Emery and Flora (2006) note that social capital initiates the factors that can spiral-up or increase community capital, including natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial and built identified in the Community Capitals Framework (CCF) (p. 20). While social capital initiates factors in the spiral-up process, cultural capital is significant in driving the ongoing flow of capital assets towards an upward spiral; combining these can bring about social change and play an integral role in community capacity building (Emery & Flora, 2006, p. 33).

While the research data has provided evidence of the width and breadth of social connections and the types of social capital formed at the CRGs, the data has also referred to building trust and relationships between CRG members and Council.

4.3.3.2 Relationships

For Wenger, a community of practice can become a very tight node of interpersonal relationships which is formed through regular contact at meetings or through other forms of communication (Wenger, 1998, p. 76). Wenger et al. (2002) note that CoPs build relationships of trust and reciprocity through members experiencing the value of collaboration or working together as a community (p. 89). Similarly, this aligns with the concept of social capital building where reciprocity and trust develop between individuals as they interact within and across social networks (Rodgers & Jarema, 2015, p. 23). Siisianinen (2000) says that although Bourdieu does not speak specifically about trust, he does speak about the triumph of universal values as a virtue that may include trust (p. 17). In relation to the findings of this research project, Putman's notion of trust is used. However, as previously noted, Bourdieu describes durable obligations as feelings of gratitude, respect, and friendship (Rogers & Jarma, 2015, p. 19). As noted in the Literature Review, Newman and Dale (2005) note that Putman (2000, p. 2) defines social capital as "social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (p. 479). For Rogers and Jarema, it is only after trust is developed and reciprocated that individuals will invest in social relationships to be used for either

individual or collective outcomes (2015, p. 23). The research participants shared their thoughts on how trust and relationships are formed through the social connections created by the CRGs.

CHRC#2 noted that the CRGs bring people to together to work for the common good and through “the human interaction relationships are formed” (11 March 2021, p. 6). While CRG#13 said they valued “forming relationships with your neighbours within the district” who attend the CRG meetings, especially with those people who live in town and “those who live a fair way out of town” (18 March 2021, p. 3). CRG#24 also agreed that being part of the CRGs “helps you strengthen your bonds within the community to make them vibrant” (12 March 2021, p. 9). The adding that “there are a lot of people who just need a little bit of encouragement to actually connect and experience that sense of belonging” (p. 9). CRG#7 expressed,

... our CRG offers me the opportunity to really get involved with an even wider breadth of people in the community and have increasingly more engagement with Council on a regular basis ... I think the benefits I've gotten has been relationship building within the [name of community] and within Council. (23 March 2021, p. 2)

From Council's perspective, CHRC#9 noted “there is no doubt it has helped the relationship between Council and its community ... I think that is probably the biggest part of having the CRGs is that relationship with Council and community” (26 October 2021, p. 4). CHRC#7 also said in relation to having the CRGs,

Council has definitely benefited by helping build that community trust so that if community trusts Council, then obviously, we are more likely to work in a partnership as opposed to delivering that top-down approach. It is also by building those relationships, it helps Council get that buy-in from community. (28 October 2021, p. 6)

Based on the research data, there is evidence the regular social interaction at the CRGs is forming relationships and building trust between community and Council as well as between CRG community members, and in the process is building social capital. Rogers and Jarema (2015) cite Emery and Flora (2006) who describe social capital as “the glue” that holds the community together in a self-perpetuating cycle

that reinforces trust, reciprocity and social norms (p. 22). Therefore, social capital builds over time and has established social values and social norms that dictate behaviours of the CRG membership, which Bourdieu refers to as cultural capital.

To summarise, based on the research data there is evidence that over time, the social networks and social interactions at the CRG are creating and building different types of social capital: bonding, bridging and linking social capital. The Social connections section revealed evidence of different types of social capital building at the CRGs: bonding, bridging and linking social capital. By exchanging and dispersing information through their individual networks in communities about CRG activities, the CRG members continue to build bonding social capital, while linking social capital is building through participation of Council, state government, industry and other key stakeholders at the CRGs. Bridging social capital is created and strengthened within group connections at the CRGs. As a result, the collective social networks demonstrate the volume of social capital that has been created by the CRGs which can be converted to the building of other community capital as community capacity building. Additionally, there is evidence through agency and active participation in the CRGs, that trust has emerged from the social interactions which is strengthening relationships between community and Council, and amid community members and other key stakeholders attending the CRGs. These relationships are needed to collaborate and partner through the CRG governance model for ongoing community planning and community development within the field of local government. By adopting more informal and flexible CRG membership strategies, the CRG members and the broader community can participate and be involved with the CRGs in different ways to benefit their communities. Theme 3: Practice explains the ways the CRGs communicate and undertake decision-making to collaborate in progressing community projects.

4.4. Theme 3: Practice

4.4.1. Introduction

Wenger's CoPs as a social theory of learning is used to frame and summarise the data for this research project to understand how the CRGs practice community planning. As noted in the Literature Review, the learning capabilities related to the CoPs practice component for the purpose of this research project are communications, information sharing, problem solving and working collaboratively to

action group activities (Wenger, 2010, p. 191). Theme 3: Practice expands on three sections: Communications, Collaboration and Collective outcomes that organically emerged from the data sets. Communication covers the methods or ways CRG participants share information internally and externally. Collaboration sets out the parameters to decision-making established by the CRG's participants, while the Collective outcomes section describes the process of collective action adopted for project planning, community ownership and CRG project outcomes.

From a CoPs perspective, the term "practice" describes the common approaches and shared standards that create a basis for action, communication, problem solving, performance and accountability (Snyder & Wenger, 2010, p. 110). Practice embodies certain ways of behaving, a perspective on problems and ideas, and a thinking style (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 110). As a result, practice becomes about making the tacit knowledge explicate through group values, norms and behaviours that inform the practice of CoPs members (p. 110). As previously noted for Bourdieu, habitus refers to socially learnt dispositions, skills and ways of acting that shape the behaviours and practice of agents (Western & Baxter, 2011, p. 215). Bourdieu refers to the social norms that inform behaviour as cultural capital (Rogers & Jarema, 2015, p. 23), which is related to the accepted ways of thinking and doing or the tacit knowledge of how things get done informally or formally by a group (Emery & Flora, 2012, p. 142). The aim of this theme is to understand the tacit knowledge and implicit shared rules that have shaped the CRG social norms and practice of implementing community projects. For Ayres (1996), a conscious shift in thinking is required to go from the planning stage to implementation stage which involves leading and delivering the collective goals, projects and outcomes established in the strategic visioning process (p. 35). From a practice perspective, while the planning stage and implementation stage both require community participation, moving from planning to delivering community projects requires community and key stakeholders to take a collaborative approach. This shift in thinking requires key elements to be addressed which include communications and information sharing, a consensus decision-making process and collective action (Ayres, 1996, p. 30 & 31).

Within the field of local government, a shift in thinking from a hierarchical, traditional approach to collaboration is needed for local government to move towards a community governance model that enables collective community action (McKinlay

et al., 2011, p. 5). As previously noted, the CRGs were developed as a community governance model to implement the 13 place community plans within the *CH2022 Community Plan* with community members. For Bourdieu, social spaces, such as communities, are depicted as sites of struggles over resources and, as such governance spaces can be viewed as arenas that preference the interests of those within it (Madden, 2010, p. 183). For Madden (2010), within a deliberative community governance space, shared power and shared rules are needed for community leaders to build community capacity (p. 183). Based on the research data, to implement community projects, the CRGs have taken a collaborative approach to decision-making and take collective action to achieve community projects and outcomes. Over time, the CRG members and Council, as community leaders, are partnering to deliver a variety of CRG projects with other key stakeholders. In the process, tacit knowledge has emerged from shared practice that has shaped implicit and explicit rules, processes and social norms of CRG community planning. The research data for this theme, focuses on understanding CRG practices including communications, collaboration in decision-making and collective action for achieving community projects.

4.4.2. Communications

Wenger et al. (2002) notes that group interactions and networking create a conduit for sharing information which can facilitate formal and informal communications (p. 59).

As demonstrated in Theme 2: Community, the CRGs have established social networks as a conduit for sharing and circulating information. Goetz and Han (2015) suggest that social capital and network-based information flows can reinforce the positive effects of ideas and information flows across communities (p. 99). Through individuals interacting and sharing information within social networks, trust and social norms are generated that builds ongoing social and cultural capital (Rogers & Jarema, 2015, p. 22). The focus for this section is to make explicit the way CRGs practice communication and what information is shared and exchanged within and beyond the CRGs social networks that can contribute to social and cultural capital building. The research data revealed, information is communicated and circulated on an ongoing basis both within each CRG group at meetings and in between meetings as well as externally with other key stakeholders and the broader community.

4.4.2.1 *Within CRG meetings*

The research data indicates that the CRG members share information internally at their meetings held four times a year. It was established in Theme 1: Meaning that CRG members actively participate by exercising their agency and engaging in two-way communication between each other and with Council at the CRGs. For Ayres (1996), leadership in a community strategic visioning program becomes participatory because of community members sharing information and knowledge (p. 23). It emerged from the interview data that the CRGs have adopted a standard meeting agenda item for “member updates” and “councillor updates” that provide the opportunity for each CRG member and councillors to speak and share information at meetings. The CRGs have also adopted the practice of inviting or receiving “guest speakers” or “guest presenters” at their meetings to provide specific or technical information.

The research participants identified that “member updates” provide the opportunity for CRG members to share information with the group which can include sector updates, general community information, raising issues or concerns, or upcoming local events. CRG#27 explained that CRG meetings include member updates so “each member can do a report on their special areas” ... “it is good that all different members of different clubs give updates” (26 March 2021, p. 2). Another CRG participant recognised the benefit of having all the different groups and sector representatives share information and opinions, which “is to understand what people are thinking” and “making people voice their reports, it may get them out of their comfort zone, however it is important for progress” (CRG#26, 20 April 2012, p. 4). CRG#2 reiterated the member updates have “definitely benefited us because we have got more of an idea of what is happening or going to happen for us in our little community ... there is a wonderful amount of things that we get on top of and submit at these meetings” (26 May 2021, p. 3). Further, CRG participants recognised their role is to share information and updates “to raise awareness and find ways of how we could work together” to look at a range of issues within the community, and provide information about “roads, communication, safety and give updates on all those sorts of things” (CRG#34, 28 October 2021, p. 3; 30 April 2021, p. 2). These reflections demonstrate that having “member updates” as a standard agenda item

enables CRG members to have a voice and act on their agency, which encourages more social interaction and dialogue between participants at the CRG meetings.

For other CRG participants the benefit of “members updates” is exchanging information at the meetings. In relation to the members’ updates CRG#19 said, “people seem to be pretty comfortable to talk about who they represent ... the crux of the meeting is listening for me”, adding about member updates that “you find out what is going on with different groups ... what events are coming up, so it is good in that way” (12 March 2021, p. 3). Another CRG participant said, “my interest in being on the CRG is for information. It is about knowing what’s going on ... if you know what’s going on, you are better prepared for pretty much anything” (CRG#12, 16 March 2021, p. 3). CRG#18 also described the value of information sharing at the CRGs by saying,

Well, if you don’t keep up with everything you don’t know what’s going on ... so being able to be involved in the community reference group to me is for firsthand knowledge. I can go on to a Lioness meeting and I can say they are talking about doing whatever at the school or the golf club’s running an event and it can help communication within your own community because it is decent information that is coming out of there. It is a real “can do” attitude. (9 March 2021, p. 2)

These quotes highlight, having first hand information directly from the people “who know” builds trust that the information is reliable, especially if this is going to be shared further by CRG members within communities. Synder and Wenger (2010) state that beyond forms of connection, the purpose of practice in a community of practice is to create and share knowledge, which reinforces a sense of belonging and identity for collective learning and collaborative activities (p. 10). Therefore, it is through communication that a strong community of practice fosters respect and trust in mutual learning (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 28). Based on the participants’ responses, “member updates” provide the opportunity for each CRG member to share information about different aspects of community life from a variety of community sectors. By sharing their own perspectives, CRG members are contributing and adding to individual and collective local knowledge. As a CRG practice, the “member updates” encourage the CRG members to exercise their agency by sharing

information, which has become an accepted social norm for meetings. The “member updates” have also become a resource for gathering and accumulating local knowledge for CRG members and Council that is contributing to cultural capital building. As noted by Wenger (1998), social learning combines individual and collective perspectives, which in practice become a way of talking about building competence that changes individual and collective ability as well as shared identity (p. 5). Through reciprocity of valued and reliable information, “member updates” also build trust which is contributing to ongoing social capital building.

Research participants acknowledged that “councillor updates” provide the opportunity for councillors to share information about Council, activities from across the region, answer questions and discuss topics the CRG members may like to raise. As noted in Theme 1: Meaning, councillors visit the CRG communities regularly. CHRC#1 said the “councillor updates” are prepared by the CEDOs, so consistent messaging and information about Council activities and from other communities is shared at all CRG meetings each quarter (22 February 2021, p. 4). In relation to the “councillor updates”, CRG participants confirmed they value hearing about other places in the region and about Council activities saying, “unless you’re going to these [CRG meetings] you don’t necessarily understand ... what is happening in the greater shire [Council]”, and it is beneficial “just communicating with the councillors that come along and hearing what they have to say about what the Council is doing” (CRG#1, 30 April 2021, p. 3; CRG#16, 11 March 2021, p. 3). These quotes verify that councillors also have the opportunity to exercise their agency in CRG discussions and share information from Council. As with the “member updates”, the “councillor updates” have established a meeting practice that enhances information sharing and can build knowledge of Council activities. Sharing information from outside the local community social networks can promote social capital and social norms that diversify knowledge for the benefit of the community (Newman & Dale, 2005, p. 481).

The research data revealed that a further valued source of information from outside the local community is the “guest speakers” or “special guests” who attend the CRG meetings to present information on a range of topics. As noted in Theme 2: Community, special guests are invited by the CRG members to attend the meetings to provide specific background or expert technical information. For Ayres (1996), strategic visioning or community planning programs can shift people’s thinking from

“let the experts do it for us” to “we know our community best, and we can do it ourselves” (p. 23). From this perspective, rather than the expert being the source of all wisdom, they are simply a resource that may be used by the people to help community members to articulate and meet their own perceived needs (Ife, 2016, p. 110). Sourcing information from special guests is a CRG practice that appears to build the members’ capabilities and is a resource for gaining trustworthy, specific and technical information to learn more about local issues and projects the CRG choose to action. A “special guest” can be a Council officer, a community member or a state government department, industry, or organisation representative. CRG#11 highlighted the importance of information provided at the CRGs by special guests, saying, “people have got to have as much information as they can to take their issues or projects forward successfully” (19 March 2021, p. 3). CRG#6 confirmed in relation to guest speakers that “sometimes we get different people come in depending on the topic, so we have had people come in that are specialists” (25 March 2021, p. 3). Another participant added at the CRGs “we have special guests from all areas” and then provided examples saying they “have had teachers come in and talk about what the local schools are doing. We have had obviously the dudes from the local mining companies come and talk to us about what is going on at the mines around the area” (CRG#22, 2 March 2021, p. 3). Requesting “guest speakers” and recognising the need to fill a knowledge gap on a particular topic is creating a practice that encourages CRG members to open their minds to learning from a range of sources and understanding the value specialist information can contribute to their decision making.

Participants explained that Council staff will attend the CRGs as special guest to provide information about Council services and activities. CHRC#6 explained that Council has set up “the process of having some of the operational staff come along and do a presentation around addressing a current issue” and “community can also inform Council” adding,

... the staff come along to provide updates to inform the community around something the CRG wants to progress, like a project. So, it is about a bit of the information on where they [Council] are at, and what steps the CRG members might need to take to achieve that project. (29 March 2021, p. 4)

While CHRC#5 confirmed that at the CRG meetings, “there has been a whole range of topics raised ... and members can express opinions and ask questions or ask for more information” when Council officers come along to provide specific information (16 March 2021, p. 3).

CRG#27 noted the special guests from Council are “the managers or supervisors” who come along to the CRGs to discuss where the CRG “projects are at or give us some information, as a bit of guidance” (26 March 2021, p. 3). This participant also explained that if a CRG member raises a concern at a meeting then “at the next CRG meeting they [Council] might bring that person who can answer the question or concern. So, it is good to have that information” (p. 3). Another CRG participant explained how a request for information from a CRG is progressed by Council saying,

... if there has been particular touch points that people have requested information from Council on, the convenor [CEDO] of the CRG meetings has managed to entice people from within Council, from Emerald or wherever, to attend so that we end up getting direct information. So that’s actually been a good initiative in many ways I think. (CRG#12, 16 March 2021, p. 4)

This demonstrates how sharing of information on a regular basis through the CRG meetings is contributing to social learning at the CRGs over time. Drawing on Bourdieu, information sharing can be viewed as accumulating knowledge as capital for individuals and a collective to enhance their symbolic capital or power in a given social field (Husu, 2013, p. 271). From this perspective, information sharing and the collective accumulation of knowledge, over time, is being embedded within the group habitus and building cultural capital. CHRC#11 explained the CRGs are the means to “provide information and improve that communication and transparency between Council and the public”, and as CRG facilitators, it is the CEDOs’ role “to be the link between the communities and different parts of Council” (19 October 2021, p. 3 & 4). CHRC#10 confirmed the CEDOs are the link between the CRGs and other Council staff saying,

When there are issues that are brought to the table by the community, our CRG people round me up and ask me to attend so I can address them. I’ve also used the CRG myself, so it has gone back the other way ... it has been

an avenue for Council to proactively provide information at the CRGs. (19 October 2021, p. 3)

CHRC#7 confirmed that it is mainly the CEDOs and the CRG members who “will follow-up after the meetings to contact special guests and invite them to our meetings” (28 October 2021, p. 4). These quotes demonstrate that Council perceives the CRGs as enabling transparency in information sharing with community members and, where possible, support the practice of staff attending the CRGs to provide specific information on a range of Council related topics. For Wenger et al. (2002), practice embodies certain ways of behaving and makes the tacit knowledge of group norms explicit in the practice of CoPs (p. 110). Bourdieu refers to the social norms that inform behaviour as cultural capital (Rogers & Jarema, 2015, p. 23). From a practice perspective, over time Council has adopted the norm of facilitating the transfer of knowledge to community members, which is fostering trust and therefore building social capital.

Another Council participant noted the value of having the CRG meetings for Council, saying,

I think it [CRGs] is just so much more, particularly across my areas, maybe it is experienced differently by different departments ... one of the things that I love best about it is that we often talk about engagement and what that might or might not look like. With the Council, there’s a danger when we are engaging that sometimes community will say, “you are just telling us what you are going to do anyway”. The CRG is nothing like that; it really is an exchange of information and ideas. (CHRC#5, 16 March 2021, p. 4)

However, another Council participant flagged the CRGs should be considered as one form of community engagement amid several ways that Council consults with the broader community, saying,

There is that bit of danger that you only have, in some of them [CRGs], a very small cohort of people, and it is dangerous for Council to sit there and go “Oh look, I’ve consulted with community because I’ve taken it to the CRG” so we have got to be careful ... I don’t want us to be blinded by thinking “this is the be all and end all,” it is a really great and an important part of consultation,

extremely important, but it is part of a bigger picture in terms of community engagement (CHRC#8, 2 November 2021, p. 13).

These quotes highlight that the CRGs provide an avenue for Council to share information and receive feedback as one method of engaging with the broader community. By supporting the practice of having Council staff attend the CRGs as special guests to build community knowledge, Council is demonstrating a shift in traditional thinking away from local government as “controller and doer” to Council as the “enabler” of community action (McKinlay et al., 2012, p. 5). CHRC#1 also confirmed that government departments, organisations and industry representatives can contact Council “to request to present information at the CRGs” (22 February 2021, p. 4). This demonstrates that over time, other key stakeholders such as state government departments have learnt about the CRGs and utilised their readiness to share information and gain community feedback at the different CRGs within the region. Based on the research participants’ responses, the practice of having “member updates”, “councillor updates” and the ability to source specialist information through “special guests” at the CRG meetings has created practice norms that are building the capabilities of CRG members to understand community issues and more proficiently progress community projects. These CRG meeting practices provide the means to address the unique issues of individual CRG localities and advance the distinct projects for each CRG community. By having “special guests” from Council, state government departments, industry and organisations, this practice is also extending the CRGs’ social networks to beyond their local communities and have the potential to provide resources which can contribute to building linking social capital. As noted in Theme 2: Community, Allen et al. (2012) state that “a community rich in linking social capital is in a strong position to bring economic or political resources to bear on issues of common interest for the community” (p. 58). Therefore, the practice of including “member updates”, “councillor updates” and inviting “special guests” is building social and cultural capital, and the capacity of each CRG community.

4.4.2.2 *Between CRG meetings*

The research data revealed information that is shared between meetings and the CRGs has ongoing contact with Council outside of meetings. Between CRG meetings, the CRG members mainly receive information on a regular basis through

emails sent by the CEDOs as the CRG facilitators. As highlighted in Theme 1: Meaning, as part of the CEDO's role they contact CRG members to call for agenda items and distribute the agendas and minutes prior to meetings. CHRC#11 confirmed the CEDOs,

... send out emails asking for agenda items, create the agendas, do the meeting minutes, create the actual meeting, make sure everybody knows what's going on; and disperse information as it comes through. (19 October 2021, p. 4)

This participant also noted the CEDOs may receive "an email about an event, related to a specific community and send that out to the community reference group" with the expectation they will send it out through their networks as "proactive community leaders because sharing of information is important to the CRG network" (CHRC#11, 19 October 2021, p. 4). A CRG participant recognised that the CRGs "definitely need the continued and continuing information flow from the convenor of the CRG and [name of CEDO] is marvellous at that. I think she sends stuff out all the time" (CRG#12, 16 March 2021, p. 4). These quotes demonstrate the integral role that the CEDOs play as CRG facilitators, preparing meeting resources and distributing information between meetings to the CRG members. By providing the resources and funding for the CEDO roles to facilitate and support the CRGs, Council demonstrates financial commitment as well as their commitment to the community and to the ongoing practice of community planning and community development in each of the CRG localities.

Additional communication methods between meetings noted by the research participants were mobile phone calls and text messages. CHRC#1 noted "I often send out a group text the day before the meetings as a reminder for the members" (22 February 2021, p. 3). While CRG#10 said that between CRG meetings, "I have had a few phone calls from [Councillor's name] to follow up on issues I've raised, and she has addressed. And then we get emails and communications all the time from [name of CEDO]" (1 April 2021, p. 4). These additional methods also provide opportunities for CRG members, councillors and CEDOs (as Council) to connect with each other between CRG meetings, which assists with creating trust and building relationships between Council and the community that enhances social capital.

Between meetings the CRGs members also form sub-groups to focus on a specific area of interest to the group and/or progress projects. CHRC#11 noted in relation to progressing projects between meetings that some CRGs “branch off into sub-groups and do a little bit more work to then report back at meetings” (19 October 2021, p.2). CRG participants explained that “someone will form up a group of like-minded people from within the CRG meeting to take the issues or projects forward. That usually happens and then they report back to the next CRG meeting”, and “we are all big enough, old enough and ugly enough to get some work done in between the meetings” (CRG#11, 19 March 2021, p. 4; CRG#24, 12 March 2021, p. 5). CRG#17 gave an example of how the CRG members have co-opted assistance from community members outside of the CRGs to progress a CRG project, saying “I had a couple of people outside the CRG group that were very good at doing things and helped a lot. So, the heritage walk is now up and running” (4 March 2021, p. 5). These quotes confirm that CRG members contact and meet to take responsibility for advancing projects in between CRG meetings. More information on CRG projects is provided below in the Section 4.4.4 below.

The research participants confirmed there is a variety of ways that Council and the CRGs communicate in between the CRG meetings to distribute information and make contact with each other. In this way, communication plays an important role in contributing to building social capital through ongoing social interaction and has created social norms that value and promote information sharing which is shaping CRG cultural capital. As previously noted for Bourdieu, social capital is established through repeated social interactions (Rogers & Jarema, 2015, p. 60. Wenger et al. (2002) observe that working together as a community on a common vision with others allows CoPs members to build trust (p. 33-34). Therefore, the practice of ongoing and regular communication and information sharing is building trust and social capital, especially between community and Council through the CEDOs as CRG facilitators.

In addition to sharing information at and in between CRG meetings, the research participants also commented on the Regional Summits and Regional Roundup, which is summarised in Theme 4: Identity.

4.4.2.3 *External communication*

Evidence of external communications and broader community engagement by the CRGs was referred to by research participants. As highlighted in Theme 2: Community, CRG members distribute and receive information within their communities through bonding social networks as members of community groups, clubs, sectors, workplaces, families, etc. An external communication medium for the CRGs is CHRC website which includes a webpage for each CRG (see Theme 1: Meaning). Having an individual webpage enables CRG information to be shared and accessed by a range of online audiences. The CRG participants commented on other ways they reach out to the broader community to invite people to attend the CRGs, saying we “let everyone know they are invited to attend our meetings on our signs”, and we advertise when we are having the meetings through “our community newsletter” (CRG#35, 28 October 2021, p. 4; CRG#4, 25 March 2021, p. 3). Also highlighted was personal contact with other community members, for example CRG#15 said, “I encourage everyone to come along if they have got something to say” (4 March 2021, p. 3). Using signage and newsletters as well as word-of-mouth communication methods, the CRGs are connecting and communicating within the broader community.

In Theme 2: Community, research participants commented on conducting community surveys as part of project planning. A Council participant provided an example of how a petition was taken up in a CRG community to raise awareness about a local issue with Council. This then led to Council conducting a survey to get feedback from all the other CRGs to understand the extent of this issue for other communities within the region. CHRC#10 explained, “a couple of people after bringing their issues to a CRG got a petition going in the Capella community.... out of that Council decided to know what everyone else in our region thinks about the topic so we then surveyed through our CRG network” (19 October 2021, p. 4). This quote emphasises the ability of Council to utilise the readiness of the established CRG network to access community feedback from one or all 13 communities at any time as well as distribute information through email and at CRG meetings throughout the year.

One CRG participant gave an example of how their organisation connected into a CRG to share information gained from their workforce, including itinerant

workers who reside in the community on a semi-permanent basis, about improving liveability in a CRG community. This is an example of information sharing with a CRG and Council by an industry CRG member. CRG#8 explained, “we did an engagement exercise within [name of company] because we are trying to work out what was important to the general workforce ... and to identify a short list of higher priority things that could make [name of community] and surrounds more liveable” ... “this information was shared with the CRG for discussion” (CRG#8, 23 March 2021, p. 2). This example highlights how local voices from a segment of the community can be easily overlooked, however also demonstrates a proactive method of gathering local knowledge from the broader community at a CRG.

While a few research participants commented on their preference for CRGs to communicate more with the broader community, CHRC#4 summed up by saying,

... there is a need to communicate the actions and goals of the CRGs better than what we are currently doing with the wider community. And it is also when people understand those groups a little bit better than they may think, “well I am interested in that” and they might want to go along and be part of it. (12 March 2021, p. 5)

The research data provides insights into the CRG communication practices and evidence of how information is circulated within the groups and with the broader community. As previously noted, information sharing can contribute to expectations of reciprocity and building trust which increases social capital. This aligns with Rogers and Jarema (2015), saying about social capital, that as a result of repeated interactions and information sharing trust is generated (p. 22). As previously noted, Bourdieu refers to the social norms that inform behaviour as cultural capital (Rogers & Jarema, 2015, p. 23). Therefore, the CRGs can be seen as cultivating shared norms of open and transparent communication that is encouraging agency and contributing to ongoing cultural capital building. Ife (2016) suggests that in consciousness-raising through the provision of information, people are more informed to articulate their own needs and to develop their own strategies for action (p. 110). Also, having access to information enables people to make more informed decisions about their community priorities and not rely on the “expert” as the source of wisdom (p. 110). Drawing on Bourdieu, the practice of information sharing is

contributing to the accumulation of technical and general knowledge that is embedded within the habitus of individual members and collective CRG.

As noted by Ayres (1996), a conscious shift in thinking is needed by community leaders when they engage in group decision-making and collaborate to implement community projects in a strategic visioning or community planning initiative (pp. 30 & 31). For Dale (2013), agency and social capital networks are preconditions for mobilising individual and group decision making to action social change (pp. 1 & 2). For the research participants, aspects of collaborative decision-making were identified as important considerations for the CRGs.

4.4.3. Collaboration

The research data revealed that as a result of practice over time, shared tacit rules emerged as considerations that underpin the CRGs' collaborative decision-making approach. In a community of practice, Pyrko et al. (2017) suggest that thinking together is a process through which tacit knowledge is shared indirectly and guides members through their understanding of the same problem (pp. 391 & 394). For Wenger (1998), CoPs is always a social practice that includes both the explicit and the tacit (p. 47). Tacit knowledge is the untold rules of thumb, embodied understandings, underlying assumptions and shared world views that are crucial to the success of CoPs practice (p. 47). From Bourdieu's perspective, the rules of the game within each field are not formalised but are tacit in nature and internalised by agents to demonstrate appropriate social practices (Walther, 2014, p. 6). As noted in the Literature Review, for Emery and Flora (2012), tacit knowledge of how things get done emerges because of social construction and becomes accepted ways of thinking and doing which reflects the group habitus and cultural capital (p. 142). Also noted, for Bourdieu, the cultural capital produced within each field, tends to define the specific logic of the field (Husu, 2013, p. 286). In this case, the field is local government, and the sub-fields are the CRGs, which creates a patchwork of fields that make up the Central Highlands Region (Husu, 2013, p. 286). The focus for collaboration, based on the research data, is on making explicit the specific logic and shared rules of the game that guide the accepted ways of thinking about decision making at the CRGs. One participant alluded to the tacit rules as parameters, saying "it is important for the CRG participants to understand the parameters and the purpose of the CRGs" (CRG#11, 19 March 2021, p. 2). CRG#23 noted the purpose

of the CRGs is to be a forum where different “members of community are able to come together to identify specific areas of need or concern....and together nut out the problem to find a solution for us to action” (1 April 2021, p. 8). The data revealed that through their practice, over time, the CRGs have formed a collaborative decision-making approach that is informed by several considerations which appear as tacit shared rules. These considerations emerged as whole-of-community; social setting, solutions focus; alternative viewpoints; and reaching consensus.

