

Joondalup Learning Precinct: Beyond Partnerships and Pathways to Engagement in a Learning City

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Abstract

Three educational institutions are working together with community partners to provide a range of educational programs, training opportunities, research, and human and physical resources in a rapidly growing regional centre. A multi-faceted array of collaborative programs and partnerships meant to create a Learning Precinct in Joondalup, Western Australia, have grown into a vision for a “Learning City” where the elements of learning and education are integrated with each other and with all relevant community institutions. This integration facilitates the learning needs of local residents with a view to making the community more flexible, responsive to change (especially global economic and technological changes), and collaborative at the local or regional level.

The purpose of this paper is to examine critically the forms of community engagement pursued by Edith Cowan University in its endeavours to contribute to the development of a learning precinct at Joondalup in the Northern Metropolitan Corridor of Perth in Western Australia. The outcomes and the evolution of the engagement process will be identified as well as the challenges, some of which still lie ahead. The core of the Joondalup Learning Precinct consists of three different providers of education and training—Edith Cowan University (ECU), the West Coast College of Training and Further Education (WCC), and the Western Australian Police Academy (WAPA). They are independent institutions, co-located by choice in adjacent purpose built facilities within walking distance of the Central Business District of the City of Joondalup. The early forms of engagement can be described as “partnerships” and “pathways.” Currently the main agenda is more transformational—the creation of a “Learning City.”

Development of the City of Joondalup

The City of Joondalup is located twenty-five kilometres north of the Perth central business district. The Joondalup city centre is located four kilometres east of the coast and is bounded by Lake Joondalup on its eastern side. The City of Joondalup was a leap frog development beyond the then edges of the main urban development. The plan to develop Joondalup as a northern sub-regional centre grew out of the “New Cities” movement, which gained popularity through the early seventies. The need for a sub-

regional centre was largely due to the sharp post-war population growth through immigration and the baby boomers who created an increasing demand for urban residential land across Australia from the 1960s onwards (Stannage 1996).

The Perth Metropolitan Regional Scheme during this period focused on a Corridor Plan which attempted to coordinate the patchwork of previous urban development in the Perth metropolitan area and overcome associated problems. The Corridor Plan consisted of four main corridors or sectors focusing on a key sub-regional centre linked by transport. The North-West Corridor focused on Joondalup which at that stage had yet to be developed. The node of each corridor was designed to provide a range of employment, social, educational, recreational, and commercial opportunities and land between each corridor was to be reserved for non-residential use (LandCorp 1992). The planning for the City of Joondalup was coordinated by the Joondalup Development Corporation which was created by an act of Parliament in 1976. The Corporation was combined with other government land development agencies in 1992 to form LandCorp.

The developers of Joondalup envisioned it as a city that would be essentially self-sufficient. The North-West Corridor Structure Plan of 1992 addressed the following issues in relation to Joondalup:

- location of urban development;
- hierarchy of regional and district shopping and commercial centers;
- location of major employment and industry areas;
- proposals for regional open space and the protection of attractive landscapes and natural areas;
- conservation of water resources, basic raw materials, areas of intensive horticulture; and areas of other significant natural resources;
- regional transport networks, both public and private;
- provision of public utilities prior to development; and
- programming of future development (The Department of Planning and Urban Development 1992).

The North-West Corridor is expected to provide the additional four hundred thousand dwellings needed in Perth by 2021. In 1992, much of Joondalup was still either bush or rural land use (LandCorp 1992).

The high rate of car ownership in Perth and low public transport usage were taken into account in the development of Joondalup City. The main public transport link is the Rapid Transit Rail system which links Joondalup with Perth. The Joondalup Station is only one hundred metres from the city centre which is also served by a bus interchange. Traffic movement has been planned with heavy vehicles being limited to major roads so as to provide a more pedestrian-friendly city centre.

To fund the plan, LandCorp invested over one hundred million dollars, the State Government two hundred and forty million dollars and the City of Joondalup twenty-five million dollars, with private investment totalling more than eight hundred million

dollars (City of Joondalup 2000). It is estimated that public and private sector investment in Joondalup is now more than one billion dollars (LandCorp 1999). The role of further developing Joondalup now rests with the City of Joondalup including coordination of planning, infrastructure development, economic development, community development, operational management, and strategic marketing.

