

Case Study

# The HUME Global Learning Village - A Learning Community of Learning Communities

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## Introduction

This case study relates the efforts of an Australian community to transform itself not only into a learning community in the geographical sense, but also by providing a focal point for enhancing learning in communities of interest in the municipality.

## Background

Hume is situated in the Western suburbs of Melbourne. It scores below average on many educational scales (eg attending university/tertiary institutions, completing year 12 at school), and computer ownership and library membership averages are low. Significant pockets of unemployment exist in the city, and it has a high proportion of people deemed "non-job ready" (needing extra support and training to return to work). While the city has a high level of large business, only a third of the jobs are taken by local people.

Hume City Council believes that learning is the key to personal, economic and community growth. In 2003, Council began one of its greatest initiatives - the creation of the Hume Global Learning Village. This is an innovative new partnership that links learning providers and community groups from across Hume City including five libraries and the mobile library, local schools, neighbourhood houses and learning centres, the Hume Global Learning Centre, Visy Cares Learning Centre, Kangan Batman TAFE, local businesses and Victoria University. All these providers are part of the Village, bringing learning to the entire Hume community. By combining collective resources, the Hume Global Learning Village provides a diverse range of formal and informal learning opportunities for residents.

## A Typical Member

GOSIP promotes painting, sewing, crackling and decorating. For some people, these activities can simply be something interesting to do in your spare time. However, for Susan Cheney and her group of learners, the art of painting the mould of a little doll, has as much to do with social interaction, confidence building and fulfilment, as it has as a hobby. Ms Cheney and her group of female learners are members of the Group for Social Interaction and Participation (GOSIP). They meet every week at Sunbury Neighbourhood House to learn how to sew, paint and reconstruct their lives with each other's help. Together they produce pieces of art and things they never thought they were capable of.

"My group creates a new life for ladies who have previously suffered personal traumas or are suffering from depression and are looking for an introduction back into society. "We are trying to get them out of the house. It is about encouragement, the more they succeed the more encouraged they will be to get out of their house and away from their problems", Ms Cheney said. The group is member of the Hume Global Learning Village and is subsidised by the Sunbury Community Health Centre Inc. and Sunbury Neighbourhood House

## **Message by Cr Mohamad Abbouche, Mayor, Hume City Council**

As a local government authority, Hume City Council is proud to embrace and inspire lifelong learning and continuing education. The Hume Global Learning Village Strategy is evidence of our ongoing commitment to this important initiative.

This Strategy is essential to empowering our community to embrace learning as a way of life. It is the result of six months work involving extensive consultation with stakeholders and covers all areas of learning for people of all ages. From learning in the workplace, at an educational institution, in the home or at play, Council and the Village members will work in partnership to encourage and support all forms of learning. The projects that Council undertakes as part of the Hume Global Learning Village Strategy will not only encourage participation by Hume residents, but will be delivered in a spirit of cooperation with the members of the Village.

By proactively working as a team, we can facilitate learning, employment, personal growth and participation and ensure that the needs of our community are addressed through an integrated network of support services. My hope is that all of Hume's residents will embrace the opportunities made available by the Hume Global Learning Village Strategy.

### **What is the Hume Global Learning Village?**

The Hume Global Learning Village is a network of committed people and organizations from all sections of Hume's community, working together to help transform Hume into a learning community. Their goal is to enhance the well-being of individuals and the community as a whole through learning.

The Village, supported by Hume City Council, comprises a growing network of at present 200 members - actively interested individuals, educators, businesses and industries, and community, faith and interest groups - who believe that social, economic and personal well-being is achievable by raising the level of learning in the community. By fostering learning and creating more opportunities in Hume, they will make a significant and positive change.

The Village network acts as the driving force to enable the people of Hume to embrace learning as a way of life in their homes, in the community, at schools and colleges, and at work. The Advisory Board was established, chaired by the Hon. John Cain, former Premier of Victoria. The Board's principal role is to provide high-level advice and support to the Council on issues, trends, policies, research, funding and partnerships that can support learning strategies in Hume.

As a learning city, Hume is joining the greater "learning community" movement of approximately 300 learning towns and cities spread across Australia and overseas.

### **The Strategy Plan: themes and strategies**

Hume City Council's Social Justice Charter was launched in 2001, stating the Council's aim "to promote an active citizenry, strengthen community well-being and reduce the causes of disadvantage". Council recognizes that many Hume citizens including our: young people, culturally and linguistically diverse community, older people, people who are socially isolated or who have addictive disorders, children, people with disabilities, unemployed and under-employed people, women and indigenous people do not fully enjoy basic entitlements to be free and equal in dignity and rights. Council committed itself to action to redress the situation.

Learning is a key program area in the Charter, and the Hume Global Learning Village's Strategy contains practical steps to address issues and supports the Council's objective of social justice. Whilst developing the Strategy, careful consideration was taken to address the needs of the groups in the Hume community identified by the Charter. Each project includes steps to encourage participation from these groups.

It is not enough simply to have a vision of a learning community, in which each member is continually growing through learning, or even to provide the resources. While essential, this must be underpinned by stimulating the desire to learn, by ensuring everyone is aware of the opportunities, and by making resources readily accessible to all.

