

Rejuvenating Citizenship...
A Role for Local Government

**A Study of the Kennett Government's Reform
of Victorian Local Government
and its Impact on Citizenship**

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Abstract:

In the face of economic liberal reform local governments are identified as important players in reinventing active 'citizenship'. However, in Victoria there are a number of constraints to such a reinvention occurring including the lasting damage wrought on 'citizenship' and associated political rights and duties by the former Kennett Government's reform of the Victorian local government sector.

Although constraints exist, this paper takes a positive position by examining the ways local governments can remain committed to 'good governance', by rejuvenating a corporate commitment to 'citizenship'. This is done via a case study approach that analyses the corporate planning processes of three local governments during the second phase of the Kennett government reform.

In this paper I argue that local governments are still able to play a role in developing strategies that support 'citizenship' at the local level. However, the potential of this role has been dramatically effected by reforms undertaken by the Kennett government and remains constrained by various elements of State Government policy. In conclusion, I canvass a number of practical activities that local governments can consider when promoting and encouraging active 'citizenship'.

For those interested in reading further on this specific topic also see:

Marshall, N. and Sproats, K. (2000) Using Strategic Management Practices to Promote Participatory Democracy in Australian Local Government, *Urban Policy and Research Journal*, Volume 18, Number 4, School of Social Science and Planning, RMIT University, December

Introduction

Politics can only exist in the presence of a space in which human beings recognise themselves as citizens (Lefort 1989: 49).

In a recent speech to the Tasman Institute, the then Victorian Treasurer, Alan Stockdale, reflected on the impact of his government's reform process on citizens' views of politics:

I believe it is important that we recognise that we are not conservative in any sense... we are radicals. We have undertaken very fundamental reforms within Victoria... which are beginning a fundamental change in the way citizens see politics (Colebatch 1999a: 4).

Those who share the political values of Stockdale would have us believe that the public has actively chosen a radical, individualised interpretation of 'citizenship' with its attendant principles of customership and privatisation and a reduced emphasis on public participation in decision-making. Others have argued that the economic liberal policy agendas of governments like the Victorian Government of Kennett and Stockdale (1992 – 1999) deplete our store of 'social capital' (Putnam 1993, 1995, Cox 1995). The devaluation of social capital, the glue that holds civil society together, has been increasingly rejected by significant segments of the population (Cox 1995, Rayner 1997, VCOSS 1999). These concerns, however, are found in broader national debates about 'citizenship', civic values and social progress.

Over the past decade, successive Australian federal governments have indicated a keen interest in discussing the value of 'citizenship' and developing educational strategies to promote an understanding of the roles and obligations associated with 'citizenship' and 'democracy' among Australians (Civics and Citizenship Expert Group 1994, Joint Standing Committee on Migration 1994, DIEA 1995, Senate Legal and Constitutional

Reference Committee 1995, DIMA 1997). This has coincided with a renewed interest in debates about the value and potential of 'citizenship' on the part of academic and civic leaders. This latter interest has been sparked by concerns about large-scale social, economic, political and environmental changes occurring in the Australian liberal capitalist, welfare state which have effectively constrained the experience of 'citizenship' (Davidson 1991, 1997, Jayasuriya 1994, Watts 1995, Barbalet 1996, Wiseman 1996, Salvaris 1997b, Burke and Salvaris 1997, Castles 1999).

Debate initiated in 1994 by the Keating Labor Government about the prospect of Australia becoming a republic was instrumental in capturing diverse views about the value and meaning of 'citizenship'. Implicit in this debate are other important questions about the nature of national identity, the quality of community life and the kind of society Australia should be. Horne suggested, for example, that the centenary of Federation presents Australia

...with a unique opportunity to strengthen our democracy and to discuss ourselves in terms of our liberal-democratic belief and institutions. We have an opportunity to emphasise questions of active citizenship in a lively civil society (Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee 1995: 23).

Contemporary debates concerning 'citizenship' in a lively civil society are complicated by virtue of their place in a broader context of social, economic and political imperatives. At least four key issues impact on the Australian way of life and experience of 'citizenship'. First, globalisation and post-technological, economic change is diminishing the sovereignty of nation states and creating greater disparities in wealth accumulation (Jones 1982, Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee 1995, Giddens 1996, Wiseman 1996, 1998, Latham 1998, Tanner 1999, Castles 1999). Second, state and federal governments are embracing economic liberalism and shying away from a commitment to developing the traditional elements of the 'welfare state' (Pusey 1991, Horne 1992, Alford and O'Neill 1994, Stillwell 1999). Third, many studies indicate that the public is increasingly disillusioned with politicians (Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee 1995, Cox 1995, Rayner 1997, Eckersley 1997, Mackay 1998).

Fourth, a decline in public participation in the democratic process and the sense of disempowerment for citizens that accompanies this is concerning to many (Putnam 1995, Cox 1995, Costello 1996, Salvaris 1997b, Rayner 1997, VCOSS 1999). For example, Salvaris (1997b) noted that:

There have been some worrying changes in the common values and institutions that underpin citizenship - greater social inequality, a diminished sense of community, a loss of confidence in public institutions, especially politicians and the political system, and a belief that we are losing control over our national destiny (p. 13).

These changes put at risk the value and relevance of the 'citizenship' experience in Australian society today.

In 1992, a Liberal–National Party Government, headed by Premier Jeffrey Kennett, was elected in Victoria on a platform of reducing state debt, reforming the public sector and rescuing the economy from crisis. With entrepreneurial flair and a commercial focus, the Kennett Government hastened the process of restructuring the Victorian public sector commenced by the Cain Labor Government (Considine 1988a, Wiseman 1993). It reduced the size and role of state government, reinvented public service as competitive private business and facilitated the survival and growth of the state by buoying Victoria's economic capability and strength (Stone 1992, Alford and O'Neill 1994, Costar and Economou 1999). Importantly, for the purposes of this thesis, part of the state's micro-economic reform agenda included the radical restructure of Victorian local government that resulted in a closer alignment between the function and role of local government and the economic liberal policies and programs of the state government.

Key tenets of the Kennett Government's economic liberal reform agenda included the confluence of public choice theory and agency theory underpinned by neo-conservative social policy (Pusey 1991, 1992, Horne 1992, Alford and O'Neill 1994, Ernst and Webber 1996, Muetzelfeldt 1999). In simple terms, the Kennett Government followed ideas about entrepreneurial government: that public sector bodies should 'steer rather than row', that

communities should be helped to 'act for themselves', that competition should be encouraged and that citizens are better understood and even defined as customers (Osborne and Gaebler 1993, MAV 1996, Saul 1997).

However, there has been significant criticism of what many writers have seen as deleterious social and democratic consequences associated with Victoria's economic reform. There is a groundswell of opposition, both in Australia and overseas, to the hegemony of economic liberalism, in particular, its perceived negative effect on 'citizenship' rights and obligations. Critics have claimed that economic liberalism is inimical to 'good government' (Pusey 1991, 1992, Hill 1996, Rayner 1997), that it is 'anti-social and individualistic' (Wheelwright 1993, Cox 1995, Janowski 1998) and that it corrodes the collective experience and value of 'citizenship' and 'democracy' (Burnheim 1985, Valelly 1993, Tomlinson 1996, Jayasuriya 1996, Davidson 1997).

In his groundbreaking study on economic rationalism in Canberra, Pusey (1991) found that the central concern of 'economic rationalists' was the economy, which was given priority over traditions, norms, culture, social needs, communities and institutions (see also Pusey 1992). Writers such as Cox (1995) and Rayner (1997) have expressed similar concern at the atrophy of civil society and the costs of sacrificing 'social capital' to international money markets:

The idea of the social is losing ground to the concepts of competition, and the money markets are replacing governments. The social aspects of humanity have somehow disappeared and we are left with a more atomised image of individuals competing in an endless process of mistrust (Cox 1995: 9).

Reverend Tim Costello, a local government activist, echoed this sentiment when he remarked that '...the loss or weakening of local political structures that creatively shape neighbourhoods is devastating' (Costello, cited in Mowbray 1996: 28). On the flip side, Rob Maclellan, the then State Minister for Planning and Local Government, downplayed criticism that local government reform led to a 'loss of the sense of community':

Residents and ratepayers of our municipalities are more concerned with the services they receive from their councils and what they pay for those services, than with having a somewhat intangible 'sense of community' supposedly provided by the council chamber. This was highlighted in the state election by the fact that local government reform did not rate as an issue with voters, despite constant claims by our opponents during the past four years that it would do our government substantial damage (Maclellan 1996: 7).

The challenge of rejuvenating the experience of 'citizenship' for local constituents is keenly felt by some local governments. Since 1993, Victorian local government, once seen as a key player in promoting local level public participation in the democratic process (Wills et al 1985, Davidson 1991, Mowbray 1996, Johnstone 1996), has been required by state legislative and policy imperatives to focus on implementing a major program of microeconomic, organisational and cultural reform. The reform process included the replacement of democratically elected councillors with appointed commissioners, the suspension of elections, the typecasting of local government as maladroit and the introduction of further controls by the state government over local government finances and administration. Through the mid to late 1990s, as the reform agenda was steadily implemented, some local governments and community groups continued to question the benefits of this reform, advocate for local level democratic processes and improve opportunities for political participation by citizens.

John Wiseman (1996) posed the important question, 'how can the logic of competitiveness at all costs be challenged in a way which is consistent with the principles of economic sustainability, social cooperation and democratic sovereignty' (p. 31). This thesis suggests that one answer to Wiseman's question can be found by supporting the role of local government in rejuvenating 'citizenship' and nurturing the expression of political rights and obligations at the local level. In this thesis, I explore the impact of the reform of Victorian local government on four key political rights and obligations normally associated with 'citizenship' - voting, political representation, participation in the democratic process and access to information. I then study, in light of the claim that socially just concepts of 'citizenship' are important for local government planning processes (Wiseman 1993), strategies and projects that three local

governments used to promote these political rights and obligations of 'citizenship' at the municipal level.

Broadly, this thesis is descriptive and illustrative. It is grounded in a theoretical review and critical analysis of literature on 'citizenship' including government policy documents and reports, contemporary Australian and overseas articles and texts, internet sites and media reports. I situate a variety of views regarding the rationale, purpose and contemporary health of 'citizenship' in the context of social, economic and political issues and events unfolding in Australia and especially Victoria.

In chapter one, I identify and discuss the nature and meaning of 'citizenship'. I commence with an abbreviated historical overview that paves the way for a discussion of the normative claims upon which 'citizenship' is founded. I explain the substantive elements of the 'good society', such as freedom, equality and justice, which underpin a framework of 'citizenship' rights and obligations comprising civil, political, social and participation rights and obligations. From this broader framework, I select for further discussion the four political rights and obligations of voting, political representation, participation in the democratic process and access to information. I argue that each of these rights and obligations was negatively affected by the former Kennett Government's reform of local government. In chapter two, I review the nature of those reforms and their impact on Victorian local government, and specifically on the four identified political rights and obligations. These political rights/obligations are reprised in chapter three to assist in a review of the 1997 - 1998 corporate planning documents of three inner urban local governments. The case studies represent local governments' attempts to institute state government reforms whilst simultaneously promoting strategies to enable active 'citizenship' at the municipal level (MAV 1996, VLGA and MAV 1997).

The key finding of this thesis is that local government is still able to play a role, albeit one constrained by the state government, in developing inclusive, egalitarian and democratic strategies and processes at the local level, thus promoting active 'citizenship'. However, changes broader than those canvassed in this study are also required to facilitate a more vibrant 'citizenship' experience for all. I believe that this inquiry into the practices of

'citizenship' may prove a useful contribution to the consolidation and enhancement of local government's role in reinventing and rejuvenating 'citizenship' and supporting political rights and obligations at the local level.

Chapter One: The Nature of Citizenship

In this chapter, I discuss the nature and meaning of 'citizenship'. I offer an historical overview of 'citizenship' and discuss the normative claims upon which 'citizenship' is founded. I introduce a framework of 'citizenship' rights and obligations comprising civil, political, social and participation rights. From this broader framework of 'citizenship' rights and duties, I identify for further analysis four political rights and obligations, namely voting, political representation, participation in the democratic process and access to information. Each of these is a key component of the traditional experience of 'citizenship' in Australia at the local government level, and I argue in chapter two that each was diminished by the Kennett Government's reform of local government. The theoretical foundation concerning 'citizenship' offered here also provides a benchmark to assist my examination, in chapter three, of three local government's attempts to promote 'citizenship' and nurture political rights and obligations during phase two of the reform process.

The History of Citizenship

Notions of 'citizenship' were first discussed as a form of regulated male rule in some Greek city-states as far back as 508 BC (Aristotle 1946). Debates about the nature, meaning and value of 'citizenship' have continued since the time of the Roman Empire, through the Middle Ages in Europe down to the present day (Farrer 1992, Skinner 1992, Mendus 1992). Whilst a diversity of opinions is the hallmark of these discussions, 'citizenship' has nonetheless been consistently linked to democratic regimes that comprise voting, political representation and participation in the polity by property-owning males (Turner 1986, Heater 1990, Farrer 1992).