Joondalup is a well-planned and modern city, largely built within the last decade, and one of Australia's fastest growing regions. There are, however, a number of underlying economic, cultural, and social issues that lie beneath its modern facade that the City of Joondalup is seeking to address in part through the development of the concept of the "Learning City."

ECU's Involvement in the Joondalup Region

Edith Cowan University (ECU) has been engaging with its communities through provision of higher education throughout its one hundred years of history. ECU has also been Western Australia's dominant provider of regional and distance education for more than twenty years. Given the growth corridor in which Joondalup is located, ECU regards it as a "region," albeit one in the metropolitan area of Perth.

ECU is a young university, being formally established just a decade ago, however; it has a proud tradition of professional education, particularly teacher education. As a New Generation University, it is dynamic and multi-disciplined, with a focus on "service, professionalism, and enterprise" that is reflected in its academic profile, product range, and mixed modes of delivery.

Recently ECU has developed a firm "campus consolidation" strategy which involves exiting from two campuses (Claremont, a small historical site and Churchlands, formerly a teachers' college with potential for residential development) and shifting staff and students to Joondalup and the inner city campus at Mount Lawley. ECU has one other campus in the State's South-West in Bunbury.

Taking advantage of the expansion of the Northern Corridor of Perth, ECU established its Joondalup campus in 1982 and commenced its first courses in 1984. The then comparatively small campus nonetheless soon became the centre of the Northern Suburbs region. Today, ECU enrolls more Western Australians than any other local university, with a high proportion of students being mature age and/or "first in family" at university. Accordingly, ECU is currently consolidating its presence in the Joondalup region with the development of an Administration Centre and new Science, Education and Business teaching facilities on the Joondalup campus. Enrolments at Joondalup are increasing each year as part of the consolidation process and it will have fifty percent of total load by 2005–2006.

Creating the Alliance: Joondalup Learning Precinct

The concept of a Learning Precinct originated with West Coast College (WCC) and ECU. In 1998 WCC and ECU signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish an alliance between them. WCC has its administration headquarters at Joondalup which is a new facility. It has a strong profile regarding “flexible delivery,” having won “National Training Provider of the Year” in 1997. Given that each institution is a separate entity, the areas of perceived synergy included planning, promotion, and resource sharing. The initial areas of focus for co-operation were:

- identification of learning pathways between the institutions;
- development and delivery of combined qualifications;
- collaboration on research and related projects;
- co-operation with local industry and the community;
- professional development of staff;
- shared servicing arrangements for infrastructure and facilities;
- joint commercial programs; and
- joint marketing arrangements.

In hindsight this was an ambitious set of projects that were shaped in part on the basis of the enthusiasm of the then key leaders. Subsequent analyses and business planning processes have identified annual priorities for projects that can be achieved through partnership arrangements.

Strategic Positioning: Two Partners Become Three

One of the first challenges for the alliance was to lobby to have the Western Australian Police Academy co-located at Joondalup on land available between WCC and ECU. ECU first established a special relationship with the police and justice departments in Western Australia in the mid-1980s which resulted in not only a unique degree program but also a research centre. In 1999 WCC, ECU, and the Western Australian Police Service (WAPS) formed a strategic alliance that formally paved the way for cooperation. The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding marked the commencement of this strategic process, which involved two rounds of submissions, inspections, and counter proposals. The opening of the new police academy at the beginning of 2002 in Joondalup was public recognition that the educational partners together can provide a range of educational programs, training opportunities, research, and human and physical resources unequalled elsewhere in Australia.

The tripartite Alliance has existed since 1999 and is steered by an advisory group consisting of senior staff from each institution with project support via liaison officers. The unique combination of education and training capacity, rapid regional development; substantial infrastructure, and the potential for collaboration ideally position the members of the Joondalup Learning Precinct to gain benefits from engaging with each other via the partnership agreement. Resourcing of initiatives is on a needs basis often with considerable in-kind contributions.