4.4.3.1 *Whole of community*

Within the field of local government, community plans integrate social, environmental, and economic sustainability elements (Prior & Herriman, 2010, p. 53). For Ife (2016), communities are complex systems of interaction, and from a holistic perspective, community includes different aspects such as social, cultural, economic, political, etc (p. 86). It emerged from the research data that taking a “whole-of-community” focus and strategic view is a consideration when making decisions at the CRGs. The CRGs are an “opportunity for representatives of the community and community groups to put their heads together to see what can be done collectively to benefit the whole community”, and the purpose of the CRG is “to take a strategic view or the helicopter view of what’s happening in the community” (CRG#32, 20 April 2021, p. 2; CRG#23, 1 April 2021, p. 8). These quotes demonstrate that when the CRGs collaborate to make decisions together about projects or initiatives, they consider all aspects of community life such as social, economic, and environment. By taking a “whole-of-community” focus, the CRGs consider all aspects of community and take a “strategic or helicopter view” when considering community benefits rather than individual interests.

According to Ayres (1996), in a strategic visioning program, narrow interests are set aside in favour of broader community needs so the process enables the various efforts in a community to be guided by a common direction (p. 31). As noted by CHRC#3, the CRGs are “about where the community wants to go” with an emphasis on the need to “think about the community not their own little patch” (19 March 2021, p. 4). Other participants acknowledged that while CRG members have areas they are passionate about, they have “got to want to contribute to the discussion about the whole community”, which is important to “the culture of the group ... because obviously some of these topics can have quite passionate

advocates" (CHRC#4, 12 March 2021, p. 5; 28 October 2021, p. 5). CRG#27 explained "your heart has to be in the right place. You are there not for your own sake, you are there for the good and the welfare of the community ... it's about the big picture" (28 October 2021, p. 3). While CRG#24 expressed that "wellbeing is the most important thing for me so having a table where everyone can meet and talk about making sure that everybody's needs are met strengthens bonds within the community for sustainability" (21 May 2021, p. 8-9). For CRG#15, "the CRG is the only forum that brings different clubs, businesses and everyone together to talk about what our community needs" (4 March 2021, p. 4). In facilitating the CRGs, Council is bringing community leaders together, and enabling community and Council to consider, discuss and prioritise a range of social, economic or environmental topics, which includes Council services and programs. For Bourdieu, the closer agents are to each other in a physical location, the more common properties they have (Husu, 2013, p. 266), which can include the ways of thinking that have formed and emerged as shared rules in practice. The whole-of-community consideration in CRG decision-making can be considered a shared tacit rule that has emerged from practice over time. This consideration, as with the others, can be considered as a tacit rule about the guide group behaviour and therefore is embedded within the group habitus as cultural capital. Another common property of shared thinking from regular social interactions is building trust and therefore social capital within the CRGs. Increasing social capital capacity within community leaders, such as the CRGs, can extend to the larger community by creating the resources for achieving socio-economic, environmental and governance outcomes for community development (Rogers & Jarema, 2015, p. 22).

Participants commented on the range of community topics considered at the CRGs that cover different aspects of community life. For CHRC#2 said, "in terms of assisting with identifying projects that improve liveability within particular towns or areas, the things they wanted to solve could have been an art project, it could have been a piece of water infrastructure they wanted. It could have been a communications channel, like a newsletter" (11 March 2021, p. 3). While CRG#21 explained the purpose of "the community reference group is to have a finger on the pulse of what's happening in the community" adding "a CRG may identify something that a sporting club needs, or that the community needs such as a toilet block in a park, footpaths, roads or they may know if there is an issue with mental health in the

community or know what we can do for youth” (1 April 2021, p. 3). Another participant highlighted that the CRGs consider topics that other levels of government are responsible for, saying

... it all comes back to where do the CRG members want the community to go? It's not easy ... as a lot of the infrastructure such as water and roads can be council's responsibility but there are other things. You have your hospitals in some communities, you have the schools in all communities that are not the responsibility of council. (CHRC#3, 19 March 2021, p. 5)

This research participant's comment was previously referred to in the Literature Review and in Theme 2: Community because it raised a challenge for local governments to engage other levels of governments in strategic community planning, as described by Tan and Artist (2013, p. 13). According to McKinlay et al. (2011), for local governments to move from addressing a specific set of services and needs requires taking a shared approach to planning for outcomes across the community as a whole (p. 5). By implementing the CRG model as a community governance structure, CHRC has demonstrated a shared and collaborative approach to working with community and other levels of government. For Bourdieu, social fields can be seen as a network, structure or set of relationships that are an historically generated system of shared meaning (Walther, 2014, p. 5). From this perspective, CHRC is changing the traditional hierarchical leadership approach towards a collaborative community leadership approach that is generating a new system of shared meaning within the field of local government.

4.4.3.2 *Social setting*

Based on the research participants' responses, having a safe space, meeting procedures and an effective meeting Chair are considerations that create the right social setting for CRG members to actively participate in the practice of decision-making. According to Wenger et al. (2002), mutual learning and effective practice requires an atmosphere of openness and a foundation for collective inquiry “where it is safe to speak the truth and ask hard questions” (p. 37). Ayres (2012) notes that individuals and organisations may hold onto their hidden agendas, and only by creating a safe environment for people to share their interests and explore their differences can trust build over time (p. 24). Participants made reference to the

CRGs as being a safe place and creating the right environment for members to be open and honest with sharing their views and ideas at the CRG meetings.

CHRC#9 said in relation to the CRGs, “It’s a safe place for people to be able to share and gain information, raise issues ... I think people need to feel safe, so they can talk openly and know that they are being heard and that their ideas are going somewhere” (26 October 2021, p. 3). A CRG participant explained, “you have got to feel safe within that environment so that you are able to say things and even if it’s a bad idea it is taken into account, and we can talk about it” (CRG#4, 25 March 2021, p. 5). Several participants noted “it makes a big difference that people are able to meet each other in a relaxed CRG environment because we learn a lot about each other at the meetings”; “it gives us a bigger platform and a more comfortable platform for people to actually come along and be with others”, and the CRGs have given some groups and people “the courage and confidence to step forward on behalf of their community” (CRG#31, 30 May 2021, p. 4; CRG#25, 21 May 2021, p. 8; CRG#24, 12 March 2021, p. 4). CRG#10 noted that at times when community members do “need to be more assertive ... to actually stand up” on behalf of the community that “the CRG probably gives you the opportunity to do that and to do it in a right environment” (1 April 2021, p. 5). These views demonstrate that having the right social setting at CRG meetings can enable people to feel psychologically safe and therefore make them comfortable enough and give them the courage to share their thoughts and opinions with other community members and Council. As a result, creating the right social setting can enable CRG members to act on their agency as community advocates. The right social setting appears to enable community members to actively participate in open and honest discussions, which forms a shared tacit rule and consideration for the practice of collaborative decision-making. As noted by Lachapelle et al. (2012), by creating a safe space for members to discuss things they value, expands their radius of trust, and increases social capital, and in the process builds the capacity of community leaders to successfully collaborate in a strategic visioning project (p. 85).

As previously, noted in Theme 1: Meaning, the CRGs develop agendas and minutes for their meeting to balance informal and formal procedures to guide the meetings. These tools (as well as an effective Chair) can create a social setting that ensures all CRG participants can have the opportunity to speak, and the meetings are run effectively. CHRC participants recognised the agenda as important “to make

sure the meetings flow and are not too long”, and “I guess one thing that I have learnt is sticking to the agenda and sticking to the time frames helps keep meetings to flow and we can get through the agenda items” (CHRC#3, 19 March 2021, p. 4; CHRC#11, 19 October 2021, p. 4). Other participants emphasised the importance of the meeting Chair creating the right social setting, saying “I think it is the responsibility of the Chair to make the CRGs an open environment for everyone to be able to share their ideas” adding “an effective Chair in the meeting is able to rein people in and to value everybody’s ideas and contributions” (CRG#22, 2 March 2021, p. 2). CRG#11 reiterated, “having a strong chair is important to keep the group at the meeting on the subject being discussed and to recognise when people are going off on tangents so discussions can be brought to a proper conclusion”, then adding the Chair ensures “everyone is on the same page and not talking across each other so everyone can be heard” (CRG#11, 19 March 2021, p. 3). Based on the research data, having an effective Chair can ensure discussions are inclusive of everyone’s opinions and that having established meeting procedures in place can create the right social setting to support the CRGs’ practice. Bourdieu describes people’s interaction within social fields or social settings as a matter of learning the rules of the game (Marjoribanks, 2001, p. 452). There is evidence that over time, creating a safe space and having an effective Chair and meeting procedures have developed shared tacit rules as considerations for collaborative decision-making practice at the CRGs. From Bourdieu’s perspective, that socially learnt dispositions as skills and ways of acting that informs behaviour or practice (Westen & Baxter, 2011, p. 215), is being embedded within individuals and collective CRG habitus.

4.4.3.3 *Solutions focus*

The research participants mentioned it is important for the CRGs to be focused on finding solutions and having a positive attitude as a consideration for decision-making. CRG#25 said the main purpose of the CRGs is to “gauge community” and it is about “finding grass roots solutions to community issues” (21 May 2021, p. 5). Others noted the CRGs “are really about problem solving”, and “having a positive attitude makes a difference” (CRG#22, 2 March 2021, p. 2; CRG#9, 2 March 2021, p. 3). CRG#15 explained,

.... if you want to go there [CRG meetings] and whinge then you have got to have an idea of how to fix the problems, rather than just bringing up negatives

... I encourage anybody to come along if they have got something to say but as long as they have got an idea how to fix it and have solutions. (4 March 2021, p. 3)

Participants reiterated that “the CRGs are not the place to go to have a whinge or always complain about things. That is just not it. There is always something positive about it”, and it is through group discussion that “people can contribute the negatives and positives ... you have got to have someone who doesn’t agree with something so you can try and find the solution” (CRG#19, 12 March 2021, p. 3; CRG#9, 2 March 2021, p. 2). Then CRG#31 summed up saying “The CRG is about being part of the solution and just having that positive impact on the community” (30 March 2021, p. 4). As previously noted, this quote further highlights that community planning can transform the habitus of a community when leaders are more open, positive and are welcoming of new ideas, which is referred to as cultural capital (Emery & Flora, 2012, p. 143). Drawing on Pyrko et al. (2017), a CRG as with a community of practice, learnt to think together and in the process tacit knowledge is shared indirectly and guides the members through their understanding of the same problem (pp. 391 & 394). Being solutions focused is therefore a shared tacit consideration informing CRG decision-making.

4.4.3.4 *Alternative viewpoints*

Sharing information from many different sources comes from listening to others as they talk about their values, beliefs, perspectives, experiences and interests (Ayres, 2015, p. 23). The research participants’ responses indicate there is an expectation that CRG participants will listen to each other and consider other people’s points of view. Participants said, “an effective group listens to each other and helps one another”, and “you have got to be a good listener to work together as you can’t be working against each other....by listening to other viewpoints you are showing respect and there has got to be that bit of respect on all sides” (CRG#6, 19 March 2021, p. 4; CRG#4, 25 March 2021, p. 5). Other participants noted that to be an effective group, “members have to have a passion for your community, and everyone needs to listen to everyone else’s opinion and ideas”, and that listening to others and considering “different perspectives” is beneficial (CHRC#5, 16 March 2021, p. 3; CRG#20, 12 March 2021, p. 2). Further, participants raised that it is important for community members to be able to speak up and know they are being

listened to, saying “you have got to be prepared to communicate your needs and wants”; “it is not easy for people to stand up and be heard”, and “if you want to see the community progress then we all need to put our opinions in there, whether we all get what we want is another thing but at least everybody’s contributed something” (CRG#4, 25 March 2021, p. 5; CHRC#3, 19 March 2021, p. 4; CRG#17, 4 March 2021, p. 3). A CRG participant confirmed “we do have a few [CRG participants] that are very quiet and others who think that they have the right view. It is just trying to work around that and to make sure everyone understands we are here to work together” (CRG#9, 2 March 2021, p. 3). While CRG#31 recognised,

... if you do not really show up and you are not a part of the discussion, you are probably not going to move anywhere and will sort of be part of the problem. I definitely think there are a lot of really good people who participate in the CRG, and they definitely do it for the right reason. (30 March 2021, p. 4)

Most participants confirmed that listening is also about showing other people respect and giving them the courtesy to speak, whether you agree with their ideas and opinions or not. CRG#17 explained,

I guess you learn a bit of tolerance of other people’s opinions, and you learn that sometimes it takes a while to extract good information out of people. And you have got to make them feel like they are contributing something too. You don’t always have to do what people want but give them the courtesy of listening to what they have to say. (4 March 2021, p. 4)

This CRG participant also noted that “our group is pretty good because we are happy to have a joke and also happy to have a discussion, and even if someone says that’s not right, they are all happy to listen” (p. 3). Then CRG#30 said that listening and speaking up is needed “for a disciplined group that can have tough conversations to try and nut out a good practical idea that is going to be something that can be used in the future”, adding “I think you definitely need to have those robust conversations to have a solid plan” (CRG#30, 23 March 2021, p. 2). These research participants highlighted that engaging with others by actively listening and showing each other respect when sharing ideas and viewpoints, demonstrate the tacit social norms that contribute to better collaboration for CRG decision-making.

For Wenger et al. (2002), practice becomes about making the tacit knowledge explicit through group values, norms and behaviours that informs the practice of CoPs members (p. 110).

For other participants, considering and finding alternative solutions improves collaborative decision-making practice at CRGs. According to Ayers and Silvis (2011), in general the problem-solving process involves identifying and considering alternative solutions (p. 164). CRG#16 explained,

If we run into a brick wall with whatever we want to do, we have other people there that we are able to bounce around different ideas with because you might think that something is good, but then you have other people go “well may be not, what about trying it this way?” ... having people from so many different parts of the community is a good idea because you have extra people to bounce around ideas with. (11 March 2021, pp. 2-3)

CRG#24 reiterated “A lot of times there will be a project that someone is working on, and they get to a stumbling block ... and we’ll discuss it. Then somebody will just come up with a very simple idea that will make the journey of that person or that group’s plan so much easier” (12 March 2021, p. 4). CRG#30 also noted,

I think you need people from a variety of different backgrounds with a variety of different experiences, so that it might just be one little question or one little statement that they say, that can just change the dynamics of whatever project you have been thinking of working on. It is definitely, the broader the better and the more the merrier really. (23 March 2021, p. 2)

These views demonstrate the capability the CRGs have to generate alternative solutions and the importance of valuing the diverse knowledge that different people contribute to the process of collaborative decision-making. Ayres and Silvis (2011) state that considering the diverse viewpoints of people encourages discussions that can lead to new understandings and solutions (p. 162). For Snyder and Wenger (2010), CoPs can be used as a community-based approach for building capacity in the civic sector (p. 159). CoPs are “essentially a social process of action learning, in which practitioners from diverse sectors, disciplines and organisations work together to share ideas and best practices, create new possibilities and build

new capabilities” (Snyder & Wenger, 2010, p. 159). When translated to CRGs, their collaborative practice provides a process for community, Council and other key stakeholders to generate and implement innovative ideas and solutions to action community projects by listening to and considering the alternative points of view of others. Therefore, cultivating the practice of thinking together as a collaborative approach gives rise to improved practices over time, of listening to and considering other points of view and alternative solutions. By adopting these shared tacit considerations, the CRGs are transforming their thinking and practices as cultural capital building.

4.4.3.5 *Reaching consensus*

The research participants described considerations for collaborative practice that align with a consensus decision-making process at the CRGs. Consensus is a decision-making method where separate interests work together to clarify issues, educate each other about respective concerns, generate options and then reach agreements that everyone can accept (Ayres, 1996, p. 32). Consensus does not mean that everyone is equally enthusiastic about the decision made but that they recognise it is the best solution available and agree to support it (p. 32); it appears that consensus is also an expected behaviour of the group to increase collaboration in decision making. CHRC#3 explained, “It is not always easy to get people in a circle to try to make decisions and think about the community” (19 March 2021, p. 3). CRG#17 shared their perspective on CRG decision-making that reflects a consensus approach, saying

you might not always agree with the idea but once the idea is approved by your group then I’m happy then to be part of bringing it to fruition rather than just going against it because I don’t like it. It’s a group decision ... it is not about your personal decisions, but I think you should be honest in how you feel about things. (4 March 2021, p. 4)

While CRG#18 explained, “you have to get along together and work things out together and take the best options and go with that ... our CRG does that pretty well all the time. There’s a few niggly ones sometimes but everyone has to come around sometime which is good” (9 March 2021, p. 3). Other participants noted, “there is a lot of give and take. You can’t just go there and expect that everything you want to

get done, gets done. You have to reason with the other people and know that we are all working together to see what we can get done for the community”, and “A cohesive group is the main thing, and a respectful group whose members, even if they don’t agree, they can come to a decision”, while “there are lots of things that the left hand doesn’t know what the right hand is doing but when we are all together than we work it out. When it is all laid out in front of us, we realise it is important that we all stay involved” (CRG#16 11 March 2021, p. 4; CHRC#1, 22 February 2021, p. 3; CRG#35, 28 October 2021, p. 3). Other participants shared their outlook on reaching consensus, saying “there is a solution to lots of things and a bit of negotiation and adaptability will hopefully get an outcome”, and “we all have different opinions ... we all want different things coming from different backgrounds. Just collaborating those thoughts and putting them into the plan helps the group” (CRG#26, 20 April 2021, p. 3; CRG#7, 28 October 2021, p. 5). Another CRG participant also explained, “our CRG is a pretty good team because everybody is willing to listen to everyone else and take on other points of view. They may not necessarily agree, but they might change their opinion, or they might just accept it” (CRG#14, 1 April 2021, p. 4). Based on the research participants’ comments, there is evidence that the CRGs have, over time, developed their own consensus decision-making process, which has emerged from creating a shared tacit logic as rules that inform the collaborative CRG decision-making approach.

The data suggests that, over time, the CRGs have developed a collaborative approach to decision making that enables shared thinking, discussion and prioritisation of community projects and collective actions. This collaborative process has shaped socially constructed beliefs and social norms informed by tacit considerations underpinning the CRG practice of decision-making. From a Bordieuan perspective, these tacit considerations are the logic and shared rules of the game that has been embedded in the group habitus which influences the behaviours and practice of the CRGs. As previously noted by Wenger et al. (2002), practice becomes about making the tacit knowledge explicit though group values, norms and behaviours (p. 110). From a regional perspective, the collaborative decision-making approach established by CRG members and Council, as community leaders, has over time forged tacit rules that are shaping social and cultural capital through their practice of community planning. As a result, the CRG community governance model, is influencing and shaping social and cultural capital within each

of the 13 CRG localities and therefore the Central Highlands region. While a collaborative approach to decision making by the CRGs was highlighted by the research participants, it can be considered as a precondition for working together to action collective outcomes for the community.

4.4.4. Collective outcomes

It emerged from the research data, that the CRG community projects can be led by either CRG members, Council or other key stakeholders to action and achieve collective outcomes. This is slightly different to the CRG approach and practice of collaborative decision making discussed earlier, in that collective outcomes occur when the CRG members, Council and other key stakeholders work together to deliver and action projects after deciding which CRG projects or initiatives will be progressed. For Madden (2010), Bourdieu depicts a social space as a site of struggle over resources, while a deliberative governance space creates a space that facilitates agency and social interaction for community leaders to structure the shared rules for accessing resources to build community capacity (pp. 183 & 184). While shared rules for collaboration in decision-making can be considered tacit, the shared rules for collective action by the CRGs appear to be more explicit. For Allen et al. (2012), the ability of a group of individuals to work in concert to achieve common community goals is the result of collective action (p. 53). The process for collective action by the CRGs, revealed in the data, highlighted the CRG project planning process, community ownership and the variety of projects and initiatives achieved through the CRGs over time. Taking collective action to deliver and advocate for community projects and initiatives is an essential part of CRG practice. Over time, the repeated actions of the CRGs have increased members' skills and knowledge of the CRG project planning process and of Council's operational and budgeting processes as well as increased efficacy and proficiency in the CRG practice.

4.4.4.1 Project planning process

As noted, a collective or participatory process for achieving project outcomes allows for community projects progressed through the CRGs to be either led by CRG members, Council or other stakeholders. While the CRGs act on their agency to advocate to the Council, the state government or others on behalf of their communities, they also deliver on a range of projects or initiatives through the CRGs

to benefit their communities. The data revealed that the project planning process used by the CRGs has emerged over time through ongoing practice. As noted in the Literature Review and Theme 1: Meaning, the CRGs have tools and resources to support the community planning practice, including a project plan template and community action plans for each of the 13 localities, which list the projects and initiatives identified by the community to achieve their community visions. These community action plans were compiled after extensive community consultation during the development of the *CH2022 Community Plan* and feature in the CRG project planning process.

The project planning process for collective action emerged organically over two or three years after the CRGs were first established. While Council had developed a project plan template, the data revealed the project planning process was refined through mutual learning and on-the-job practice by CRG members and Council. As a practice that emerged from collective actions, specifically by CRG members and Council, shared tacit and explicit rules for CRG project planning appears to be still evolving, based on the research data. As with the collaborative decision-making approach, the CRG practice of project planning embodies certain ways of behaving, a perspective on problems and ideas, and a thinking style within the collective (Wenger et al., 2002. p. 110). For Morrison (2012), a project plan defines the small steps to advance a project to move to clear outcomes and makes it easier for collective commitment (p. 171). The project planning process used by CRGs was described by CRG#24, saying

CRG members come to the table with our own project or passion on what they would like to see in the community. They will say, 'this is a really great idea that I've got, or I think it's a great idea'. Then we discuss it and as a group use each other as a sounding board. It doesn't have to be an official project plan even though we have all the tools Council has provided for us, initially it's just a proposal. When the person presents their proposal, then the group discusses its merit by looking at the pros and cons. Then the group decides whether we want to put that through the CRG. Then we go to the project planning stage. The CRG already has made an action plan or strategic directions which has our strategies in place. We check that the project fits into one of our strategies, one of our visions for the community. And of course, if

it's already in there then it's easier to work on it. But if it's not in there, and it's a great idea or project that we all want to work on, then we can amend our action plan to include this project. (12 March 2021, p. 4)

This quote demonstrates that the CRGs have developed a project planning process that incorporates several steps. This clearly points out the CRGs check each project against the strategies in the community action plan (now called strategic directions). Participant CRG#24 also explains that if the project is not in the action plan, the CRGs will amend their action plan to include that project. In this way, the community action plan remains relevant and evolves over time to meet changing community issues and aspirations. The community action plans/strategic directions then become a reference point and tool for communicating the planned actions and projects for each CRG locality and identity who is responsible for leading and partnering to deliver on projects. The projects can be led by either the CRG members, Council or a wide range of other key stakeholders such as government departments. However, it appears from the data, the CRG project planning process, described above, is for projects that are being led by the CRG members, Council or by the CRG members and Council. It appears that most CRG projects are delivered by CRG members in partnership with Council. The data revealed another aspect of the CRG project planning process is ground truthing projects with the broader community. A Council participant described how CRG members engage with the broader community to enable other residents to have input into community projects, saying

... the most important thing is that the project plans are done, and you demonstrate the engagement within the local community; it's not just a one person doing a plan up and putting it in. We actually establish what engagement, and sometimes that's done through surveys, sometimes it's done through letters of support or whatever, but we actually demonstrate that it is community driven. (CHRC#6, 29 March 2021, p. 7)

In this way, the CRG members build their competency and skills in community engagement, which enables the broader community to exercise their agency and have a say in community projects prioritised by CRGs and Council. Based on the research data, when Council and/or the CRG and Council are partnering to deliver

projects, the CRG project plans are presented to Council to progress through their internal budgeting and operational processes. Another Council participant described the internal process for progressing CRG projects within Council, CHRC#2 explained,

The decisions for ideas and projects at the CRGs are fed back into Council, sometimes the CRGs complete project plans or other paperwork. Then these go through a checking process to verify if it is a real need and if there is wider support than one or two people at the CRG. Next is the budgeting process and staff work hard to have realistic costs. The staff present to managers and managers then present to general managers to forward plan for projects. (CHRC#2, 11 March 2021, p. 4)

Another Council participant elaborated on how CRG projects are advocated for within side Council, saying,

There is a diverse amount of ‘things’ raised at CRGs and Council representatives at all levels within the organisation advocate for these across the organisation and through organisational processes. The councillors and Council staff who attend the CRGs advocate for specific topics or projects as well as the CEDOs for their CRGs. (CRG#10, 19 October 2021, p. 3)

Other Council participants noted that having individual CRG project plans has assisted with the success of CRG projects progressed through Council, saying, “it is rewarding to attend a CRG when an idea is presented, projects are developed, requests move through the budget process and the projects happen”, and “because we [at the CRGs] did those project plans, we have had a lot of success in getting our community projects funded through Council” (CHRC#7, 29 October 2021, p. 4; CHRC#6, 29 March 2021, p. 6. Other participants noted that Council has also reprioritised projects based on input from the CRGs. CHRC#9 noted, “I have seen Council reprioritise projects after speaking with the CRGs, especially if there has been an issue with achieving milestones” (26 March 2021, p. 5). Then CRG#16 gave an example of Council reprioritising funding for a CRG project in their community, saying they had secured funding “to use for the cemetery” and after experiencing delays “they [Council] actually let us use the funds to put a slab at the skate park ...

that was a good decision they made that day to help us move along with it. That is a lot to do with the CRG members too so there is a lot of give and take” between Council and the community (11 March 2021, pp. 3 & 4). This practice appears to have emerged over time, and these quotes demonstrate that CRG agency and proficiency in their collaborative decision-making practice and project planning process has built trust between the CRGs and Council.

For Ayres (1996), it is notions of shared power that is shifting thinking for collective action (pp. 30-31). Madden (2010) suggests, the importance of inclusive leadership, specifically distributed leadership, increases empowerment and participation in deliberative governance initiatives (pp. 183 & 187). From a Bordieuan perspective, the CRGs are reshaping the shared rules based on agency and symbolic power enabling for diverse interests to be represented in a community governance space (Madden, 2010, p. 182). As previously noted from a CoPs’ perspective, practice becomes about making the tacit knowledge explicit through group values, norms and behaviours that inform the practice of members (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 110). As a result, the emerging practice of CRGs and Council working together to reprioritise projects demonstrates the trust and confidence that has formed over time in the CRG project planning process. This practice also demonstrates a shift in Council’s thinking and practice away from traditional leadership to collaboration which is enabled by the CRG community governance model (McKinlay et al., 2011, p. 5). As noted by Emery and Flora (2012), community leaders can socially construct, develop and strengthen a new or renewed positive community habitus to replace a previously dominant negative one (p. 143).

Another participant observed the commitment required by CRG members to ensure projects are truly community led. As noted by CHRC#7,

It requires a lot of drive from communities around the CRG. They have to want to participate for the group to function effectively and they have to be really invested and willing to take part. The groups that we see do really well with projects are where it is very much community led. They [CRG members] have ideas for projects, and they really work together to make them happen. And Council obviously support that ... but it has to come from the community, otherwise it is just another example of Council actioning things as opposed to it being truly led by community. (28 October 2021, p, 3)

This quote demonstrates that Council appears to have adopted a community-led approach in working with the CRGs which aligns with the self-help community development approach. For Garkovich (2012), in practice, community visioning or community planning is a community development tool (p. 42). According to Garkovich (2011), using the self-help approach, community development practitioners provide information as requested and facilitate the development of skills and knowledge in local people so they can identify alternatives and act in their own interests (p. 16). In this approach, the facilitator or practitioner organises community efforts and processes that will enable residents to come together, identify strategies for achieving their collective goals and often help to identify potential resources to enhance the capacity of community to address their opportunities (Green, 2011, p. 72). As noted by Sail and Abu-Samah (2016), the ultimate goal of community development is to develop the capabilities, skills and practice of community members to leverage resources for social and economic benefit (pp. 63 – 64). By adopting a similar self-help practice approach, Council has facilitated the development of the capabilities and skills of the CRG members, as well as strengthened the CRG processes, which has transitioned the CRGs and Council's practices in community planning and development. According to Butler (2005), local government must be continuously looking for ways to better utilise the scarce resources they can access, and exploring alternative processes that will assist and enable them to assist communities to meet their own needs (p. 4). The more local governments engage with communities, the more obvious it becomes that communities themselves are an extremely valuable resource generally overlooked, or at least underestimated by local government (Butler, 2005, p. 4).