Turner (1986) and Delanty (1997) have commented that, since the seventeenth century, the advancement of 'citizenship' has been linked to the emergence of capitalism, violent revolutions in England, France and North America and the establishment of nationalism as a dominant ideological system. Turner (1986), for example, argued that

'...citizenship supports the continuity of the capitalist mode of production by giving expression to the bourgeois requirements in the market place and providing some form of abatement between conflict between groups' (p. 137).

Turner's analysis of 'citizenship' echoed Marshall's view that class conflict was the foundation for the amelioration of extreme inequalities generated by unfettered capitalism (Marshall 1950, Turner 1986, Janowski 1998). Marshall had previously indicated that the advent of industrialisation and a market economy brought a great deal of instability for the masses and large fortunes for many of the bourgeoisie (Marshall 1950). Political revolutions and social conflicts resulted in European and North American regimes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries making popular concessions to the people, which included measures to ensure individual liberty, equality before the law and universal forms of state support. This led to the development of civil, political and social rights between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, and the conditions under which these rights were advanced has formed the cornerstone of contemporary 'citizenship' theory (Marshall 1975, Turner 1986, Janowski 1998). Over time, as the political sphere has become increasingly democratic, working classes, minorities and marginal groups have been able to achieve at least some civil, political and social rights. 'Citizenship' can therefore be characterised as a consequence of real and 'popular', often class-based struggles against various forms of hierarchy, patriarchy, class exploitation and political oppression (Turner 1986, Bottomore 1992, Dalton et al 1996, Jayasuriya 1996).

Turner (1986) emphasised that 'citizenship' rights are 'the outcomes of social movements that either aim to expand or defend the definition of social membership' (p. 92). He proposed that the long-term consequences of these social movements is to 'push and universalise citizenship rights for an ever widening array of persons' (Turner 1986: 92). Yet 'citizenship', ironically, is also '...an act of closure about a group of people it calls citizens... consequently, states and societies are very particular about whom they call citizens' (Janowski 1998: 46).

Understandings that inform and legitimate concepts of 'citizenship' are variously linked to market economics, politics and governments, the 'welfare state' and civil society (Turner 1986, Pierson 1991, Dunn 1992, Watts 1995, Cox 1995, Janowski 1998). 'Citizenship' is

viewed as an essential institution of the capitalist welfare state (Turner 1986, Davidson 1991). It is both a constituent of modernity and an effect of the processes of modernisation (Turner 1986, Janowski 1998). As a response to the oppositional tension between egalitarian, democratic political systems and capitalist economic systems that generate social and economic inequalities, 'citizenship' is, in essence, an abatement of the class structure of capitalist economic relations (Marshall 1977, 1981, Turner 1986). In effect, the existence of 'citizenship' implies a body of rights and symbols that seek to modify capitalist market relations (Moore 1992). The expansion of 'citizenship' rights and responsibilities interferes with the market principle of capitalism, whereas an increase in the naked function of the market interferes with the enjoyment of 'citizenship' understood as a body of egalitarian social, civil and political rights and duties (Marshall 1977, Turner 1986, Dunn 1992).

Normative Theories and Citizenship

The history of 'citizenship' is a long history of normative theoretical debate about the ontology of human life and what comprises the 'good society'. A significant body of political analysis has argued that a discourse of 'citizenship' rights and obligations is only credible when it seeks to promote or pursue liberty, equality, state support and social participation for human beings. For example, Berlin (1969), Rawls (1971), Sandel (1982), Taylor (1989), Salvaris (1995) and Boulet (1996) have argued that the recognition, maintenance and development of 'citizenship' rights and obligations are crucial to the common good of society. 'Citizenship' rights and obligations are related to the 'common good' because they enable personal freedoms to exist at the same time as promoting a fair and just society (Marshall 1977, Turner 1986, Janowski 1998). Claims about the moral worth of individual freedom and justice in society permeate contemporary normative theories about the composition of the 'good society'. In turn, the existence of 'citizenship' rights and obligations reinforces society's commitment to freedom, equality and justice. But why should this be so? What is ethically compelling about 'citizenship' rights and obligations?

In explaining the ethical compulsion of 'citizenship', political theorists as different as Rawls, Berlin and Habermas have each articulated normative ontological meta-theories

about the 'good life' for human beings and how it can be achieved. In response to questions about what is proper, fair and just for human beings, each considered, albeit from different perspectives, the twin concepts of freedom and justice. It is important to consider the work of these three writers because while each emphasised different aspects of the relationship between individuals and the larger collective life of 'society', they also insisted on the need to reconcile the tensions implicit in this relationship by recognising the role to be played by social goals, rules and constraints.

Rawls, writing from a liberal standpoint, argued that a basic framework of liberties and a concern for poor and marginalised people should characterise a decent society because it would be rational to choose to embrace this commitment (Rawls 1971, Mulhall and Swift 1992, Waldron 1999). In Rawls' view, individuals are rationally motivated to choose a particular notion of the 'good society', one that is regulated by principles of justice. Rawls' theory of justice is premised on two central ideas, the 'original position' and the 'veil of ignorance' (Rawls 1971).

In his theory of justice, Rawls identified the basic institutions of a society that would be chosen by rational individuals under conditions that ensured impartiality. These conditions were characterised hypothetically as the 'original position'. The 'original position', whereby individuals contract themselves into an imaginary social structure from behind a 'veil of ignorance', effectively represents the absence of all knowledge of future life chances, family talents and endowments. In the 'original position' each individual understands that they will be bound for life by the principles they choose (Bobbio 1987, Mulhall and Swift 1992, Waldron 1999). Rawls (1971) argued that individuals in the 'original position' would not be motivated by common good but rather by self-interest to choose rationally a society regulated by the following three principles of justice. First, each person would want an 'equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all' (Rawls 1971: 302). Second, social and economic relationships and resources would need to be arranged so that they are to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged. Finally, 'offices and positions must be open to all under conditions of fairness and equality of opportunity' (Rawls 1971: 302). The rationality of this choice would be due to the individual not knowing whether they would be among an advantaged majority or a vulnerable minority of society. To elaborate, individuals 'would

choose principles of economic equality because they would not know what their talents were or how much in demand they were going to be' (Rawls 1971: 5). Mulhall and Swift (1992) distinguished this part of the theory of justice in the following terms:

One way of thinking about what happens in the original position is as a kind of bargaining process in which each person, acting rationally in her own self-interest seeks to get a good a deal as possible for herself (p. 5).

They added,

If I don't know which of the five pieces of cake I am going to end up with, then it makes sense for me to cut the pieces fairly. Similarly, if people don't know who they are going to be, then it will make sense for them to choose fair or just principles to regulate their society (Mulhall and Swift 1992: 3).

Waldron (1999) has commented that '...the leitmotif of Rawls' work has been the idea of the well-ordered society' (p. 3). A 'well-ordered' society is one in which individual members, men and women of every creed, class and background, are prepared to raise awkward questions about how things are organised and to justify their laws and institutions to one another in good faith, without myth or illusion. A well-ordered society also advances the good of each and all of its members.

Berlin also examined the moral and social imperatives for a just, free and equal society. Like Rawls, Berlin viewed the 'good society' in liberal terms. It included liberty, equality and justice as core values (Berlin 1969). However, Berlin proposed the continuing existence of a 'value pluralism' in relation to competing claims over liberty and justice. He claimed '...the belief that some single formula can in principle be found whereby all the diverse ends of men [sic] can be harmoniously realised is demonstrably false' (Berlin 1969: 169). Berlin argued that there is an oppositional and ongoing tension between liberty and justice which, on the one hand gives priority to individuals and their rights to act freely, and on the other, supports the priorities of communities and their common good (Simons 1996). Berlin used the terms 'positive freedom' and 'negative freedom' to assist in explaining his ideas about liberty (Berlin 1969). Negative freedom refers to the

setting of parameters around individual freedom to ensure that the liberty of one person does not unfairly diminish the liberty of another. In contrast, Berlin described positive freedom as the individuals' ability to be 'his own master' [sic] (Berlin 1969:132). Positive freedom promoted the individuation of human beings from the networks and resources of society. In this scenario, individuals must be free from outside interference in order to be able to pursue their own self-interest, to be dependent on their own will, to create their own ideas and purposes and to be responsible for the social progress of the society in which they live (De Tocqueville 1969, Berlin 1969, Mulhall and Swift 1992, Dalton et al 1996, Delanty 1997).

The key tension for Berlin, as for most liberals, was about the extent to which liberty should be curtailed for the common good. In other words, Berlin was concerned to establish the boundaries of '...the area within which human beings should be left to do or be what they are able to do or be, without interference by other persons' (Berlin 1969:132). Sandel (1982) also regarded this as a fundamental and enduring problem when he proposed that '...the challenge in every society and culture to protect individual rights and safeguard moral cohesion is both complex and difficult' (p 34). Whilst Berlin asserted that social progress could be encouraged by the individual strivings of human beings, he recognised that some parameters for individual liberty or 'negative freedoms' must be applied to aid the proper and overall functioning of the 'good society'. Berlin viewed human beings as largely interdependent. Therefore, '...the liberty of some must depend on the restraint of others' (Berlin 1969:125). '...For what is freedom to those who cannot make use of it because of poverty, lack of education and health?' asked Berlin (1969:124). Whilst promoting freedom, Berlin reflected on questions of inequality and injustice associated with a lack of common purpose in achieving the 'good society'. He concluded that '...if the liberty of myself, my class, my nation depends on the misery of a number of other human beings, the system which promotes this is unjust or immoral' (Berlin 1969:125). To this end human beings cannot remain absolutely free, and must give up some level of individual liberty to preserve the common good. Although individual liberty must be supported, it also must be sacrificed to some degree in order to achieve broader societal goals such as personal security, common economic prosperity, justice, equality and fraternity (Berlin 1969).

In summary, Berlin's thesis was that there is an ongoing tension between claims made about what comprises the 'good society'. This conflict was represented by claims for individualistic liberties and rights and competing claims for a level of equality and justice. Berlin (1969) argued that the '...liberty of human beings cannot be unlimited' (p. 171). Pluralism, with a measure of 'negative' liberty, is a more humane ideal than the goals of those who seek the ideal of positive self-mastery (Berlin 1969).

Finally, writing from a left, communitarian viewpoint, Habermas' normative theories of communicative action and discourse ethics confirmed the substantive basis of Rawls' and Berlin's theories. Habermas proposed that the key moral imperatives for modernity and the 'good life' are autonomy, equality and justice. Rather than focus on the primacy of individual freedoms, he instead argued that the 'good society' can be built through mutual support and group action (Habermas 1990). For Habermas, the struggle for just social relations and processes to develop the 'good life' relied on human beings creating the conditions for undistorted communicative action in the public sphere (Habermas 1990, Wiseman 1993).

Habermas' theory of communicative action proposes that rational consensus in the public sphere leads to freedom, radical democracy and justice. Communicative action is characterised as rational in the sense that it is based upon an objective knowledge achieved through inter-subjective agreement as to what should count as proper, fair and just for people (Pusey 1987, Habermas 1990).

Habermas' discourse theory of ethics is committed to values of justice and impartiality whilst recognising that the needs and welfare of human beings are embedded in networks of interdependence. Discourse ethics seeks to demonstrate that rational consensus is built into the nature of human communication as ideal speech situations (Held 1980, Habermas 1990). The ideal speech situation occurs when the non-coercive 'better argument' leads to all participants accepting a binding norm. A norm is valid after a public discourse that includes people speaking, listening and accepting the norm as being in the general interest (Habermas 1990).

Habermas argued that human identity is formed intersubjectively through caring networks of social relationships and the medium of language. His understanding of justice and freedom emphasised impartial justice and autonomy within a framework of democratic relations that inform individual, public and institutional norms (Habermas 1990).

The major threat to Habermas' emancipatory project for modernity is the dominance of 'technocratic rationality' over 'communicative rationality'. For Habermas, the imperatives of technocratic rationality are constantly threatening to convert moral issues into technical or instrumental issues by overwhelming and subverting the processes of communicative action and diminishing equality and justice. Therefore, political and economic institutions must be regulated in accordance with the functional and goal oriented requirements of the 'system', dispensing with the need for consensus via linguistic communication. The coordination of action in the 'system' is primarily through the empirical notions of self-interest rather than rational motivations of actors, becoming ethically and morally neutralised. The domination of technical and functional values, money and power disrupt the practical and moral elements of communicative action. In summary, Habermas' universal normative theories of communicative action and discourse ethics included the constitutive propositions that human beings are linguistically rational, socially embedded and have the necessary intersubjective skills to develop the 'good life' through communicative action, which will naturally lead to cooperation, justice and autonomy.

Although arguing from quite different initial premises, Habermas, Rawls and Berlin all agreed that the substantive elements of a 'good society' are the coexistence of freedom, equality and justice. Each concluded that oppression, inequality and injustice were irrational and not good for society. However, there are competing claims as to the normative primacy of individual freedoms over equality, justice or the common good. Berlin and others have argued that autonomy and individual freedom can be promoted as equalling the 'good society' (Berlin 1969, Nozick 1974, Jordon 1989). Berlin nonetheless rejected claims that human beings are atomistic and self-seeking individuals in favour of the idea that individuals are part of a society and cannot escape the potentials and responsibilities associated with being a member of that society (Berlin 1969).