Building Academic Pathways

Notwithstanding the ambitious agenda, students at the Learning Precinct can pursue vocational education at WCC and then continue with degree programs at ECU. Police cadets with WAPA can also extend their initial police training to degree level qualifications via a customised and articulated pathway: The Policy Service Development Program.

Learning pathways between the three educational institutions allow the transfer of credits so students can gain the most suitable qualification for their career needs. A significant advantage for students is that they can progress through their education from Certificate to Ph.D. level in the region in the following fields of study:

- Information Technology and Multimedia
- Business
- Tourism and Leisure
- Security Policing and Justice Studies
- Education
- Psychology and Community Services
- Arts and Entertainment

To promote these avenues and opportunities to existing and prospective students, the Learning Precinct is involved in local events such as the Joondalup Festival Street Parade, ECU Career's Expo, and the WAPA Open Day. The Joondalup Learning Precinct also has its own website, with information on the Precinct and links to the respective websites of each institution.

There is a collaborative project in place in professional development arising from a training needs analysis at WCC and WAPA. Currently, a Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching is being offered by ECU with participation and mentoring of staff as students, supported by each institution. Another pathway for police staff is the Leadership for Command Course jointly developed by WAPA and ECU. This program has the potential to be tailored for international markets in developing countries in particular, as they seek to upgrade their security, police, and justice systems.

Inhibitors to Engagement in the Joondalup Learning Precinct

Although the Precinct has been reasonably successful, the engagement of three very different education institutions has not been without its difficulties.

Differences in organisational cultures, structures, and statutory requirements have been limiting factors to the processes of engagement among the three institutions. WAPA has the most formalised structure with little flexibility to operate any commercial fee-for-service programs. However, the new academy has been the focus of much interest from both interstate and overseas police services and so has an opportunity to develop

new products and programs that may strengthen the international profile of the Learning Precinct.

All three institutions are constituted under state government legislation; however, given the different funding bases, policy frameworks, and stakeholder expectations each operates in a different education and economic context. There is also a significant difference in the size and scale of each operation. ECU is much larger than WCC, and WAPA is a relatively small specialist training operation within a large government department.

The three institutions have different internal financial systems, which makes the joint funding of projects sometimes difficult due to the need to adhere to different auditing requirements. Resourcing of joint projects auspiced by the Precinct has also been difficult as each organisation has internal constraints in regards to funding, priorities, and strategic developments.

The liaison officer role in each institution is part-time in terms of direct support for the Precinct. This often means that the proposed work plans of the Precinct are slow to be implemented due to other pressures on staff. There has also been a high turnover of these officers and some changes in the senior leaders, which has caused problems with the continuity of some projects.

In an attempt to overcome some of these difficulties one institution may take the lead on a project or activity to ensure its success. As partners of the Joondalup Learning Precinct, each institution has worked to build on their respective strengths.

From Learning Precinct to Learning City

The idea of a learning precinct, region, or city is not new. The opportunity to develop a Learning City linked to but stretching beyond the Joondalup Learning Precinct was identified by some of the early members of the Alliance Advisory Group and seeded by the local government—the City of Joondalup. In 2002, with a change in CEO, the City of Joondalup began the process of developing the Joondalup Learning City with the Learning Precinct as the core.

The Learning City agenda has provided a whole new set of opportunities and challenges for both the Precinct and each institution. It requires the capacity to engage in a new way with the region of Joondalup and a wide range of local stakeholders, including other education providers, small business, community agencies, and professional associations.

The concept of learning cities has been around for several decades with the idea crystallizing in the early 1990s with the First International Congress on Educating Cities. Learning city developments typically focus on lifestyle enrichment and lifelong learning. The ultimate goal of a learning city is one where the elements of learning and education, across all sectors, are integrated with each other and with all relevant community institutions. The aim of this integration is to facilitate the learning needs of

local residents with a view to making the community more flexible, responsive to change (especially global economic and technological changes), and collaborative at the local or regional level in response to new challenges.

Learning cities seek to create networks and critical mass, both in terms of administration and funding so there is a capacity to respond to identified and prioritised stakeholder needs. Stakeholders in learning city initiatives are in turn empowered to achieve outcomes through partnerships and networked services, which they could not otherwise achieve as stand-alone institutions or individually.