Based on data, it has emerged that through the CRG practices of collaborative decision-making and collective action processes, a shared set of tacit and explicit rules that have been formed and shaped by the CRGs and Council for project planning and delivery over time, have emerged as a result of the deliberative CRG community governance model. As mentioned above, redistributed power in community leadership is enabling agency and building trust through practice between CRG members and Council. In this way, their collective community leadership is shifting thinking, shaping social values and norms that are embedding new adopted practices within the habitus of the CRGs as cultural capital. As the CRGs meet regularly, collaborative and collective thinking means the ongoing

negotiation of meaning is continuously building competence in the practice of community planning within the field of local government. Bourdieu never assumes field and habitus remain the same; fields are arenas of ongoing struggles where agents make ongoing choices about position-taking as they negotiate the rules of the game (Husu, 2013, pp. 266 & 268). It is through agency in active participation and ongoing negotiation of meaning that new learning and improved planning skills, as new practice, are leading to collective outcomes that benefit all participating CRG communities. However, the research participants noted that achieving collective outcomes has not all been smooth sailing as projects can take time to progress by the CRGs, Council and other levels of government.

4.4.4.2 *Project timelines*

It was noted in Theme 1: Meaning that the CRG members have gained knowledge of Council's internal processes for planning, budgeting and delivering on projects as well as the long-term approach required for Council planning. As noted in the Literature Review, the concept of community planning takes a long-term focus (Walzer & Sudhipongpracha, 2021, p. 33), and the introduction of community strategic plans was designed to help elected members and officials consider a long-term context for local government operational planning (Tan & Artist, 2013, p. 9). While the *CH2022 Community Plan* and 13 place community plans and action plans/strategic directions has a 10-year planning timeframe, research participants commented on how some CRG projects can take time to move through the planning processes of Council and other levels of government. They also commented on having patience and experiencing frustration while they wait and continue to advocate for some projects to be achieved. This, it seems, is a reality of the collective practice for community planning and community development. As noted by Westoby and Owen (2010), in the "real world" the delivery of community development programs means people-centred community practice is much messier than clearly named social and technical processes (p. 72). The participants provided examples of projects and the length of time it takes to achieve collective outcomes. As noted by a Council participant, "one project was funded to the tune of about one hundred and thirty thousand dollars roughly ... that was eight years for me to get through Council" (CHRC#6, 29 March 2021, p. 6). While CRG#9 said, "it was all the work of the CRG really pushing for the toilet in Lions Park and that took about three

years” (2 March 2021, p. 3). Describing another project, CHRC#1 said, “without the CRG there to guide the process, the skate park would not have happened because Council would not have assumed that is what our community wanted ... it ended up being a four-year project and we are all very proud because the outcome was very positive” (22 February 2021, p. 2). CHRC#9 explained the process of progressing projects whether it is local, state or federal government:

I know it frustrates people the way projects have to go through the big machine to get it done, but unfortunately that is just the way it is. I try and inform them [CRG participants] on just what steps and hoops we [Council] have to jump through from the government side to get things done. I think that just helps people allay their fears, and yes, it is going slowly, that is government. It is not that it is not going to get done, it is just got to go through this big machine. (26 October 2021, p. 4)

While CRG#25 noted, “we [the CRG] have achieved an enormous amount over the time ... but at the same time, there is a growing level of frustration that some of the important things that we were addressing very early in the piece have been raised continuously since and haven’t really gone forward in terms of action” (21 May 2021, p. 7). Other research participants also noted that “you do need patience and have to keep advocating to progress projects”, and “persistence is important and to keep going because sometimes it takes time to see an idea progress through as a direction of the CRG” (CRG#10, 1 April 2021, p. 7; CHRC#3, 19 March 2021, p. 3). A further CRG participant expressed their perspective, saying we have learnt “patience, things don’t happen in a hurry. I think that being a business owner ... when things need to be done you get in and do it. Whereas it takes quite a while for things to actually happen from a Council point of view” (CRG#4, 25 March 2021, p. 4).

While some participants expressed their frustration about the time it takes projects, another CRG participant shared their view about the delivery of CRG projects, saying,

Sometimes things stay on the table for a long time, and we think “is this ever going to happen?” But then, there is, “it’s happening!” It is slow because there is a lot of stuff happening in the background being check out and worked on.

Then sometimes things lay dormant for a number of years and then spring back up and you go “OK, now is the time to do that”. It wasn’t four years ago but now is a good time to relook at that situation. (CRG#24, 12 March 2021, p. 5)

CRG#25 added that when Council was delivering a project in their CRG area “it took several years to happen, but Council communicated to us about progress on the project from time to time, which was appreciated” (21 May 2021, p. 9).

These quotes demonstrate the level of consideration, communication and understanding required for collection action to progress projects and community outcomes, over the longer-term. For Lachapelle et al. (2012), securing “buy-in” requires the support, involvement or commitment of interested or affected parties to a community development proposal, plan, strategy or decision (p. 82). Ayres (1996) suggested the notions of shared power and leadership necessitate a shift in thinking away from power and control over resources to a focus on ways to deliver on collective actions (p. 31). Over time, the CRGs appear to have formed shared rules and social norms that are fostering a collective process the CRGs and Council to achieve community projects and outcomes over the longer-term. This is reflective of Bourdieu’s idea of fields as enabling openings and transformations with and across field structures as social spaces (Walther, 2014, p. 6). He views change within the different fields of society, such as economic and political, as always creating and recreating itself, just as the CRGs continue to create and recreate change in communities through the collective practice of the CRGs and Council. While progressing community projects through the CRGs may require a longer-term view, other research participants expressed their views about “community ownership” as a consideration of collective action.

4.4.4.3 *Community ownership*

CRG and Council research participants referred to aspects of “community ownership” relating to the collective process for delivering CRG projects and initiatives. According to Lachapelle et al. (2012), a sense of ownership is described as a concept to assess whose voice is heard, who has influence over decisions and who is affected by the process and outcome (p. 82). For Ife (2016), the primary consideration must be given to the process rather than the outcome which “represents a significant challenge to a way of thinking and operating that has often

bypassed the people most involved”, leading to disempowerment (p. 169). There is always the possibility that the outcomes of strategic visioning programs or community development programs may challenge the control of experts, professionals and local officials (Green & Deller, 1996, p. 124). However, according to Lachapelle et al. (2012), ultimately, a sense of ownership is predicated on power and empowerment, which is a critical component of collective action (pp. 80 & 82).

The research participants comment on aspects of “community ownership” and the importance of community and Council working together to achieve CRG projects. This was confirmed by CHRC#7 that the intention of partnership between community and Council, saying the CRGs are “an opportunity for proactive community members to come together to kick start or work with Council on projects to enhance the liveability of their areas” (28 October 2021. p. 2). CHRC#3 notes that,

The CRG is about Council and community working together. The community may have a vision ... so it is not a matter of Council saying, ‘here you go take it or leave it, this is what you are getting’. It is about Council and community listening to each other and both giving some directions. It benefits community and it benefits Council because they have helped the community get to where they want to go. (19 March 2021, p. 4)

CHRC#8 noted their view on how the CRGs are assisting community and Council to share a sense of ownership, saying,

The CRGs help Council because it encourages community to get involved and have community buy-in ... then we are working together in a sort of partnership as opposed to Council just delivering services and hoping that it hits the mark with community. It is nurturing a partnership and joint community ownership. (2 November 2021, p. 11)

CRG#26 shared their view of who owns the community and how it feels when community efficacy efforts are not acknowledged, saying,

As a community we like to think we own it, and I think that’s what the CRG should be all about. They [the CRGs] are giving us ownership of our community as the people who are really caring about our community, but when Council comes in and stamp their foot down about policies and then

things don't get done at your community. It leaves a little bit of bad taste in your mouth, and you think, 'well, I won't bother'. (20 April 2021, p. 5)

In relation to whose voice is being heard, CRG#4 noted that "when the frustration flows over on both sides is when they [Council] aren't listening and you have to listen to each other to work together" (25 March 2021, p. 5). While for another CRG participant, the tacit rules have empowered CRG members to communicate and partner with Council in planning and achieving community goals, saying, "the CRG is about community members putting forward things that we want done or would like to see happen that isn't being done, then it is up to Council to respond with what is possible and not possible" (CRG#1, 30 April 2021, p. 3).

While from Council's perspective, CHRC#8 also noted,

The CRGs are about "community building, which is about improving liveability, and if people are feeling ownership of their town or community and feel they have influence over what they are doing and what is happening, then it is not happening to them and they are having a say in what is going on. (2 November 2021, p. 10)

This participant also added, people do not want to live in a place "if Council just basically tells them this is how it is" (p. 10). While CHRC#3 added, "the CRGs are about how to make the most of what you have got. The community does not want a lot, but they would like it if Council can help the community because it makes a difference for CRG members and for people to live in communities" (19 March 2021, p. 4). These quotes give more insight into Council's approach to practicing community development as noted above.

The research data has provided an insight into understanding "community ownership" from community and Council. There is also evidence the CRGs are an avenue for CRGs and Council to actively participate in collaborative decision making and achieving collective outcomes for the future development of their communities. As previously noted, practice describes the common approaches and shared standards that create a basis for action, communication, problem-solving, performance and accountability in a community of practice (Snyder and Wenger, 2010, p. 110). Lachapelle et al. (2012) say that a community's sensibility changes from looking to the outside for solutions to understanding that they must build their

community's future, towards an increase in the level of cultural capital happening in terms of changing patterns of thinking to mobilise community change (p. 80). While the research participants described aspects of collaboration in decision-making and collective action by the CRGs and Council, they also commented on the variety and number of projects that have been completed and are in progress in all 13 CRG localities.

4.4.4.4 *Project outcomes*

While the CRG model was established to implement the 13 community and action plans within the *CH2022 Community Plan*, it emerged from the participants' comments that over time, the CRGs have undertaken a diverse range and number of projects. The CRGs are therefore a vehicle CRG members, Council and other key stakeholders use to undertake projects for community development. The research participants noted several CRG projects that the CRGs and Council have partnered in advocating for other stakeholders to lead. Some of these projects included advocating that Queensland Main Roads fix or upgrade an intersection on the highway (CRG#13, 18 March 2021, p. 3); Aurizon to complete an upgrade to a railway crossing (CHRC#1, 22 February 2021, p. 4); the local medical services for doctors and other health services (CHRC#6, 29 March 2021, p. 6); Queensland Health for a new hospital (CHRC#1, 22 February 2021, p. 3); Queensland National Parks and Wildlife about road access and improvements to several national parks in the region to support tourism (CRG#1, 30 April 2021, p. 5). Additionally, advocating to the federal government for towers to improve telecommunications (data and mobile coverage) and to increase safety by building a Flying Doctors airstrip in a rural area (CRG#2, 26 May 2021, p. 4).

There are also projects that are led and completed by the CRG community members. CHRC#1 also described a CRG project to attract a business to town when the store burned down saying, "for that community, that is what they advocated for and they did all the work to get the letters of support to say the CRG wants a store, and now that store's open so a very positive outcome" (22 February 2021, p. 3). CHRC#1 also provided another example of a CRG project which is a "historical path with 16-20 signs around town of historical markers showing when the first school was, the first post office and there is a path map that they give away at the tourism centre. So, you can go and do the part with is all very exciting" (p. 5). While CRG#1

explained “we got a grant for \$20,000 so we were able to put an awning on our recreation hall ... we can go outside when it rains and not get wet and even in summer you can get out of the sun” (30 April 2021, p. 3). This research participant also noted their CRG received a smaller grant from Council saying, “we usually do a Christmas party, and we were able to get caterers in to cater for it so that gave all the mums a break because they didn’t have to do any of the cooking” (p. 3).

There are also projects that Council is progressing or delivering such as grading rural roads (CRG#4, 25 March 2021, p. 6); installing skate park facilities (CRG#16, 11 March 2021, p. 3); park toilet (CRG#9, 2 March 2021, p. 3); exercise equipment in park (CRG#10, 1 April 2021, p. 4); and maintenance of water infrastructure (CRG#19, 12 March 2021, p.4).

The research participants identified several examples of projects that have been raised at CRG meetings and/or completed through the CRGs, including,

- skate parks in various communities,
- improved visual amenities such as mowing and improving street gardens,
- upgrades and maintenance for roads both rural and in towns,
- erecting parthenium free signage,
- erecting town entrance signage and electronic signs,
- renovating the local halls – installing new kitchens,
- installing toilets and playground equipment in parks,
- urban and rural addressing initiatives for ambulance service,
- installing a community library exchange,
- extra curbing and channelling to improve street drainage,
- waste facilities management/changes at transfer stations and opening hours,
- water infrastructure upgrades and renewals such as pipes,
- upgrades to sporting fields and club houses,
- installing dump points for visiting caravaners,
- upgrades to tourist locations and community recreation areas,

- attracting health services in a small rural town,
- street beautification/upgrades,
- upgrading active transport networks or footpaths,
- installing outdoor exercise equipment in parks,
- large and small community events,
- successful grant applications for community facilities – built and upgrades,
- cemetery improvements and upgrades, and
- historical trails and buildings to protect historical sites.

Based on the data, there is evidence that over time project outcomes have been achieved through the CRGs that have contributed to community development in all 13 CRG towns and communities, which include social, economic and environmental elements. As noted by Bourdieu, change in social fields creates change in society in a perpetual and ongoing way of creating and recreating (Walther, 2014, p. 6). From this perspective, the collective practice of the CRGs is therefore never complete; it is always undergoing additional negotiation to meet the needs and aspirations of the broader communities. As demonstrated above, the CRG model is a deliberative community governance structure that is enabling agency and building social and cultural capital through collective practice to progress community development within the 13 CRG localities.

To summarise, based on the research participants' responses within Theme 3: Practice, the evidence suggests that the CRGs have introduced several communication methods to share information on a continuous basis within the CRGs and with Council and the broader community. CRG communication practices encourage and allow CRG members, Council, other stakeholders as "guest speakers" and the broader community to exercise their agency at the CRG meetings. Through establishing social norms of information sharing, the CRGs have adopted practices that promote agency and social interaction that build social capital and cultural capital.

The research data has also confirmed that, over time, considerations emerged as shared tacit rules that underpin collaboration in the practice of decision-making at the CRGs. These considerations include whole-of-community aspects; the

right social setting, being solutions focused, listening to alternative points of view, and reaching consensus as a decision-making method. As these shared rules are tacit in nature, they have been embedded as social norms in the group habitus that reflects the cultural capital of the CRGs. Finally, the evidence suggests that the CRGs have developed a collective process for achieving community projects and actions. As with the collaborative decision-making approach, collective action at the CRGs is informed by tacit and explicit knowledge and rules for project planning. Over time, the collaborative approach and collective action has forged a partnership between CRGs and Council which has built trust as social capital and new practices that are enabling agency and creating a shift in thinking that is building cultural capital. I have emphasised the notion of these practices occurring “over time” throughout this research, because within this community governance space, shared rules and social norms have emerged through the CRGs being more empowered to exercise their agency and have a voice into Council. This has established new patterns of thinking for community and Council that is creating cultural capital, which is continuing to do so, into the future. Additionally, through working together trust has strengthened relationships between community and Council, contributing to ongoing social capital building. The CRG model is an example of a Council shifting their thinking from hierarchical or traditional towards a collaborative approach that creates a community governance model that empowers local communities within the field of local government (McKinlay et al., 2012, p. 4).

Based on the research data, Theme 3: Practice has provided evidence of the CRG model being a deliberative community governance model within which shared rules of leadership are building community capacity. For Wenger (1998), the concept of identity is an integral component of CoPs as a social theory of learning and therefore inseparable to practice, community and meaning (p. 145). Theme 4: Identity explores aspects of place and identity recognised in the research data.

4.5. Theme 4: Identity

4.5.1. Introduction

Wenger’s CoPs as a social theory of learning is used to frame and summarise the data for this research project to understand how the CRGs practice community planning. As noted in the Literature Review, the learning capabilities of CoPs identity component for the purpose of this research project relates to identity, competence

and full membership of CoPs (Wenger, 1998, p. 152). Theme 4: Identity includes three sections: Connection to place, Future vision and Regional link. Connection to place explores the relationship between place-identity and agency. The Future vision section addresses collective agency and envisioned futures, while the Regional link section covers aspects of connecting the CRGs at the regional level.

For Wenger (1998), learning is an experience of identity because learning transforms “who we are and what we can do” (p. 197). Wenger also notes that when “we” are competent in practice and “we” understand the enterprise to which participants are accountable, “we” are a full member of a community of practice (1998, p. 152). Identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities (p. 151). As evidenced in the previous themes, CRG members have negotiated meanings through building their competence in practice to be considered as full members of the CRGs. As members of the CRG, their group identity has been shaped by agency as empowerment, social capital through social networks and social interaction, and cultural capital as group social norms and behaviours. The data suggested that the CRG members have bonds and attachments to the towns and communities or “places” within which they live. It also emerged, that these bonds and attachments, initially motivated the CRG members to join their local CRG. Wenger (1998) defines identity in practice as part of a social learning system not merely because it is reified in a social discourse of the self and of social categories, but also because it is produced as a lived experience of participation in specific communities (p. 151). The data reveals that a definition of identity for CRG members combines self, social and lived experience as participation in the CRG communities as well as membership of their place communities. In this way, identity is linked to aspects of CRG membership and to elements of place that motivated members to join the CRGs.

Place attachment refers to the bonds that people develop with places and along with place attachment, place-identity is another important concept that refers to people’s bonds with places (Qazimi, 2014, p. 309). For Qazimi (2014), place alludes to the complex and strong relationships between people and place, and that over time, place bit by bit becomes part of “who we are” and shapes the identity of people (p. 307). According to Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, place becomes salient for the self-concept and is an active part of the construction of a person’s identity as well as a person’s expressed identification with a place (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996, p.

205 & 207). Place attachment is part of place-identity, but place-identity is more than attachment because it is composed of observation and interpretation regarding the social and physical environment (Qazimi, 2014, p. 307). For Bourdieu, habitus refers to socially learnt dispositions, skills and ways of acting that shapes the behaviour of agents (Western & Baxter, 2011, p. 215). While Bourdieu does not invoke place specifically, Bourdieu's concept of habitus can be drawn on as being between self and place or between lived place and geographical self (Easthope, 2004, p.133). People feel at home in places where their habitus has been developed, and people do act based on habitus by continually undertaking social actions that express an intentional and invested commitment to place (Easthope, 2010, p. 133 & 134; Casey, 2001). For Perkin et al. (2002), it is place attachment that leads people to stay and protect what they cherish most in their communities and to invest time and energy into improving aspects which they are dissatisfied with (p. 42). Dale (2013) cites Bandura (1989) as saying "persons who have a strong sense of efficacy deploy their attention and effort to the demands of the situation and are spurred to greater effort by obstacles", and he refers to self-efficacy as a person's belief in their ability to succeed in specific situations (p. 3 & 9). For Bourdieu, social spaces or social settings are where there are struggles over resources, competing and cooperating as needed (Poole & Germov, 2011, p. 27). As noted in previous themes, the CRGs can also be perceived as social spaces where there are struggles for the resources needed to prioritise and deliver on local community projects. Within these social spaces, the CRGs have also created the opportunity for community members motivated by their attachments to place to exercise their agency and self-efficacy.

According to Dale (2013), there are many definitions of agency that relate to people acting on their intentional actions and having the ability to make choices (p. 2 & 3). Within Theme 1, agency is described as the ability for people to have their voices heard and feel they can influence a democratic process (Newman & Dale, 2005, p. 482). Agency can also refer to the psychological characteristics of a person and their ability to be self-confident, not necessarily for their own self-interest, but when acting for a collective interest they can think beyond self in narrow terms to consider themselves as part of a much wider community (Dale, 2013, p. 3). In this context, individual agency can be connected to strong perceptions of self-efficacy that is efficacy-based, while collective agency can be described as the social environments where people work together to achieve change outcomes to benefit

community (Dale, 2013, p. 11). As a community development tool, community visioning is focused on geographical communities exercising individual and collective agency to create a shared identity through discussions that are framed within stories of “who we are”, “what we can become” and “what we can do” (Garkovich, 2012, p. 429). According to Archer (2013), personal identity is constructed through reflexive deliberation in the process of “who I am is what I care about” and collective identity is a process of “who we are is what we care about” (p. 11). While Main and Sandoval (2015) suggest the social, cultural and physical elements of place form identity, because they engender a strong attachment to place, which can be viewed as “what we care about” for the CRGs (p. 75). Based on the research participants’ responses, the focus of Theme 4 is to understand the relationship between place and identity, and their link to agency, self-efficacy and the individual, as well as collective and regional levels to understand full membership of the CRG members.

4.5.2. *Connection to place*

Based on the research participants’ responses, it emerged the CRG members experienced attachment to place in a variety of ways that can reflect aspects of identity. According to Wenger (1998), participation in a CoPs is about identity in terms of belonging and identification of self within the place of belonging (p. 173). Identification defines a process through which modes of belonging form and shape our identities by creating bonds and difference in which members are invested (Wenger, 1998, p. 191). Community members invest in a community visioning or planning approach to help their place or geographical communities deal with their changing environment (Ayres, 2012, p. 16). For O’Toole and Grey (2020), connection to place is complex and not a self-evident nor a simple matter of a particular geographical location impacting upon identity (p. 1 & p. 28). Qazimi (2014) says that the occupation of territory is fundamental to human existence and “access to particular territory or to the product thereof is a necessary condition of life” (p. 309). Main and Sandoval (2015) cite Rios, Vasquez and Miranda (2012), saying that people conceive of place as a setting of the everyday that is associated with collective memories; it is the location of ideas, practices and social relations among people in territory communities; and that identity is produced by place (p. 73). According to Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996), there are two ways in which place is related to identity (p. 205); the first is identity as place identification referring to a

person's expressed identification with a place (p. 205). This is, for example when someone identifies themselves as saying "I am a Central Highlander" who is someone from the Central Highlands or "I am from Bluff" who is a resident of Bluff. In this sense, place can be considered to be a social category or social identification within social identity (p. 206). The second way is termed as "place-identity" by Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff (1983, p. 59; 1987) who state that self-identity of a person consists of cognitions about the physical world that "represent memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings and concepts of behaviour and experience" that defines the day-to-day existence of every human being (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996, p. 206; O'Toole & Grey, 2020, p. 8). While, Easthope (2004) says place-identity is when someone expresses their ties to the physical locality in terms of social, cultural and emotive constructs, which can also have links to psychological wellbeing (p. 136). Many of these aspects were noted by the research participants, who commented on the different ties they have with their physical localities and the experience of place connections that motivated them to become members or that are needed to make good CRG members. Their responses demonstrated how these connections, attachment and sense of place inspired their agency and self-efficacy. Connection to place here draws on several concepts to highlight the social, cultural, emotive, and psychological elements of place-identity mentioned by the research participants.

According to Raymond, Kyttä and Stedman (2017), a "sense of place" that refers to "place" as the centre for meaning making in relation to identity which focuses on how individuals become attached to places hold intangible emotional, symbolic and spiritual meanings for them (p. 2 & 5). The emotive effects of place can be expressions of love or grief in narratives of self and place (Easthope, 2004, p. 134). The research participants described their feelings of passion, pride, and love for the places they live in and for some these are the qualities needed to make a good CRG members. CRG#20 expressed "I've always been passionate about community and community needs so when it [CRG] first started... I just went, 'yep, I've got to be in that'" (12 March 2021, p. 3). While CHRC#2 observed that "you need people with passion and drive.... that have a vested interest in the town" as "things that make a really good CRG member" (11 March 2021, p. 5). CRG#27 said they were motivated to be involved in the CRGs because "I'm passionate" and have a long connection with community saying, "I've lived here all of my life" (26 March

2021, p. 4). Another participant noted that the people who join the CRGs are “those that have the community at heart” (CRG#28, 26 March 2021, p. 4), while others said “In my case.... it is because I have a love for the community”, and “I am very, very fond of our community here” (CRG#17, 4 March 2021, p. 3; CRG#13, 16 March 2021, p. 4). Other participants said they experience as sense of pride in their community saying, “I’m very proud of our community”, and “I am proud when others say they are proud to say they are from Dingo” (CRG#28, 26 March 2021, p. 6; CRG#16, 11 March 2021, p.4). CHRC#9 summed up saying for CRG members that it is their “passion, the interest, the community drive and essentially, that they want to get involved to really improve their community for the better, long term” (26 October 2021, p. 6). These participants expressed their emotive connections to place, which capture their sense of place-identity.

For Anderson (2014), a human quality that helps communities embrace a “sense of place” is “generosity in giving what one has to others without expecting anything in return”, which can be described as a cultural belief (p. 309; Relph, 1993). This type of cultural belief was expressed by research participants saying the CRGs attract “people who are involved in the community ... those people who help others to do things”, and that having a “sense of community participation and helping community to develop” is important (CHRC#3, 19 March 2021, p. 6; CRG#34, 28 October 2021, p. 5). CRG#4 noted “For me it all comes down to giving back to community (25 March 2021, p. 5), while CRG#35 described the CRG members as “community minded people with the drive for the betterment of others” (28 October 2021, p. 6). CHRC#10 said of the CRG members, “they want to give back to their communities. They see the CRGs as a potential way to influence things for their community and for the future” (19 October 2021, p. 4). A participant also described how their belief in valuing and giving to community has been passed on through generations. For CRG#15 stepping forward and being involved in community life is important because,

My grandfather was a good community person, my father was a community person, and it runs in your genes when you see your parents working for the community. I have brought my children up the same way. (4 March 2021, p. 3)

These participants verify their attachment to place is expressed through helping and giving to others in the community, which strengthens their place-identity. As previously noted, people do act on their habitus by continually undertaking social actions that express an intentional and invested commitment to place (Easthope, 2010, p, 133; Casey, 2001).

In relation to advocacy and self-efficacy, Norris et al. (2008) said citizen participation relates to creating empowering settings that allows for the participants own feelings of efficacy as well as playing meaningful roles as community leaders (p. 139). For the CRG participants being able to act on their agency and self-efficacy to advocate for their community motivated them to join the CRGs. CRG#10 said they joined the CRG “to become an advocate for all those who can’t have a say” (1 April 2021, p. 8). While another participant noted,

I think if you are living in the community and you think things should be different, I don’t think you should sit back and say things should be different, because who should change it? If you actually really believe that something should be different, then what are you going to do to help it change?
(CRG#20, 12 March 2021, p. 5)

CRG#11 expressed their view, stating,

... everyone should do their bit. Your community doesn’t get anywhere if everyone doesn’t do their bit. There are some people who don’t and that is their choice, but my doctrine is, if you can call it that, is that everyone should do their bit. Get out and get off your butt and do something. (19 March 2021, p. 3)

CRG#17 explained that “If you sit back and say nothing and just whinge to your neighbour, you’ll get nothing done. But if you feel powerfully enough about your community you will step forward” (4 March 2021, p. 5). Additionally for Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996), people experience positive feelings of worth or social value as well as increased belief in their self-efficacy capabilities when they can effect change in relation to qualities of the place (p. 208). One research participant experienced positive feelings of social worth and social connectedness when putting effort into community events saying,

When we run a successful [name of community event] and people say they had a great time, that makes me feel good. The same with the races when you see everybody had a good day at the races. When you are part of your community you think, well that is us! (CRG#15, 4 March 2021, p. 4)

CRG#34 noted, that CRG members stay motivated when “we see stuff happening. It is not tokenistic, that there is a way forward and you can tick off the goals at the end of the year ... and that we still have a sense of community identity” (28 October 2021, p. 3). These views highlight for some participants by acting on their belief that they can make a difference forms their connection with place. This connection to place is to both their personal and community identity.

Other research participants are motivated to be part of the CRGs to improve their communities for future generations. Petty et al. (2003) noted place can serve the continuity of one’s identity through planning for future generations and aspiring to invoke one’s past memories of place for future generations (p 12). While Main and Sandoval (2015) suggest the continuity of identity related to place has significant consequences for wellbeing and strengthens the bonds between people and places (p. 84). CRG#28 said they are involved in the CRG to see the “town thrive for the children because they need it for their future” (26 March 2021, p. 4). Another participant said they became a CRG member because “It is important to me because I have children and grandchildren on properties in the area” (CRG#4, 25 March 2021, p. 5). Others noted “One of my values is future generations, so you are doing things that benefit your community now and into the future” on the CRGs, and having “great assets for the children to be able to enjoy the place like we have as children” was an important motivate for being part of the CRG (CHRC#4, 12 March 2021, p. 5; CRG#27, 26 March 2021, p. 4). These views allude to the need to recreate the positive aspects of personal lived experiences for future generations to preserve their continuity of self as a connection to place.

Further data described the importance of individual social bonds and embeddedness within their communities. However as noted by Norris et al. (2008), “place attachment” is closely related to one’s “sense of community” and implies an emotional connection to one’s town or neighbourhood, that is separate from the social connections to specific people who live there (p. 139). For CRG#28 their town is important “because it is my town and my children are here, I want my

grandchildren to have a community that they are proud of” (26 March 2021, p. 4). While CRG#20 referred to the importance of place in relation to the people and their life achievements explaining,

I am in Emerald because it is my place, my community and my home. The people in the community are my people and my young people and my old people. I know that I am saying mine, but that is the way I feel about it. It is my place; I have made it my place. It is a place where I have grown my children, I have grown my career, I have grown myself as a person and I would like to see it continue to be able to support families, young people and elders as a community. (12 March 2021, p. 5)

These quotes demonstrate the social bonds these participants have with people, family, work colleagues and community members which forms their connections to place. Whereby, a sense of belonging within the community networks connects individual and community identity.