In short, freedom, equality and justice are socially constituted cornerstones for the foundation of 'citizenship' rights and obligations (Freedon 1991, Galston 1991, Janowski 1998). By implication, any set of ideas or practices that seek to ignore or degrade the social framework in which 'citizenship' is to be practised must be viewed with suspicion. The three key substantive normative claims of freedom, equality and justice are nested in a framework of 'citizenship' rights and obligations characterised by civil rights, political rights, social rights and participation rights (Rawls 1971, Marshall 1977, Bobbio 1987, Salvaris et al 1996, Janowski 1998). The ontological tension, illuminated by Berlin and others, between the competing primacy of individual rights and collective obligations is also inherent in the contemporary 'citizenship' framework of rights and obligations (Berlin 1969, Nozick 1974, Sandel 1982, Habermas 1990, Mulhall and Swift 1992, Dalton et al 1996, Abbey and Taylor 1996).

Defining Citizenship

Discussions regarding the meaning and value of 'citizenship' invariably canvass a broad range of philosophical, sociological and political theory and debate (Turner 1986, Dalton et al 1996, DIMA 1999). There are diverse and fluid understandings of the term 'citizenship' (Heater 1990, Watts 1995, Tomlinson 1996, Janowski 1998, Manne 1999a), which are fashioned by competing political, economic and social ideologies (Dalton et al 1996, Delanty 1997, Janowski 1998). 'Citizenship' is, as Aristotle (1946) observed '... a question which is often disputed, there is no general agreement in a single definition' (p. 93).

At its simplest, 'citizenship' consists of a person's formal membership of Australia's political community (Civics and Citizenship Expert Group 1994, Kymlicka and Norman 1994). In Australia, the formal establishment of 'citizenship' occurred in 1949 with the enactment of the *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948* (Australian Citizenship Council 1999, Manne 1999a). 'Citizenship' may be granted either at birth, on the attainment of a certain age or by formal application and the meeting of various criteria set down by the state (DIEA 1994, Delanty 1997, Chesterman and Galligan 1999).

A less narrow view of contemporary 'citizenship' might also characterise 'citizenship' as a compact of legal rights, protections and reciprocal duties between government and individual members of society. 'Citizenship', in this sense, suggests that, in exchange for the protection of the state, citizens will pay taxes, participate in its democratic institutions and may enter into military service (Skinner 1992, Joint Standing Committee on Migration 1994, Australian Citizenship Council 1999).

More expansively, 'citizenship' also represents a framework of universal political, civil, social and participation rights and obligations defined by law to which each citizen is entitled, may lay claim or is responsible for (Marshall 1975,1977, Jayasuriya 1996, Delanty 1997). Marshall (1950) claimed that all who possess 'citizenship' status 'are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is in evidence' (p. 84). Jayasuriya (1996) interpreted Marshall's definition of 'citizenship' as 'both a status and a set of rights, based on equality' (p. 23).

Turner (1986) combined both minimal and expansive understandings of 'citizenship' when he noted '...citizenship can also be viewed as being concerned with the social participation of persons within the community as fully recognised legal members' (p. 134). Janowski (1998) built upon this view by commenting that 'citizenship' comprises '...both passive rights of existence and active rights that include present and future capacities to influence politics' (p. 11). In Janowski's view, 'citizenship' referred to the '...passive and active membership of individuals in an nation-state with certain universalistic rights and obligations at a specified level of equality' (p. 9)

Passive and active rights are very different in their theoretical implications (Thompson 1970, Mouffe 1992, Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee 1995, Etzioni 1995, Davidson 1997). Passive rights are embodied in a framework of universal legal rights and obligations that support a certain level of freedom and justice for citizens (Janowski 1998). Active rights bring citizens in a democracy to the foreground in politics and even economics. The Senate Committee on Employment, Education and Training defined an 'active citizen' as someone who not only believes in the concept of a democratic society but who is willing and able to translate that belief into action (MAV 1997: 3). When citizens act on their 'citizenship' rights and obligations, they participate in

political decision making processes, the networks of civil society and the market sphere (Turner 1986, Mouffe 1992, Davidson 1997).

In Australia, 'citizenship' status is seemingly more passive than active, at least if we consider the verbal commitment to 'citizenship' required of intending new citizens. The current Australian 'citizenship' pledge focuses simultaneously on the rights, privileges and obligations of 'citizenship':

From this time forward I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect and whose laws I will uphold and obey (DIEA 1994)

In summary, there is no simple, singular and universal definition of 'citizenship'. 'Citizenship' is a highly contested idea imbued with diverse meanings, inimical arguments and idealistic potentials (Turner 1986, Bobbio 1987, Wiseman 1993, Dalton et al 1996, Davidson 1997, Delanty 1997). 'Citizenship' can be viewed, as in the Australian context, in the minimal and passive terms of state membership and basic rights, duties and protections, and as inclusive of universal political, civil, social and participation rights and duties granted by the state to ensure equality before the law. Alternatively, in more expansive and active terms, 'citizenship' can be seen to embrace activity associated with participatory democracy and social and economic justice. Commonly, 'citizenship' is understood in terms of a framework of rights and obligations.

A Framework of Citizenship Rights and Obligations

Janowski and others, following Marshall, developed typological frameworks of 'citizenship' rights and obligations (Marshall 1950, Dalton et al 1996, Delanty 1997, Janowski 1998). Janowski (1998) adapted Marshall's influential framework of 'citizenship' rights and responsibilities to include four distinct yet interdependent sets of rights: legal rights, social rights, participation rights and political rights. Legal or civil rights in Janowski's taxonomy include expressive rights such as privacy and freedom of speech and religion; bodily control rights such as the right to decide sexual preference and the right to safety and protection; property and service control rights including the

right to own property; and procedural rights to access the court system and receive fair treatment therein. Social rights were described as public interventions into private spheres to support citizens' claims to economic subsistence and social existence. Social rights alter the market distribution of resources and include such services as health care, secular education, employment support and income transfer payments. Janowski defined participation rights as the state's creation of rights in private areas, whether in market or public organisations. They refer to individual and group rights to participate in private and state regulated decision-making processes and include participation in workplace councils, job creation programs and environmental impact decisions. Finally, political rights include citizens' rights to vote and participate in the political process, including electing political representatives, creating new laws, and standing for and holding political office. Political rights for organisations also include nominating political candidates, obtaining government information and conducting political inquiries (Janowski 1998).

Political rights enable citizens to protect, extend or reduce their 'citizenship' rights and responsibilities. These rights also confer membership status by allowing the exercise of power and enabling citizens to 'have a say' about issues that affect them. Political rights can be 'passive' in that they provide protection against an intrusive state and a defence against the erosion of individual liberties. Alternatively, they can be 'active' in that they can encourage the development of greater forms of collective decision-making, group responsibility and social solidarity (Janowski 1998).

For the purposes of this thesis, I use Janowski's model to focus on four political rights and obligations that can usefully be applied to understand the changing experience of 'citizenship' at the local government level. These rights and obligations are the rights to vote, to have political representation, to participate in the political process and to have access to relevant information or engage in political inquiry.

Political Rights at the Local Government Level

Political theorists from both the left and the right of the political spectrum view local government as a wellspring of citizen participation in a representative democratic regime

(Pateman 1970, Barber 1984, Burnheim 1985, Bobbio 1987, Davidson 1997). Bobbio (1987), for example, claimed that local government is important for the promotion of democratic practices, such as the right to vote for elected representatives, even enabling 'different groups to vote in different contexts outside politics' (p. 56). Active 'citizenship' at the grass roots level has long been encouraged by political theorists to ward off the threat of political elitism and the tyranny of central governments (Rousseau 1960, Bachrach 1967, Bobbio 1987), to defend principles of personal liberty and freedom of speech (Bobbio 1987), to activate collective decision making processes (Burnheim 1985, Held 1989, Habermas 1990, Etzioni 1995) and to protest from below against inequality and injustice (Berlin 1969, Davidson 1997).

The four interdependent political rights and obligations selected are particularly relevant for local government. Although these rights coexist at national, state and local levels, they are promoted as major constituents of 'good governance' at the municipal level by local government peak bodies and prominent advocates for local government (Davidson 1991, 1997, MAV 1996, Rayner 1997, VLGA and MAV 1999a). The exercise of these four rights and responsibilities, in particular, via local government, is an essential part of the 'citizenship' experience (Fontana 1992, Cox 1995, Dalton et al 1996, Delanty 1997, Janowski 1998).

At the local government level in Victoria, voting rights can be exercised during regular and democratic elections that provide genuine choice amongst a range of locally known candidates representing all sectors of the community. The option to engage either in postal voting or attendance voting is offered. The right to political representation, in effect, means that citizens can not only have their views represented in political forums but can assist in the determination of how representation occurs, for example, the structure of wards, the number of councillors and the level of remuneration offered to councillors and mayors. The right to participate in the democratic process includes the right to lawful protest, to stand as an electoral candidate, to be informed or consulted about decisions that affect you and to participate in making decisions. The right to secure political information and undertake political inquiries implies a range of local accountability mechanisms which support the electoral process between elections, for example, direct councillor contact with constituents, public meetings, annual reporting processes, media

reporting and the dissemination of council policies, plans and strategies (MAV 1996, VLGA and MAV 1999a). The corporate strategies and projects developed by three local governments to promote and nurture 'citizenship' and political rights and obligations are the focus of the case study in chapter three.

Conclusion

Whilst debate continues about the relative merit of expansive or minimalist understandings of the term, there is a clear normative foundation of 'citizenship'. Most conceptions of 'citizenship' rely on some of the core constituents of the 'good society' like freedom, equality and justice. For the purposes of this study, four political 'citizenship' rights and obligations relevant to local government have been selected from Janowski's framework of civil, political, social and participation 'citizenship' rights and obligations. Each of these rights is regarded by politically diverse theorists as being a significant element of democracy and 'citizenship' and is a key element of 'good governance' at the local government level. The next chapter describes the impact of the Kennett Government's economic liberal reform on Victorian local government and, in particular, on the four political rights and obligations outlined here.

Chapter Two: The Impact of Victorian Local Government Reforms on Citizenship

During the past eight years, through a massive program of privatisation, outsourcing, radical reduction in public sector employment and growing financial dependence on gambling, Victoria under Kennett has experienced a revolution in the relationship between the public and private sectors and between a society and a state (Manne 1999b).

In this chapter, I examine the former Kennett Government's radical reform of Victoria's local government and in particular, the impact of the reform on 'citizenship'. I identify how the reform impacted on four political rights and obligations of 'citizenship' exercised at the municipal level, these being voting, political representation, participation in the democratic process and access to political information. I begin by reviewing some of the roles and functions of local government including its democratic role. I then elucidate the rationale and major outcomes of the reform process for local government. My critical review of these reforms establishes its deleterious impact on 'citizenship' and the four political rights and obligations. I reveal here that the Kennett Government's reform of local government based on public choice theory, agency theory and economic growth resulted in the diminution of local governments' role in promoting 'citizenship'.

The Mandate of Local Government

Local government was well established in all Australian colonies before federation. However, local government does not have either the level of power or esteem accorded to either state or federal governments. Finn (1990) proposed that 'local government was, and still is, the Cinderella of our public administration' (p. 49). Indeed, historians suggest that local government has not yet won a major place for itself in our democratic polity. For example, local government is not referred to in either the Victorian state or the federal

constitution (Aulich 1995, Davidson 1997). The 1988 referendum, which included a question to recognise local government in the federal constitution, was defeated.

In Victoria, the *Local Government Act 1989* provides the statutory framework that empowers local government (Ray Smith 1999). The Act indicates the governance roles, objectives, functions and accountability requirements of local government. According to the Act, the major roles for local government are to provide democratic leadership, a community vision, strategic and integrated planning, advocacy to other levels of government and management of community assets (MAV 1996). Broad, enabling powers of local government are detailed in Section 8 (3):

A council has the power to do all things necessary or convenient to be done for or in connection with the performance of its functions and to enable it to achieve its purpose and objectives (*Local Government Act 1989*).

Section 6 denotes four key objectives for local government. They are

to provide for the peace, order and good government of the municipal district; to facilitate and encourage appropriate development of the municipal district in the best interests of the community; to provide equitable and appropriate services and facilities for the community; to ensure that those services and facilities are managed efficiently and effectively; (and) to manage, improve and develop the resources of the district efficiently and effectively (*Local Government Act 1989*).

Corporate planning and other accountability requirements of local government are explained in Section 153. Councils are required to develop triennial corporate plans outlining organisational objectives, strategies for achieving those objectives and performance indicators to be used in measuring them.

The role of local government is considerably constrained by its subordination to the legal frameworks and policy platforms of central governments (Davidson 1991, Galligan 1996, MAV 1996, Dalton et al 1996, Salvaris 1997b). As Mowbray (1996) argued, 'in terms of overall power and policy, local government is historically and legally an administrative dimension of state governments' (p. 35). Similarly, the Municipal Association of Victoria

(1996) has described councils as '...legal creations of state governments, with their boundaries, powers and duties being laid down in state legislation' (p. 3). Local government is commonly described as the third sphere of Australia's federal system of government (McKenna 1995, Mowbray 1996, VLGA and MAV 1999a), a system dominated by the federal government, primarily through its taxation powers. In 1991–1992, the federal government collected 78% of total taxes, the states collected 18% while local government collected just 4% (MAV 1996).