Edith Cowan University sees the potential of the Learning City, as the initiative is closely aligned to ECU's overall strategy to promote growth in the region. As such, ECU has committed substantial resources to the development of the region. ECU is already involved in a range of learning and infrastructure activities beyond the Learning Precinct such as the Education Compact between the School of Education and the local school district, science summer schools and competitions for secondary students, a Psychology Clinic offering low fee services direct to the community, and the Business Incubator project. ECU is also a partner in the logistic and e-procurement IT project "Twin Cities," involving the City of Joondalup and the Shire of Wanneroo.

As a significant employer in the region, ECU also contributes to the local economy via direct and indirect multiplier effects in the order of ten million dollars. As the major tertiary provider for the Northern Corridor, ECU is keen to contribute to further growth in local employment in the region. For ECU to contribute to the skill pool for the region directly there needs to be a more diversified regional economy with more than construction, property-related, and retail services as the major sources of employment. Currently Joondalup's status is a consumption economy. The local retail sector services consumer needs while the majority of residents commute directly to Perth's Central Business District and elsewhere for employment.

Rationale for the Learning City at Joondalup

The foremost driver for the development of a learning city in Joondalup is the needs of its resident population. The City of Joondalup's demographic profile is characterised by a significant student and school-leaver cohort aged between 10 and 19 years whose employment prospects will be conditioned by globalisation and the transition to the knowledge economy, particularly over the coming decade. The global process of transforming the industrial economy into a knowledge economy will have different impacts on cities and regions. The challenge is to improve economic performance by generating the development of "innovation-intensive" industries (OECD 2001).

The peak hour traffic congestion on the region's rail and freeway system is symptomatic of the gap between the availability of jobs in the Perth CBD and inner metropolitan Perth, and continued residential developments and population growth along its North-West metropolitan corridor. It is expected that a learning city will provide a catalyst for employment either directly through teaching and training jobs or indirectly through the ancillary services for a range of formal and informal learning

activities centred on Joondalup as a “knowledge hub” and regional centre.

Another reason for the development of a Learning City is the potential for lifelong learning to be a catalyst for increased civic participation and local capacity building including the cultural capital and identity of Joondalup. Apart from the youth cohort, the other notable demographic is an ageing population which has significant owner-occupier purchasing power. This has already resulted in a growth of apartment and medium density townhouses owned by baby boomer and empty nester couples. Lifelong learning could provide a common language to link the unique residential and commercial land use and intergenerational demographic mix currently characterising the Joondalup city centre. A stronger focus on learning may also result in more systematic linkages being established between the health, welfare, and community support agencies, all of whom have a presence in the Joondalup city centre.

Community Pathways to Lifelong Learning in Joondalup

In seeking to apply the lifelong learning concept in practice in Australia, Moira Scollay (2000), the CEO of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) envisions “A seamless post-compulsory education and training system where individuals can move through school, vocational education and training, adult education, university and other informal systems, in any order, back again throughout life, with confidence that their skills and qualifications are recognised and portable.”

The development of a learning city in Joondalup will clearly necessitate the fostering of more concrete linkages between key learning sectors beyond the Joondalup Learning Precinct. These include the government and private secondary schooling system; the diverse non-profit and niche vocational training providers and employment assistance agencies fostered over the last decade by the competitive market development and tendering practices at state and federal levels; and the community and adult learning sector. The latter sector is emerging with the growing presence of retiring, though active, baby boomers living in the Joondalup central city, as well as in desirable beachside properties along the City of Joondalup coastline.

For the concept of the Joondalup Learning City to become a reality it is necessary to systematically quantify the learning needs and aspirations of the target population for lifelong learning. It will also require a collaborative approach among the potential partners of the Learning City so they develop high trust between each other under the Learning City umbrella.

Mapping existing education services will enable Learning City partners to address gaps in learning needs as well as provide the objective basis for re-allocation of resources from areas of low demand.

The Learning City will also require a collaborative approach to the necessary planning and transport infrastructure to enable and facilitate lifelong learning, particularly within the Joondalup city centre. This aspect of the Learning City is consistent with current developments within the City of Joondalup to establish a central city “place management” process with the view to developing a single coherent master plan for the central city’s development. It is envisaged that the Learning City will be an important consideration in the development of this master plan.