In reference to the relationship between place and identity, Easthope (2004) distinguishes between house as a physical location and a “home” as being a social, cultural and emotive construct (p. 136). A home-place is not simply a physical location, it imbues a sense of being “at home” and links to psychological wellbeing (p. 136 & 137). One way that identity is attached to a particular place is by a feeling a sense of belonging to that place (Quazimi, 2014, p. 308). It is a place in which people can feel comfortable, for example at home because the way they define themselves is symbolised by certain qualities of that place (p. 308). Some research participants used the analogy of “home”, or it is “where I live” when referring to the importance of their town or place to them. CRG#1 said, “It is home. It is the place that you live, and you want to make it safer and be a better place to live and obviously you want to better more things that the community can enjoy” (30 April 2021, p. 5). For CRG#6 their town is important “because it is home, it has been home since I was twenty” (25 March 2021, p. 4). CRG#9 also said of their town, “it is important to me because I have lived here for so long. I think it is an important place to me. My kids are here as well. It is where we live” (2 March 2021, p. 4). For others, “it is where we live and spend the most time”; “this is for my family and supporting families and children to stay here in this community” (CRG#22, 2 March 2021, p. 4;

CRG#23, 1 April 2021, p. 8). While CRG#13 said “it is a great place to live in and everybody helps everybody else when they are in strife, and I wouldn’t live anywhere else. They will probably have to drag me out of here” (18 March 2021, p. 4). For these participants, connection to place are perceptions of being in comfortable and familiar surroundings and being with people they have close relationships with all attests to the strength of this finding on connection and identity.

Breakwell (1983) says places are significant sources of identity elements, which arise because places have figures and images that have meaning and are significant to us (as cited by Qazimi, 2014, p. 308). Place-identity relates to interpretations, conceptions and feelings of specific physical setting or types of setting (Qazimi, 2014, p. 307; Proshansky, 1978). CRG#12 alludes to the positive feelings that are invoked by images of the physical settings saying, “the amenity and the niceness of a place where you live is very important” (16 March 2021, p. 4). One research participant described how physical settings can impact on emotions and psychological wellbeing. CRG#26 shared,

If you want to drive into the town and see a nice clean little town, it takes work. I know it was a while back, where coming into [name of town] was an absolute feral mess ... and over time these little things have all changed and been corrected so now as you drive in, you go “Wow, this is a beautiful little town again”. That was happening too in the middle of the really, really dry, and people’s attitudes were a bit down as well and you drove into town going “Oh my God, no one cares” but I know it definitely all takes time. It was just a bad stage and we’ve gotten there now. Feeling more positive and hopeful. (20 April 2021, p. 7)

Other CRG participants commented on how the images or visual appearance of living in towns that are not maintained can become reflective of their self-image and can be perceived as judged negatively by others. CRG#10 said, “I don’t want to be in the situation of if someone says, “I hear you live in [name of town] ... Oh, that is the place where they don’t mow the lawn, they don’t pick up the rubbish or water the gardens” (1 April 2021, p. 6). CRG#15 added “it’s probably because it’s your home so it’s whatever you do in your town it is a bit of a reflection of everyone, isn’t it?” (4 March 2021, p. 3). While another participant linked visual amenity to others judging

community residents as not being respectful of their place, saying “I have always been a community spirited person. I think if we don’t look after our churches and our cemeteries and things like that it shows we disrespect our own town” (CRG#35, 28 October 2021, p. 5). For these participants, visual images of physical settings can imbue emotions and feelings that connect to self-identity to the physical place-identity.

Senses of place may be impassioned often with intense emotional constructions in relation to identity (Qazimi, 2014, p. 309), and can be feelings of the way people experience, express, imagine and know the place in which they live (p. 307). Many CRG small towns and rural communities in the Central Highlands face declining population, which results in a loss of services such as businesses and schools. In this context, research participants described their towns and communities as “going to die” and the importance of keeping them “alive”. CRG#19 said their town is important to them “because all small towns are going to die without something happening in them. You look around, we know even here, we have lost so many things” and gave an example of student numbers dropping at the school (12 March 2021, p. 4). CRG#17 explained,

A lot of things have been happening in small towns over the last few years. This town has gone down in population because of a multitude of things ... when one thing is taken away out of the town everything else suffers and that goes right down to our small clubs in small towns, they struggle. (4 March 2021, p. 4)

CHRC#6 explained that it is about “the survival of those communities. I think that if community doesn’t show passion for their own towns, then they won’t survive. It is our life blood ... It is passion because if we don’t have that we won’t have our small communities. Passion is what drives a community” (29 March 2021, p. 7). While, CRG#14 said, “it is easy for a small town to just die basically, if things don’t improve and you don’t attract people to town either visitors or people to live. It’s important to just keep it alive” (1 April 2021, p. 5). As noted previously, identity is produced by place (Main & Sandoval, 2015, p. 73), and these research participants, living in places that are declining can invoke empathy and impassioned emotional that connection them to place. This can suggest that if individual identity is produced

in place, then over time, self-identity can also be negatively impacted, which can test or reinforce “passion” for community.

For Twigger-Ross & Uzzell (1996), identity is the desire to maintain personal distinctiveness or uniqueness and in relation to community identity is presenting themselves as different, unique and distinct from other communities (p. 207). Senses of place often provides differences between one group of people and another as aspects of identity (Qazimi, 2014, p. 308). The process of “othering” is specifying where you belong through a contrast with other places as well as other people (p. 309). CRG#27 said, “I just want to see Rolleston go forward and just match up with the other towns” (26 March 2021, p. 3). While CRG#13 explained “we will keep working and trying to make our community better...and in fact the best community” (18 March 2021, p. 4). CRG#4 acknowledged their community is “that little area that’s really away from all the other areas. We are unique” (25 March 2021, p. 7). For CRG#3 they wanted to be distinguished from other CRG towns to secure financial equity saying, “I suppose to make sure all the other places don’t get more money than we are, so we don’t fall behind” (23 March 2021, p. 5). For these participants, connection to place reflects confidence in uniqueness and perceptions of equality and pride as expressions of self-identity within place.

The research data provides further evidence of the CRG members being connected to place through elements of place-identity. These elements of place-identity were expressed as social, cultural, emotive, and psychological constructs. The interview participants commented that these elements of place-identity as motivating them to become members of the CRGs. As previously noted by Easthope (2004), while Bourdieu does not invoke habitus specifically, it can be used to elucidate the link between self and place given our habitus is developed in physical places (p. 137). Acting on the basis of habitus through agency and self-efficacy, the member’s attachment to place and elements of place-identity contribute to the group habitus of the CRGs, which is building cultural capital. Also, by acting on agency within social settings, agency creates social capital through ongoing social interactions, and can further each other in a virtuous cycle (Dale, 2013, p. 2). From this perspective, the CRGs can be seen as social spaces that enable CRG members and Council to exercise their agency and through regular social interactions, agency and social capital continues to build over time. Based on the research data, to understand full membership of the CRGs, elements of place which link to the identity

of CRG members needs to be considered. As noted above Archer (2013) states that the equivalent of “who I am is what I care about” as individual identity becomes “who we are is what we care about” as collective identity (p. 11). In this way, the individual elements of place-identity aggregates to influence and shape “what we care about” as CRGs.

4.5.3. Future vision

It emerged that research participants share common elements in their aspirations for the future of their towns and communities, which transforms “what we care about” to “what we can do” now to invest in the future. For Wenger (1998), a sense of trajectory gives members of a community of practice ways of sorting out what matters and what does not, what contributes to their identity and what remains marginal (p. 156). The term “trajectory” is used here not as a path that can be foreseen, but one that has coherence through time that connects, past, present and the future (p. 154). Through trajectories, identities incorporate the past and the future in the very process of negotiating the present (p. 154). They might also give significance to events in relation to time constructed as an extension of self in a way that practice itself gives life to stories and mutual engagement offers a way to share stories through one’s own experience (Wenger, 1998, p. 156). The development of the self-in-place identity is related to the shared collective dimensions of place that become integrated within one’s individual identity (Pretty, Chipuer & Bramstom, 2003, p. 10 & 11). For community members, the process of identity formation becomes embedded and associated with place because of the experiences of attachment they create (Main & Sandoval, 2015, p. 75). Easthope (2004) notes that Bourdieu’s concept of habitus can be used to elucidate the link between self and place (p. 137). The concept of shared cultural values, beliefs and practices that form part of the group habitus can be used to portray the common elements of place that are embedded within the CRGs habitus (Throsby, 1999, p. 4 & 7). The meaning of place common to its inhabitants, can have affective, cognitive and behavioural components of shared experience (p.10). While from an individual perspective people experience levels of feeling and behaviour from belonging and special affinity that invoke a readiness to do something for the place (Throsby, 1999, p.11).

Therefore, it can be interpreted that aspects of individual place identities and efficacy-based agency motivate community members to join the CRGs as social

spaces that enable collective agency for community outcomes (Dale, 2013, p. 11). While Archer (2013) incorporates the personal and collective, and links reflexivity to identity through the concept of collective reflexivity, suggests that reflexive deliberation links individual and collective identities to shared intrinsic commitment and attaining common goals (p.11). As noted in the Literature Review, researchers have argued that Bourdieu's notion of habitus underestimates that rational, calculative and reflexive aspects of human action, which gave way to the development of reflexive habitus (Mouzelis, 2006, p. 6 & 7). As an alternative concept, Archer (2013) argues that reflexivity mediates between the objective structure and cultural contexts confronting agents as they pursue reflexively defined projects based on their concerns (p. 1). Archer (2013) adds that "what we care about" is not because we think the same or have shared commitments and mutual intentions, "but because we are in a special relation, and that relation is what makes us reflexive in a social, instead of a personal way" (p. 11). The research participants identified this special relation with others as being with liked-minded people that contributed to a combined future vision.

In relation to community leadership development, Anderson (2014) noted that people tend to want to work with others that are like-minded and those that they feel a connection with (p. 308). The research participants described their mutual intentions as like-minded people that can be described as informing their collective reflexivity. As noted by CRG#1, "we are all pushing for the same goal ... we are like-minded people that are attending the reference group" (30 April 2021, p. 2). CRG#3 said, "We all have our different view but probably very like-minded in what our goals are and what we want in the community" (23 March 2021, p. 4). CHRC# 11 agreed the CRGs are "a meeting place for those like-minded people, which is a really great thing" (19 October 2021, p. 6). Collective reflexivity of the CRG members transforms "what we care about" to "what we can do" in terms of understanding and articulating future community visions of identity. As trajectories of identities, the CRG members are incorporating the future in the very process of negotiating the present as noted by Wenger (1998, p. 154).

As noted in the Literature Review, community planning or visioning uses participatory processes to identify and articulate a future vision for community that incorporates the hopes and dreams of people from all segments of the community (Garkovich, 2012, p. 115). Prince (2014) says that visioning self in the future is

inextricably bound with place and therefore place enables people to envision different possible futures (p. 1). Therefore, an important aspect for CRG members is their reflexive capacity to understand and work collaboratively to achieve agreed priorities and goals to realise the future they envision for their towns and communities. This was verified by CRG participants, with CRG#25 describing the CRGs as,

... a way for different demographics of your community to all come together to talk about what they see the vision of their community is and the steps for how they can make their community more resilient and vibrant. (21 May 2021, p. 9)

Another respondent said about the CRGs, “it’s about forward planning for our town ... it’s nice I think to have a strategy in place moving forward and ... work together on that strategy” (CRG#7, 23 February 2021, p. 3). For CRG#1, in relation to having the CRGs, “It’s adapting and looking forward” (26 May 2021, p. 4). The research participants recognised that to plan for the future and implement community initiatives, now and into the future, also links to the value of working with like-minded people.

Archer (2013) defines collective identity as “who we are is what we care about” (p. 11), the research participants shared what they care about as their hopes, dreams and aspirations for the future of their towns and communities. As a result, “what we care about” translates to “what we can do”. Through a community planning process, the individual elements of place-identity become the collective hopes, dreams and aspirations for the future of communities. As demonstrated in the first section above, the elements of place-identity stem from the individual cognitions about the tangible and intangible aspects of physical world that “represent memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings and concepts of behaviour and experiences” that defines the day-to-day existence for every human being (O’Toole & Grey, 2020, p. 8; Proshansky, 1983, p. 59). Place is important in the formation of self- and group- identities and the need to maintain a continuity of one’s own place-based identities by seeking out or recreating places important in one’s past (Main & Sandoval, 2015, p. 72). Personal and group identities associated with and communicated through the local physical environment strengthen the bonds between people and places (p. 75). The ways that places become “imbued with

public meaning” come to symbolise distinct social and cultural identities (Main & Sandoval, 2015, p. 75). It is also possible to envision the long-term community goals and visions, stewarded through the CRGs, as becoming reified through their social discourse and ongoing reimagining of a better future.

For Wenger (1998), “imagination is an important component of our experience of the world and our sense of place in it”; it “is looking at an apple seed and seeing a tree” (p. 176). Nurturing collective imagination allows a community of practice members to envision a future that is anchored in social interactions and communal experiences that expands the scope of reality and identity (p. 178). While identity emerges from social interactions and common experiences, the collective imagination of the CRGs can allow members to reify a hybrid or collective place-identity. In this way, the individual elements of place-identity as social and cultural constructs form the unique identities of the 13 CRG towns and communities. As noted, by Barton and Selfa (2011), the concept of community and physical landscapes or environments are social and cultural constructs because they take on meaning as people interact with them (p. 35). Cultural capital plays a vital role in framing the feedback loops or two-way relationship building within community change processes (Emery & Flora, 2012, p. 141). Bourdieu (1974) introduced the concept of fungibility to describe how cultural resources become capital when community members can convert those resources into other forms of capital (as cited by Emery & Flora, 2012, p. 141). The concept of fungibility, demonstrates how cultural capital can lead to an increase in other forms of community capitals (p. 141). This approach provides a broader view of cultural capital and underscores the role it plays in a change process such as community visioning and community development (p. 141). Emery and Flora (2006) say that social capital and cultural capital play an integral role in community capacity building (p. 33). Also drawing on Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, groups such as the CRGs can also act on their habitus to take social actions such as acting on their agency to invest in their commitment to place (Easthope, 2004, p. 133). While Dale (2013), notes there is a critical distinction between agency and social capital whereby social capital is a potential and agency activities it (p. 3; Krishna 2001). Agency is a catalyst and empowerment is an outcome of social capital in the implementation of sustainable community development (Dale, 2012, p. 13). Dale (2013) acknowledges agency can be critical for civic society, democracy and robust governance (p. 13). Within the field

of local government, the CRG community governance model has been developed by Council as a democratic mechanism to enable agency which allows for CRG members, Council and other key stakeholders to collaborate in planning and delivering projects for the future development of the 13 localities within the Central Highlands.

Research participants shared their hopes, dreams and aspirations for the future of their towns and communities which extend on the individual elements of place-identity detailed above. It is possible to assume that these are like those of community members in other rural and regional towns and communities in Queensland. Following is a short list of some of the combined aspirations the research participants shared which provides a glimpse into the future they envision for their towns and communities. As noted by CRG#28, “we want to grow our community.... in the direction that our community wants to grow” (26 March 2021, p. 4). CHRC#1 said, “having everyone at the table is important ... Where the whole community is speaking on what they want for their future is the most valuable” (22 February 2021, p. 4). While CRG#25 noted, of the CRGs,

it is a great networking opportunity for people who do not often meet with each other. To get a different perspective of what you need something in your community, or why something is not working in your community. And then those ideas and visions can be fed back to your local council so together you can work towards a common goal. (21 May 2021, p. 7)

CRG#7 described how the CRGs provide “different insights. I might attend a meeting and have my thought in place of what I’d like to see for the future, but then when you are sitting around the table and an item is being discussed, it sort of broadens your thought and it helps lead a clear path to the end goal for the community” (23 February 2021, p. 2). These views represent how the CRG members perceive collaboration as a way to achieve some of their aspirations, collated and detailed below.

- Improving liveability, into the future, was important for the research participants as it would contribute to a range of aspects of everyday life in towns and communities. As summarised by CRG#8 who said liveability “is critical for little country towns” and making “a community that is more vibrant and

diverse...and more liveable is enjoyable to live in, you are going to have more success in people wanting to live in an area” (23 March 2021, p. 4). Other expressed that improving liveability as the means to “keep people here” in relation to maintaining the population levels in rural areas (CRG#29, 19 March 2021, p. 5). While another participant perceived having “liveable communities for all” in terms of improving the quality of life “for people living in towns” and bringing economic benefits to the “rural sector and for tourism” (CRG#22, 2 March 2021, p. 4).

- Increasing the population was important to grow communities and support business and industry, especially attracting families to live in towns and communities. CRG#29 suggests attracting people to live here, they would like to see smaller communities promoted as “great places to bring up children and for the elderly and they are generally safer spaces” (19 March 2021, p. 5). For CRG#21, “our town has got to be liveable for all. It is a great way of life. It is a great community” (1 April 2021, p. 3). CRG#30 said, “to improve the town and promote all the benefits of the community” will encourage people to come and live here (26 March 2021, p. 2). CRG#34 said promoting the towns is a benefit because “we have got a really rich and strong community, we have got a rich environment of beautiful landscapes” (28 October 2021, p. 4).
- Economic development and business growth was also important for other respondents. For CRG#35 having “a vision” for increasing economic and business “development and growth” of the population is important (28 October 2021, p. 4). CRG#21 suggested “we need to keep people in the rural sector” (1 April 2021, p. 3), CRG#32 noted that by improving liveability “from a business perspective, we recognise that there is a synergy between a healthy vibrant town and a productive and happy workforce” (23 March 2021, p. 4). CRG#13 explained,

... our hotel is now reopened which is lovely after being closed for nearly twelve months. Unfortunately, our little shop has closed so we can't get fuel and our post office is closed. We now have a roadside service for garbage collection after our rubbish dump was closed, which is absolutely wonderful.

But yes, we will keep working trying to make our community better (18 March 2021, p. 3).

- Other participants perceived growth in the tourism sector as an opportunity to increase economic development in their towns and communities. CRG#27 said, “We want to see the town thriving for our tourists” (26 March 2021, p. 4), and making the community “a bit more welcoming for people to pull up and have a look at our [name of town] and its history (CRG#16, 11 March 2021, p. 3). A participant from a different town said, we want “to get visitors coming though ... to come and stop and read our story boards” and experience the town (CRG#13, 18 March 2021, p. 3). CRG#15 said, the CRG is now working to tidy up the main street to “make it more welcoming for people to pull up and have a look at our town and its history” (4 March 2021, p. 3). CRG#6 added, “I really want to see our town being beautified because we are on the highway that passes from Duaringa to Emerald so locals and visitors can enjoy our town” (25 March 2021, p. 4).
- Creating more adaptive and resilient communities is also viewed as assisting CRG towns and communities to be responsive to change from within and beyond the region. This was summed up by CRG#31 who said,

the world will always be constantly changing ... You are not ever really going to have a happy community if you just stay in the same place in a changing world. So, I think the best thing for community spirit and encouraging people to live in the community is that we always need to be adapting and striving for better. It’s really about securing our future. (30 March 2021, p. 2)

CRG#22 noted it is about “sometimes being adaptive” in relation to improving small country towns (2 March 2021, p. 4). Then for CRG#25, it is having a vision and taking steps to “make their community more resilient and vibrant” (21 May 2021, p. 9).

- Another suggested aspiration is in regard to improving assets, support and services such as having better facilities in the community and having assets, good playgrounds, good fields, good tennis courts and get the infrastructure and amenities to keep people and families involved (CRG#4, 25 March 2021,

p. 3; CRG#15, 4 March 2021, p. 3). For CRG#2, the CRGs are about being able to achieve our community outcomes which are “improved roads and communications infrastructure is what is needed” (26 May 2021, p. 4).

- Improving amenity and attractiveness was also important to the research participants. CRG#13 said that “everyone likes a nice place to drive through. They like a nice place to live in and somewhere that’s got some amenities” (18 March 2021, p. 3). CRG#27 said that “we are very busy in the tourist season from April to September so it is nice to have people comment about what a lovely town it is and then they can promote our town to other tourists” (26 March 2021, p. 3). CRG#29 said, “if we can beautify the town and make it a liveable space then people will go, “Oh, let’s stay in Springsure” (19 March 2021. p. 4).
- Attracting support services to improve the quality of life for all demographics was another key strategy for future-proofing communities. CRG#30 said that for some people and families living in rural areas feel quite isolated so offering support and services will encourage families to live “out here to be community” (26 March 2021, p. 2). CRG#9 said, “it’s really important to maintain the services ... once you lose a service it’s not there and we’ve lost so many” (CRG#10, 1 April 2021, p. 7). For CRG#17 keeping and increasing the population will ensure the community groups and clubs do not “struggle” and the number of students do not decline to ensure schools do not lose teachers (4 March 2021; CRG#18, 9 March 2021, p. 5).
- Considering the survival of the smaller communities into the future was a vision shared by several CRG research participants. They noted in relation to small rural towns and communities “it is important to just keep it [town] alive...if things don’t improve”, and “All small towns are going to die without something happening in them” (CRG#14, 1 April 2021, p. 5; CRG#19, 9 March 2023, p. 5). CHRC#2 suggests that “small towns are the backbone of the country. People do live there, work there, live their lives, therefore it is important to keep them going, keep them running. Don’t let them die! They can easily be forgotten in the greater scheme of things” (26 May 2021, p. 5).

- Considering and planning now for future generations to ensure and improve their quality of life was a further priority. CRG#3 said it is important “to leave a legacy for our town. To try and make it a better place (23 March 2021, p. 5). CRG#27 said “For the children basically, I want this town to thrive for the children in this town because they need it for their future (26 March 2021, p. 4). While CHRC#4 said, “It is working together to be a great place to live that benefits community now and into the future ... valuing future generations” (12 March 2021, p. 3).

As previously noted, these quotes extend on from the elements of place-identity to create a better understanding of the social and cultural constructs of CRG members about their ties to the bonds and attachments to physical localities. They also demonstrate how CRG members negotiate or reflexively deliberate the present to incorporate identities of their past into their future as a continuous trajectory. In this way, it creates a better understanding of what constitutes full membership of the CRG members.

As these future aspirations are combined from across the research participants, collectively they represent elements of a regional set of aspirations for Central Highlands. Just as efficacy-based agency motivated individuals to join the CRGs, the CRG members have the capacity for collective agency at the regional level. As noted previously, individual agency can be connected to strong perceptions of self-efficacy that is efficacy-based, while collective agency can be described as the social environments where people work together to achieve change outcomes to benefit community (Dale, 2013, p. 3). When the members of all 13 CRGs connect, they are creating another dimension to their full membership. While place-identity refers to aspects of CRG membership, full membership can also include regional place-identity as another dimension of membership.

4.5.4. Regional link

From the research data, it emerged that Council has facilitated opportunities for members of all 13 CRGs to come together at face-to-face gatherings, creating social spaces for shared conversations to expand their knowledge and potential, as a regional collective, to act on their agency and action outcomes. As noted in Theme 1, each of the 13 CRGs can be considered as part of a larger network or landscape of practising CRGs with each community connected into Council. In this way, CHRC

has constructed a new level at which members of each CRG can connect with each other as well as with and through their local government. This concept has been drawn from Wenger's notion of a Landscape of Practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 118). As previously noted for the purpose of this research project, each CRG is viewed as a community of practice and therefore become a network of 13 CRGs as a landscape of practices. As referenced in the Literature Review, Landscapes of Practice is a concept that evolved from the CoPs as a social learning system (Wenger, 2010, p. 137), where the CoPs differentiate themselves and interlock with each other as they constitute a complex social landscape of shared practices, membership, boundaries and peripheries (Wenger, 1998, p. 118). From a spatial perspective, the 13 CRGs can be imagined as a patchwork of multi-sites or "places" connected into Council. When the members of the 13 CRGs come together as a regional collective, another dimension is incorporated into this governance model that creates the opportunity for collective agency, social and cultural capital building to occur. By connecting CRG members from across the region, they create the opportunity to extend Archer's concept of collective identity that realises "what we are is what we care about" as a regional CRG community (2013, p. 11). This regional level of connection adds to the understanding of full membership of CRG members as related to place-identity.

As mentioned in Theme 3: Practice, Council facilitates the annual Regional Summit as a face-to-face event for all CRG members to meet as a collective with councillors, Council staff and other key stakeholders. The participants also noted that Council compiles the Regional Roundup to summarise the annual achievements of each CRG, which is presented as a power-point to each CRG at their last meeting of the year. This was developed to ensure CRG members share information of each group's achievements when COVID pandemic first happened in 2020. The Regional Summit and the Regional Roundup have become ways to further link the CRG members to creates a combined group.

As noted in the research data, the first Regional Summit was held in July 2015 and these events were held each year in different towns and communities within the Central Highlands prior to Covid pandemic in 2020. Following is a summary of the CRG participants insights that relate to coming together and learning from each other at a regional level including Sharing knowledge, Collective voice, Social connections and Regional roundup.

4.5.4.1 *Sharing knowledge*

The research participants explained that the Regional Summits create the opportunity for each CRG present and share information about the projects and initiatives they are working on in their towns and communities at the forum. CRG#11 state that the purpose of “the annual get together at the regional summits are held so the CRGs can present to each other on the progress of their CRG” (19 March 2012, p. 3). While CRG#15 explained “we were able to go to the summit meetings, that was before Covid, so it was a chance to actually show everyone what we’re doing in our community” (4 March 2021, p. 3). CHRC#3 noted that the summits give the CRG members the opportunity to learn from each other saying “they can see other’s ideas of how they can progress their community” (19 March 2021, p. 3). CHRC#1 explained, “each CRG group prepares a presentation of what they have been up to which they present to the whole group” at the summits (22 February 2021, p. 5). Other participants explained that along with the group presentations, each CRG set up displays showcasing aspects of their communities and Council invited guest presenters to the summits. CRG#6 explained “our CRG got up when it was our turn to do our presentation about Blackwater CRG to the whole forum.... we set up our own display tables to showcase our towns” (25 March 2021, p. 4). CHR#19 said, “all those communities within the shire get together and they do an actual presentation, and they display things of what is going on in their community. It might be pictorial, or it can be items as well” (12 March 2021, p. 5). CHRC#1 added, “we [Council] organise a guest presenter for the summits” (22 February 2021, p. 5). CRG#6 explained “the first three regional summits in particular were amazing. They have presenters and one chap they had motivated people and showed them how to do up their town. It was interesting to learn what you can do with little resources” (25 March 2021, p. 5). These quotes demonstrate the Regional Summits provide the opportunity for the CRG members from individual communities to make presentations, including a guest presenter, and display information to showcase their own communities and increase renewed identity-making on an annual basis.

Other participants shared their thoughts about the ideas and knowledge they gained from the other CRG members. CRG#20 said, “the CRG summits were a fantastic showcase of what’s happening and some of the smaller communities, I’d eat my heart out because they just have such fantastic ideas and were running with

them” (12 March 2021, p. 3). This research participant added after hearing what other CRGs are doing, “I thought, ‘Oh wow, that’s fantastic! What a great idea! Can we do something like that here?’” (p. 3). While CRG#14 said, “I think getting different ideas, getting a different perspective on things is great because you might think that something is an absolutely fantastic idea and then someone from the outside comes in” and shares their thoughts, “it makes you think about things in a different way” (1 April 2021, p. 3). In relation to learning about another CRGs project, CRG#19 noted that it is the access to “firsthand knowledge, it’s knowing things that have not been corrupted along the way. You are hearing it from the people who are running the thing” (12 March 2021. p. 3). CRG#35 said the summit is “absolutely a good idea for the CRGs to connect with each other because if they are trying to get a project through ... that concept or idea might work absolutely fantastic for another area so sharing information means we do not have to keep re-inventing the wheel” (28 October 2021, p. 5). While CRG#31 said about sharing information and experiences that “I think if one community group has learnt something then everyone should know about that, so we don’t make the same mistake or we get to the end goal quicker” (30 March 2021, p. 5). These views demonstrate how exchanging ideas and sharing knowledge has enabled collective learning. Through their active participation, the CRG members have gained ideas for new community projects and learnt more efficient ways to action community projects based on the actual success of other CRGs. In the process, the CRGs are building their knowledge of their particular community strengths and their capabilities to resource and action new ways to develop their communities. In this way, CRG members are forming new attachments to their place communities and to the other CRG communities from across the region which is reifying place-identity.

Research participants also noted that having the summits held in different places provided them with the opportunity to visit and learn more the other towns and communities in the region. CRG#19 confirmed Council have held the summits in different towns like Capella, Dingo, Springsure, Blackwater and Emerald “to rotate them around” the region (12 March 2021, p. 4). Then CRG#25 shared insights about summits saying,

The summit in Capella was awesome, because there were little bus tours ... I go to Capella all the time, but I had never driven to those particular spots, and

know the history in a certain place. The same with Springsure as there was absolutely amazing just to find out the local knowledge and just to see what's there even. I'm involved in tourism, but I didn't know about. Some of the things I learnt about Springsure which was awesome. (21 May 2021, p. 7)

CRG#12 said, "I'll be honest, I don't know what is happening in the other towns like Duaringa or Rolleston or Bluff" (16 March 2021, p. 5). For CRG#24 about the summit,

It is good to know what is happening in Duaringa and Tieri and a lot of times we don't know what is happening in other parts of our region. The summit showed that we were all looking and working towards a common goal and little pockets here and there were not able to reach their goals but knowing that someone in another place was doing exactly the same thing, you had a chance to brainstorm and go "wow", we could make this happen as a region more so than an individual community. (12 March 2021, p. 8)

These quotes demonstrate that knowledge sharing can contribute to improved practices for undertaking CRG projects and that coming together to connect at the regional level can contribute to creating common goals to achieve the regional vision. These quotes also acknowledge the role Council plays in hosting the Regional Summits and facilitating the opportunity for CRG members to interact and learn together. As noted in Theme 1: Meaning, sharing information builds knowledge and improves practice skills by enabling agency and negotiating meaning through conversations at individual CRGs. As I perceive the individual CRGs as CoPs, by linking CRG members at the regional level, this group can also be viewed as a regional community of practice. As with the place CRGs, when members come together at the regional level, they can imagine and reify a hybrid or collective Central Highlands identity. In this way, self-in-place identity as a shared construct of the Central Highlands becomes integrated within an individual's (Pretty et al., 2003, p. 10 & 11). Therefore, it can be demonstrated that the CRG community governance model is building a regional place-identity with the CRG members. As noted in Theme 1: Meaning, this is important post amalgamations for some research participants. Additionally, as a result of the knowledge sharing about undertaking CRG community projects at the Regional Summits, CRG members are building

competence in community planning and community development practice. This provides Council with the opportunity to partner with CRG members who now have the capability to collectively action regional community projects and initiatives.