Notwithstanding its relatively poor capacity to raise revenue, Victorian local government spends around \$3.2 billion dollars each year and undertakes local functions including economic development, environmental management, land use and social planning, infrastructure maintenance, civic leadership, public health, community services, transport and leisure and culture services (MAV 1996). During the 1970s and 1980s, there was an upsurge in state and federal recognition of Victorian local government as an agent to deliver human services, conduct local area planning and manage community facilities (Wills et al 1985, Dalton et al 1996, Mowbray 1996). This was matched by an increasing acknowledgment of local governments' capacity to lead, advocate and plan on behalf of local constituencies (VLGA and MAV 1999a, Raysmith 1999). Accordingly, local government, at least throughout the 1980s, was able to consolidate and expand its traditional focus on 'roads, rates and rubbish' (MAV 1986) to incorporate a more dynamic local planning and leadership function.

Local Government and Democracy

Local government is a key constituent of Australia's representative democratic system and features the election of councillors by the polity to make local decisions on behalf of citizens (Bobbio 1987, Davidson 1997, Rayner 1998). Advocates for local government have highlighted its potential to promote and nurture democratic practices and be accountable at the local level. It is local government, rather than federal or state government, which is instrumental in establishing a sense of community, and providing a democratic forum whereby local people of diverse backgrounds can participate in political debates and be heard (Bobbio 1987, Pusey 1991, Putnam 1993, Kalantzis 1995, Johnstone 1996, Costello 1996, Hill 1999). The Stegley Foundation (1998) captured the nexus between democracy and the nature of everyday life:

Local government determines the immediate environment in which we live our daily lives. It is the first level of government and the one at which citizens gain their most direct experience of representative democracy and participation (Stegley Foundation 1998: 5).

Whilst Burnheim (1985), following Abraham Lincoln, described democracy as being 'government of the people, by the people, for the people' (p. 113), the type of democracy mandated by the *Local Government Act 1989* and existing in Victorian local government is more conservative than Burnheim would support. Mowbray (1999) and others have reminded us that the democratic potential of local government is still far from realised due to inequality, discrimination, political elitism and conservatism which exists at the local level (Watts 1995, Kalantzis 1995, Rayner 1997, Bessant 1998). Theorists such as Burnheim (1985), Bobbio (1987) and Mowbray (1999) have contended that local government can actually have a negative impact on democracy by encouraging oligarchies, discouraging fair and equal participation by citizens and failing to educate citizens equally about civics. With regard to inequality, Mowbray (1999) proposed that '...the present reality is that local government is a deeply conservative institution. In respect to race and gender, for example, it often has a distinctly reactionary quality' (p. 13). Rayner (1997) added her voice to these concerns by questioning why company nominees and multiple property owners can vote more than once in Victoria's municipal elections.

The central features of local government democracy as described by Victoria's peak local government bodies encompass the four political rights and obligations of voting, political representation, participation in the democratic process and access to political information (VLGA and MAV 1997). These organisations have proposed that local government's legitimacy comes from representing the interests of local communities and it is therefore important that local government sustains these rights and obligations by ensuring that certain democratic activities occur. They argued that citizens must elect councillors who are in turn accountable to those citizens and that councillors, as elected representatives, must maintain a consultative link between the community and council, represent local interests and needs to other levels of government and make policy decisions on behalf of all citizens. They further argued that local government must seek community understanding and involvement in governance through effective communication and citizen participation in decision-making processes and that the legitimacy of decision-

making by local government depends on effective accountability to communities. Finally, the peak bodies have agreed that local government decision-making must be open, transparent and responsive to the information requirements of citizens (MAV 1996, VLGA and MAV 1997).

Inherent limitations and inequalities aside, local government appears to have captured the imagination of some public advocates, grassroots movements and democracy theorists as an important institution able to sustain and reproduce representative democracy at the local level. Accordingly, in recent years, Victorian peak bodies have advocated for increased opportunities for citizens to participate in democratic decision-making and influence local representatives, beyond the simple act of triennial voting in council elections. Advocacy for revitalising local democracy and 'citizenship' has been underpinned by substantial angst concerning the detrimental impact of the former Kennett Government's radical economic liberal reform of local government on the health of democracy and 'citizenship' at the local level.

The Kennett Government's Reform Agenda

The Kennett Government (1992–1999) came to power with strong views about the proper role of government. Central to the Kennett Government's approach were the tenets of public choice theory, agency theory, 'entrepreneurial government' and neo-liberal economic science (Pusey 1991, 1992, Horne 1992, Osborne and Gaebler 1993, Alford and O'Neill 1994, Muetzelfeldt 1994, Ernst and Webber 1996).

These ideas were brought to bear in a political context shaped by the sense that the Victorian economy was in crisis (Alford and O'Neill 1994, Bessant 1999). There was heightened concern that the Victorian Government budget was in deficit partly because the Cain Labor Government refused to raise additional revenues in 1988 and partly because unanticipated expenditures blew out following the collapse of the Tricontinental and Pyramid financial institutions, requiring state government intervention. By 1991-1992, the Kennett Opposition, the media and other opinion makers found success arguing that Victoria's public debt was so serious as to render Victoria an economic basket case (Larritt 1996). While critics of this view (Watts 1992, Salvaris 1993, Crooks and Webber 1993) noted that the debt to asset ratio was in fact quite small by international and private sector

standards, the perception that there was a problem became a political reality. The 'debt problem' and its burden on economic growth subsequently became a core point of reference for many of the Kennett Government's reforms including its program of reform for local government (Local Government Board 1993, Draper 1996, Maclellan 1996, MAV 1996, Costar and Economou 1999).

In 1993, the Kennett Government appointed the Victorian Commission of Audit to undertake a study of Victoria's economic situation. Its membership assured that the study was underpinned by ideals of efficiency via competition, empowerment of consumers through choice of service providers, and fiscal constraint, especially in regard to community welfare programs (Victorian Commission of Audit 1993). The Audit concluded that one of the major causes of the state's financial problems was overspending on government services caused by the undue influence of interest groups (Victorian Commission of Audit 1993). This was understood to mean that the state government must reduce its reliance on consultative processes and sharpen its economic leadership capacity. Kiss (1999), for example, noted that in 'making use of claims that Victoria's finances were in dire straits, the government put aside notions of the right of local communities to self-determination' (p. 114). Consequently, the state government's role in matters such as human service planning and delivery, justice administration and social reform were subjected to the criteria of efficiency as defined by neo-liberal economic science (Crooks 1996b, Costar and Economou 1999, Colebatch 1999b). In response to questions of social justice, the newly elected Premier said

There is no such thing as equality. We live in a competitive world. If you try to make the fat man [sic] thin then the thin man ultimately dies. We have got to encourage the fat man to become fatter so that the thin man becomes fatter (Australian Financial Review, 23 October 1992).

In progressing its reform agenda, the Kennett Government relied on notions of public choice theory, agency theory and entrepreneurial government. Public choice theorists make a fundamental assumption about human motivation - that 'man' is an egoistic, rational, utility maximiser (Mueller 1989, Muetzelfeldt 1994, Love 1998). Public choice theory also assumes that market principles can be used to empower consumers and develop more effective and efficient state policy (Osborne and Gaebler 1993, Stretton and

Orchard 1994, Salvaris 1997a). Public choice theory endorses a large scale reduction in the role and function of the public sector, implementation of the purchaser-provider split and competition between service providers (Victorian Commission of Audit 1993, Alford and O'Neill 1994, Crooks 1996a, Dalton et al 1996). Proponents of public choice theory are described as being antagonistic toward concepts of pluralism, public participation in decision-making and social democratic development (Pusey 1991, Muetzelfeldt 1994, Dalton et al 1996). Rather than being valuable, public participation in political processes is perceived as a hindrance to effectiveness, efficiency and rational decision-making, qualities associated with an unfettered market (Burnheim 1985, Crook et al 1992). Critics of public choice theory have contended that it primarily serves to centralise control and reduce 'citizenship' rights and political participation (Muetzelfeldt 1994, Ernst and Webber 1996). This is achieved by the removal of the 'public' aspect from government, to enable a focus on impersonal market economics and by the privileging of private profit ahead of public benefit (Stillwell 1993, Wheelwright 1993, Alford and O'Neill 1994, Stretton and Orchard 1994, Muetzelfeldt 1994).

This approach to government is also termed 'entrepreneurial government' because market solutions are favoured over government competence (Stone 1992, Osborne and Gaebler 1993, Ernst and Webber 1996, Saul 1997). The Kennett Government's push towards entrepreneurial government was fuelled by a widespread contemporary commitment of central governments to 'roll back the state'. In this context, government led solutions and the growth of the welfare state are avoided and economics is the predominant measure of government performance and success (Pusey 1991, Stone 1992, Independent Committee of Inquiry into National Competition Policy 1993, Mowbray 1999). Crook et al (1992) characterised these changes as moving '...from administrative-political distribution to market regulated provision, from authoritative commands to less obtrusive control, from centralised regulation to polycentric and consumer oriented competition, from entitlements to provision' (p. 99). A dominant aspect of the Kennett Government's commitment to entrepreneurial government was the reduction in the role and function of government in favour of the private sector, especially using the management tools of privatisation (of public assets) and compulsory competitive tendering.

Privatisation and compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) are linked to agency theory (Alford and O'Neill 1994, Muetzelfeldt 1994, 1999). Agency theory is predicated on

...the notion that social and political life can be understood as a series of contracts in which one party, designated as the principle, enters into exchanges with another party, designated as the agent. Such contracting is said to have several important advantages. Most directly it is said to increase efficiency and client focus. At the systemic level, it is said to have the advantages of avoiding government agencies being captured by their clients and working with complicit or dependent client representatives to produce a distorted demand for new or increased services (Muetzelfeldt 1999: 377).

Privatisation and CCT assisted in rendering public services more market-like and separating local government from direct service provision. Broadly defined, privatisation encompasses the sale of public assets to the private sector and the introduction of competition into the public sector (Collyer 1990, Ernst and Webber 1996). CCT is a compliance based process whereby local governments were forced to submit to tender a set percentage of their direct services. It thus opened up these services to competition from the private sector, provided greater choice to consumers and revealed information about the costs of providing those services (Crook et al 1992, Murfitt 1996, Bessant 1999).

Both privatisation and CCT have been criticised as being deleterious to collective understandings of 'citizenship' and diminishing political rights and obligations (Stretton 1987, Horne 1992, Wheelwright 1993, Salvaris 1995, Hodge 2000). For example, Stretton (1987), who viewed public enterprise as emblematic of national unity and social equity, claimed that

retaining public ownership of essential services enables all interest groups to participate in debate about the best use of resources to pursue not only economic efficiency, but also equity and social cohesion (p. 77).

The ideology of the Kennett Government points to a highly individualistic view of 'citizenship'. Muetzelfeldt (1994) and others have argued that the Kennett Government understood 'citizenship' to be essentially about individual (positive) freedom, which was promoted over collective approaches to determining the common good (Wiseman 1993, Tomlinson 1996, Dalton et al 1996). With this understanding, the idea of the self-interested individual in the marketplace prevailed over the competing concept of a socially interested

community participating in political life (Ingram and Schneider 1993, Alford and O'Neill 1994). Accordingly, public participation in political decision-making was viewed as inimical to rational governmental decision-making and to be discouraged (Alford and O'Neill 1994, Dalton et al 1996). Salvaris (1997b) and others have suggested that such an individualistic interpretation of 'citizenship' contributes to a view of politics that removes legitimacy from bonds of mutuality and active civil society (Berlin 1969, Lowi 1992, Cox 1995, Love 1998).

In summary, the Kennett Government's economic liberal reform agenda was based on core values associated with public choice theory, agency theory and entrepreneurial government. Reforms were focussed on achieving economic growth by improving government efficiency and constraining the role and function of government. An individualistic understanding of 'citizenship' was a feature of the reform. A reduction in state debt and restoration of Victoria's credit rating were key results sought (and ultimately achieved) by the Kennett Government. However, the market centric, elitist and asocial nature of economic liberalism was criticised by many (Pusey 1991, 1992, Cox 1995, Jayasuriya 1996, Wiseman 1996). Most critics were concerned specifically about the devaluation and destruction of social bonds in society, citizen participation and an active civil society.

The Reform of Victoria's Local Government

To commence the reform of local government, the Kennett Government established the Victorian Local Government Board, comprised of six part-time members, to review local government, prepare recommendations and oversee the implementation of the reform platform (Local Government Board 1993). Larritt (1996) and Kiss (1999) noted that the Local Government Board, and the Government itself, were heavily influenced by right-wing think tanks such as Project Victoria, a consortium of businesses supported by the Institute of Public Affairs and the Tasman Institute. Ernst (1994) and Woodward (1999) described these institutes as advocates for a free market ideology and active contributors to the Kennett Government's policy. Kiss (1999) commented that the Local Government Board was '...dazzled by Project Victoria reports advocating drastic reductions in the public sector, use of contracts and privatisation' (p. 114). In the context of such ideological encouragement, it is of little surprise that, in its final report, the Local Government Board found that local government was 'parochial', 'inefficient' and lacked a 'competitive edge'.