The Strategy focuses the energies of the Village members on practical steps to achieve this winning combination of vision, opportunities, resources and motivation over the next three to five years. Some of the 56 strategies are already underway, while a few extend beyond that timeframe.

## A SELECTION OF THE 56 STRATEGIES

### Theme 1: Inspiring lifelong learning in Hume

#### *1.1 "Inspired to Learn in Hume" postcard project*

Every person will be given a free postcard, and on a set day, all are asked to write on it "I would like to learn ..." and send it to the Hume Global Learning Village.

#### *1.2 Mentoring*

Encompasses young people, seniors, those with special needs, and business leaders in a multi-tiered ongoing project, and provides support to existing projects for mentoring young people.

#### *1.4 Inspiring learning stories*

Highlighting the achievements of lifelong learners who have made a difference to their own lives and the lives of others

#### *1.8 Publicity and communication plans*

Broadcasting information about learning events and stories and promoting Hume as a learning community through local newspapers and community newsletters at all levels

#### *1.10 Teachers' awards and scholarship program*

A program of awards and scholarships acknowledging the important role of teachers and tutors working in schools and community settings

#### *2.1 School - community engagement*

Developing a high level of community and parental/guardian support for their children's education from already successful models in Hume, Australia and overseas

#### *3.4 Marketing many pathways*

Assisting school leavers in the transition from school to work; creating a broad-based 'Learning by Doing' program; and supporting young people to develop and run a new enterprise

#### *3.8 Skills and knowledge profiles of regional jobs study*

An audit of skills needed in local businesses, now and into the future, and programmes developed to help local people gain the required skills

### ***3.9 Learning in SMEs***

The role of small and medium businesses as learning organisations - the aim is for the firms to offer their people opportunities to develop new skills and so adapt to the changing needs of business

## **Theme 4: Learning in community settings**

### ***4.1 Learning in your local community (communities of interest)***

Pinpointing the learning needs of a wide range of groups in the community and linking the members and groups with others that can fulfil those needs

### ***4.2 Learning in your local community (geographic communities)***

Sharing community resources: a facilitator to help local learning providers develop programs for the local community, e.g. a neighbourhood house running evening classes in a school's computer lab, community use of a school library, or a staff tearoom hosting cooking classes

### ***4.3 Learning as a volunteer***

Volunteering in a wide range of community organisations offers people unexpected learning opportunities, as well as providing much needed resources for many local groups

### ***4.5 Learning through place, journey and life stories***

An important fund of life stories, covering the vast range of cultures and journeys of Hume's residents, will be acknowledged and valued through a series of projects to collect the tales. Schools and community groups will be involved in documenting the stories through oral, photographic, video, written and drawing media, and celebrated through a range of activities including an annual exhibition.

## **Theme 5: Language, literacy and numeracy skills**

### ***5.1 Enhance literacy and numeracy programs***

Existing programs to improve literacy and numeracy skills will be enhanced, and new programs developed if needed, for both children and adults

### ***5.4 Literacy and numeracy programs for young people in contact with the court system***

## **Theme 6: Information technology (IT) uptake and virtual communities**

### ***6.1 Taking IT out to the community***

Sparking people's interest in the internet and showing the relevance of IT to their lives. Taking IT "to the action", at recreation centres, community groups, sporting and Rotary clubs, etc.

### ***6.2 IT month***

For one month each year, every member of the Hume Global Learning Village will run a mini-project to reach out to those not using computers and the internet, and show them how IT may be valuable to themselves, their families, businesses or community groups

### ***6.3 Schools as local computer hubs***

Programs for parents and others in the immediate area, in association with local organisations like health centres, playgroups and neighbourhood houses

### ***6.7 A library card - a ticket to free internet access***

Every family will receive a sample library card with the message that their own library card is "a ticket to free internet access"

### ***6.8 Research into Hume as a virtual community***

How virtual communities might be developed for communities in Hume - a pilot project will be considered for one suburb with high levels of home computer usage

## **Theme 7: Information**

### ***7.1 Hume Global Learning Village members as information hubs***

The Hume Global Learning Centre and all libraries will be one-stop shops for information on learning

### ***7.2 Hume Global Learning Village database and website***

Up-to-date and full information about learning opportunities from universities to community groups, a database, accessible to all through the Hume Global Learning Village website. The website will be targeted at various groups within the community

### ***7.8 Learning audit***

Locating and mapping the learning opportunities of all kinds in Hume. This provides material for the Hume Global Learning Village website

### ***7.9 Hume Global Learning Village as a mentor***

While helping and encouraging the Hume community to keep learning throughout their lives, the members will consider how the Village can share that information, its experiences and insights with other cities and regions within Australia and overseas

## **Theme 8: Village network**

### ***8.1 Annual State of Learning Conference***

An annual State of Learning conference promotes the learning community concept, continues to inspire those involved, and encourages new and innovative approaches

### ***8.4 Shared information, networking and programs***

A strong program of forums, meetings and events encourages people and organisations to become members of the Hume Global Learning Village

### ***8.6 Youth input and advocacy***

Young people are offered opportunities for self-determination in the Hume Global Learning Village, so that they can express their needs and participate in the solutions