4.5.4.2 *Collective voice*

The research participants noted the Regional Summits provide the opportunity for individual communities to share have a voice into other CRGs and identify similar issues being experienced in other places. CRG#27 explained the Regional Summits gave our little town “a bit of a voice” and letting the other community members know “we are here you know!”. It was a way of getting us seen into the other townships” (26 March 2012, p. 4). While CRG#17 said the benefit of the summit was that “you pick up some good ideas and if they are all having the same issues as you, then collectively you have got a much better voice than one little unit” (4 March 2021, p. 4). CRG#24 added, “There’s value in numbers. If there was a common issue across all the CRGs they could bring this to the attention of council which council would collate anyway. In understanding what individual CRGs are pushing, surely, they [Council] will recognise that there is something of collective importance to all the groups” (12 March 2021, p. 6). While CRG#8 explained,

The benefit of having them [CRGs] interconnected is everybody knows what everybody’s working on. You know there might be some initiatives that another CRG are working on that could offer real benefit the other groups as well. So, it’s obviously learning from them could be worthwhile or collectively you might find there’s initiatives that could be drawn together as a bigger overall project to go to council. Whatever that might be. It might be something to do with the highways or something that affects a number of CRG areas. And collectively, same thing, it would probably flag higher on the priority list for council to have a look at. (23 March 2021, p. 9)

CRG#15 explained about the interaction with others, “It’s amazing what other people have accomplished and just seeing the look on their faces when they are talking about what they have done in the community” (4 March 2021, p. 4). While CRG#24 said about the summits it is “actually people talking and listening, people talking about their passion....and you can contribute to that excitement” (12 March 2021, p. 8). CRG#20 explained about the summit,

I think that is something that was really good because you could see the faces of the other people and have conversations and spark ideas. Because if you have got someone in there that can spark an idea and all of a sudden it is like fireworks, lit from one little spark. You have got that passion that someone else brings and also you try new stuff, and you are all energised by their passion. And sometimes that idea, just one idea, can go ‘choong’.(12 March 2021, p. 5)

CRG#22 said the coming together allows everyone to ensure “all communities are getting a fair treatment. If they are doing things in one area that might benefit another area, then they take it on board. It is sharing information for the positiveness of it all” (2 March 2021, p. 3). CRG#7 said, “[W]ell every town is working towards the same goal and if you put us all together, collaboration is the key” (23 February 2021, p. 3). CRG#34 explained about the summits,

It is so exciting! I suppose it gives us a bit of an identity as a shire, who we are as the Central Highlands Regional group. It promotes a little bit of unity across the CRG members and a bit of healthy competition. And working towards common goals, not just individual CRG goals, we are working towards a common goal of promoting this region. Creating pride in our region and how we will promote the amazingness of our region. (28 October 2021, p. 6)

These quotes highlight the ability of individual CRG communities to have representation into the CRG collective. Additionally, demonstrating the ability to act on their collective agency at the regional level contributes to conversations that are developing and reifying a collective regional identity.

4.5.4.3 *Social connections*

Research participants identified the Regional Summits enabled CRG members to meet each other and form friendships with fellow CRG members. As a result, members are expanding their social networks into other communities within region and they are building contacts with the others who they can link with and learn from, between summits. CHRC#1 notes that the summits “bring our communities into one venue” so all the community reference groups can meet each other (22 February 2021, p. 5). CRG#20 recognised the value of connecting at the summits

saying, “having the chance to meet up with those guys from those other locations was really valuable but we only get together once a year” and observed “actually in the smaller locations, they really are people who are active in their community” (12 March 2021, p. 4). CRG#11 noted that prior to COVID at the regional summits gave the CRG members the opportunity “to come together and meet other members from across the Highlands” (19 March 2021, p. 3). While CRG#14 acknowledged at the regional forums “we do interact, and they are really good, but they are very few and far between” (1 April 2021, p. 5). For CRG#23, the summits are “a really good way to make connections because every community is so different” (1 April 2021, p. 8). While CRG#24 explained about the summits,

I remember the first couple being absolutely amazing, and it was a really good way to connect with the other communities because we are all in the same region, we really are one big community. Each of the 13 groups represent a portion of the larger big family. (12 March 2021, p. 7)

CRG#17 shared their experience of the summits saying,

The only way we really connect is when they [Council] do the big community group meeting, the Regional Summit. That’s really good because [CEDO name] and the other Council ladies that are involved with the CRG meetings, they make sure that you are not just sitting in your group, you get to mix with everyone else, you get to have a chat. The way they create activities means everyone talks and listens to the ideas of others and what they have done, and learn this is the way other approached their projects. (4 March 2021, p. 4)

Other participants explained how they have connected with other CRG members after the summits (or between). CRG#35 said the benefits of people connecting is “priceless” and “sharing of information and contacts ... and knowing who to ring if you want to know something from another area” (28 October 2021, p. 5). CRG#34 noted it would be a good idea to have the summits “open to the community and still have your CRGs” (28 October 2021, p. 5). Then added,

It is sharing of ideas and creating different connections across the communities. One of the summits we went to, it came up about the Gemfields and their community gardens so really connecting there. And we all went out

for a trip then and participated in a field day. That was exciting. It was so exciting! (p. 6)

The research participants acknowledged the summits provided the opportunities for CRG members to meet one another, form relationships and build contacts with other members in the region to continue sharing information and ideas on an ongoing basis about a variety of community projects. In the process, the CRG members are engaging in mutual learning that is building their knowledge, skills and competency in practice. The CRG members are building trust through reciprocity as information sharing which is building relationships and social capital across the region. Through adopting new ways of thinking and new behaviours that are improving the collective practice of the CRGs, the summits shaping new social values that are positively shaping and building regional cultural capital. By actively participating and engaging with others and each other, the summits are shaping a regional or collective identity and habitus amid CRG members and Council, as community leaders.

4.5.4.4 *Regional roundup*

As a result of COVID-19, the research participants noted, the CEDOs developed the Regional Roundup as another method of communicating and sharing information with members across all the CRGs. The research participants commented on the benefits of the Regional Roundup, which is a power-point presentation that lists the events and projects each CRG had been working for the year and ideas for the future. The Regional Roundup is presented at the last CRG meeting of year. CHRC#1 said that,

Each year we [Council] do either a Regional Summit or a Regional Roundup ... the Regional Roundup is a PowerPoint presentation that lists the CRG successes for the year and their ambitions into the future, and with that process we make sure that they present to each other at the end of the year, so that they can inspire one another. (22 February 2021, p. 5)

This was confirmed by CHRC#9 who also explained about the Regional Roundup,

The groups nominate highlights for their community for the last year and at the last meeting of every year, we compile it and present it as a power-point. So, the communities do get a chance to see what other CRGs have been working on and what other CRGs are working towards in the future. So, I think that it is a good way to ensure they are that little bit connected. That they know what's happening and what the other groups have been working on. (26 October 2021, p. 5)

CRG#16 said about the Regional Roundup "I think that is a good way of getting together and seeing what everybody else is doing" (11 March 2021, p. 4). CRG#11 also compared the summits and Regional Roundup explaining,

This year, each town reported electronically, which was sent to all CH CRG members. This is a more efficient way of getting information across the region because we don't have to travel so far – it's such a big region. But that doesn't get you face-to-face meetings. I guess the benefit is in knowing what the others are doing – what's happening across the region. (19 March 2021, p. 5)

Other research participants noted additional ways for CRGs to connect. CRG#14 said, "the Council staff and the councillors do bring us some information about what other groups are doing at our meetings" ... "however, I actually think it would be good for members of different groups do attend meetings of other groups to maybe talk about what they are doing or hear what other groups are doing (1 April 2021, p. 4). CRG#25 also agreed this is a good initiative saying,

... it sort of fell over because of Covid I think. I would like to visit as a CRG member or be able to invite someone from the Emerald CRG to come out and sit through one of our meetings and I'd like to go into one of their meetings. And just to see what's happening at another CRG. (21 May 2021, p. 6)

These quotes demonstrate the value of having the Regional Roundup as another way to share information amid the CRGs. It also demonstrates that Council can be flexible and adapt to change by developing the Regional Roundup as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic social restrictions, and Council's commitment to ensuring CRG members can connect and link-up to share ideas and stories about their activities and achievements for the year. Although the Regional Roundup does not

involve social interactions, Council is continuing to facilitate information sharing amid the CRGs, which is contributing to mutual learning and improved practice on an ongoing basis. The Regional Roundup and the Regional Summits contribute to forging the concept of a regional place-identity and regional CRG membership. The Regional Roundup and the Regional Summits have become an annual reminder to the CRGs that while they do operate individually and separate to Council, they are all linked through their common purpose and practice of community planning.

Based on the research data, the Regional Link section highlights the regional dimension of the CRG community governance model and gives an insight into the regional CRG activities that are enabling collective agency and shaping new knowledge and practices, which is building cultural capital. Through connecting at the Regional Summits, CRG members have met other members from across the region, extended their social networks, and formed new relationships which is building social capital within the Central Highlands. As previously noted, Wenger (1998) says identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in the social communities of CoPs (p. 197), and place-identity can be expressed as a social construct (O'Toole & Grey, 2020, p. 8). This section demonstrates, that when the CRGs come together and actively participate in meaning making about their common practice, they are forging the concept of regional CRG membership and reifying Central Highlands place-identity.

The Identity Theme provides evidence around competence building and learning by CRG members that incorporates elements of place-identity, collective envisioning and regional interactions that assists with understanding the full membership of CRG members beyond their own CRG. As noted by Wenger (1998), learning is an experience of identity because learning transforms “who we are and what we can do” and by understanding when “we” are competent in practice members of a community of practice become full members (p. 152 & 197). Within Theme 4, evidence has been provided that CRG members become full members through dual membership of their local CRG and through their membership of their place communities.

Membership of place communities becomes important to understanding how members experience bonds and attachments as place-identity and are motivated members to join the CRGs to exercise the agency and self-efficacy. The Future Vision section provided an insight into how individual identity as “who I am is what I

care about” transforms to “who we are is what we care about” and “what we can do” as a process for shaping the unique identity of the CRGs communities. As previously noted, Wenger defines identity in practice as social not merely because it is reified in a social discourse of self and of social categories, but because it also is produced as a lived experience of participation in specific communities (1998, p. 151). The sections within this Theme, link identity to full membership of the CRG members as incorporating their CRG membership as well as their membership of their local and regional place communities.

4.6. Conclusion

This chapter uses Wenger’s CoPs components of meaning, community, practice and identity as themes and related learning capabilities as a lens to structure the research data for this study. To determine how the CRG model builds community capacity, the concepts of agency, social and cultural capital are drawn from Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice elements of field, habitus, and capital. The following provides a summary of the findings for each Theme.

Theme 1: Meaning relates to the CoPs meaning component and the learning capabilities of active participation, creating a repertoire of resources and building competence (Wenger, 1998, p. 62) for this research project. This theme includes the Active Participation and Building Competence sections. The data reveals that active participation in the CRGs does enable community to exercise their agency by having a voice into Council, and an ability to engage in meaningful conversations around the table to negotiate and make meaning of their communities and practice of community planning. It also reveals, that the CRGs provide the means for community members to meet with councillors on a regular basis to advocate for their towns and communities directly to their elected representatives; and that having a CRG in each of the 13 localities to provides the opportunity for each community to have equal representation into Council. There is evidence that the CRG model has the capacity to change and build community cultural capital, especially symbolic capital, by activating the agency of CRG members as community leaders to advocate for their communities. Based on these findings, through active participation in conversations to meaning making of their communities and practice, the CRGs have enabled community and Council to act on their agency within a deliberative community

governance structure that enhances participatory and representative democracy across the 13 CRG localities.

The Building Competence section identifies shared repertoire of CRG tools and resources initially developed by Council to focus and support meaning making by the CRG members and Council in their ongoing practice of community planning practice. There is evidence that skills development and new knowledge has been gained organically over time by the CRG members and Council representatives through mutual learning and on-the-job upskilling as they actively participate in the practice of community planning at the CRGs. Through acquiring new skills and building their mutual knowledge, the CRG members and Council representatives are individually and collectively building an ongoing regime of competence. This competence has evolved and been activated by agency and new ways of thinking about their shared practice of community planning, which in the process is building cultural capital. Utilising CRG resources and tools, gaining new skills and building knowledge, over time, demonstrates that CRG members and Council are shaping and building cultural capital amid community leaders within the region by participating in the CRGs.

Theme 2: Community relates to the CoPs community component and the learning capabilities of membership, attendance, networks and relationships (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 28 & 34) for this research project. This theme includes the Membership and Social Connections sections. The data reveals that core members regularly attend CRG meetings to progress projects, while others attend to share and gain information irregularly or rarely. Also, that the CRGs provide a local avenue for community members to raise issues or concerns in order to act on their agency that allows for democratic participation. By adopting more informal and flexible CRG membership strategies, the CRG members and the broader community can participate in the CRGs in different ways to benefit their communities. Consistency in CRG members and Council representatives participating in the CRGs accumulate explicit and tacit knowledge of CRG practice over time which ensures the CRGs are more resilient and adaptive to change. The Social Connections section reveals evidence of different types of social capital building at the CRGs: bonding, bridging and linking social capital. By exchanging and dispersing information through their individual networks within in communities about CRG activities, the CRG members continue to build bonding social capital, while linking social capital is building through

participation of Council, State Government, industry and other key stakeholders at the CRGs. Bridging social capital is created and strengthened within group connections at the CRGs. As a result, the collective social networks demonstrate the volume of social capital the CRGs generate, which can be converted to the building of other community capitals as community capacity building. There is also evidence that through agency and active participation in the CRGs, trust has emerged from the regular social interactions which strengthen relationships between community and Council as ongoing social capital building. These relationships are essential to how collaboration and partnerships occur through the CRG governance model for ongoing community planning and community development within the field of local government.

Theme 3: Practice relates to the CoPs practice component and the learning capabilities of communications, information sharing, problem solving and working collaboratively to action group activities (Wenger, 2010, p. 191). This theme includes the Communications, Collaboration and Collective Outcomes sections. Based on the research data, the CRGs introduced several communication methods to share information on a continuous basis within the CRGs, with Council, other key stakeholders and the broader community. CRG communication practices encourage and allow CRG members, councillors, Council staff, other stakeholders as “guest speakers” and the broader community to exercise their agency by sharing technical and general community information at the CRG meetings. Through establishing social norms of information sharing, the CRGs adopt practices that promote agency and social interaction that builds social capital and cultural capital. Over time, several considerations emerged as shared tacit rules that anchor collaboration in the practice of decision-making by the CRGs. These considerations include whole-of-community aspects; the “right” social setting; being solutions focused; listening to alternative points of view; and reaching consensus as a decision-making method. As these shared rules are tacit in nature, they are embedded as social norms within the group habitus which reflect the cultural capital of the CRGs. The evidence also suggests that the CRG have developed a collective process for achieving community projects and actions. Over time, the collaborative approach and collective action forges a partnership between CRGs and Council which has built trust as social capital and shifted thinking that has created new practices for community planning and community development; this strongly contributes to cultural capital. The

findings provide evidence that the CRG model, as a deliberative community governance structure, shapes shared practice which is building the capacity of the CRG members and Council as community leaders.

Theme 4: Identity relates to the CoPs identity component and the learning capabilities of identity, competence and full membership of CoPs (Wenger, 1998, p. 152), for the purpose of this study. This theme includes the Connection to Place, Future Vision and Regional Link sections and demonstrates that in order to understand full membership of the CRGs, the consideration of the elements of place which link to the identity is essential. The data reveals that CRG members are connected or attached to place through elements of place-identity, which are expressed as social, cultural, emotive, and psychological constructs. These elements of place-identity motivate community members to join the CRGs. By acting on this habitus through agency and self-efficacy, the CRG members sense of place and place-identity contribute to the group habitus of the CRGs, which builds cultural capital. The Future Vision section provides an insight into how individual place-identity as “who I am is what I care about” transforms to “who we are is what we care about” and “what we can do” as a process for shaping the unique place-identity of the CRGs and their communities as cultural capital. The Regional Link section highlights the regional dimension of the CRG community governance model and gives an insight into how regional CRG activities enable collective agency and mutual learning to build new knowledge and practices, as well as cultural capital within the regional CRG collective. Through connecting at Regional Summits, CRG members meet other CRG members, extend their social networks, and form new relationships to build social capital within the region. This section demonstrates, that when the CRGs come together and actively participate in meaning making about their common practice, they forge the concept of a regional CRG membership and in the process imaging and reifying a Central Highlands identity of place.

4.6.1. Review “hunches”

Based on the findings in this Chapter, I believe that my initial “hunches”, included in Chapter 3, are valid and verified. The CRG community governance model builds the capacity of the collective community leadership of the CRG members and Council with the Central Highlands region. A summary of these hunches occurs below:

CHRC's CRG model is potentially a unique community engagement model for local government to implement community planning in regional rural Queensland.

The findings provide evidence that the practice of community planning has developed over time to meet the unique requirements of the CRG members and Council as they implement the actions of their place communities as part of the *CH2022 Community Plan*. The CRG resources, tools and processes have also evolved over time and emerged from the collective practices of the CRG members and Council which can also be regarded as unique. As the CRG communities are located in small towns and rural areas within the Central Highlands region, it can be assumed the CRG model and community planning practices are tailored to their specific practice. Therefore, the CRG model is a unique method of engaging with community and developed their distinct practice of community planning.

The model is more than a community engagement method, that it is a type of community governance structure that enables agency and advocacy so CRG members and Council can share aspirations/ideas for future place community and regional planning, and action joint projects.

An analysis of the data demonstrates the CRG model is a participatory and democratic community governance structure through which community and Council can act on their agency to advocate for community aspirations and needs, and partner in delivering projects for the development of the 13 CRG localities. While the CRGs provide a local avenue for CRG members and the broader community to raise and resolve issues by engaging with Council, the CRGs also provide the opportunity for community members to be involved in social interactions to progress projects to benefit their communities. Therefore, the CRG model is more than a community engagement method, it is a process of community planning, and which has built the capacity and capability of CRG members and Council's as practitioners of community development.

Following Queensland Regional Council amalgamations in 2008, CHRC's community planning process and the establishment of the CRGs assisted with maintaining the unique characteristics of local towns/communities and supported residents to conceptualise and identify with the new entity of Central Highlands Regional Council.

The CRG model provides a deliberative governance structure that enables community members and Council to progress the development of each of the 13 CRG communities that builds the unique identity and progresses the distinct projects for the development of each community. Through the regional events, the CRG members are exercising their collective agency and builds regional social and cultural capital. Through forging a regional CRG group, members and Council imagine and reify attachment to the Central Highlands as place-identity post the forced local government amalgamations of 2008.

Over time, the CRG model enables core members (community and council) to develop and learn leadership skills and exchange knowledge that led to capacity building.

The findings provide evidence that through information sharing and regular meetings over time, CRG members continually gain new knowledge about Council's processes, planning and operations. Council also gains knowledge of the community, specifically local knowledge about the history of the towns and communities within the region, forming contacts and relationships with community members as well as an understanding of future community visions and of the unique physical, social and cultural aspects of the 13 communities. Therefore, the CRG model enables mutual learning in practice, which increases the skills, knowledge and capacity of the collective community leadership within the region.

The CRG model established a connected-up structure that enabled participatory community development at the place/locality level and regional level, that can contribute to community resilience.

The findings provide evidence that each of the 13 CRGs function as individual groups to participate in developing their place communities, and, are also connected with Council and to each other within the larger CRG network. The CRGs are linked within this network through their common purpose and practice of community planning and community development. The CRG community governance structure provides a mechanism for community to exercise their agency, develop leadership skills and access resources and decision makers from within and beyond their communities which contributes to building adaptability to change and community resilience.

The research findings presented in this chapter, again, further demonstrate the CRG model as a deliberative community governance structure within the field of local governance does enable agency and is increasing social and cultural capital which is building community capacity. Additionally, the findings in this chapter, demonstrate that my “hunches” are verified.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter concludes this research study by outlining the four functions of the CRGs community planning practice that I have observed and my recommendations for ongoing CRG practice based on the research findings. From the research, I believe that the CHRC CRG model can be adopted by other local governments. I conclude that the research findings in this study, along with my observations and recommendations, have deeply expanded the initial research topic, which is to identify the impacts and implications of community planning on resilience in rural and regional communities. Following is a list of the CRG model functions and recommendations based on the research data.

5.1.1. *CRG model functions*

From my observation of the findings, I can confidently recommend that the CRG model is robust and complex from a community practice perspective, because the CRGs over time have developed four distinct and inter-related functions simultaneously. Since the establishment of the CRGs, it has emerged that capacity building has contributed to the practices of the CRG members and CHRC as the collective leadership of the Central Highlands region. Through establishing the CRG model, CHRC has created a deliberative community governance model that enables community members to partner with Council in undertaking community planning for the development of the 13 communities within the Central Highlands. It emerged that the practice of the CRGs involves four distinct and inter-related functions which have been embedded within their practice. Over time, these functions have contributed to the CHRC CRG model being a maturing and proven local government community governance model. These practice functions are: community member capacity building, community development, community engagement and community planning.

1. **Community member capacity building:** The findings of this study provided evidence of a range of ways the CRG model builds the capacity of CRG members.

Building capacity of community members is a critical element for a deliberative community governance model. Therefore, it is critical for CHRC to partner with community members who have the capabilities to perform their roles as

community leaders. Summarised below are some examples of the ways the CHRC CRG model enables the CRG members to build their leadership capabilities so they can more proficiently partner with Council to deliver community outcomes.

- **Advocacy:** The CRGs create the social space for CRG members to exercise their agency and create the right environment to advocate on behalf of their communities to Council. Through active participation around the table at the CRGs, community members have gained an understanding of the tacit and explicit CRG protocols and procedures, which give them the confidence and opportunity to share their opinions and ideas with other CRG members, Council representatives and other key stakeholders. In this way, they advocate for all aspects of community life including social, economic, environmental and governance.
- **Skills development:** The CRGs enable CRG members to gain a range of skills such as interpersonal communication skills, effective listening, the ability to articulate and present information, chair meetings and plan projects. This research provides clear substantiation that CRG members' skills development is taking place over time, through both explicit and tacit mutual learning and upskilling as they actively participate in practice. This style of experiential learning aligns with adult learning or andragogy teaching principles.
- **New knowledge:** Through information sharing, the CRGs provide community members with the opportunity to gain knowledge about Council processes, procedures and planning practices that would not otherwise be accessible to them. This knowledge assists CRG members to understand how Council "does things" and improved their ability to negotiate and partner with Council on community projects and initiatives. Also, through having "guest speakers" at the meeting, the CRG members can build their technical knowledge on specific topics which has allowed them to make more informed decisions. Through the "councillor updates", the CRG members have learnt more about what is happening in other areas of the region and about the programs and projects that Council are undertaking across the region and into the future, and within their local area. The "member updates" provide the opportunity for CRG members to learn more general information about the community, including events, local knowledge and history. Along with ongoing information sharing

through emails from the CEDOs, these are some of the ways the CRG members accumulate knowledge.

From the knowledge they gain about Council's internal processes and delivery of projects at the CRGs, CRG members also advocate on behalf of Council into their communities.

- CRG resources and tools: Several tools and resources were developed for the CRGs to use in their practice, such as templates for agendas, minutes, newsletters, project plans, communication plans, community surveys, etc. Along with having a webpage, community plans and action plans, CRG members gain the capability to access, use and apply these resources and tools.
 - Other vital resources provided by CHRC are the CEDOs as the CRG facilitators, councillors and Council staff. The CEDOs offer support and skills in community practice which are integral to enabling the CRG members to participate in the CRGs and build a professional relationship between Council and the community. CEDOs are pivotal to the functioning of the CRGs and CRG members successfully achieving community projects. The councillors are valued members of the CRGs, not just because they are elected members, but because of their ability to actively participate in CRG projects and build relationships with CRG members. Council staff are a ready resource for projects, providing ongoing technical and specialist information about Council operations.
 - Decision-making: Over time, the CRG members developed a set of shared tacit rules that guide their decision-making at the CRGs. These shared rules provide CRGs with the ability to collaboratively identify, prioritise and determine solutions to reach consensus in their decision making. This collaborative approach underpins the ability of CRG members to take collective action and work with each other, Council and other key stakeholders to achieve beneficial community projects and outcomes.
2. **Community development:** The findings demonstrated that one of the core functions of the CRGs is to undertake community development projects and initiatives.

The CRG model creates a process for CRG members, Council, other key stakeholders and the community to work collectively to plan projects, access resources, gain funding and implement community projects and initiatives. The findings also provided evidence of a wide range of projects the CRGs have completed or are undertaking that are either led by CRG members, Council, state government or other key stakeholders. This approach to community development enables Council to expand their capacity to undertake community development across the 13 localities within the Central Highlands region. The CRG model provides Council with the ability to advance projects with a range of partners to meet the distinct and unique needs of all 13 communities.

This form of community participatory development is critical for genuinely developing rural and remote towns and communities within the region. As highlighted by the research participants, many of the smaller towns and rural areas are declining in population and losing services. While this is happening in many parts of Australia, the CRG model provides the opportunity for councils to progress ongoing community development in the smaller communities with community members who can be recognised as having the skills and capacity to practice community development.

3. **Community engagement:** The CRG model establishes a readily accessible network of community contacts to undertake community engagement and consultation in each of the 13 communities and/or across the regional CRG network as they need.

While it was recognised by research participants that the CRGs are one community engagement tool or method for gaining community feedback, the CRGs provide the ongoing means for Council and other government departments, industry and organisations to utilise the CRG members for community engagement. The CRGs also encourage multi-sector representation so the model enables Council and others to tap into a wider segment of the community, where possible. Additionally, as the CRG localities in some areas include several smaller towns and rural communities, they are a conduit for engaging with most or all towns and communities within the region. For example, the Gemfields CRG brings representatives together from Anakie, Sapphire, Rubyvale and The Willows.

Importantly, the community engagement function of the CRGs provides a mechanism for people to participate in a democratic process and exercise their agency or right to have a voice into decision-making that affects their daily lives. This

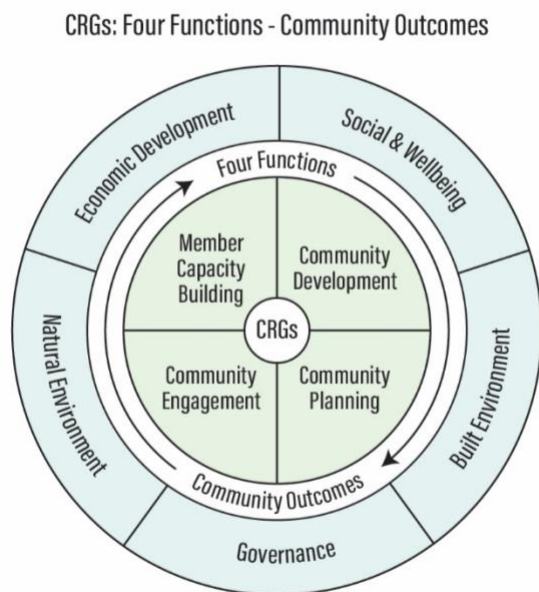
project substantiates the CRGs to provide an avenue for CRG members and the broader community to raise issues and concerns to councillors and Council in each of their local communities.

4. **Community planning:** The original purpose of the CRGs was to implement the actions in the 10-year community plans across the 13 localities within the Central Highlands region.

As noted by the research participants, the CRGs utilise a range of planning tools including community actions plans or strategic directions and project planning. The community planning function of the CRG model promotes the concepts of a long-term future vision for the community and long-term planning is integral to achieving this vision. Also, community development takes time and is not always straightforward. Through the CRG model, CRG members acquire the concepts and skills to understand long range community planning and apply community planning tools and resources in their practice.

From my observations, the CRG model enables CRG members and CHRC to perform four distinct and inter-related functions simultaneously in their community planning practice to achieve community outcomes. These practice functions continue to build the collective leadership capacity of each CRG, which then enables access to a range of resources for the ongoing delivery of community projects or outcomes. In turn, this leads to achieving projects and initiatives across all aspects of community life within the 13 localities. Figure 14 depicts how the practice four functions of CRGs link to the ongoing achievement of whole-of-community outcomes.

Figure 15
CRG Functions link to community outcomes



5.2. Recommendations

Based on the themes generated in Chapter 4, I make the following recommendations regarding the CRG community governance model that may be useful for CHRC going forward and as a way to assist other councils that wish to establish a similar community governance model.