Clearly apparent in the findings was an emphasis on local government's capacity to stimulate economic growth, improve efficiency and reduce government outlays. The final recommendations directed a reduction in the scale of local government to meet goals of market orientation, competition and efficiency. The Local Government Board also recommended the implementation of compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) as a more efficient way for councils to deliver services including community welfare services (Hallam 1994, 1996, Manning and Pensabene 1994, Maclellan 1996). When introducing the future role for Victoria's local government, the Local Government Board claimed

...local government reforms have created the potential and capacity for local government to be more proactive in providing leadership to enable local communities to take control of the quality of their life in a far more effective way. These reforms also provide the opportunity for all three spheres of government to work together more effectively to provide better outcomes for all communities (MAV 1996: 11).

Roger Hallam, then Minister for Local Government, added that 'the benefits of this reform will be the improved efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of municipalities' (The Age, 11 April 1994).

In implementing the recommendations of the Board, the Kennett Government introduced significant legislative changes incorporating accountability measures and targets to ensure immediate change and ongoing control of local government by the state government (Larritt 1996, Proust 1996, Rayner 1997, Costar and Economou 1999, Kiss 1999). New legislation was passed to frame key initiatives such as CCT (*Local Government Competitive Tendering Act 1994*). Amendments were also made to the *Local Government Act 1989 (Local Government Amendment Act 1994)* to tighten corporate planning and reporting requirements, impose uniform performance standards and auditing arrangements, and allow the state government to have final approval of Chief Executive Officer appointments to councils, among other things (Coghill 1996, Mowbray 1999). These changes effectively introduced a radical change to the purpose, culture and role of Victorian local government.

Critics were initially concerned about the unprecedented scale and pace of the reform and expressed alarm at the lack of consultation with key stakeholders such as citizens, communities and local government (Costello 1996, Larritt 1996, Rayner 1997, Kiss 1999). As Mowbray (1999) noted, '...a major facet of the overall approach has been a massive attack on the organisation of local government' (p. 6). This 'attack' featured rapid-fire forced amalgamations of Victoria's local government reducing the number of councils from 210 to 78. Using powers derived from amendments to the *Victorian Constitution Act*, the Kennett Government '...adopted a most extreme approach to restructuring; all elected councillors were dismissed and replaced by commissioners chosen and appointed by cabinet' (Kiss 1999: 113). Writers such as Larritt (1996), Kiss (1999) and Mowbray (1999) claimed that the Kennett Government was bullish in pushing through the reform, because it perceived an electoral mandate and had large majorities in both Houses of Parliament. Some have also suggested that another rationale behind these radical and hasty moves was the stifling of criticism and bypassing of pockets of resistance at the local level (Mowbray 1999, Kiss 1999).

Within fifteen months of the Local Government Board being appointed the reform of local government was intractably in place (Kiss 1999). Kiss (1999) described the reform as unfolding over two phases coinciding with successive Kennett Governments. In the first phase (1993-1996), the Kennett Government set the scene by fundamentally altering the structure of local government to be more market oriented and establishing central control over the implementation of the reform. The second phase (1996-1999) was characterised by the restoration of elections, the return of elected councillors and the introduction of state government accountability measures to ensure the reform stayed on track.

The ideologies of the Kennett Government, notably public choice theory, agency theory and entrepreneurial government, permeated the reform of local government. As Blacher (1993) noted, 'the aim is to create local governments that operate like any other business' (p. 1). In a guide for new councillors, the Municipal Association of Victoria reproduced the principles of entrepreneurial government, observing that

Councils are now expected to be more business oriented, focus on citizens as customers and be less driven by local social welfare concerns and community group input. Councils are required to maintain and improve organisational

productivity at the same time as reducing social welfare expenditures, rationalising functions and becoming economically competent (MAV 1996).

Privatisation and CCT, associated with agency theory, were the key strategies to bring about the required reform. Privatisation involved commissioners selling off council assets especially buildings, land and electricity supply departments. CCT involved councils submitting to tender at least 50% of their services potentially including community welfare services (Industry Commission 1995, MAV 1996). With CCT, councils were encouraged to develop multiple contracted arrangements between it as the client and former staff or sometimes, regional businesses as private service providers of the required services. CCT brought some benefits to local government including the '...reform of work practices and improved performance of council business units' and 'increased budget flexibility from external purchasing and reduced costs of services' (Digby 1999: 3).

Whilst concessions about the benefits of these reforms were given, critics' voices were nonetheless loud and clear. Love (1998) compared the new state model for local government to a 'franchise operation to serve state government customers' (p. 2). Similarly, Rayner (1998) expressed anxiety about the reduction of local government's democratic role and again, that the reforms seemed designed to eliminate the sense of intimacy between citizens and their local representatives (Rayner 1997). Mowbray (1996) and others contended that the combined effect of the reforms was that local government prioritised state concerns about economic progress ahead of local democracy and dramatically reduced social programs (Crooks 1996a, Haag 1997a, Rayner 1998, Mowbray 1996, 1999).

The Impact of the Reform on Citizenship and Political Rights and Obligations

During the first phase of the reform, in particular, the Kennett Government '...set about limiting the rights and responsibilities of Victorians' (Webber 1996: v). The reforms highlighted the Kennett Government's aversion to citizen participation in government and human services (Local Government Board 1993, Hallam 1994, Manning and Pensabene 1994, Lyon 1998). Citizen participation in local government was seen as an ineffective use

of resources and potentially destabilising to the imperatives of the reform (Victorian Commission of Audit 1993, Alford and O'Neill 1994, Muetzelfeldt 1994).

The reform strategies used by the Kennett Government fundamentally altered the nature of Victoria's local government and its relationship with citizens (McKenna 1996, Crooks 1996b, Digby 1999). The power of councils to develop government-owned business enterprises and invest in the municipality was handed over to the market. Councils were constrained in their efforts to directly provide some services on behalf of the local community. Citizens were also deprived of the opportunity to share in the collective ownership of public assets and were increasingly defined as customers of contracted services rather than people with 'citizenship' rights and obligations (Alford and O'Neill 1994). Broader constitutional and legislative changes that accompanied the reforms served to entrench the erosion of the civil and political rights of Victorians (Larritt 1996, Rayner 1997, Waugh 1999, Bessant 1999).

More specifically, for the purposes of this thesis, the state government ignored the major political rights and obligations associated with 'citizenship', these being voting, political representation, participation in the democratic process and access to political information (Rayner 1997, Kiss 1999, Mowbray 1999).

Effective participation in the democratic process is contingent upon political participation both at election time and between elections (Zifcak 1994). When elected councillors were dismissed, citizens' political right and duty to vote in local elections was, by implication, suspended. The dismissal of elected councillors and suspension of voting removed avenues for organised democratic resistance against the reform whilst simultaneously restricting the ability of citizens to mobilise any concerns and interests via councillor representatives.

The right to political representation, in effect, means that citizens can not only have their views represented in political forums but can assist in the determination of how such representation occurs (MAV 1996, VLGA and MAV 1999a). However, citizen participation in decision-making associated with the management of local government during the reform process was negligible. Instead, cabinet-appointed commissioners were charged with the task of establishing the new municipalities (Hill 1999). All council decisions were made by

triumvirates of commissioners, most of whom did not reside in the municipal area (Mowbray 1999). Whilst commissioners consulted the state government as required, consistent attempts to consult with citizens were rare (Kiss 1999). Commissioners actually enjoyed sufficiently unfettered power to enable them to sell off assets including buildings and land, spend accumulated reserves, engage in land use rezoning, undertake massive downsizing and outsourcing of programs and appoint Chief Executive Officers who were entrenched in office by the time elected councillors returned (Hill 1999).

The right to participate in the democratic process was ignored and devalued in the Kennett Government's reform process. This right includes the right to lawful protest, to stand as an electoral candidate, to be informed or consulted about decisions that affect you and to participate in making decisions (MAV 1996, VLGA and MAV 1999a). There was minimal public consultation by the state government about the reform agenda and the implications of the reform on local communities and local government (Larritt 1996, Kiss 1999, Mowbray 1999). Larritt (1996), Rayner (1997) and Kiss (1999) all expressed concern at the haste with which the reform was implemented without significant regard for public participation. For example, Kiss (1999) commented that '...both the speed and drastic character of the changes precluded any effective public participation or even understanding of what was happening' (p. 113). Further, the Kennett Government worked actively to quash any criticism or protest of citizens against reforms. Any questioning of the effect of state government reform on citizens' rights and obligations was treated with disdain (Larritt 1996, Kiss 1999, Mowbray 1999).

Finally, the Kennett Government was criticised for devaluing the right of citizens to access relevant information. Access to information and the ability to undertake political inquiries relies on councillor contact with constituents, public meetings, annual reporting processes, media reporting and the dissemination of council policies, plans and strategies (Larritt 1996, MAV 1996, VLGA and MAV 1999a). Information and inquiry rights relevant to the reform agenda were stymied due to the haste of an inwardly focused reform. A veil of secrecy shrouded the Kennett Government's reform agenda for local government, especially during phase one (Larritt 1996, Kiss 1999). Further, the widespread lack of transparency in the time of commissioners discouraged citizens from exercising their right to political information about the operation of local governments (Mowbray 1996, Manne 1999b, Baragwanath 1999). Without the catalyst of councillor representation, there were

few interactions between citizens, community groups and the new administrators. Instead corporate plans, annual plans and marketing strategies were used to 'sell' the future directions of newly amalgamated municipalities to 'customers' and extol the virtues of the reform to local businesses and ratepayers (Kiss 1999). Although this resulted in increased reporting to the community about local government directions and finances, this was often more of a marketing exercise, than a genuine attempt to provide open, transparent information. It can also be seen to reflect the Kennett Government's eagerness to hold local government accountable to itself. Finally, commercial confidentiality clauses related to government contracts and public assets were regularly inserted into key documents, especially those related to CCT, thereby further preventing access to information by citizens (Bessant 1999).

The return of voting rights and elected councillors (and improved opportunities for citizen participation in decision-making) coincided with the Kennett Government's second term in office (phase two) and occurred after the major elements of the reform were firmly in place. On their return, democratically elected councillors found that their roles had changed markedly, to be more strategic and less operationally focussed (MAV 1996, Kiss 1999, Mowbray 1999). Councillors were advised to operate like a board of directors running a private business (Office of Local Government 1995, Ernst and Glanville 1995, Murfitt et al 1996). The *Local Government Amendment Act 1994* reinforced these constraints on the role of councillors and empowered Chief Executive Officers to be responsible for local administration and reporting to the state government (Hill 1999). Thus, even after councillors returned there was a sense that council administration still belonged and reported to the state government not the local municipality (Rayner 1998, Kiss 1999, Hill 1999). In isolated cases, some councils such as Darebin, Nillumbik, Melbourne, Greater Geelong and Port Phillip continued to live with the threat of being dismissed for not complying with state government requirements. Darebin and Nillumbik councillors were actually removed again after reinstatement, at the direction of the state government (Lyon 1998, Kiss 1999, Mowbray 1999). In effect, these actions continued the state government trend to undermine the legitimacy of councillors (Kiss 1999).

In phase two of the reform, 'citizenship' rights and responsibilities could still not be exercised to the same degree as in pre-reform times. Even when the reform was entrenched, local government was still required to focus on principles of competition, cost

reduction and entrepreneurial management instead of public participation in the democratic process and the provision of balanced information concerning the political process. Amalgamations dramatically changed the landscape of local government and smaller communities were subsumed into larger municipalities and ward boundaries were redrawn. This required new councillors, even those with considerable experience, to relearn their communities. The potential of democratic governance was further reduced by halving the number of councillors and substantially increasing the size of wards (Kiss 1999), thus forcing elected representatives to spread themselves more thinly. Challen (1996) noted the difficulties that would face councillors in keeping in touch with constituents and maintaining awareness of the impact of local government policies in areas distant from them. The reforms also impacted on the equality of political representation: The Stegley Foundation (1998) reported that the reform reduced the number of women councillors from 453 prior to amalgamations to 129 by 1997.

The language of the reform also mitigated against positive experiences of 'citizenship' and the exercise of political rights and obligations. The dominance of terms associated with economic liberalism such as 'customer', 'efficiency' and 'competition' pointed to the new market-centric, entrepreneurial focus required of local government. These terms replaced the terms 'citizen', 'social justice' and 'advocacy' (Cox 1995, Challen 1996, Mowbray 1996, Salvaris 1997a). The increasing use of terms like 'customer' instead of 'citizen' generated significant angst among public advocates, especially when this occurred at the hands of political leaders who designated themselves as 'corporate executives' (Costello 1996, Challen 1996, Rayner 1998). Whilst an attractive metaphor for the provision of high quality service, the term 'customer' is not supportive of citizen participation in local government nor public ownership over community activity and space. Instead the term 'customer' assists to transform public space and democratic government to a system of market choices reliant on an ideological commitment to individualism and competition (Pusey 1991, Horne 1992, Osborne and Gaebler 1993, Salvaris 1997b). As Bobbio (1987) noted, the term 'customer' promotes the distance between local government administration and their constituents; managerialism and a lack of transparency and accountability in political decision-making exacerbates it (p. 79).