Strategies for Collaboration

The advisory group for the Joondalup Learning Precinct now includes the CEO of the City of Joondalup to reflect the new transformational agenda. Following community consultation, six clusters of interrelated activities have been identified as important steps to create the Learning City in the City of Joondalup in particular and the North Metropolitan region of Perth in general. These are by no means exhaustive and it is expected that over time the priorities of the Learning City will change, subject to new demographic trends, the (expected or unexpected) outcome of initial Learning City developments, State or Federal Governmental educational priorities, or the impact of new technologies to learning.

1. Brand Development. This cluster of activities will focus on identity, branding of the concept and the coordination of events that will enable the regular promotion of the Learning City. Associated activities in this cluster include the identification of the appropriate target audience, particularly through the systematic mining of Census 2001 data; the use of appropriate media, including local press, community radio, or Internet to reach the intended target audience; and the incorporation of key events, for example the Joondalup Festival or Careers Expo as part of the Learning City’s continuous promotion.

2. Self-Sustained Funding and Governance. This cluster of activities will focus on questions of the governance and management of the Learning City, with particular reference to appropriate levels of representation by organisations varying in staff, student size/client base, and delivery of different areas of lifelong learning, as well as diverging levels of institutional autonomy. One possible option centres on that of a formally registered non-profit organisation that owns the shared assets and employs the key staff and to which members of the Learning City network financially subscribe. This shareholder/stakeholder governance option also allows for voting on this organisation’s management and policy making structure to be commensurate with the amount to which the member institution subscribes. An additional advantage to this model is ability of such a non-profit organisation to apply for grants and other funding from a variety of sources, including those which specifically seek to disqualify education institutions, government agencies, or commercial businesses.

3. Pathways to Lifelong Learning. This project will seek to create in Joondalup key elements of a seamless postcompulsory education and training system where individuals can move through schools, vocational education and training, adult education, university, and other informal systems, with confidence that their skills and

qualifications are recognized and portable. This is an area of co-operation in which the Joondalup Learning Precinct under the Alliance Advisory Group has already made progress.

4. Infrastructure Coordination. This set of activities will include incorporating the City of Joondalup's central city master plan development with the requirements of the Learning City. A related initiative that may be facilitated is the development of a "Learning Shop" in the Joondalup CBD or one of the major shopping centres in the City of Joondalup. The sharing and utilisation of the various networks of libraries, including the City of Joondalup library network, for lifelong learning initiatives will also be considered.

5. Global Market Development and Local Business Opportunities. Here the income-generating capacity of the Learning City from international students will be a key issue for further development. Local business would benefit from the ancillary services accessed by overseas students, particularly those living in Joondalup.

6. Local Employment Facilitation and Social Inclusion. A final cluster of activities include the focus on the capacity of the Joondalup Learning City to disseminate relevant knowledge to small businesses in Joondalup as well as foster the inclusion of those that have had not gained from the benefits of learning, formal or informal. Joondalup has a multicultural profile and, apart from excellent sporting facilities, lacks infrastructure for the performance and creative arts. A previous working group has been investigating options to secure funding to build a performing arts facility. ECU has the WA Academy of Performing Arts based at Mount Lawley. Staff from the Academy continue to offer advice regarding the potential scale and scope of this proposed facility.

Lessons Learned by ECU from Engagement

It is a challenge to create a culture of collaboration inside and outside the university which encourages synergies and long term planning. Matching expectations with concrete possibilities is another reality check. The Learning City agenda means putting policy into action to build a "learning community," not merely a community with learners. Facilitating a common vision is another necessary prerequisite. Without a clear focus for stakeholders there will be no commitment to establish priorities and allocate resources. Ensuring that local economic and social drivers are linked to an educational agenda and reflect global impacts is the basis for gaining momentum for sustainable development.

Finally, and most importantly, it is critical to develop a project management and review capability. Risks must be identified, resources tracked, and responsibilities assigned to ensure outcomes and allow for flexibility in implementation.

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