5.2.1. Recommendation 1: Determining community value

Understanding the value of community members' participation in the CRGs, can be important for CHRC to determine the benefits of tapping into the pool of resources provided by community members, including volunteering hours and the contributions the CRG members bring to Council through the CRG model. Quantifying the number of hours and physical resources contributed by members can be possible. However, most contributions are intangible and difficult to measure such as quantifying the value of trust and relationships, and the benefits of having ready access to people's honest comments, feedback and local knowledge.

Determining the value of community involvement in the CRG model may provide CHRC with additional information to share with other councils who may look to adopting the CRG model or a similar approach. Additionally, it would be beneficial

for Council have this information to compare the financial implications for staffing and resourcing the CRGs.

5.2.2. Recommendation 2: Skills development

While mutual learning and upskilling is taking place through ongoing practice at the CRGs, a more considered approach to skills development would be beneficial. As the CRGs perform the functions of community development, community engagement and community planning, it may be beneficial for councillors, CEDOs and other Council staff to be trained in each of these aspects of the CRG's practice. Through intentionally building skills and capabilities within Council, CHRC can further develop these CRG functions, not only with the capacity to work with the CRGs, but also to benefit other aspects of councillors and Council staff roles.

Additionally, I recommend that Council and the CRG members undertake an audit to identify the skills and/or training they would like to complete going forward such as chairing meetings, writing media releases and public speaking. The CRG members should also be provided with increased opportunities to participate in community development, community engagement and community planning training.

5.2.3. Recommendation 3: Communications

Increased utilisation of the CRG communication resources such as the CRG webpage, communication plans and newsletter templates to raise awareness within their local communities about the meeting times, CRG projects and initiatives would be beneficial to CHRC. This can ensure the community has increased awareness as to there being an open invitation for community members to attend the CRG meetings and promote the activities and positive outcomes from the CRGs. This is also an opportunity to promote Council's proactive role in facilitating the CRGs and demonstrate how they are partnering with community to address community issues and progress community initiatives in each of the 13 localities.

5.2.4. Recommendation 4: Regional connections

Facilitating opportunities for the CRG members to connect at a regional level and across the CRGs by CHRC can contribute to strengthening the regional place-identity as well as create and build social networks for ongoing discussions and planning for regional development.

- Continue to host the Regional CRG Summits. While I perceived there were benefits to bringing CRG members together from across the region, I did not realise the true value for those who participated in these summits until undertaking this research. It may be possible to host the Regional Summits every second year and continuing to invite motivational speakers. I recommend extending the invitation to the broader community to attend and continue to host the Regional Summits in different towns and communities around the region. It may also be possible to offer the opportunity to link into the summits online.
- Continue with developing the Regional Roundups or prepare them every second year to alternative with the Regional Summits.
- Promoting and encouraging CRG members to attend meetings in other towns and communities will be an effective way to foster regional networks and exchange ideas for projects and other initiatives.
- Consider inviting one or two representatives from each CRG to meet with councillors and senior staff once a year to share local information and ideas. This provides another method for Council representatives to meet community members from different communities and for community members to learn about other communities as well as advocate to Council about local issues or planning projects.

5.2.5. Recommendation 5: Community acknowledgement

While the CRG members do not seem to become involved in the CRGs for recognition, I recommend that their partnership with Council be acknowledged more formally and more regularly. Undertaking this research project has given me a greater appreciation of the time and commitment the CRG members make to the betterment of their towns and communities and a greater knowledge of their dedication.

5.2.6. Recommendation 6: Duplicate CRG model

The CRG model has the potential to be adopted by other local governments in rural areas, given it has been a tried and tested community governance model over almost ten years (at the time of thesis writing). CHRC and CRG members have, over

time, developed tools, procedures and processes through engagement with real people and achieved real outcomes. Therefore, CHRC has a suite of these resources and tools as well as the expertise to provide support and assistance to mentor other councils. Before adopting a community governance model, it is advisable that councillors, senior Council staff and community development officers are supportive of the long-term commitment to partnering with community as community outcomes take time to achieve and are not straightforward. Most importantly, building community trust and relationships also takes time and a high level of skills in community practice.

5.3. Conclusion

The CHRC CRG model is a deliberative community governance model that has enabled CRG members, Council, and other stakeholders to partner in future planning to improve and develop the towns and communities within the 13 localities across the Central Highlands. During the development stage of the *CH2022 Community Plan* in 2010-11, the 13 localities of the Central Highlands region were created. By 2015, the 13 CRGs were established by CHRC as a community engagement model to implement the individual community plans in each of the 13 localities with CRG members, other key stakeholders and the broader community. Over time, the CRG model has developed into a unique local government community governance model which is addressing the balance between participatory and representative democracy. The aim of this research is to explore how the CHRC CRG model builds community capacity and therefore resilience in rural and regional communities in Queensland. As most community planning is undertaken by local government in Australia, this is important for rural and regional communities given the prominent role local government plays in local community life and the strong influence collective leadership has on managing social and economic change. It is possible, the CRG model, as a distinct and proven community planning practice, can be adopted by other rural and regional councils in Australia or internationally to build community capacity and, therefore, increase community resilience.

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Interviews: Central Highlands Regional Council (Please note, the locations are not used in order to de-identify contributors)

CHRC#1: 22 February 2021, 1-6.

CHRC#2: 11 March 2021, 1-6.

CHRC#3: 19 March 2021, 1-7

CHRC#4: 12 March 2021, 1-6.

CHRC#5: 16 March 2021, 1-5.

CHRC#6: 29 March 2021, 1-8.

CHRC#7: 28 October 2021, 1-8.

CHRC#8: 2 November 2021, 1-16.

CHRC#9: 26 October 2021, 1-7.

CHRC#10: 19 October 2021, 1-6.

CHRC#11: 19 October 2021, 1-8.

Interviews: Community Reference Groups (Please note, the locations are not used in order to de-identify contributors)

CRG#1: 30 April 2021, 1-5.

CRG#2: 26 May 2021, 1-5.

CRG#3: 23 March 2021, 1-6.

CRG#4: 25 March 2021, 1-8.

CRG#5: 25 February 2021, 1-4.

CRG#6: 25 March 2021, 1-5.

CRG#7: 23 February 2021, 1-3.

CRG#8: 23 March 2021, 1-5.
CRG#9: 2 March 2021, 1-4.
CRG#10: 1 April 2021, 1-9.
CRG#11: 19 March 2021, 1-4.
CRG#12: 16 March 2021, 1-6.
CRG#13: 18 March 2021, 1-4.
CRG#14: 1 April 2021, 1-6.
CRG#15: 4 March 2021, 1-4.
CRG#16: 11 March 2021, 1-5.
CRG#17: 4 March 2021, 1-5.
CRG#18: 9 March 2021, 1-6.
CRG#19: 12 March 2021, 1-6.
CRG#20: 12 March 2021, 1-6.
CRG#21: 1 April 2021, 1-4.
CRG#22: 2 March 2021, 1-5.
CRG#23: 1 April 2021, 1-10.
CRG#24: 12 March 2021, 1-9.
CRG#25: 21 May 2021, 1-11.
CRG#26: 20 April 2021, 1-7.
CRG#27: 26 March 2021, 1-5.
CRG#28: 26 March 2021, 1-6.
CRG#29: 19 March 2021, 1-6.
CRG#30: 26 March 2021, 1-3.
CRG#31: 30 March 2021, 1-6.
CRG#32: 20 April 2021, 1-9.
CRG#33: 23 November 2021, 1-11.

CRG#34: 28 October 2021, 1-7.

CRG#35: 28 October 2021, 1-6.

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APPENDIX A: CENTRAL HIGHLANDS 2022 COMMUNITY PLAN

Full document can be found at: <https://haveyoursay.chrc.qld.gov.au/central-highlands-2022-community-plan>



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APPENDIX B: CHRC LETTER OF APPROVAL



Our ref: FCM #1556493
Your ref: Dr Janet McDonald
Contact name: Scott Mason
Direct telephone: 07 48606377
Email: smason@chrc.qld.gov.au
Address: PO Box 21, Emerald QLD 4720

11 September 2020

Human Research Ethics Committee
C/- Graduate Research Office
University of Southern Queensland
West Street
TOOWOOMBA QLD 4350

Dear Sir / Madam

I am writing this letter to confirm Central Highlands Regional Council (CHRC) gives approval for Janice Moriarty, Doctoral Candidate at University of Southern Queensland (USQ), to undertake her research on the community engagement network or Community Reference Groups Council has established to build community capacity. Cr Moriarty will keep myself and Council up to date on her research milestones over the next 18 months.

CHRC is located in rural Central Queensland, approximately 270 kms east of Rockhampton. The Central Highlands region has a population of around 29,000 people and covers an area of almost 60,000 square kilometres. The major towns in our region are Emerald, Blackwater, Capella and Springsure. Our major industries are coal mining and agriculture, and our major tourist attractions are Carnarvon Gorge National Park, the Blackdown Tablelands and the Sapphire Gemfields.

I understand this research may provide valuable insights about the unique ways that CHRC conducts community capacity building. The Central Highlands has a relatively young population (average age 33) compared to other rural council areas in Australia. The people in this region are resourceful, dynamic and proud, which is why CHRC is committed to finding new and innovative ways to strengthen its relationship with the diverse communities and people across our region. This is one of the main reasons Council is pleased to support this research project. Also, as a former staff member and now a Councillor of CHRC, many people know Cr Moriarty and Council trusts the support USQ will be providing for the study.

I can confirm my support for this research project. I understand that:

- It will respect the anonymity of participants
- Community Reference Groups members and Councillors will be invited to participate in interviews

Please do not hesitate to contact me if the USQ Human Research Ethics Committee any further information.

Yours faithfully

Scott Mason
Chief Executive Officer

65 Egerton Street, Emerald QLD 4720 T. 1300 242 685
centralthighlands.qld.gov.au

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



University of Southern Queensland

Participant Information for USQ Research Project Interview

Project Details

Title of Project: **Impacts and Implications of community planning on resilience of rural and regional communities**
Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H20REA258

Research Team Contact Details

Principal Investigator Details

Janice Moriarty

[Redacted contact information]

Other Investigator Details

Assoc Prof Janet McDonald

[Redacted contact information]

Description

The project will determine if and how the Central Highlands Regional Council (CHRC) community planning, as a community development tool, builds community capacity and resilience. This project will specifically focus on the CHRC Community Reference Group (CRG) model.

This project is being undertaken as part of Doctor of Philosophy.

The purpose of this project is to describe the CRG model, which was first established in 2013 by CHRC when undertaking the Central Highlands 2022 Community Plan project. This research will involve interviews with community members to determine what they value and have learnt through their involvement in CRGs and Council representatives. By undertaking this research, CHRC may have the opportunity to share this model with other local governments.

The research team requests your assistance and welcomes the opportunity to understand your involvement and what your experience has been as a member of CHRC CRGs.

Participation

Your participation will involve an interview that can take approximately 15-25 minutes of your time.

The interview will take place at a time and venue that is convenient to you or via telephone or zoom/online.

The questions will include:

- Q 1. How long have you been a CRG member?
- Q2. What is the purpose of CRGs?
- Q3. Who participates in CRG meetings?

- Q4: How do you and/or others contribute to the group?
Q5. What skills and knowledge have you gained from being a CRG member?
Q6. What elements or attributes are needed for a CRG to be an effective group?
Q7. How has your CRG benefited (or not) your community?
Q8. How do CRGs connect with each other?

The interview will be conducted by an approved independent interviewer and audio recorded. If you do not wish for recording to occur, please advise the research team, as this will mean you may not participate in this research project.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. You may also request that any data collected about you be destroyed. If you wish to withdraw from this project or withdraw data collected about you, please let the researcher know.

Your decision to take part or not, or to take part and then withdraw, will have no impact on your current or future relationship with the University of Southern Queensland.

Expected Benefits

It is expected that this project will not directly benefit you individually. However, it may contribute to better community planning and engagement for local government.

Risks

There are no anticipated risks beyond normal day-to-day living associated with your participation in this project.

To ensure there are no perceived risks, as the researcher is a CHRC Councilor, Sally Hansen will be conducting the interviews as the approved independent interviewer and research assistant.

Only as a precaution, if any issues raised in the interview create uncomfortable or distressing feelings or if need to talk to someone about this immediately, please contact:

- ☐ Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636
- ☐ Lifeline: 13 11 14

Privacy and Confidentiality

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law.

For Audio recordings, you will be provided with a copy of the raw data (transcription from your interviews) as soon as they are available for you to make relevant changes within a given time period (fortnight). Recordings will not be used for any other purposes. Once the interviews have been conducted by approved independent interviewer Sally Hansen, the research team will have access to the recordings only, as well as the USQ-approved transcriber: Kay McKay.

This raw data will NOT be made available to other researchers, but the analysed and de-identified results may appear in the format of either a conference paper and/or finalised research thesis. These will be freely available for participants, stakeholders, and the general public, as requested.

Any data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely as per University of Southern Queensland's [Research Data Management policy](#).

Consent to Participate

We would like to ask you to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your agreement to participate in this project. Please return your signed consent form to Janice or Sally prior to participating in your interview.

Questions or Further Information about the Project

Please refer to the Research Team Contact Details at the top of the form to have any questions answered or to request further information about this project.

Concerns or Complaints Regarding the Conduct of the Project

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project, you may contact the University of Southern Queensland Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics on +61 7 4631 1839 or email researchintegrity@usq.edu.au. The Manager of Research Integrity and Ethics is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an unbiased manner.

Thank you for taking the time to help with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM



Consent Form for USQ Research Project Interview

Project Details

Title of Project: **Impacts and Implications of Community Planning on resilience of rural and regional communities**
Human Research Ethics Approval Number: H20REA258

Research Team Contact Details

Principal Investigator Details

Janice Moriarty

Other Investigator Details

Assoc Prof Janet McDonald

Statement of Consent

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read and understood the Information Sheet regarding this project. ☐ Yes / ☐ No
- Have had any questions about the research project answered to your satisfaction. ☐ Yes / ☐ No
- Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team. ☐ Yes / ☐ No
- Understand that the interview will be audio / video recorded. ☐ Yes / ☐ No

- Are over 18 years of age. ☐ Yes / ☐ No
- Understand that any data collected may be used in future research activities ☐ Yes / ☐ No
- Agree to participate in the project. ☐ Yes / ☐ No

Participant Name

Participant Signature

Date

Please return this sheet to a Research Team member prior to undertaking the interview.

APPENDIX E: EXAMPLE CRG AGENDA AND MINUTES



Date: Wednesday 2 February 2022

Meeting number: 40

Time: 3:00pm - 5:00pm

Chair: To be determined

Venue: Emerald Town Hall Supper Room

Note taker: Ashleigh Kavanagh (CHRC)

Item no.	Time	Agenda	Speaker
1.	3.00pm	Welcome & Apologies	Chair
2.	3.05pm	Previous Meeting Actions ☐ Review and confirm minutes and action table	Chair
3.	3.15pm	Emerald High School Students Presentations ☐ Review feedback from last years presentations	All
4.	3.30pm	Strategic Directions Review	All
5.	3.50pm	Project Plan Template and Flowchart	Ashleigh Kavanagh
6.	4.00pm	General Business	All
7.	4:20pm	Councillor Update	Councillors
8.	4:35pm	Member Sector Updates	Members
9.	4.55pm	Next Meeting ☐ Date: ☐ Nominate Agenda items: ☐ Nominated Chair: ☐ Nominated Note Taker:	Chair
10.	5.00pm	Close meeting: Time:	Chair



MINUTES OF Blackwater 2022 – Community Reference Group Meeting

DATE: 1 December 2022 **MEETING:** 48 **VENUE:** Blackwater Aquatic Centre **CHAIR:** Ursula Colgan **NOTE TAKER:** Georgia Esplin (CHRC)

PRESENT: Kylie Brown, Mary Anderson, Ursula Cohan, Lester Anderson, Di Stanley, Gini Tangira, Jessica McAulay, Charissa Allan, Megan Gregory, Cr Janice Moriarty, Georgia Esplin (Community Development and Engagement Officer Online Services (CDEO-OS), CHRC)

APOLOGIES: Geraldine Lanko (Community Development and Engagement Officer (CDEO), CHRC).

MEETING COMMENCED: 5.04pm **MEETING CLOSED:** 7.20pm

ITEM NO.	SUBJECT	DISCUSSION
1	Welcome & Apologies	Chair welcomed attendees and noted apologies.
2	Previous Meeting Actions	Members reviewed the minutes from the last meeting. Actions are recorded in the table at the end of the minutes.
4	Blackwater Childcare	Gini Tangira (Director Tiny Tots childcare service) led the following discussion on childcare availability in Blackwater: A number of families have relocated to Blackwater recently and there are not enough spaces available in childcare services to meet the demand. There is a nation-wide shortage of childcare availability. The Department of Education has a priority list for the minimal places available, which prioritises spaces for the following groups: ☐ Indigenous children ☐ children who require learning support ☐ kindergarten aged children ☐ families with working mothers Gini noted the lack of spaces in childcare has led to public scrutiny over decisions about placement. Tiny Tots are receiving enquiries seven days a week and have a waitlist of two years. Gini advised that Childcare & Kindergarten (C&K) has a similar waitlist time. Discussion: Members noted that there is an empty building in Blackwater that was previously a preschool. They suggested this could be developed into a childcare centre. It was noted the major issue is staffing as opposed to available facilities. Members advised that BMA mine is investigating ways to support community members to open home day care centres. Gini noted that licenses also determine the number of children that can be enrolled at a time. This is another barrier to meeting the childcare demand. She also advised that the funding and fees barely cover the centre's operating costs due to inflation. Members suggested stakeholders hold a round table discussion to identify a solution.

		Members acknowledged Gini for providing a critical service to the community during a difficult time. Gini acknowledges the local mines for the support they have provided to Tiny Tots. Action: CDEO to add childcare to the agenda for the next CRG meeting for further discussion.
6	Aging in our Place Forum Update	Cr Janice Moriarty presented the Ageing in Our Place report: The Ageing in Our Place forum took place on 20 October 2022 with 31 attendees. The intention of the event was to connect service providers, community members, and ageing residents of Blackwater and Bluff to identify issues for the ageing population and put forward recommendations to mitigate these issues. Participants at the forum identified that a community bus would be a great support to seniors in Blackwater and Bluff. Another priority area is accommodation options for ageing residents. The data collected at the forum will be used for advocacy purposes, including applying for grant funding. Members noted that the Blackwater International Coal Centre (BICC) has a bus. They suggested proposing this be utilised as a community bus when it is not in use. Jessica McAulay and Charissa Allan from Yarrabee Mine noted the company has a board meeting in February 2023 and suggested the CRG attend this to put forward a proposal for a community bus. Ursula Colgan and Cr Moriarty expressed interest in attending. Cr Moriarty noted that the Strategic Directions document will be updated to include the key items raised at the Ageing in Our Place Forum. Action: CDEO to update Blackwater Strategic Directions document to reflect priorities identified at the Ageing in Our Place forum. Action: CDEO to connect Cr Moriarty and Ursula Colgan with Yarrabee representatives to progress community bus proposal for Yarrabee board meeting. <i>See attachment for a copy of the report.</i>
7	Roads Meeting Update	Roads Meeting Update Cr Moriarty advised that council plans to upgrade the carpark at the Blackwater North State School. They have applied for funding for this. Council do not intend to change the drop off area; however, they plan to add an additional drop-off zone on the other side of the school. Cr Moriarty advised that an Active Transport Network Working Group has been initiated. Members will identify priority areas for footpaths to create circuits. Council will consider the proposed plans for future works. Action: CDEO to request a list of footpaths identified for completion this financial year.
7	General Business	McKenzie Street Members expressed their view that McKenzie Street is unsightly due to the weeds and the state of the median strips. Members have reported the weeds to council's Parks and Gardens officers, who advised they have not found poison strong enough to address the weeds. Ursula Colgan expressed her disappointment with the state of the median strips and noted that the beautification of the McKenzie Street median strips should be a priority for council. Members also noted that there is parthenium growing on council-owned paddocks across Blackwater. Blackwater Liveability Survey Members noted that a representative from Yarrabee mine had previously undertaken a survey to support improved liveability in Blackwater. The survey also sought feedback on the Blackwater Aquatic Centre operating hours. The Yarrabee Mine representatives in attendance advised they have searched for the survey data but have been unable to locate it. CDEO-OS advised that council is currently consulting on the aquatic centres across the region. The survey is seeking feedback on a number of areas, including the facilities and operating hours. Members are encouraged to complete the survey here: https://haveyoursay.chrc.qld.gov.au/aquatic-centre-survey-2022. The survey is open until 8 January 2023. The data from this survey will be used to identify improvements to the facility in future years.

		Blackwater Cemetery CRG member suggested installing seating at the Blackwater cemetery. There is currently a cement slab at the cemetery which could be utilised as a base to install seating. Members suggested a sprinkler system also be installed at the Blackwater cemetery. Action: Cr Moriarty and Mary Anderson to progress a project plan for Blackwater cemetery improvements. Bedford Weir Cr Moriarty noted that the amenities block at the Bedford Weir is currently being upgraded. Members suggested additional landscaping works be undertaken at the weir. It was noted the Bedford Weir features as a potential site to be developed in Central Highlands Development Corporation's Recreational Vehicle (RV) and Camping Strategy to increase tourism. Blackwater Christmas Lights Cr Moriarty presented a project plan for a creative Christmas Lights project. The project plan proposes that string lights be added to trees in Blackwater similar to the lights on Egerton Street in Emerald. The plan suggests string lighting be hung in trees at the following locations: ☐ Medium strip in Arthur Street ☐ Lions Park or Flag Park precinct Members indicated their support for the project plan. <i>See attachment for a copy of the project plan.</i> South Blackwater Mine Cr Moriarty advised the Blackwater Mine currently has a mining lease application. The draft Terms of Reference are currently open for public comment here: https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/coordinator-general/assessments-and-approvals/coordinated-projects/current-projects/blackwater-south-coking-coal-project. It was noted the mining tenement is 50 kilometres from Rolleston; it is closer to Rolleston than it is to Blackwater.
8	Council Update	Cr Janice Moriarty shared the following updates: Ghungalu Nunee Gardens Draft plans for the development of the Ghungalu Nunee Gardens were presented to the group. Members suggested installing car parking for tourists near the gardens. They also discussed whether an additional dump point would be required for Blackwater to support an influx of tourists. It was noted that caravans cannot enter the BICC carpark due to its condition. Members advised they would like Leisa Donlan (Manager Parks and Recreation, CHRC) or a member of her team to attend the next CRG meeting to consult on the plans. Members expressed that the directional signage identified is not feasible. The signage proposed would direct caravans to Wey Street from Littlefield Street for parking. Action: CDEO to invite Leisa Donlan to attend the next CRG meeting to consult on the draft plans for the Ghungalu Nunee Gardens. Better Business Blackwater Cr Moriarty presented the better Business Blackwater project plan. The intention of the project is to hold a networking event for local businesses and social enterprises. The date will be advised once determined. <i>See attachment for a copy of the project plan.</i>
9	Member Update	Di Stanley (Emerald Today)

		Di Stanley gave an overview of Emerald Today, the local newspaper in the Central Highlands. Di noted Emerald Today report on stories region-wide, as opposed to just Emerald. Di thanked members for allowing her to attend the meeting and hear about local issues and projects the CRG are working towards. Ursula Colgan (Blackwater Community) Ursula Colgan noted the Blackwater Banter requires a new project manager. She has identified a community member who may be interested. Ursula raised that driving over Bluff Creek on the Capricorn Highway can be unsafe following rainfall. Cr Moriarty noted that the Bluff community advocate for improvements regularly through the CRG and are taking this to the Traffic Advisory Group. CRG members expressed interest in writing a letter to the Department of Transport and Main Roads about road safety driving over Bluff Creek on the Capricorn Highway. Action: CRG to draft a letter to the DTMR to advocate for road improvements on the Capricorn Highway at Bluff Creek. Charissa Allan (Yarrabee Mine) Yarrabee Mine are taking funding applications from community groups as part of their Community Support Program. Members are encouraged to apply and share this opportunity amongst their networks. They are also seeking a community representative to advise on community needs as part of their Community Support Program.
10	Regional Round Up	CDEO presented the Regional Round Up 2022. This presentation highlights the achievements of each of the CRGs across the region. <i>See attachment for Regional Round Up presentation.</i>
11	Next Meeting	The proposed Blackwater CRG meeting dates for 2023 are: ☐ Q1 16 March 2023 ☐ Q2 22 June 2023 ☐ Q3 17 August 2023 ☐ Q4 2 November 2023 Members indicated their support for the proposed dates. It was noted the dates can be adjusted at any point based on member needs.

"Disclaimer: Council minutes are public documents therefore minutes may need to be adjusted where appropriate to council formatting and publishing standards."

Action Table

Ongoing Items				
Item /Project	Date	Action	Status	Notes
Blackwater Childcare	#48 1.12.2022	CDEO to add childcare to the agenda for the next CRG meeting for further discussion.	To do	
Ageing in our Place	#48 1.12.2022	CDEO to send Ageing in Our Place report to CRG members. CDEO to update Blackwater Strategic Directions document to reflect solutions identified at the Ageing in Our Place forum. CDEO to connect Cr Moriarty and Ursula Colgan with Yarrabee representatives to progress community bus proposal for Yarrabee board meeting.	To do	
Footpaths	#48 1.12.2022	CDEO to request a list of footpaths identified for completion this financial year.	To do	
Blackwater Cemetery	#48 1.12.2022	Cr Moriarty and Mary Anderson to progress a project plan for Blackwater cemetery improvements.	To do	
Ghungalu Nune Gardens	#48 1.12.2022	CDEO to invite Leisa Donlan to attend the next CRG meeting to consult on the draft plans for the Ghungalu Nune Gardens.	To do	
Bluff Creek	#48 1.12.2022	CRG members to draft a letter to the DTMR to advocate for road improvements on the Capricorn Highway at Bluff Creek.	To do	
Roads meeting	#47, 29.8.2022	CDEO to add Bluff and Rufus Streets to the agenda for the roads meeting on 29 September 2022.	Complete	1.12.22 update: Bluff Street and Rufus Street are identified for upgrades. Littlefield Street works are scheduled to begin by end next of 2023. Littlefield Street required major works due to the water pipes. Action complete
Blackwater Aquatic Centre	#47, 29.8.2022	CDEO to seek information from Yarrabee Mine from their company survey about use of the Blackwater Aquatic Centre.	Complete	1.12.22 update: Yarrabee Mine representatives advised they have not located the survey data. It was noted that council are consulting on the aquatic centres through their annual Aquatic Centre Survey. Action complete
Childcare	#47, 29.8.2022	CDEO to add childcare services to a future meeting agenda.	Complete	1.12.22 action complete

NAB hours	#47, 29.8.2022	Cr Janice Moriarty to contact the NAB manager in Emerald to seek clarification on the Blackwater branch hours.	Complete	1.12.22 Blackwater NAB operating hours are Monday to Friday 9:30am to 3:00pm Action complete
Stop sign	#46, 19.5.2022	CDEO to enter a customer request for stop sign to be removed from the intersection from Bond Ave to Bauman Way.	Complete	29.8.2022 Infrastructure department considering stop sign requirement. 1.12.22 this request will be taken to a future road group meeting Action complete
Roads meeting	#44, 21.10.2021	CDEO to organise a road discussion meeting.	Complete	19.5.2022 Organise a roads discussion prior to the next CRG meeting. 29.8.2022 Meeting organised for 29.9.2022, from 2pm at Civic Centre. 1.12.22 action complete
Aging in Our Place	#44, 21.10.2021	CDEO to organise an Aging in Our Place meeting.	Complete	28.2.2022 Cr Janice Moriarty provided the following update: ☐ Plans continuing for 'Aging in Our Place' forum. ☐ To connect with Paul Bell, Chair of the Central Queensland Health and Hospital Service for update regarding the Blackwater Hospital Multipurpose Health Service. ☐ Aged care housing option construction designs being discussed. 28.2.2022 Ursula Colgan provided the following update: ☐ Community Advisory Network (CAN) to be back up and running again soon. 19.5.2022 Forum planned for October 2022. 29.8.2022 Forum planned for Thursday 20 October 2022, from 9.30am for a 10am start at the Blackwater Civic Centre. 1.12.22 action complete
Tourism update	#42, 22.4.2021	Invite Paul Thompson, Tourism Development Officer from Central Highlands Development Corporation (CHDC) to share an update on Central Highlands tourism and plans for the Bedford Weir.	Ongoing	1.12.22 ongoing
Community Hub	#41, 1.2.2021	Ursula Colgan, Kim Tuart, Angela Taylor to draft a project plan for a Community Hub at the old pool site.	Ongoing	21.10.2021 project plan presented to CRG. 1.12.22 ongoing
New CRG members	#33, 1.11.2018	CRG members to encourage new members to join the CRG.	Always continuing	14.2.19 Three new member enquiries since last meeting. 1.12.22 ongoing

Complete Items

Item /Project	Date	Action	Status	Notes

Water security survey	#46, 19.5.2022	CRG members to complete the water security survey and promote within the Blackwater community.	Complete	29.8.2022 Water security survey now closed.
Median strips	#46, 19.5.2022	CDEO to enter a customer request for council to consider the median strips planting and maintenance schedule for Mackenzie Street, Acacia Street, Blain Street and Bauman Way.	Complete	29.8.2022 Complete, maintenance ongoing as needed.
Road maintenance	#46, 19.5.2022	CDEO to enter a customer request for road maintenance required for Bluff Street and Littlefield Street.	Complete	29.8.2022 Bluff and Littlefield Street scheduled for maintenance in FY 2022/2023.
Blackwater cemetery	#46, 19.5.2022	CDEO to enter customer request for maintenance required in the southern end of the Blackwater Cemetery.	Complete	29.8.2022 Parks will ask for irrigation advice, and this will be a potential budget item for 2022/2023.
Lighting at Blackwater Civic Centre	#46, 19.5.2022	CDEO to enter customer request for lighting in the carpark and front steps of the Blackwater Civic Centre.	Complete	29.8.2022 Electrician quotes received. Work scheduled, expected for completion in September 2022.
Median strips	#43, 17.7.2021	CDEO to enter customer request for median strips across Blackwater require beautification.	Complete	29.8.2022 to discuss at road meeting on 29.9.2022.
Active transport and road improvements project plan	#43, 17.7.2021	CRG to do project plan on active transport for footpaths and bike ways. Project plan to support funding opportunities. Project plan for road improvements to be drafted by Cr Moriarty and Tom Hayes.	Complete	Project plan draft. 29.8.2022 to discuss at road meeting on 29.9.2022.
Letter of support Ghungalu Nunee	#45, 28.2.2022	CDEO to draft a letter for CRG member to sign in support of the Ghungalu Nunee garden concept.	Complete	Letter sent on 7 April 2022.
Blackwater Cemetery	#45, 28.2.2022	CDEO to enter a customer request for maintenance at the cemetery.	Complete	CRM 2022/141805 This area is not irrigated and is managed with available resources.
Median strips	#45, 28.2.2022	CDEO to enter a customer request for maintenance required for the Blackwater median strips.	Complete	CRM 2022/141825 Work scheduled.
Community Garden feedback	#45, 28.2.2022	CDEO to update Leisa Donlan with the feedback on the community garden, indicating preference to include rainwater tanks and relocate the sink.	Complete	1.3.2022 Emailed feedback to Leisa Donlan.
Community Garden feedback	#45, 28.2.2022	CDEO to request a letter of support from council so the Community Garden group can apply for funding.	Complete	1.3.2022 Emailed feedback to Leisa Donlan.