In summary, the Kennett Government's economic liberal reform had a dramatic and negative impact on the status of 'citizenship' and on political rights and obligations at the

local government level. Each of the four political rights and obligations were violated to expedite the reform process, reducing the value of 'citizenship' and curtailing the participation of citizens in democratic decision-making processes that affected their local area. Not only did the reform of local government undermine the exercise of political rights and obligations, but local government became the repository for a fundamentally conservative view of politics and the role of government. Broad political participation in democratic government and community affairs was subservient to the hegemony of public choice theory, agency theory and economic progress.

Conclusion

Local government has long played an important if constrained role in promoting 'citizenship' at the municipal level. The potential of this role was arrested on the election of the Kennett Government in 1992. The former Kennett Government ushered in an era of radical economic liberal reform that led to the fundamental restructuring and reorientation of Victorian local government. The reform of local government was one part of an overall reform agenda that reduced state debt, sustained business enterprises and restored Victoria's credit rating. The Kennett Government's reform agenda, however, valued economic growth, agency theory and public choice theory at the expense of 'citizenship', equality and political rights and obligations. Key political rights and obligations were marginalised in the search for efficiency, effectiveness and a smaller role for government. Local government was viewed as a tool of economic liberal micro-economic reform rather than as a democratic institution able to promote and sustain 'citizenship' rights and obligations. Thus, the Kennett Government had a significant deleterious impact on 'citizenship' and political rights and duties. This was most noticeable during the establishment phase of the local government reform process, but was still apparent during the second term of the Kennett Government.

Chapter Three: Citizenship and Local Government

– Three Case Studies

Local government working together with local communities has a key role in promoting and nurturing citizenship (MAV 1997: III)

In light of the claim that cooperative and socially just concepts of 'citizenship' are important for local government planning processes, I introduce three case studies concerning local government attempts to promote the political rights and obligations of 'citizenship' at the municipal level. Specifically, I analyse recent corporate planning documents of Moreland, Port Phillip and Maribyrnong City Councils and ascertain their respective commitment to 'citizenship' and how each promoted and nurtured 'citizenship' through their planning processes. I argue that each of these councils was appropriately attentive to concepts of 'citizenship' in their corporate planning processes, whilst still addressing the economic imperatives and accountability requirements imposed by the Kennett Government.

Corporate plans are the primary planning document for councils and other large organisations, providing a vision and strategic direction for the operations of departments (Morgan 1986, VCOSS 1990, Jones and May 1992, Lewis, Morkel and Hubbard 1993). Council corporate plans inform the state government and local constituents about council priorities and the resources scheduled for use by councils in responding to the priorities identified.

Corporate management in the 1990's was driven by economic liberalism and centred on generating and managing competition, improving efficiency and reducing costs (Alford and O'Neill 1994, Muetzelfeldt 1994, Dalton et al 1996). Dalton et al (1996), for example, claimed that public administration in Australia in the 1990's was shaped by the idea of the 'contract which emphasises market solutions' (p. 92). In this context, Kettner et al (1995) and others have argued that corporate planning is a tool of managerialist control, used to increase organisational achievement, effectiveness and efficiency (Sinclair 1991, Rogers

and Hough unpub., Landry and Bianchini 1994, Rees 1995). Corporate planning is primarily a means of combining structure, people, culture and technology, in a holistic organisation-wide sense, to achieve a stated 'vision' (Morgan 1986, Lewis, Morkel and Hubbard 1993). Understood in this way, corporate planning provides a long-term game plan, a process to mobilise resources to produce outputs and outcomes (Jones and May 1992).

Considerable suspicion, however, has been expressed about the increasing reliance on corporate planning processes in the 1990s. Considine (1988a), for example, proposed that, in promoting economic liberal reform, corporate planning served to dilute external criticism and police the organisation's environment. Considine (1988b) argued that

...corporate planning can be seen as indicative of a system of control. It does not necessarily address social inequities regarding poverty, race, gender and disability. Instead it is one part of an overall process that seeks to deflect criticism by couching objectives in general terms. It can also be seen as providing an instrumental view of the community, one which cannot be expected to willingly assist most community projects (p. 21).

Whether accepted as valid or otherwise, the adoption of corporate management principles, and specifically the production of an annual corporate plan by local government, were key requirements of the Kennett Government's reform process.

The Local Government Board (1993) decreed that 'the overall thrust of local government reform calls for a rapid transition to modern corporate management' (p. 2). The imperative for corporate planning, enshrined in the *Local Government Amendment Act 1994*, required councils to develop three yearly corporate plans complete with objectives, strategies and performance indicators. Performance indicators related to both organisational objectives and financial status. Throughout the reform, corporate planning was used by local government to broadcast the reform agenda and articulate councils' vision and plan for meeting the objectives of the reform (MAV 1996, Mowbray 1999, Kiss 1999). The reform agenda involved no requirement for councils to report on activities to promote 'citizenship' in their municipalities or the opportunities available for citizens to learn about and use their political rights and obligations. Instead, corporate plans reflected both local government's

traditional and mandated role and new and emerging priorities around competition, the generation of cost savings and privatisation. In general terms, corporate planning was designed to give effect to the economic, social, environmental and financial planning roles and functions of local government, as articulated by the *Local Government Act 1989*.

Councils updated their corporate plans annually after extensively reviewing their previous year's performance and preparing an annual report. Councils were required by legislation to publish and disseminate a report on the annual achievements and activities of council in meeting the objectives of the corporate plan. Annual reports were onerous and complex documents, requiring a depth of accountability unprecedented in Victorian local government. Reports included audited progress in meeting National Competition Policy guidelines, the number and nature of trade practices complaints against council, compliance with compulsory competitive tendering requirements and compliance with competitive neutrality principles in business activities. A fully audited financial statement was also required as were details concerning donations and grants, 'Freedom Of Information' requests, allowances for councillors, organisational memberships and existing contracts.

The Office of Local Government (OLG) played the important role of watchdog during the reforms: The OLG monitored corporate plans and annual reports to ensure they both complied with relevant legislation and adequately addressed the nominated performance indicators. The OLG also received and reviewed audited financial reports.

My intention in these case studies is to capture examples of how 'citizenship' was promoted and nurtured in a context of unsympathetic political reform. The three councils I discuss in this chapter were chosen for in-depth analysis for three reasons. Traditionally, each council has exhibited relatively high levels of commitment to social justice, 'citizenship' and the exercise of political rights and obligations. Second, each was publicly identified as critical of reforms undertaken by the Kennett Government. Finally, they all represent inner urban municipalities with culturally and socio-economically diverse constituents who tend to be relatively politically active and aware. Thus, it can be argued that 'citizenship' is particularly meaningful and important for these municipalities.

For the purposes of the case studies, I review and discuss each council's first corporate plan¹ after the return of elected councillors, the yearly plan (associated with the corporate plan) and the first annual report of each council, highlighting references and commitments to citizens or 'citizenship'. The documents assessed in this study are collectively referred to as 'corporate planning documents'. Whilst it was not within the scope of the study to evaluate the actual effectiveness of councils in delivering on their respective corporate commitments, I identify strategies and projects from the documents that have the potential to promote and nurture 'citizenship' and the political rights and obligations of voting, political representation, participation in the democratic process and access to political information. I discuss similarities and differences in the corporate planning approach adopted by each council, whilst avoiding the tendency to rate the municipalities on a competitive basis. The documents studied were prepared during 1997 and 1998 and were gathered in 1999 via councillors, staff of the Chief Executive Officer and/or corporate planning officers at each of the three municipalities.

The corporate plans, annual plans and annual reports as assessed generally commenced with an introduction by the Mayor, which was followed by a social, demographic and geographic snapshot of the new municipality. The new councillors were introduced and new wards indicated. The corporate plans established a vision for each council and focused on identifying the manner by which the organisation (*identified as departments and in terms of a client/provider split*), organisational inputs (*staff, technology, budgets, stakeholder time*) and operating culture (*competition, 'Total Quality Management' and 'best practice'*) would enable councils to achieve this vision. The finer detail of the corporate plans included information about key performance indicators, service charters, budgets and business plans. Annual plans were a scaled down version of the corporate plan and focused on the way the corporate plan would be implemented over the forthcoming twelve months. Annual reports detailed councils' achievements in meeting the key performance indicators of annual and corporate plans, and also contained significant additional information to demonstrate compliance with legislative requirements.

¹ During 1999 corporate plans became known as council plans in local government parlance. Despite this change I continue to use the term 'corporate plan' as this was in vogue during 1997 and 1998.

Case Study One: Moreland City Council

The City of Moreland comprises the former Cities of Brunswick and Coburg plus sections of the former City of Broadmeadows. Moreland's population is approximately 137,000, 32% of whom were born in non-English speaking countries. The Merri Creek forms the eastern boundary, the Moonee Ponds Creek forms the western boundary whereas Moreland is bounded by Park Street in the south and the Western Ring Road in the north. Moreland covers an area of 51 km², its southern boundary commencing approximately 5 kms north of the Central Business District (CBD). Ten councillors were elected to a three-year term in 1996 (Moreland City Council 1997a).

Moreland City Council actively campaigned against many of the Kennett Government reforms, which Councillors argued were likely to undermine democracy and interfere with the independence of local government (Moreland City Council 1996, 1997a, 1997c, 1998c). The annual Mayor's speech in Moreland provided one platform for expressing these ideas. The Mayor's speech publicly presented the policy of Council and provided a detailed overview of priority initiatives for the forthcoming year. In the first Mayor's speech of the new Council, Councillor Mike Hill commented that 'Council will be ready to take any measures necessary to ensure the Kennett Government's view of local government as a branch of Spring Street is repudiated and resisted' (Moreland City Council 1996: 3). One such measure taken by Moreland Council to protest actively against the outcomes of the Kennett Government's reform of local government was to catalyse the formation of the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA). The VLGA, an alternative statewide peak body for local government, was 'committed to the principles of local democracy and local autonomy' (Moreland City Council 1996: 3).

In the Mayor's introduction to the Council's first corporate plan 1997 - 2000, Councillor Higgins could speak more positively, noting that 'democratic governance has been fully re-established in Moreland and it is beginning to chart its own course' (Moreland City Council 1997a: 1). The corporate plan thus proposed a revitalised approach to local democracy arguing that

local government is the foundation stone on which democratic government and practices in the nation must be built. It is the point at which most people

experience their first direct contact with government (Moreland City Council 1997a: 8).

Notwithstanding this more positive outlook, Moreland City Council's corporate plan continued to embody overt resistance to the reform process.

Moreland's commitment to democratic 'citizenship' and to local government as a leader, advocate and planner for the municipality was exhibited in the corporate planning documents in three ways; through the strategic use of language, through expressions of commitment and intent and through appropriate projects and actions. The deliberate use of the language of 'citizenship' was a feature of Moreland's documents. Council's Human Services Impact Statement (Moreland City Council 1998c) sheds light on the rationale sustaining Council's position on this issue. This statement debunked the values of economic liberalism by noting that

more and more human service activities are being forced into the market framework and the private economy. Language is used to disempower citizens, weaken democracy and reinforce a centralised corporatist model (Moreland City Council 1998c: 9).

It is apparent that Moreland Council rejected the characterisation of its constituents as 'customers'. Instead the favoured term, 'citizen', was habitually repeated throughout the Mayor's speeches and in corporate plan objectives and projects (Moreland City Council 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1998c). Similarly, Council's executive services department initiated the 'Citizen's Response Branch' to deal with public queries thereby defying the wholesale trend in local government to establish 'Customer Response Services'. References to 'citizens' were notably active in nature.

In terms of its commitment to 'citizenship', Moreland's corporate plan provided unequivocal support for local democracy and the political rights and obligations of voting, political representation, participation in the democratic process and the provision of political information. The annual Mayors' speeches contained similar commitments. In the 1998 Mayor's speech, Councillor Helou paid much attention to Council's role in community development, social cohesion and citizen participation (Moreland City Council 1998c).

The corporate plan entailed five key commitments. These were governance, democracy and political leadership, accountability, social justice, economic activity, and quality of living (Moreland City Council 1997a). Commitments to 'citizenship' were nested in three of the five objectives in the corporate plan. The key commitment to 'Governance, Democracy and Political Leadership' aimed to nurture a democratic culture, enhance community knowledge of government, advocate for the interests and concerns of the local community, and give residents confidence that their views and aspirations would be respected. Another key commitment to 'Accountability' aimed to ensure that Councillors were wise and careful stewards of municipal assets and revenues and that they acted with the authority and consent of constituents. Finally, the key commitment to 'Social Justice' aimed to bring fairness and redistributive justice to the allocation of resources and the planning of services.

More practically, the corporate plan endorsed the need for new measures to stimulate a more active form of 'citizenship' at the community, local government and state levels. A large number of organisational projects were proposed which promoted and nurtured the four identified political rights and responsibilities (Moreland City Council 1997a, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c).

The voting rights and obligations of citizens to elect autonomous councillors were clearly at the forefront of corporate thinking. Triennial elections were understood as a key means by which local government could ensure accountability to constituents (Moreland City Council 1997a).

Moreland encouraged and promoted local political representation through activities such as the annual Mayor's speech and through the provision of executive support for the Mayor and Councillors. The leadership function of Councillors was demonstrated by participation in political campaigns and a track record of effective advocacy on local issues. Significant advocacy work was undertaken in relation to Citylink tollways, Optus cabling, responsible gaming, and the reclamation of democratic local governance (Moreland City Council 1996, 1997a, 1997c). Support was offered to those projects that specifically identified how market forces and state government services were failing to meet human, social and environmental needs in Moreland (Moreland City Council 1997a).

Openness and responsiveness were seen as pivotal to promoting citizen access to, participation in and engagement with local democracy (Moreland City Council 1997a, 1998a). To this end, the possibility of enhancing democracy using the Internet or televising Council meetings was foreshadowed (Moreland City Council 1998c). Council actively endorsed concrete projects that enabled public participation in debates and political decision-making processes. Each department of Council had a role to play in this and was held to account for its contribution to this objective. For example, performance indicators for the executive services department included the number of people voting in elections, attending Council meetings, ceremonies and events; and having the opportunity to participate in Council decision making processes (Moreland City Council 1997a). The Council's business branch was required to facilitate open, transparent and accessible decision-making processes especially through Council meetings. The public relations and communications branch was required to develop a community consultation strategy.

The social development department had a particularly significant role in promoting public participation in democratic processes. In providing for the social, recreational, cultural and health needs of residents and promoting the benefits of continuing community development, this department developed a local social health and well-being index. The index, developed in collaboration with Swinburne University's Centre for Urban and Social Research, incorporated the measurement of social health and democracy in the municipality (Moreland City Council 1998b, 1998c). The social development department also explicitly encouraged young people's and women's participation in local democratic processes. Groups of young people were assisted to participate in special consultations and decision-making processes such as the youth summit and youth 'citizenship' project. The potential of the Internet for fostering young people's involvement in local government affairs was also considered (Moreland City Council 1998c). All of these projects aimed to increase the level of participation by young people in the local community and 'assist them to be active citizens' (Moreland City Council 1997b). A 'women's summit' likewise aimed to ensure equal access for women to services, facilities and activities (Moreland City Council 1998c).

A further major initiative of Moreland Council to promote citizen participation in political processes was the establishment of advisory committees. A series of advisory committees, each comprising community and Council representatives, reported to Council

on issues such as health, environment, housing, libraries, women's issues, waste minimisation, and economic development (Moreland City Council 1998a, 1998c).

Finally, Moreland valued the provision of political information. Council recognised that the dissemination of accurate and up-to-date information about Council strategies, activities and services would enable greater public awareness about local events and issues. Moreland was committed to act as a 'facilitator of community debate, through constant provision of information to the community and through consultation with the community' (Moreland City Council 1997a: 8). An important initiative in this regard was the development of the 'freedom of information policy' to enhance public access to information about issues important to the community (Moreland City Council 1997a).

Summary

In the face of the Kennett Government's reform of local government, Moreland Council was a strong advocate for independent and democratic local government, fully representative of local citizens (Moreland City Council 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1998a, 1998c). Moreland's unwavering commitment to principles of 'citizenship' was apparent, especially through continued references to constituents as 'citizens' not 'customers'. Council developed a significant range of concrete strategies and projects that had the capacity to promote and nurture all four areas of political rights and obligations in integrated and complementary ways. A particularly strong commitment to promoting citizen participation in democratic processes was evident. Performance measures for increasing citizen participation were explicit and sophisticated.

Case Study Two: Port Phillip City Council

The City of Port Phillip is located immediately south of the CBD along the northeastern edge of Port Phillip Bay. The municipality covers 20.4 km² and the population totals approximately 76,000. Port Phillip comprises the suburbs of St. Kilda, Balaclava, Elwood, Middle Park, Albert Park, Fisherman's Bend, Port Melbourne, South Melbourne, East St. Kilda, Garden City and Ripponlea and includes Albert Park Lake and the St. Kilda foreshore. Seven councillors were elected to a three-year term in 1996.

Supported by Council's vision, which included an endorsement of community ownership over Council processes and a commitment to equity and social justice, Port Phillip's corporate planning process was strongly informed by community views. The 1997/8 - 2000 corporate plan was developed in the context of the 'Community Plan - A Statement of Community Aspirations' (Port Phillip City Council 1997b). Port Phillip's 'Community Plan' recorded the proceedings of the community summit held early in 1997 and attended by approximately 400 people. Regarding the purpose of the community summit, Mayor Haag recalled

...we did not attempt to consult citizens about what they wanted the Council to do in terms of the old perennials – rates, roads and rubbish. Rather we aimed to tap into the underlying aspirations of the community, to articulate the communal vision for Port Phillip (Haag 1997b: 2).

Council responded to the community summit by observing that, '...in our city, the community feel a sense of control over their destiny and local government is empowered to meet the expectations of its community' (Port Phillip City Council 1997c: 9). Priority issues raised at the community summit, that is, housing and neighbourhood and commercial development (Haag 1997b), were incorporated in the corporate plan. For example, the corporate plan included a neighbourhood development strategy (Port Phillip City Council 1997b). The neighbourhood development strategy aimed to identify needs on a neighbourhood basis, review existing community consultation and Council committee processes, disseminate service delivery information and establish structures for neighbourhood leadership (Haag 1997b).

Overall, the corporate plan identified six key result areas: diversity and community development, planning and city development, infrastructure, service delivery, environment, long term financial viability, and leadership and innovation. Corporate planning documents also contained extensive references to corporate performance indicators, the use of community satisfaction surveys and the provision of Council services.

Scrutiny of the language of the corporate planning documents indicates that Port Phillip predominantly used the term 'community' not 'citizen' when identifying its constituency. The term 'citizen' was used only occasionally by the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer

(CEO) and mostly in the context of the community summit or in an introductory sense (Port Phillip City Council 1997a, 1997b, 1998a, Haag 1997a, 1997b). For example, the CEO wrote that 'in 1997, in conjunction with the citizens of the city, we produced a community plan which outlines the community's aspirations' (Port Phillip City Council 1998b: 3). In the Mayor's message introducing the planning documents, Haag (1997a) claimed that '...the City of Port Phillip is ...where our community members are treated as citizens, not customers' (p. 2). Further references to 'citizen' were rare. On occasions references to 'customers' were made (Port Phillip City Council 1998b: 33).

At one level, Port Phillip's corporate planning documents can be read as an attempt to meet the accountability requirements of the Office of Local Government and pass the scrutiny of the Minister for Local Government. A strong emphasis was placed on Council being 'financially responsible', rebuilding physical infrastructure and providing services responsive to the requirements of users. 'Port Phillip Council aims to be a leader in its field, particularly in the areas of... 'strategic planning (and) financial management' (Port Phillip City Council 1997c: 9). This obsequiousness was possibly linked to the history of conflict between the Kennett Government and the Port Phillip City Council and the establishment of community resistance groups during the implementation of the reform (Love 1998). Mowbray (1999) recalled that in 1996, the former Minister for Local Government, 'held a list of councils that he would like to see extinguished, and singled out Port Phillip Council for its refusal to tender out human services' (p. 7). At a deeper level, however, under the key result areas of diversity and community development, and leadership and innovation, the documents revealed a commitment to community participation in local decision-making and endorsement of representative local government as an advocate for its people (Port Phillip City Council 1997a, 1997b, 1998a).

A content analysis shows that the corporate planning documents contained no commitment or key result area that explicitly discussed 'citizenship' or political rights and obligations at the local government level. However, there was ample evidence that Port Phillip implicitly supported democratic local government and the political rights and obligations of 'citizenship'. (A stronger commitment to political rights appears to have been obfuscated by the veil of 'corporate speak' which partly reproduced the language of the state government's reform agenda.) The documents implicitly reinforced some political rights and obligations more than others. Whilst the voting rights and obligations of citizens

were not discussed and access to political information seemed not to be a high priority, projects that encouraged political representation and participation in the democratic process were relatively prominent.

Council seemed keen to encourage participation in the democratic process and be 'recognised in local government as a leader in the areas of community communication and consultation' (Port Phillip City Council 1998b: 30). Councillor Haag extolled the virtue of healthy community attendance at Council meetings by quoting the *Emerald Hill Times*:

One of the most endearing things about Port Phillip Council is that the public gallery is almost always full. Other councils may complain of poor turnouts at meetings, this is almost never the case in Port Phillip (Haag 1997b: 6).

Enthusiastic to promote even higher levels of participation, Port Phillip established in the corporate plan specific processes and activities that increased community contact with councillors and further enabled the participation of interest groups in local level planning and policy development (Port Phillip City Council 1997b). For example, under the diversity and community development key result area, it was envisaged that Port Phillip would 'develop and maintain the diversity of the community and provide a platform from which residents can develop their communities' (Port Phillip City Council 1997b: 4). The highly inclusive neighbourhood development strategy outlined above was a key mechanism for achieving this objective. Other mechanisms included community consultative committees and neighbourhood liaison groups (Port Phillip City Council 1997c). In a similar vein, the infrastructure key result area aimed to 'explore opportunities for greater involvement by the community in the development of proposals for capital works' (Port Phillip City Council 1998b: 27). Elsewhere the environment key result area sought '...community input' and '...partnership with the community in achieving environmental objectives' (Port Phillip City Council 1998b: 22).

Political representation was a clear priority for Port Phillip in that the representative roles that could be undertaken by councillors were recognised and discussed. Councillors' representative roles included participation on major peak bodies impacting on the functions of local government, advocacy to state and federal governments for outcomes important to the community, and generally being available to meet with residents,

businesses and ratepayers (Port Phillip City Council 1997b, 1998b).

Whilst Port Phillip was committed to the provision of information, there is little evidence to suggest that this information was overtly political in nature. Information provision aimed to increase the level of knowledge and understanding within the community about Council services, achievements and decisions. Corporate plan directives did not specifically uphold 'citizenship' rights to political information: Port Phillip simply committed itself to ensuring that there was two-way information exchange between the community and Council concerning services and activities (Port Phillip City Council 1998b). Projects included 'community update', neighbourhood newsletters and various other contact activities such as the open day, home page and councillor meetings with community organisations (Port Phillip City Council 1998b). A major information activity was the ratepayer survey that provided community feedback about local issues to Council and assessed Council's performance in delivering services (Port Phillip City Council 1997c). Council also aspired to provide meeting facilities and keep the public informed about the latest issues (Port Phillip City Council 1997c).

Summary

In summary, Port Phillip Council's corporate planning documents were attentive to state government reporting requirements whilst still positioning Council as a leader and advocate of local community interests. Port Phillip made no in-depth reference to citizens, 'citizenship' and political rights and obligations in the documents and instead used the term 'community' to describe Council's constituency. Nonetheless, Council still endorsed community ownership and social justice, even in the face of threats from the Kennett Government. Particularly noticeable was Port Phillip's commitment to developing strategies and projects that encouraged public participation in the democratic process and representative local government. Explicit recognition of voting rights and responsibilities and access to political information was generally overlooked.

Case Study Three: Maribyrnong City Council

The City of Maribyrnong is located seven kilometres west of the CBD and has a population of approximately 60,000. Maribyrnong is an intensely multicultural community with approximately 44% of the population born overseas. The municipality comprises the suburbs of Braybrook, Footscray, Maidstone, Maribyrnong, Kingsville, Seddon, Tottenham, West Footscray and Yarraville. Seven councillors were elected to a three-year term in 1997 (Maribyrnong City Council 1998c).

Unlike Moreland and Port Phillip with their Mayor's speeches and community summits, Maribyrnong's corporate planning process was not accompanied by large-scale participatory mechanisms or significant civic events. Corporate planning documents in Maribyrnong tended to be clear and concise, even plain, succinctly summarising Council's values and objectives, and strategies responding to the priorities identified.

Maribyrnong City Council used the 1997 – 1999 corporate plan to assist in the management of the city's resources and to support community values (Maribyrnong City Council 1998b). The corporate plan articulated Council's governance priorities and seven corporate objectives. Governance priorities focused on community and economic development, service provision, support for community needs and aspirations, facilitation for community organisations, and advocacy to other levels of government (Maribyrnong City Council 1998b). The seven corporate objectives included traditional commitments to planning, asset management, economic growth and environmental issues. Several further objectives were supportive of the centrality of community and citizens to Maribyrnong's endeavours: providing responsive services; building and celebrating community life; and building an organisation to meet community needs (Maribyrnong City Council 1997, 1998c). Importantly, one objective specifically mentioned 'citizenship': engaging with people as citizens. Such a progressive and explicit commitment to 'citizenship' at the corporate objective level is unique to the study.

Maribyrnong seemed intent on providing responsive and accountable leadership and good government for its diverse communities. A strong theme emerging from the corporate planning documents was attentiveness to the core roles of leadership, advocacy and planning at the municipal level. Accountability, performance and efficiency requirements

also featured prominently. Accountability projects cited included service charters, service user surveys and Office of Local Government surveys (Maribyrnong City Council 1998b).