Blackwater North State School traffic	#45, 28.2.2022	CDEO to enter a customer request for council to consider traffic flow at Blackwater North State School parking.	Complete	CRM 2022/141837 To be discussed with BNSS and Police for future options.
Blackwater North State School traffic	#45, 28.2.2022	CDEO to set calendar invite for Councillors Brimblecombe and Moriarty to meet onsite with road staff to observe Blackwater North State School traffic.	Complete	Onsite meeting held to watch traffic behaviour on 22 April 2022.
Blackwater North State School traffic	#45, 28.2.2022	CDEO to draft a letter to the Blackwater Police requesting they monitor the traffic at Blackwater North State School.	Complete	Letter sent on 7 April 2022.
Raw water for Pony Club	#44, 21.10.2021	CDEO to request raw water be considered for the Blackwater Pony Club.	Complete	CRM 2021/137292 28.2.2022 Discussions held between council and the Pony Club found no raw water pipelines near the Pony Club. If the Pony Club can secure external funding for pipeline, council are supportive of this use. Funding application will require consultation with council.
Old pool meeting room	#44, 21.10.2021	CDEO to update councils Facilities Team of the progress for the plan for the old pool meeting room space.	Complete	CRM 2021/134595 28.2.2022 Leisa Donlan update: no further discussions or decisions have taken place at the moment for the future use of the building. These will commence if/when the next project within the park is approved.
Bedford Weir	#44, 21.10.2021	CDEO to organise a Bedford Weir meeting.	Complete	28.2.2022 Leisa Donlan updated the Bedford Weir will update the amenities block. No further community consultation for future work is required at this time. Awaiting the RV and Camping Strategy from CHDC.
Arnold Street footpath	#43, 17.7.2021	CDEO to enter customer request for Arnold Street footpath plants need to be maintained and watered.	Complete	CRM 2021/134591 Arnold Street footpath maintenance complete January 2022.
Dempsey Park equipment	#43, 17.7.2021	CDEO to enter customer request for Dempsey Park equipment not being operational.	Complete	21.10.2021 Submitted as budget item, yet to be approved.
Stower Street park	#43, 17.7.2021	CDEO to enter customer request for Stower Street park to be watered to keep grassed area green.	Complete	21.10.2021 For parks consideration. CRM 2021/134594
Active recreation options in Blackwater	#43, 17.7.2021	Leisa Donlan to email list of active recreation options for Blackwater area to Tom Hayes.	Complete	☐ The Memorial Garden Project CHRC are finalising the soft landscaping elements such as planting and turfing. Irrigation has been installed and with savings in other areas we have been able to concrete the entire section underneath the existing shade structure and install tables and seats (two with wheelchair accessibility) and the large grassed area over the old pool site, will be a

				lovely lawn for either relaxing, playing games or even a possible event site for Blackwater. The old fence has been removed and will be reused in another site. Gravel finishes and the possible installation of scar trees are still under way. Interpretive signage will be the next and final part of the project. CHRC will be engaging with the major stakeholders on the eventual fencing plan for the combined areas of Memorial Garden, Lions Park, Tennis Courts and the proposed new garden extending down to the Japanese Garden. Plans for the water tower and new garden are slowly coming together now we've completed the underground scans, soil tests and drone scanning. ☐ Bedford Weir An amenities upgrade is in the budget proposal for 2022-23 to upgrade the existing toilets and showers and add a rainwater tank to support a caretaker. Further funding has been entered into the approval process and will eventually come before council when a site plan is agreed (schedule to bring to CRG next year). Expressions of Interest for new caretakers are being prepared.
Recycled water	#43, 17.7.2021	CDEO to enter customer request for council's surplus of recycled water to be used in the parks and gardens and median strips.	Complete	Response received by Marvin Pacheco, Acting Manager Water Utilities: ☐ We do have substantial amount of effluent water that we are currently managing using a combination of storage (dams) and irrigation (golf course + hunter street field + 20Ha of land adjacent to the golf course). ☐ Effluent water is available but these are some of the challenges with the idea that group mentioned: ○ There is no simple/cheap way to create a piping network for median strips. You could use water trucks but that will be expensive There are a number of public health requirements that need to be observed when using effluent water – the public cannot come in direct contact with the water/spray. This is why the irrigation that occurs at the golf course happens late at night when no one is around.
Blackwater Civic Centre	#43, 17.7.2021	CDEO to enter customer request for council to consider installing a large drop-down screen for the middle of the stage at the Blackwater Civic Centre with a projector.	Complete	21.10.2021 Request for council facilities consideration.

Blackwater Mine sign DTMR	#43, 17.7.2021	CDEO to enter customer request for council to advocate to DTMR to update the sign located at the Capricorn Highway pointing towards Ardurad Road says 'Blackwater'. This should say 'Blackwater Mine'.	Complete	Sign updated by DTMR.
BMA Funding Project	#42, 22.4.2021	CRG members to forward Fiona any Blackwater funding ideas to Fiona Powell, fiona.powell@bhp.com	Complete	Emailed members suggestion from meeting.
Customer request	#42, 22.4.2021	CDEO to enter customer request for: Blackwater Aquatic Centre has tiles coming off in the big pool. Needs repair, ideal time to repair is during closed season.	Complete	19.7.2021 Manager Parks and Recreation attended CRG meeting, noted tiles are being repaired.
		CDEO to enter customer request for: Karri Street has large pot holes in need of repair.	Complete	Request given to council's infrastructure team for action.
		CDEO to enter customer request for: Blackwater Cooroorah Road has pot holes and the road is narrow. The road needs to be considered for a renewal design. Also the bridge over the Bedford Weir needs to be lifted as it cuts off regularly during wet seasons.	Complete	Request given to council's infrastructure team for consideration.
		CDEO to enter customer request for: Blackwater Rolleston Road is very narrow and has a lot of big trucks on it. This road needs to be considered for a renewal design.	Complete	Request given to council's infrastructure team for consideration.
Bedford Weir	#42, 22.4.2021	CDEO to pass CRG suggestion to Manager Parks and Recreation for consideration. ☐ CRG would like a council approved plan for the Bedford Weir space. CRG would like to see the plan shovel ready for funding opportunities. Important tourist and community space.	Complete	19.7.2021 Manager Parks and Recreation attended CRG meeting.
Blackwater park equipment	#42, 22.4.2021	CDEO to pass CRG suggestion to Manager Parks and Recreation for consideration. ☐ CRG would like additional swings and seating around Blackwater, could be nice to have sandstone blocks as seating. ☐ CRG suggestion for park spaces for children is additional flying fox equipment in parks. This is a popular item and is only is one park in Blackwater. The CRG suggest adding this into the Rotary Park. Can the	Complete	19.7.2021 Manager Parks and Recreation attended CRG meeting.

		costing of this and location be shovel ready for funding as it becomes available. Also if shovel ready and costed then a local group could consider funding.		
Health Expo	#42, 22.4.2021	CDEO to investigate options for Health Expo in Blackwater in 2021.	Complete	Requested Centacare host a 'checkpoint' event in Blackwater.
William Street	#42, 22.4.2021	CDEO to enter customer request for the road to continue from William Street through to Scantlebury Street and Comollatti Street.	Complete	Request given to council's infrastructure team for consideration.
Health Forum	#42, 22.4.2021	CDEO to arrange Health Forum planning meeting.	Complete	Requested Centacare host a 'checkpoint' event in Blackwater.
TMR meeting	#41, 1.2.2021	CRG nominated Glen Hamilton as a community representative to join the TMR and Aurizon discussion and give community feedback on options.	Complete	22.4.2021 Aurizon representative gave feedback from this meeting with option of traffic lights going ahead for the Ardurad Road and Capricorn Highway intersection.
Aurizon feedback	#41, 1.2.2021	Discussion items raised to be given to Aurizon to inform decision making for the rail crossing	Complete	22.4.2021 Items raised at meeting were emailed to Aurizon representative.
Blackwater Banter Printing	#41, 1.2.2021	CDEO to investigate if council would fund the Blackwater Banter printing.	Complete	22.4.2021 Council contributing to printing of the Blackwater Banter
Invite to future CRG meeting	#39 19.10.2020	Invite to future meetings: ☐ Department of Main Roads ☐ Aurizon ☐ Department of Environment and Science	Complete	22.4.2021 Aurizon attended meeting, DMR unavailable. 1.2.2021 Aurizon and DES attended meeting, DMR unavailable.

APPENDIX F: EXAMPLE OF GRC TERMS OF REFERENCE



Established:

The Community Reference Groups (CRGs) have been established to implement local Community Plans. They were developed when Central Highlands Regional Council (CHRC) created the ten year Central Highlands 2022 Community Plan.

CHRC is committed to partnering with Central Highland communities.

CRG members represent individuals, businesses, agencies, industry and organisations, they play an important role in supporting their community to achieve their vision.

Purpose

The purpose of the CRGs is to:

- Provide cross-representation from a range of community interests, sectors and groups;
- Provide community involvement and input to the local short, medium and long term actions in their local community plans.
- Assist with distributing information and undertaking community engagement to identify and prioritise actions, initiatives (events) and programs;
- Assist with and partner in advocating for the needs and aspirations of their community and link with various levels of government;
- Provide information to monitor and update their Community Profile;
- Promote and share their local events with the Central Highlands community;
- Assist with identifying opportunities and mitigating issues for their community and Central Highlands region; and
- Act as community visionaries and maintain motivation for positive future outcomes.

Selection:

- Nominations are open to the public and nomination forms are available from haveyoursay.chrc.qld.gov.au website.
- Visitor spots are available at each meeting for visitors to attend and help determine if they wish to become a member.
- Reference Group members to be reviewed every two years, by members.

Membership

It is proposed that CRG membership will consist of approximately 5 – 20 members. Ideally, the group should include representation from local community Neighbourhoods and the following sectors but is not limited to this representation. Members have the right to invite individuals, community groups/clubs and organisation to attend meetings and/or become members as required.

- Arts, Culture and Heritage
- Business and Tourism
- Cultural Diversity
- Education and Training
- Emergency Services
- Environment Sustainability
- Health/Community Service
- Mining and industry
- Rural Land Owner
- Seniors
- Sport and Recreation
- Young Families
- Youth

Community attendance and participation is encouraged.

All new members will be inducted.

Members who have not attended or made contact for one year shall be contacted to discuss commitment to membership in the following year.

Members vote at meetings and in the case they are unable to attend, can vote electronically via email within a set timeline. Decisions are made by majority vote.

Chairperson:

The CRG Chairperson is to be nominated, elected and agreed to by members, on a rotating basis. If a nominated Chairperson is absent, the group may nominate their replacement to act as Chairperson for the duration of the meeting.

Principles:

The CRGs are committed to the following principles:

- **Community:** Support the development of a strong inclusive community that promotes access, equity, partnerships and participation in decision-making to shape a better community for everyone.
- **Creativity:** Nurture diverse creative expression in the community, foster innovation and always seek opportunities for continuous improvement to meet the local needs of community.
- **Sustainability:** Ensure that all decisions and future planning considers a balance of economic, environmental, cultural and social elements to enhance the quality of life in local community.
- **Consultation:** Promote ideas for actions, initiatives (events) and programs that are genuinely what local people want and fit into the foreseeable future vision and needs of each local Community.

Resources:

The following will be available on the haveyoursay.chrc.qld.gov.au website:

- Templates:
 - meeting minutes and agendas
 - member sector updates
 - project plan
 - member nomination forms
- Terms of Reference, Strategic Directions (previously known as Action Plans), Community Plans etc.

Meeting Frequency:

CRG meetings will be held quarterly with Council support. Members are welcome to hold additional meetings as required and appoint their own note taker. The CRG will determine time, venue and dates for meetings, for these additional meetings.

A Summit for all CRGs within the region will be hosted by the Mayor of Central Highlands Regional Council each year. The Summit will allow members to meet one another; showcase community projects, initiatives (events) and programs; provide opportunity to learn through training and foster partnerships to promote sustainable long-term planning for the Central Highland's communities and region.

Reporting:

Members are expected to foster open communication, co-operation and strong community engagement. As such the group will:

- Make minutes of meetings and local Strategic Directions (formerly known as action plan) public via haveyoursay.chrc.qld.gov.au website;
- Present an annual report of achievements and successes at the Regional Summit.

Council's Role:

It is Council's role to develop local Community Plans and steward their ongoing implementation as part of its commitment to the Central Highlands 2022 Community Plan.

A Councillor will provide CHRC representation on each CRG.

CHRC's Community Development Unit will provide secretariat support for maximum of four (4) meetings per year, update the community Strategic Directions document, prepare communiques and assist with follow-up actions as required.

The CRGs will enable Council to:

- Partner with community, business, organisations, industry sectors and State & Federal Governments to lead and deliver on actions and projects for Community;
- Enhance communications and community engagement with community to support the delivery of Council services and inform Council's ability to advocate for community needs and aspirations; and
- Assist with identifying short, medium and long-term priorities for community.
- Provide information to inform strategic regional documents.

Training & Development:

CRG members will be supported to develop and enhance their leadership skills and capacity to undertake and fulfil their role on the group.

Administration Processes:

CRG members can establish procedures that will inform administrative processes when implementing the community plan. These procedures will be developed in partnership with CHRC to ensure transparency and democratic processes.

Dispute Resolution:

In the event of any dispute, all parties concerned should meet, discuss and resolve the matter as soon as possible. If the parties are unable to resolve the dispute, they must hold a meeting in the presence of a person nominated by CHRC.

APPENDIX G: EXTRACT 2015 REGIONAL SUMMIT REPORT

Extract from 2015 Regional Summit Report, cover, pages 2-4.



Central Highlands 2022 Community Plan Project

Inaugural Regional Community Summit 2015 Report



FINAL MONDAY 22 JULY 2015

FOR EXTERNAL CIRCULATION TO CRGs

DISCLAIMER:

CHRC has exercised care and diligence in the preparation of this report and accepts no liability for any loss or damage that may be incurred as a result of reliance on this information.



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1.0 Executive Summary



This Executive Report has been prepared to summarise the key outcomes, feedback and recommendations of the Regional Community Summit 2015 as part of the *Central Highlands 2022 Community Planning Project*.

The *Inaugural Regional Community Summit 2015 – Capella Reaching our Peak* was held at the Capella Cultural Centre on Saturday 16 May 2015.

The aim of the Summit 2015 was to celebrate the establishment of the thirteen (13) Community Reference Groups (CRGs) and bring together members from communities in the region.

The Summit 2015 was sponsored and funded by the Central Highlands Regional Council. Mayor Peter Maguire and six of the eight Councillors attended the event.

The Summit 2015 was attended by 51 CRG members representing 11 of the 13 CRGs. These communities included Blackwater, Bluff, Capella, Comet, Duaringa, Dingo, Emerald, Gemfields, Rolleston, Springsure and Tieri communities. Arcadia Valley and Bauhinia were the only CRGs unable to attend on the day due to other community commitments.

The CRG members also represented the following sectors from their individual communities: Industry, Youth, Senior's, Rural, Health/Community Services, Education, Cultural, Sports and Recreation.

Guest Speaker Professor John Cole, Executive Director of the Institute of Resilient Regions, University of Southern Queensland, presented on “*Thinking Global – Building ‘Grass-roots’ Capacity for Future Global Leadership*”. Key themes covered by Professor Cole were: Leadership, Collaboration and Entrepreneurship.

Additionally, Natasha Neale, Executive Director Strategic Policy and Intergovernmental Relations, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, was a guest for the day.

The Summit 2015 Project Team consisted of Janice Moriarty, Manager Community Planning and Engagement, Lyn Hopewell Summit Coordinator and Thalia Allsop, Community Development Officer.

Mayor Peter Maguire was MC for the event and everyone was welcomed by Councillor Gai Sypher and youth representatives Aileen Kinghorn and Jane Joubert from Capella State High School.

Outstanding presentations were made by the Capella, Springsure and Dingo CRGs, which enable group members to share their achievements and key learnings.

Community Showcase Displays were a great success with CRG members gathering produce and resources from their communities to display at the Summit.

The Summit 2015 Featured:

The Summit 2015 focussed on a range of key features including:

- ☐ Showcased Capella as the host community
- ☐ Support of local businesses and local buy approach
- ☐ Working with community groups and local State High School
- ☐ Promotion of local and regional tourism through community showcase displays
- ☐ Engaging with young people through interviews and videoing the Summit
- ☐ Presentation from a renowned university professor as guest speaker
- ☐ Participation from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet as an invited guest
- ☐ Presentations from CRGs to share insights, experiences and future aspirations
- ☐ Scoped from local, regional to global perspectives
- ☐ Identification of regional projects for the Central Highlands Region
- ☐ Acknowledging family through the Partners Program

Key achievements for the Summit 2015 included supporting the host community by purchasing local goods and services, visiting venues such as the Capella Pioneer Village and a local Farm as part of the Partners Program and the closing entertainment performance from the Capella Crack-up Kids.

Recommendations for Councils Considerations:

A number of recommendations have been developed around the areas:

1. Frequency of Summits
2. Design of Summit Agendas
3. Selection Process for Summit Host Community
4. Supporting Local Economy
5. Additional Activities
6. Production and distribution of Summit materials

These recommendations are for consideration of the Central Highlands Regional Council, Community Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC).

The Summit 2015 was able to cover the dimensions of local, regional and global perspectives for delegates to make connections as part of the region. It was instrumental in harnessing the commitment and energy of the CRGs as they work together to achieve the local priorities and regional outcomes outlined in the *Central Highland 2022 Community Plan*.

APPENDIX H: EXAMPLE OF CRG REGIONAL ROUNDUP

Community
Reference
Group

Regional Round

What happened locally and
regionally in 2022



Ph: 1300 242 686

haveyoursay.chrc.qld.gov.au



GEMFIELDS CRG

Community successes:

- Construction of Sapphire Skate Park and opening event with 88 attendees
- Gemfields Festival with events in all four communities
- Anakie tennis courts upgraded to multi-use courts and official opening event
- Have a Go Community Connections Event in Rubyvale had 379 attendees
- Funding secured for Willows Recreation Club upgrades
- Willows war memorial upgrades

Future aspirations:

- Willows water security
- Dump point for the Willows
- Toilet facilities on Capricorn Highway



APPENDIX I: BAUHINIA/DUARINGA COMMUNITY CONSULTATION SHEET

Central Highlands Regional Council Community update | Bauhinia/Duaringa | March 2023

HOUSING

Duaringa

Council resolved on 14 December 2022, a revised list of vacant properties in Duaringa for disposal. The properties will be offered for sale by tender or auction before the end of this financial year.

Upgrades (refurbishments) to community and staff housing in Duaringa are progressing, with several contracts recently awarded. Full details of the various projects can be found on the 'EOI and Tender' page on council's website.

chrc.info/tenders

The construction of two additional dwellings for council staff will not proceed as planned this financial year due to the value of the tenders received. Alternative construction options for staff accommodation are being considered for delivery next financial year.

Bauhinia

Tenders recently closed for the sale of two vacant lots in Bauhinia. Council has accepted the offers received for both lots and will proceed to settlement over the next month.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Reference Groups (CRG's): This is an opportunity for community members to meet and identify their aspirations for their township. The group collaborates to progress projects that are supported by council.

Bauhinia CRG current priorities include:

- Tennis court upgrade
- Health, art/craft, and paddock workshops
- Garden competition

The quarter two Bauhinia CRG meeting is scheduled for 20 April 2023 at 11.30 am at the Bauhinia Community Hall. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Duaringa CRG current priorities include:

- Community gardens
- Unmarked graves
- Geocaching

The quarter two Duaringa CRG meeting is scheduled for 1 June 2023 at 4.00 pm at the Duaringa Community Centre. Everyone is welcome to attend.

PARKS AND GARDENS

A global supply shortage of mowing equipment and spare parts, sodden land and extreme heat has impacted mowing schedules across the region. The parks & gardens team continues to prioritise work based on need and risk and respond to CRMs when they are lodged. We hope to see relief when new mowers and equipment arrive in a few months and the extreme heat subsides.

FINANCE

The 2nd half rates levy for this financial year were issued at the end of February. To receive the 5% discount ratepayers must pay the full amount, including arrears, by March 30.

Council is looking at issuing rates and water notices via email next financial year. Further communications will be issued to ratepayers about this new initiative over the next few months.

In October, Council approved a new general rate concession for rural ratepayers. This concession relates to capping on land that has changed by way of amalgamation, separation or transfer due to succession planning. Council contacted identified ratepayers to inform them of the new concession. Ratepayers who did not receive an application form and think they may be eligible are encouraged to contact council immediately to apply by 30 June 2023.

Ratepayers who are experiencing difficulty paying their rates should contact council to enter a payment arrangement or apply for financial hardship.

FACILITIES

The process for sponsorship requests i.e. fee waivers, is changing from 1 July 2023. Details regarding a quarterly grant application process will be communicated soon. Keep an eye out for more information.

In the meantime, sporting clubs and community groups can continue to seek sponsorship by contacting council.

SPORT AND RECREATION

Winter sport is getting ready to kick off in the region and council is working with resident sport groups to prepare for events.

WATER

Duaringa: A contract for the upgrade of the Duaringa and Dingo Water Treatment Plants has been awarded. Design work is progressing and construction is planned to commence in late March 2023.

Design work has begun on the Duaringa Standpipe, which includes looking into suitable locations. A drop-in session is being scheduled later this month to share location options and discuss the project with interested community members.

ARTS

Emerald Art Gallery: Now on display is Geoffrey Head's exhibition 'Over the Fence'. This collection of paintings is inspired by the natural landscape seen over the fence at the rear of his property. The exhibition is a celebration of the observed suburban landscape through the interpretation of its unique character and composition using a dynamic visual language. The exhibition will be on display from 27 February to 31 March 2023.

Annual Art Awards – Springsure: Entries have closed. The exhibition opening night with judge's award announcement will be held on Friday 3 March at 6pm. The exhibition will remain on display until 13 April 2023 at the Bauhinia Bicentennial Art Gallery, Springsure. Stay tuned to the Central Highlands Regional Galleries Facebook page for upcoming events and opportunities
facebook.com/chgalleries

HAVE YOUR SAY

Council is currently seeking feedback on the following projects:

Central Highlands Youth Strategy and Action Plan 2023 – 2028

Council wants to hear about the types of issues affecting youth and hear your suggestions to make Central Highlands an even better place for young people. Your feedback will be used to develop the Central Highlands Youth Strategy and Action Plan 2023 – 2028. The survey will close on 3 March 2023. Visit: chrc.info/youth

Major Planning Scheme Amendment 7 – Business Improvement and Innovation

Council is proposing an amendment to the Central Highlands Regional Council Planning Scheme 2016 to support business improvement and innovation. We are seeking your feedback.

The proposed amendment can be accessed by visiting: chrc.info/eplan

The Have Your Say page contains a number of guides to assist in making a submission. Submissions will be accepted from 10 February 2023 to 31 March 2023. chrc.info/amendment7

Register for Have Your Say Central Highlands to receive notification about future engagement opportunities in areas of interest to you:

haveyoursay.chrc.qld.gov.au

WASTE

a new location for the bulk bin station in Bauhinia has not been found. Several locations were investigated and deemed to be unsuitable due to access or land tenure. A recent audit of all waste facilities across the region found the current site at Bauhinia is currently well maintained which is a credit to residents. Council is meeting with TMR to discuss a road corridor permit that would approve the already established site (with improvements) to remain where it is.

1300 242 686 | enquiries@chrc.qld.gov.au

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Regional Council

Central Highlands Regional Council

Community update | Bauhinia/Duaringa | March 2023

LIBRARIES

Bauhinia: The council library team is excited to confirm an activity day happening for Bauhinia in 2023. Activities for all ages will include the First5Forever early literacy programs, Tech Savvy workshops, robotics, and craft activities. Suggestions from community members are encouraged. Details on the date and time will be confirmed via the council library's Facebook page.

Library Collection Refresh: The library service team will be visiting the Bauhinia Library Honorary Monday 6 March 2023 to refresh the collection. The team will not touch the community collection items.

Duaringa

First5Forever: An ongoing, state-wide project that is dedicated to building literacy and motor skills in children aged 0-5 years. Families can join in programs and events delivered by the CHRC Library Service, as well as pick up a free First5Forever goodies bag. The Dingo and Duaringa libraries offer regular programs for local families to participate in. Head to your nearest branch or go to EventBrite for more information and bookings.
chrc.info/first5forever

Craftermoons: Don't miss out on the Crafternoon sessions at your nearest library branch. This is a program aimed at primary school-aged children and activities include crafts, games, robotics, and homework assistance. Adult supervision is required for children under the age of 8.

- Dingo: Wednesdays and Fridays 3.00 pm
- Duaringa: Mondays and Tuesdays 3.00 pm

Vintage Sessions: An ongoing program for adults and seniors to relax, learn, connect, and discover. Each session is different, enjoying activities such as crafts, robotics, workshops, local history, and more. Bookings are essential through EventBrite which can be done in advance on your own device, or upon arrival with staff assistance on our Public Access Computers (PACs).

- Dingo: Fortnightly Wednesdays 10.00 am
- Duaringa: Third Thursday monthly 9.00 am

CAREERS WITH COUNCIL

View our current vacancies here:



Library hours and contact information:

Emerald Library Location: 44 Borilla Street,
Emerald Phone: 4986 8444

Email: library@chrc.qld.gov.au

Opening hours:

Monday to Friday, 10.00 am to 6.00 pm, Saturday,
10.00 am to 1.00 pm

Dingo Library Location: Normanby Street Dingo
Phone: 4935 9237

Email: DingoLibrary@chrc.qld.gov.au

Duaringa Library Location: 12 William Street

Duaringa Phone: 4925 6412

Email: duaringalibrary@chrc.qld.gov.au

Opening hours:

Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, 8.45 am to 12.30
pm and 1.30 pm to 4.45 pm

Eventbrite bookings: chrc.info/librarybooking

YOUTH

Youth Development Officer Trainee: There is a new face in the youth team! Rose Savage started with the youth team on the 6 February 2023. Rose will be supporting fellow youth development officers within their communities whilst completing her Certificate IV in Youth Work.

Queensland Youth Week 11-17 April 2023:

Queensland Youth Week (QYW) is an annual celebration of young people aged 12 to 25 and the positive contributions they make to Queensland communities. Council, in partnership with the community, will be delivering one signature event in Emerald this year. Buses will be available from all other communities to attend the event. Each following year, the signature event will be rotated between Emerald, Blackwater, Capella and Springsure.

Annual Mayoral Student Leaders Summit 2023:

The Mayoral Student Leaders Summit is an annual event that brings student leaders from across the Central Highlands together for a day of inspiration, motivation, and sharing. This year's summit is scheduled for Tuesday 16 May 2023 in Emerald.

ROADS

Bauhinia: Council have upcoming resheet works on Bauhinia Duaringa Road and finishing re-sheet works on Glen Elgin Road.

Next year's program will include re-sheeting and rehabilitation on Fairfield Road, including works at the intersection of Fairfield and Mundabunda Road. Maintenance grading works will resume shortly on Mapala and Lunds Road.

Duaringa: reheeting works to commence this financial year on Coomoo Baralaba Road, Central Creek, Range Barranga and Mourindilla



Follow council on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter. Subscribe to our weekly email newsletter and pick up a copy of the monthly printed newsletter at your local council office, select post offices and The Hub in Emerald.
chrc.info/connect



We're here to help!

Have a question or concern?
Don't wait until the next consultation, contact our friendly customer service team today!

They can assist with:

- Payments
- Animals
- Water
- Roads
- Waste
- Parks and gardens
- Building and planning

Call us on 1300 242 686, email us via the address below or lodge a request through our website.