Corporate planning documents identified commitments to be pursued by Council in response to corporate objectives. Prominent commitments articulated Council's integrated approach to infrastructure maintenance, developing the economy, managing the environment, accounting for finances and ensuring the wellbeing of the community (Maribyrnong City Council 1997, 1998a, 1998b). Commitments to 'value for money services and facilities that increasingly meet community expectations' (Maribyrnong City Council 1998c: 11) as well as to meeting the requirements of the Kennett Government's reform also featured.

In the 1997/8 Annual Report, Council committed itself to 'promote and recognise citizenship in Maribyrnong' (Maribyrnong City Council 1998b: 20). Maribyrnong, however, like Port Phillip and Moreland, did not explicate 'citizenship' in terms of a sophisticated framework of political, civil, social and participatory rights and obligations. Instead, the corporate objective was accompanied by an array of generic roles traditionally undertaken by local government. 'Citizenship' projects, for example, were deemed to include the provision of meeting rooms and facilities to community groups, grants to community agencies, a 'Citizen of the Year' award, consultations concerning a ward boundary review, information provision, libraries and a 'responsible gaming' strategy (Maribyrnong City Council 1997, 1998a, 1998b). Further, 'citizenship' strategies included informing residents through open Council meetings, weekly press communications, ward meetings and newsletters; consulting with the community on a wide range of topics; acknowledging Aboriginal reconciliation, and encouraging multiculturalism through recognition of cultural diversity (Maribyrnong City Council 1998b). Whilst the broad range of strategic activities pasted under the heading of 'citizenship' seemed to have the capacity to achieve some positive and noble outcomes, these activities did not reflect an overt commitment to democratic governance and the political rights and obligations of 'citizenship'. Also, the contribution of these activities to the promotion and recognition of 'citizenship' was tenuous and insufficiently clear. Ultimately, there was nothing dynamic or innovative enough in the list of 'citizenship' projects to enable a significantly greater number of citizens to understand or exercise their political rights and obligations. This may be why the commitment to 'citizenship' was short-lived. In the 1998 - 2000 corporate plan, it was

replaced by a new objective for 'strengthening community life: we will improve neighbourhoods and strengthen community life' (Maribyrnong City Council 1998c: 14).

Analysis of the language of the corporate planning documents suggests that Maribyrnong neglected to follow through on its commitment to 'engage with people as citizens'. The term 'citizen' was rarely found in the corporate planning documents. Like Port Phillip, Maribyrnong regularly used the term 'community' to describe its constituency. In using this more ubiquitous term, Maribyrnong may have inadvertently devalued the meaning of 'citizenship' in the face of its stated commitment.

In relation to the four political rights and obligations, corporate commitments to political representation, participation in the democratic process and access to political information were found in varying degrees, and were usually general in nature and/or brief. For Maribyrnong as for Port Phillip, there was no reference to the voting rights and obligations of 'citizenship'.

Activities associated with political representation were canvassed briefly. Beyond the biographical details of councillors and descriptions of their wards, there was reference to each councillor publishing ward newsletters and holding ward meetings (Maribyrnong City Council 1998b).

Public participation in the democratic process was endorsed in general terms: Maribyrnong invited 'people to be involved in all aspects of Council business' (Maribyrnong City Council 1998c: 2). And again, '...Council is committed to ensuring that Maribyrnong is a place where everyone can contribute to the life of the city' (Maribyrnong City Council 1998c: 2). Council's commitment extended to eliciting community views and concerns prior to making significant decisions (Maribyrnong City Council 1997). For example, council's commitment to 'leadership and accountability' specifically guaranteed opportunities for people to influence Council policies and inform Council decision-making in the areas of environment, compliance with National Competition Policy, planning and development, economic development and responsible gaming (Maribyrnong City Council 1998a, 1998c). Another commitment in 1997/98 was to hold at least 100 public forums on issues ranging from community safety to land use planning (Maribyrnong City Council 1997). Council also coordinated support for community committees such as childcare services, neighbourhood

houses and community centres, whereby the community could participate in decision-making processes (Maribyrnong City Council 1998c).

Council committed itself to providing quality, timely information to residents (Maribyrnong City Council 1997) for two reasons. First, it was believed that people had a right to access information: 'People need to know what is going on and where their interests may converge' (Maribyrnong City Council 1998c). Second, Maribyrnong seemed to believe that information provision was part of the process of making sound and informed decisions. Thus, there was considerable support for providing information about Council services and encouraging feedback from residents on issues of concern. Specific projects in relation to information provision included ward newsletters, consultations regarding land use, parks and community safety, maintenance of a community information database and the promotion of impending capital works programs (Maribyrnong City Council 1998a).

Summary

In summary, Maribyrnong's corporate planning documents were unfussy, succinctly summarising Council's values, objectives and strategies and revealing Council's commitment to democratic leadership and accountability to constituents. Whilst the promotion of 'citizenship' was nominated as a corporate objective, this objective lacked a vibrant connection to an understanding of political, civil, social and participation rights and obligations. No new or innovative projects were proposed to improve opportunities for citizens to practise 'citizenship' rights and responsibilities. Instead, standard Council roles and functions were nominated to achieve the objective. The reference to 'citizenship' was subsequently removed from the corporate plan in 1998/99. As with Port Phillip and Moreland, there was no explicit support for the political rights and responsibilities associated with 'citizenship', however, many general projects were identified that could nurture the 'citizenship' rights and responsibilities of political representation, participation in the democratic process and provision of political information.

Discussion

Each of the local governments studied expressed clear support for some core ideas and values associated with 'citizenship'. Each also embraced its obligation to represent the needs and interests of the community in an equitable manner and to set community goals by more fully involving citizens and interest groups in decision-making processes. These commitments to 'citizenship' are laudable, especially given the context of an unsympathetic state political environment.

From the perspective of the Kennett Government's reform agenda, 'citizenship' was not intended to be central to the mission and planning of local government. In this context, 'citizenship' became a rallying point for articulating protest against the outcomes of the reform and advocating for increasing community involvement in local government. The three councils each attempted to reconcile the overriding objectives of the Kennett Government's reform agenda with their ongoing interest in advancing active 'citizenship' and the exercise of political rights and obligations. There is evidence that all three councils diligently reported along Office of Local Government lines whilst simultaneously promoting strategies and projects that encouraged 'citizenship' and political rights and obligations.

Certainly, the nature and depth of commitment to 'citizenship' and community involvement varied between the councils. Moreland was more overtly 'political' than the other councils, and developed an extensive range of highly innovative projects for promoting 'citizenship'. Port Phillip was also very innovative, although more measured in its approach, seemingly constrained by the threat of dismissal by the Kennett Government. Both Moreland and Port Phillip had high expectations and standards of community involvement, with Moreland's approach being relatively sophisticated. Whilst Maribyrnong was alone in elevating the importance of 'citizenship' to corporate objective status, it demonstrated somewhat less originality in operationalising its commitment to 'citizenship', compared to Moreland and Port Phillip. There are nonetheless important lessons to be learnt from Maribyrnong's pragmatic approach. As many activities traditionally undertaken by local governments can usefully be characterised as promoting 'citizenship', community members can then be encouraged to perceive a wider range of their activities as the exercise of their 'citizenship' rights and obligations. Alternatively, the promotion of 'citizenship' can be marketed to local governments as a low cost or conservative activity that can occur within the realm of

existing roles and responsibilities.

Commitments to 'citizenship' were generally poorly expressed and underdeveloped. By and large, commitments to 'citizenship' rights and responsibilities remained implicit in corporate planning documents. For example, I could find no clearly articulated explanation about the nature or meaning of 'citizenship' in relation to local government or any recognition that 'citizenship' comprised a framework of interdependent political, civil, social and participation rights and responsibilities. Without a broad recognition of the framework of 'citizenship', there was no acknowledgment of the normative basis of 'citizenship'. Lack of attention to these issues is understandable given the purpose of corporate plans during phase two of the Kennett Government's reform, and the readability and succinctness which is required when preparing documents for public consumption. Nonetheless, the absence of a definition of 'citizenship' or a framework for promoting it reduced local government's capacity to be effective in nurturing 'citizenship'.

In the case studies, I argued that 'citizenship' and political rights and obligations were promoted and supported to a greater and lesser degree by three local governments during phase two of the Kennett Government's reform of local government. Although small scale and indicative, analysis of the case studies prompts further discussion about the roles that local government can meaningfully undertake to rejuvenate or reinvent 'citizenship' and support political rights and obligations at the local level. If local government, together with local communities, is to continue having an important role in promoting and nurturing 'citizenship', at least three further developments must occur. First, a higher profile for active 'citizenship' must be adopted by local government and expressed articulately in planning documents, in particular, in corporate plans. Second, clearer descriptions about the nature of 'citizenship' rights and responsibilities and how they link to the role and function of local government must be included in council planning documents. Finally, local governments must find innovative ways of significantly increasing the number of opportunities for citizens to collectively participate in local government and to exercise their political rights and obligations to assist in the development of a free, equitable and just society.

Conclusion

In the face of economic liberal reform, many critics have advocated for the rejuvenation of socially just and cooperative forms of 'citizenship' based on trust, social connectedness and environmental sustainability (Wiseman 1993, Cox 1995, Watts 1995, Rayner 1997, Salvaris 1997b). Local government has been identified as well placed to catalyse just such a reinvention of active 'citizenship' (McKenna 1995, MAV 1997, Salvaris 1997b, Wiseman 1998, VLGA and MAV 1999a, LGCSA 1999, VCOSS 1999). In considering the impact on 'citizenship' of the Kennett Government's reform of local government, however, I identified that the reforms marginalised 'citizenship', rendering it peripheral to the mission and planning of local government and subverting the political rights and obligations of citizens. Instead, the reforms resulted in the closer alignment of local government practices with the economic liberal policies and programs of state government.

My major finding in this thesis is that, even in the face of unsympathetic reform, three local governments in Victoria managed to maintain a commitment to active 'citizenship' and the four political rights and responsibilities of voting, political representation, participation in democratic decision-making and access to political information. These commitments, whilst varying in their depth and complexity, were evident in the corporate documents of each local government and were accompanied by strategies and initiatives to promote political rights and responsibilities. This is an encouraging observation, but much more can be done to install 'citizenship' in the mainstream of the business of local government. In this conclusion, I flag a range of issues that should be considered further in consolidating and enhancing local government's role in rejuvenating or reinventing 'citizenship' and supporting political rights and obligations at the local level.

A higher profile for active 'citizenship' must be adopted by local government and expressed articulately in planning documents, in particular, in corporate or council plans. Articulating a commitment to 'citizenship' raises its profile among managers, staff and citizens. The strategic use of language is widely understood as a powerful tool in legitimating and framing public policy (Bessant 1995, Dalton et al 1996). A full consideration and adoption of the VLGA and MAV's Code of Good Governance (VLGA and MAV 1999a) would be a useful starting point to assist local government in developing

a higher profile for active 'citizenship' in planning documents.

Clearer descriptions about the nature of 'citizenship' rights and responsibilities and how this links to the role and function of local government must be included in council planning documents. A typology of 'citizenship' rights and obligations, such as those prepared by Janowski and Marshall, would be useful to assist local government to identify strategies for promoting 'citizenship'. Peak bodies representing local government would be well placed to resource their members to understand and incorporate into planning practice such typologies of 'citizenship' rights and obligations. At a recent forum coordinated by the Victorian Local Governance Association, it was proposed that local government develop 'Citizen's Charters' (VLGA 1999b). This initiative has considerable potential to increase the sophistication of local government's understanding of and engagement with 'citizenship' rights and responsibilities.

Finally, local government must find innovative ways of significantly increasing the number of opportunities for citizens to collectively participate in local government and to exercise their political rights and obligations. Internationally as well as in Australia, there has been recent interest in how best to maximise citizen engagement with political issues. Some of the more innovative projects which could yield important lessons for Victorian local government include deliberative forums (Ryan 1999), citizen initiated referenda (Rainbow Alliance 1995, Coghill 1996), 'citizenship' benchmarks and community indicators of well-being (Hamilton and Saddler 1997, Salvaris 1997c, Ryan 1999, Eckersley 1999) and consensus conferences and citizen's juries (Carson 1998, Urban and Environmental Program unpub.). As Moreland City Council (1998c) has suggested, use of the internet and other emerging technologies in promoting active 'citizenship' (electronic democracy) could provide fruitful avenues for increasing participation levels. The application of technology to enhance democracy has much potential especially for young people, and could be explored further (Bessant 1998).

Clearly, there is still much research to be done and changes broader than those canvassed here will ultimately be required to facilitate a more vibrant, democratic process for citizens. Nonetheless, I believe that this inquiry may prove a useful contribution to the consolidation and enhancement of local government's role in rejuvenating or reinventing 'citizenship' and supporting political rights and obligations at the local level. Already, the election of the minority Bracks Labor Government in September 1999 has heralded a

revitalised interest in restoring local democracy and encouraging 'citizenship' as part of state government policy (Australian Labor Party 1999, Mowbray 1999, Purple Sage Project 2000,). And so, the stage is set for local government to embrace more fully its responsibility to increase opportunities for citizens to collectively deliberate on the issues that impact on their lives.

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