You can also report things like potholes, water leaks, graffiti, dumped rubbish and overgrown allotments on the go from your mobile device with the **Snap Send Solve** app. Get it for free from the App Store or Google Play.

1300 242 686 | enquiries@chrc.qld.gov.au

chrc.qld.gov.au

CHRCouncil



APPENDIX J: DINGO CRG COMMUNITY MEETING INVITATION



COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUP (CRG)

**YOU
ARE YOUR
COMMUNITY'S
VOICE.**
Be heard!



What is a community reference group?

A CRG is a collective of like-minded locals who help council prioritise and deliver projects important to their community. Essentially, they help give their patch a voice when it comes to council decision-making.

Who can get involved?

Anyone and everyone! You don't need experience, specific skills, or a notebook full of ideas – just a passion for making your community great.

Why should I join?

This is a real opportunity to make a difference and shape the future of your community. You will also build local networks, add to your skills and get an insight into everything council.

Your involvement can be as much or as little as you like, with only four meetings a year and no lock-in commitment. So come see for yourself!

For future
meeting dates and
more information visit

haveyoursay.chrc.qld.gov.au

or phone us on

1300 242 686.



Central Highlands
Regional Council

APPENDIX K: EXAMPLES OF CRG PROJECTS – POSITIVE AGEING FORUM AND RURAL ADDRESSING

2021 Positive Ageing Forum – extract, pages 1 and 6



Emerald Positive Ageing Forum

Outcomes Report – November 2021

The Emerald Positive Ageing Forum was hosted by the Emerald Community Reference Group (CRG) on Thursday 28 October 2021 at McIndoe Park Emerald. The Forum commenced at 9.30am and concluded at 2.30pm.

Forum Aim: Achieving 'Positive Ageing' outcomes in Emerald continues to raise several challenges, ranging from accommodation through to social connectedness. The aim of the Forum was to bring local resident's together with relevant organisations, service and program providers to identify options for improving the liveability and wellbeing of older people. The expected outcome was not to develop an action plan, but to simply share information and gain consensus on priority solutions to advocate for a more age-friendly community and promote 'Positive Ageing' in Emerald.

Attendance: 53 participants attended the forum (by invitation).

The Emerald CRG is facilitated through Central Highlands Regional Council (CHRC) and made up of community leaders representing sporting and art groups, business, youth, education, etc. The role of Emerald CRG is to advocate and progress social, economic, environmental and infrastructure solutions to improve liveability in the town.

The Emerald CRG formed a working group and developed a project plan for the forum. The working group members were Catherine Galea, Vicki Gale, Cr Janice Moriarty and Ashleigh Kavanagh (CHRC). Thank you to Dr Lisa Caffery who facilitated the forum. The Emerald Art Group Inc. auspiced the forum on behalf of Emerald CRG (thank you to Sharon Gimbert). Thank you to the Emerald Interagency Group for providing support and information to the Emerald CRG. A huge thank you to the Emerald Country Women's Association (CWA) for catering at the forum. Finally, an enormous thank you to the panel members, agencies and organisations, and local residents who participated in making this forum such a successful event.

Sponsors:

The Emerald CRG secured sponsorship to host the Positive Ageing Forum, which was greatly appreciated. Thank you to our sponsors (as listed below) for your financial and in-kind support and generosity.

- ☐ Central Highlands HealthCare
- ☐ Central Highlands Community Services
- ☐ Centacare

- ☐ Dementia Units / more accommodation options

Overall Comment:

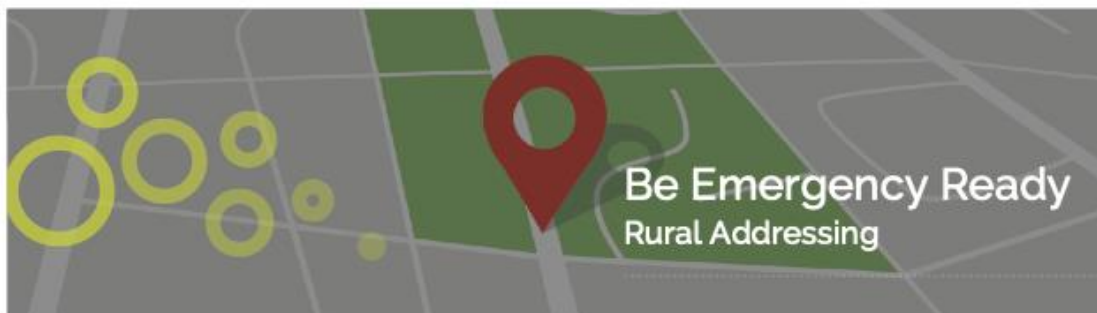
- ☐ The forum was very warranted
- ☐ Good to have a cross-section of participants – community and services
- ☐ Great having health and services professionals there on the day
- ☐ Good networking – brought people together you don't normally see

Outcome Actions:

The Emerald CRG working group are organising a debrief meeting to finalise an advocacy list from this Positive Ageing Outcomes Report and lobby to have the priority solutions/ideas added to the Emerald Strategic Directions.



Be Emergency Ready – rural addressing



DO YOU HAVE A RURAL ADDRESS ALLOCATED TO YOUR PROPERTY?

To ensure Emergency Services can locate your property, please ensure that you have an allocated property address. If you do not have a property address, please contact council to request for one.

WHO CAN APPLY FOR A PROPERTY ADDRESS?

A property address request can only be made by the property owner. If you are a tenant, you may ask your landlord to make a property address request to council. Mining claim holders and mining lease holders will not be allocated a rural address for their temporary tenure.

WHICH LAND PARCELS QUALIFY FOR A PROPERTY ADDRESS?

For a parcel of land to be assigned a rural address, it must have a defined property access and infrastructure such as house, stockyards, shed, etc. If the property does not have a defined access but has acceptable infrastructure, then an application for the construction of a compliant access must be made to council.

DOES YOUR PROPERTY HAVE A COMPLIANT ADDRESS MARKER?

To ensure uniformity throughout the region, council provides and installs the initial standard number

To ensure uniformity throughout the region, council provides and installs the initial standard number post with the reflective rural address number adhered to both sides of the post. Once the rural addressing post has been installed by council, its location is not to be altered. Any change to the location of the rural addressing post may alter the number assigned and must be referred to Council.

Where a replacement standard number post is required as a result of vandalism, theft, damage or otherwise, the property owner is responsible for all costs involved.

HOW DO I GET MY GPS COORDINATES?

There are various mobile phone applications that can be used to get your exact location. The Queensland government and emergency services have also developed an application called Emergency Plus. This app can be downloaded to a smartphone and uses a smartphone's GPS functionality to help a triple zero (000) caller provide the critical location details needed to mobilise emergency services. Latitude and longitude details shown on the app can be relayed to an emergency operator, as well as the property address details.

HOW AND WHERE CAN I KEEP MY GPS COORDINATES?

Once you have acquired your property's GPS coordinates, write your property's Latitude and Longitude on pieces of card and store them in accessible places in your

USE OF GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM (GPS) TO IDENTIFY YOUR PROPERTY

There are instances where Emergency Services may have difficulty in locating your rural address. In the event of an emergency, time and location accuracy are critical therefore council strongly advises that all rural property owners have their property GPS coordinates GDA94 handy in case of emergency. These GPS coordinates give you the exact Latitude and Longitude of where you are located.

home in the event of an emergency. Keep a card in your wallet, and also stick the other cards to the fridge or wall, whichever place is safest and easiest to access.

As you may require emergency assistance while you are away from home, it is also encouraged to download the Emergency Plus app on your phone so that you can provide the exact latitude and longitude of your location, wherever you are.



APPENDIX L: 25 CODES – LEVEL ONE OPEN CODING

No	Codes (25)	Initial codes (70)	Open-coding
1	Having a voice	• Having a voice into Council (Individual/CRG/community levels) • Link into (with) Council – Councillors, Council staff • Community members (and other stakeholders) and CRG/community connected and part of a central body/region • GRGs connect with each other to create a regional voice/identity	• Having a voice – individual/GRG/community • Direct access to Councillors, Council staff • Feeling connected to/part of central body/region – an extension of Council into community (ears and eyes) • Platform to share/raise issues, concerns and ideas with Council and others • Coming together with other CRGs to connect as a region
2	Representation	• Ability to represent –as individuals, interests/sectors, community, etc • Coming to the table and having a seat at ‘the table’ • Each community has a CRG - equally connected into Council (no town or community over-looked) • Designated Councillors to each CRG and access to them regularly	• Seat at the table - equal • Small community/small town having a CRG so can part of CRGs – included and not overlooked by council (equity of representation for communities) • Designated Councillors to town/community
3	Right Environment	• Creating a safe space and the right environment where community, Council and other stakeholders can engage with each other	• Safe space / right environment– talking and listening/structured/respectful • Meeting protocols and structured to create a safe space

No	Codes (25)	Initial codes (70)	Open-coding
		• Protocols/structure	
4	Community level	• Community level focus/ community-wide approach • Different people, community groups and council coming together at community level (not individuals having a whinge)	• Community-wide approach (common good) • No other opportunity to come together as a community usually involved in own groups – sporting, school, etc
5	Speaking up	• Speaking up as an individual and as a CRG/community - sharing ideas/raising issues, concerns to improve community • Designated Councillors speaking up inside /at Council on behalf of CRGs/ Communities • CRGs presenting to/meeting with other CRGs to share ideas/projects (not reinvent the wheel)	• Speaking up for what you want for community/town as community, individuals, groups – sporting, etc • Exercise passion and drive for community • CRGs sharing ideas/raising issues/project planning with other CRGs • Regional CRG Summits – presentations, sharing projects ideas, etc
6	Communicating	• Communication method - two-way communication/conversation - talking and listening to each other • Communication reach – within group, to Council, other key stakeholders and broader community • Communication mediums – emails, newsletters, etc	• Two-way communication – with each other • Face-to-face conversations – in person • Authentic – with real people • Ask questions and have discussions, especially with Councillors and guest speakers – Council staff and other stakeholders – Aurizon, mining companies, • Information mediums – emails, agendas, minutes, website (CRGs have a page on Council website), etc

No	Codes (25)	Initial codes (70)	Open-coding
			• Target broader community – improve information distribution to broader community • Council website – • Council making video clips to share CRG information and for member recruitment on Council Facebook
7	Information Exchange	• Information from multiple sources (locals, Council and other key stakeholders) • Diversity of information - variety of topics/issues/trends • Information exchanged is meaningful, timely, authentic and relevant with real people • Information levels: individuals, CRG, community, other stakeholders, Regional between CRGs	• Exchanging information by all participants/real people • Engaging at different levels on Council projects (roads, new infrastructure /initiatives (corporate plan) • Place community planning – aspirations, ideas, etc • Informing (one-way) – providing updates on projects, happenings, events, up-coming initiatives • Meaningful and relevant information • Diversity of information – different people, organisations, Council (councillors and guest speakers), community, state government, mining companies, etc • Range of information – diverse topics social, infrastructure, economic, etc • Local updates – events, projects, timely issues (water leaks, etc) • What happening ‘on the ground’ when something went well or do not go well and

No	Codes (25)	Initial codes (70)	Open-coding
			why (physical assets and community opinions) Exchanging ideas and learning about other CRG projects
8	Social Connections	- Variety, diversity and density of social connections - Types of connections: individual - individual, Council - CRG, Other key stakeholders - CRG and Council, CRG - CRG	- Meeting new people - Making contacts - Networking - Range of connections – other community members, council, businesses, state government, businesses, organisations, etc - Meeting other CRGs – other members
9	Membership	- Inclusive – everyone (individuals, government/business/etc representatives) - All welcome to attend – once-off/regular basis - Diversity – sectors, organisation, skills, talents, etc - Different ideas and viewpoints - Broader community members	- Started inclusive and open over time - Diversity of individuals, groups, government, etc - Diversity of ideas, skills, talents, - Other like-minded people - Members have different ways of thinking and viewpoints - Everyone is welcome to attend - Recruit new members - Consistency of membership – core individuals who have CRG history and understand protocols/way we do things

No	Codes (25)	Initial codes (70)	Open-coding
10	Relationship building	- Relationships – bonds formed over-time through meeting regularly, common experiences, sharing ideas and thinking together. - Built trust and honestly (open conversations – agree or disagree)	- Meeting regularly - Building relationships - Overtime and long-term relationships - Builds trust and honesty
11	Contribution	- Making the effort/turning up/volunteering time/ - Cost to Council (staff and resources) - Appreciating/acknowledging commitment and contribution of community members - Attending events with other CRG members - summits	- Attendance numbers - Meeting times – to suit more people - Finding time/making time to attend - Volunteering - Making the effort – Councillors, staff, community members, etc - Valuing / recognising contribution of CRG members - Meetings held four times a year (not once) - Cost to Council – Councillors, staff and CDOs
12	Participation	- Chairing meetings - Agendas and minutes - Meeting structure – procedures/process/format - CDOs role / council's role and function of facilitating the meetings/summits/information sessions/events – preparation, coordination, reporting, etc	- Minutes and agendas – having record of meetings - Chairing meetings/meeting procedures – not continuing to go over old information - CDOs facilitation function – taking minutes, organisation meetings, following up on actions (internally and externally), setting up, emailing information, setting agendas, running summits

No	Codes (25)	Initial codes (70)	Open-coding
13	Deliberate Community Engagement	Council and CRG seeking opinions/thoughts/ideas of broader community to inform decision making	- Council and CRG seeking opinions/engagement of broader community to inform decision making - Engagement and communication tools/methods: surveys (online), Petition, Forums, Information sessions, working groups – inclusive, experts, etc - CRG members seeking ideas, opinions, concerns to take to the CRG meetings for consideration mostly word of mouth communication with other community members, other sector or group members, co-workers, customers, tourists, etc
14	Knowledge Building	- Learning new knowledge and adding to current knowledge about local community (demographics, history, etc), and Council (internal processes and procedures/organisational structure) and other stakeholders - Better understanding that projects/actions take time and reasons why NB: knowledge as distinct from information – knowledge from information sharing	- From the information being shared – building understanding and knowledge about internal functions and process of Council - From this knowledge understanding that projects, etc take time and do not happen quickly (takes a long time to see any progress), understanding the complexity of this process especially with road projects, multiple levels of government, different funding models, etc - Council - budgeting, timelines, funding, processes, procedures, organisational structure (departments), etc - Insight into State government, industry, organisations – operations and structure,

No	Codes (25)	Initial codes (70)	Open-coding
			• Understanding of legislation, finding out about grants, updates on policies, staff change-overs • Community knowledge – history of town and people, where ‘things’ are located (exactly), what has happened in the past, what did not work and what will work, • Local people/relational connections – who is related to who, who has specific knowledge about topics to assist with gaining more information • Local opinions, thoughts about specific issues, ideas/insights for solutions, ideas and aspirations about improving the viability and liveability of the town • Hosting regional summits in different locations to learn more about other towns – history, significant sites, tourist attractions, meet people
15	Accountability	• Councillors, Council staff, community members and other key stakeholders – explaining background to opinions, actions taken, etc	• Knowing where and how Council is spending rates • Explanation of why and what Council is doing- locally and regional • Deeper conversation to explain background and reason for decisions – transfer stations for example
16	Skills Development	• Learning new skills and developing skills – individual and professional development	New skills learnt: • Listening • Charing meetings

No	Codes (25)	Initial codes (70)	Open-coding
			• Grant writing • Project plans – writing, preparing • Speaking up/sharing own opinions with group of others - confidence and courage • Public speaking - presentations, presenting Other Skills: • Developing Strategic Directions / actions plan • Community engagement tools – surveys, petitions, etc • Communication tools – newsletters, Identified training: chairing meetings, writing project plans, conducting surveys to gather community opinions/ideas. NB: Skills learnt through CRGs helped in other aspects of life/personally
17	Qualities Acknowledged	• Qualities noted that were developed and/or exercised as part of being a CRG member	• Persistence • Patience • Staying positive/being positive • Being hopeful • Passion • Inspired /inspiring • Drive • Confidence

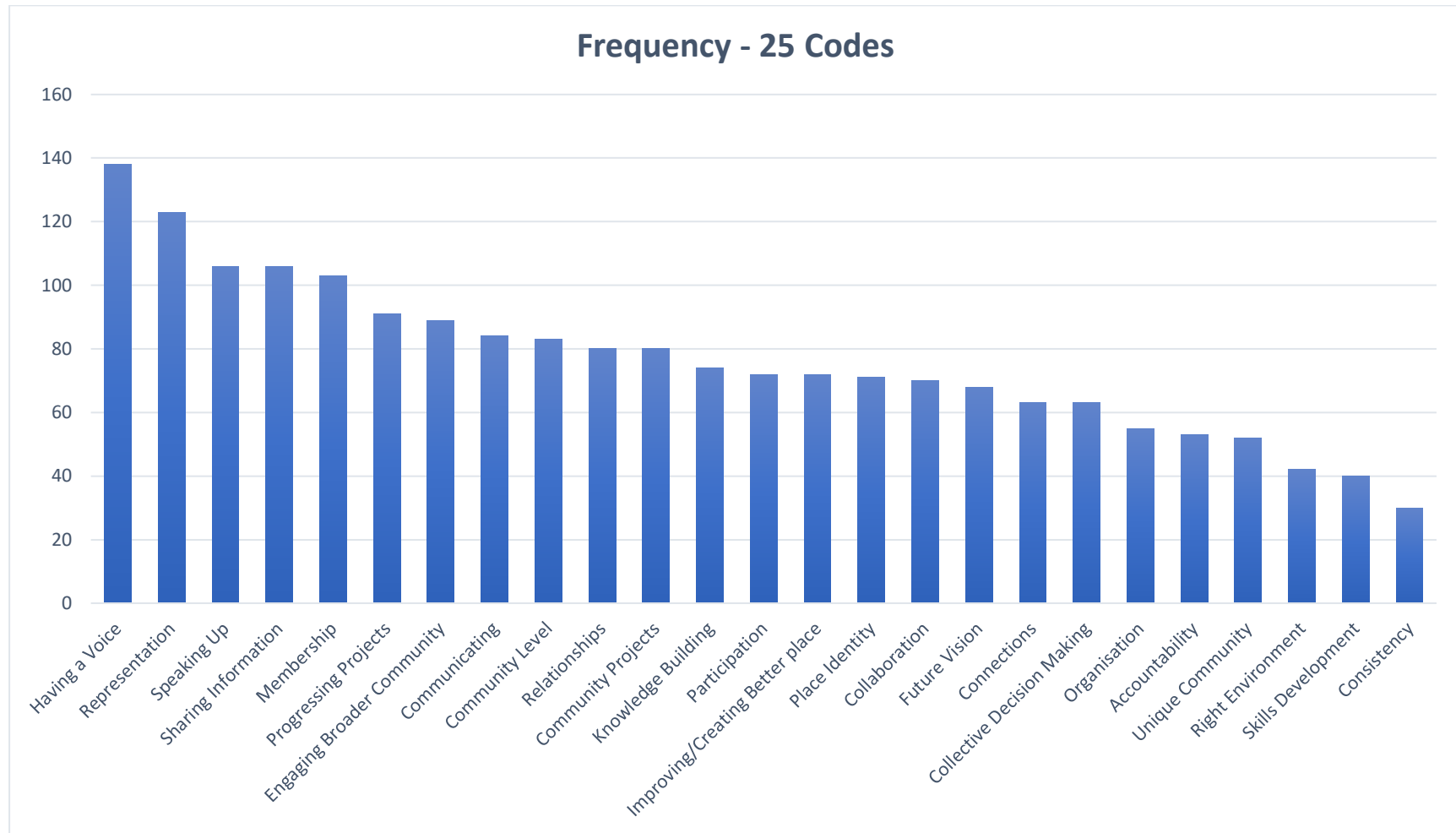
No	Codes (25)	Initial codes (70)	Open-coding
			• Courage • Community spirited • Like-minded
18	Collective Decision Making	• Listening to others/each other • Valuing other's contributions • Thinking and problem solving together • Collective consensus process – identifying and prioritising projects, initiatives, events together • Solutions-focused • Strategic – community level and short to long term	• Listening and considering all/other opinions/viewpoints (Appreciative Inquiry) • Appreciating others may have a better idea than your own to solve problem • Solutions focused approach – bring problem with a solution/no whinging • Problem solving together • Making decisions for common good/ betterment of community – at community level • OK to agree and disagree • Prioritising projects/actions
19	Collaboration	• Working as a team to deliver projects/share resources using processes and procedures • Inspiring and encouraging each other • Understanding each other and group protocols to work together as a team to deliver	• Inspiring and encouraging each other • Positive thinking/planning together • Group formation /power dynamics – forming, storming, norming and performing • Working together to host events, deliver projects • Sharing resources – assist each other • Writing project plans/grants and delivering on projects/initiatives/events • Understanding groups and power dynamics/group culture

No	Codes (25)	Initial codes (70)	Open-coding
20	Consistency	- Over-time: group history/culture /memory evolved so they value consistency to keep progressing - Consistency: of group membership/core members - Consistency of Councils approach and of staff and Councillors	- Over-time evolving own procedures, routines – how the CRG approaches projects (value consistency of membership/core members/group memory to progress at meetings) - New group members are valued – to be inclusive takes up meeting time - Changing approach and principles by Councillors (beyond council elections) and Council staff - Change-over of Councillors and staff, members coming and going – value core group for consistency
21	Progressing Projects	- Achieving and progressing projects by a range of project leads – CRG, Council or other - Progress of projects/initiatives -Slow or no project/actions progressed linked to levels of self-efficacy	- Projects are led by Council, CRG or other - Projects/initiatives if Council leading or partner takes a long time (complicated and complex) - Project progress – seeing action - Achieving projects / making progress - Short, medium and long timeframes - Knowing if projects are not going ahead or when in the future
22	Community Projects	Type of projects/initiatives nominated/intended to improve liveability – social, economic, infrastructure, cultural, environmental, etc	- To improve liveability - Various – delivered or in progress - Social, economic, infrastructure, cultural, environmental

No	Codes (25)	Initial codes (70)	Open-coding
		Projects delivered or in progress that benefit community/town	
23	Unique community	Unique place and unique character of community/town	- Character of place community – physical and people - Respecting/showcasing unique assets - Valuing own community history, community culture - Unique community /lifestyle – people, events, etc - Proud of own/unique community - Value being small, rural – qualities of country living
24	Sustained/vibrant Future	Envisaging/aspirations for a better (prosperous/vibrant) future for community – to keep and grow population and economy/jobs	- Vision setting for new opportunities - Dying/declining small rural communities and towns – keep alive - Better place for future generations - Attracting and retaining people, families, - To grow the population - Creating economic diversity – create new jobs/keeping jobs
25	Connection to place	- Pride in community- place visual amenity – being proud of home - Improved amenity imbues hope and positivity – improved wellbeing - Linking place and self-identity	- Reflects on you when you community/town is looking attractive (connection self and place identity) - Improving amenity – makes you feel more positive and hopeful - Clean and tidy appearance – improves mental wellbeing 'Love' my community/town - It's your home – where I live/my home

No	Codes (25)	Initial codes (70)	Open-coding
			• Community pride – on display • Shows being disrespectful if community and amenity not maintained and tidy • Community heart and soul of everything

APPENDIX M: FREQUENCY OF 25 CODES



APPENDIX N: 25 CODES TO 12 CATEGORIES

Categories (12)	Codes (25)
1. <u>Agency</u> • Being direct link and voice into Council. • Having equal voice around the table. • Community can advocate for community. • Regularly connect with Councillors visiting local community. • Equal representation of 13 localities into Council.	• Having a voice • Speaking up • Participating • Representation • Accountability
2. <u>Skills Development</u> • New skills learnt – listening to other points of view, speaking in public, group protocols and purpose of the CRGs, facilitating groups, etc.	• Skills development
3. <u>Knowledge</u> • Community learning about Council internal processes, budgeting, sources of funding, organisational structure and Council staff. • Council learning about community history, physical features of landscapes, who the people are living in each community and significant local events. • Shared knowledge developed overtime of the 13 CRG group histories.	• Knowledge building

Categories (12)	Codes (25)
4. <u>Resources & Tools</u> • CRG resources & tools – agendas, minutes, project plans, action plans /strategic directions, etc. Developed by Council. • Council CRG facilitators and staff support	• Organisation
5. <u>Membership</u> • CRG community membership has evolved over time from membership based to being open for all members of the public to attend. • Different sectors of the community invited represent segments of the community which has adapted overtime for community size. • Attendance at CRG meetings is based on how people like to be involved – core members for projects, irregular to share information, general public to raise issues. • Consistency – of meeting attendees improves meeting flow, community and Council built up knowledge of group activities overtime.	• Membership • Consistency
6. <u>Social Connections</u> • Social networks formed by the CRGs. • Individual CRG members networks. • Networks of Council, State Government, industry and organisations attending CRGs.	• Connections

Categories (12)	Codes (25)
7. <u>Relationships</u> • Building trust between community and Council. • Relationships forming between CRG members and Councillors, Council staff as well as between community members.	• Relationships
8. <u>Communications</u> • Two-way and face-to-face conversations. • Communication methods internal and external to the CRGs – emails, newsletters, website pages, etc.	• Communicating • Engaging broader community
9. <u>Information</u> • Variety of information shared at CRGs – members sharing information about their sectors or local information, guest speakers providing technical information, Councillors sharing about Council and other areas in the region, general community information, etc.	• Sharing information
10. <u>Decision Making</u> • Thinking together and group protocols. • Creating safe/right environment to speak honestly and parameters for decision-making - whole of community and solutions focused, effective listening for other points of views, etc. • Agreeing to support the group decisions even whether agree or not.	• Community level • Right environment • Collective Decision-making

Categories (12)	Codes (25)
<u>11. Collaboration</u> • Delivering community projects and initiatives can be led by community, Council or other key stakeholders (participatory community development approach) • CRG project planning process has developed overtime – project plans used for community to progress projects, communicate projects to Council. • Advocate for other key stakeholders such as State Government departments to undertake community projects. • CRG projects achieved range in size and length of time to deliver.	• Collaboration • Progressing projects • Community Projects
<u>12. Creating Place</u> • Experiences/connections between self and place. • Aspirations for improving and envisioned a better future the 13 unique towns and communities. • Creating a regional place – one a year Council bring the CRG members together from each of the 13 localities or share information about projects each of the 13 CRGs are progressing. The regional events enable CRG members to meet each other, learn about from each other about community projects and identify regional projects.	• Improving/creating a better place • Place identity • Unique • Future

APPENDIX O: THEMES, CATEGORIES AND CODES

Theoretical Framework		Categories (12)	Codes (25)
<i>Theory of Practice - Bourdieu</i> Field – Local Government Agency Social Capital Cultural Capital	<i>CoPs - Wenger</i> <i>Theme 1 - Meaning</i> <u>Active Participation</u> - Voice to Council - Two-way communication - Advocate to Councillors - Equal representation <u>Building competence</u> - CRG tools and resources - Skills Development - New knowledge	<u>Agency</u> - Having a link/voice into Council - Equal voice/advocacy - Regularly meeting with Councillors - Equal representation for 13 CRG <u>Skills Development</u> - Learning new skills – listening, public speaking, writing projects plan, etc <u>Knowledge</u> - Learning new knowledge - community about Council internal processes, budgeting, finances; Council about community local history, people and places <u>Resources & Tools</u>	- Having a voice - Speaking up - Participating - Representation - Skills development - Knowledge building - Organisation - Accountability

Theoretical Framework		Categories (12)	Codes (25)
		CRG resources & tools – agendas, minutes, project plans, action plans /strategic directions, etc	
<i>Theory of Practice - Bourdieu</i> Agency Social Capital Cultural Capital	<i>CoPs - Wenger</i> <i>Theme 2 Community</i> <u>Membership</u> - Evolving membership - Sector representation - Involvement - Consistency <u>Social Connections and Networks</u> - CRG Networks - Relationships	<u>Membership</u> - Open membership changes overtime - Sector representation adapted to community size - Attendance at CRG meetings - Consistency – community and Council <u>Social Connections</u> - Social networks formed by the CRGs <u>Relationships</u> - Building trust and relationships	- Membership - Connections - Consistency - Relationships

Theoretical Framework		Categories (12)	Codes (25)
<i>Theory of Practice - Bourdieu</i> Agency Social Capital Cultural Capital	<i>CoPs - Wenger</i> <i>Theme 3 Practice Communications</i> • At meetings • Between CRGS • External communications <u>Collaboration</u> • Whole of community • Right environment • Solutions focused • Group expectations • Consensus <u>Collective outcomes</u> • Project planning process • Project timelines • Community ownership • Project outcomes	<u>Communication</u> • Methods and ways of communication – internal and external <u>Information</u> • Sharing and exchanging information <u>Decision Making</u> • CRG decision-making – safe/right environment, solutions focused, whole of community and consensus <u>Collaboration</u> • Participatory community development approach – community • CRG Project planning process • CRG Projects achieved	• Communicating • Engaging broader community • Community level • Right environment • Collective Decision-making • Collaboration • Progressing projects • Projects

Theoretical Framework		Categories (12)	Codes (25)
<i>Theory of Practice - Bourdieu</i> Agency Social Capital Cultural Capital	<i>CoPs - Wenger</i> <i>Theme 4 Identity</i> <u>Connection to place</u> <u>Future vision</u> <u>Regional connections</u>	<u>Creating Place</u> - Experiences/connections between self and place - Aspirations and envisioned future for unique towns and communities - Regional connections and collective agency	- Improving/creating a better place - Place identity - Unique - Future