

## **COLLABORATION FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF WIDE BAY BURNETT**

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**ABSTRACT:** Collaboration is increasingly playing an important role in regional development driven by the need to jointly mobilise and connect endogenous assets and resources to achieve self-sufficiency and sustainable development. However, different collaborative efforts are rarely coordinated, resulting in “siloed” efforts to dealing with interrelated regional development challenges. It is against this background that this study sought to understand the nature, scope, opportunities and limitations of collaboration in Wide Bay Burnett (WBB), an economically underperforming region. The study showed that WBB collaborative initiatives mainly existed within sectors and local government areas (LGA) with limited networking across LGAs owing to the geographic spread of the region. In addition, existing networks mainly resulted in information sharing with little scope for the joint development of innovative products and processes. The establishment of new networks and/or broadening of existing sectorial networks would provide better integration of regional initiatives and associated outcomes in the WBB region

**KEYWORDS:** Wide Bay Burnett, regional development, collaboration, networking.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Different regions have experienced varying levels of regional development across the globe. A range of factors including natural, physical, socio-economic and institutional have been explored to explain differences in economic development across regions (The Council on Competitiveness, 2010; Ascani *et al.*, 2012; OECD, 2012). In particular, the ability of regions to mobilise and utilise local assets and resources in an integrated way has been considered a major driver of sustainable regional development (e.g. Cooke and Morgan, 1998; Isaacs, 1999;

OECD, 2012). Evidence from local regions such as the Hunter and international regions such as the Silicon Valley support that innovation capacity and the ability of regions to link and leverage its endogenous assets and resources are major drivers for regional development (Regional Development Australia Hunter, 2013; Moretti, 2012). Furthermore, the OECD (2012) and Moretti (2012) showed that successful regions hosted “brain hubs” and were also places of cutting edge knowledge where most innovation occurs, and where productivity and income was highest.

While human capital is critical, it is the more powerful idea of drawing these skills into collaborative networks that influences the ability to connect assets and resources in more productive and innovative ways. The definition of collaboration in economic development is not always clear. However, it is generally accepted that it involves participation, networking, partnerships, cooperation, joint learning core-design and joint implementation (Johnsen and Ennals, 2012; Hogan *et al.*, 2012). Dockery and Miller (2012) identified that strong links between industry, tertiary education and schools would ensure better alignment of education attainment/skills with employment requirements so as to close skills employment gaps. Cooke and Morgan (1998) drew on evolutionary economics to coin the term “association economy” a reflection of collaboration where “collective learning” and “associative practices” are significant elements of regional thinking, practice and policy development. The value of collaboration has also been demonstrated in supply chain networks through the ability of partners to create synergies that result in superior firm performance (e.g. Cao and Zhang, 2011; Mangoyana and Smith, 2011). The formation of the Regional Development Committees is a reflection of the growing interest in advancing collaborative approaches in regional Australia (Bultjens *et al.*, 2012).

Despite the growing consensus on the value of collaboration, implementation of collaborative initiatives have been slow partly due to lack of proper funding, technological challenges, lack of clear frameworks for such implementation and limited evidence of improved returns on investment due to collaborative networks (Buys, 2007; Whipple and Russell, 2007; Bultjens *et al.*, 2012). In regions such as Wide Bay Burnett (WBB), different sectors and enterprises have not adequately communicated or established synergies and linkages critical to supporting a more effective and efficient management of regional development challenges (Collits and Mangoyana, 2013).

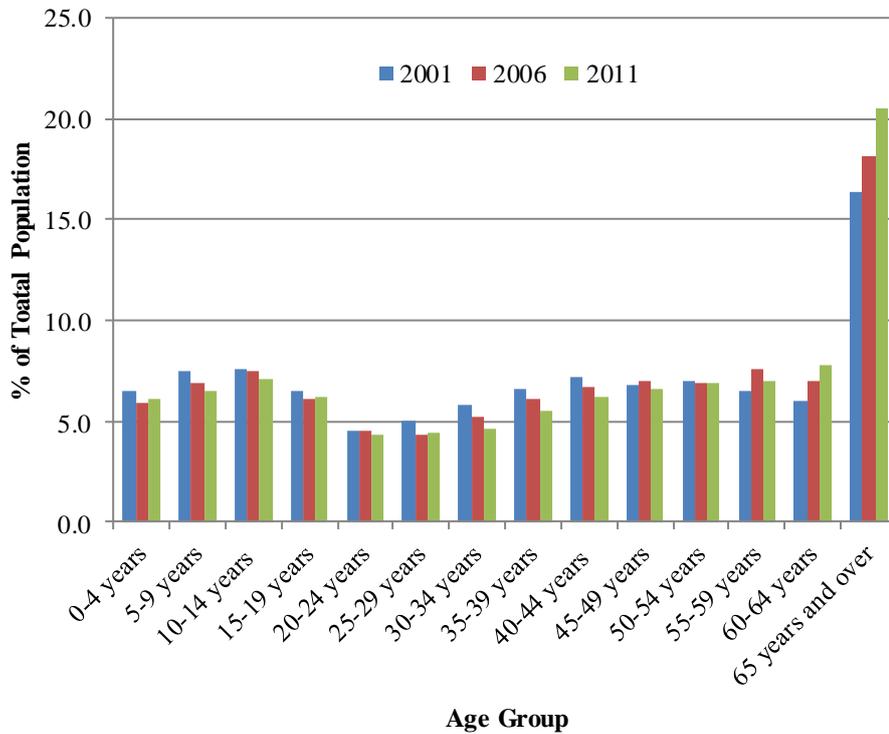
It is against the background of the issues above that this study aims to provide an understanding of the perceived role, nature, scope, opportunities and limitations of collaboration in the WBB region, an economically lagging regional area in Australia. The results of this study will contribute to the understanding of issues impacting sustainable collaborative initiatives and strategies to enhance collaborative advantage in regional areas.

### ***Overview of the WBB Region***

WBB is located in Queensland State of Australia. The region covers over 48 500 square kilometres (about 3% of total Queensland land area). About 95% of the region is rural land.

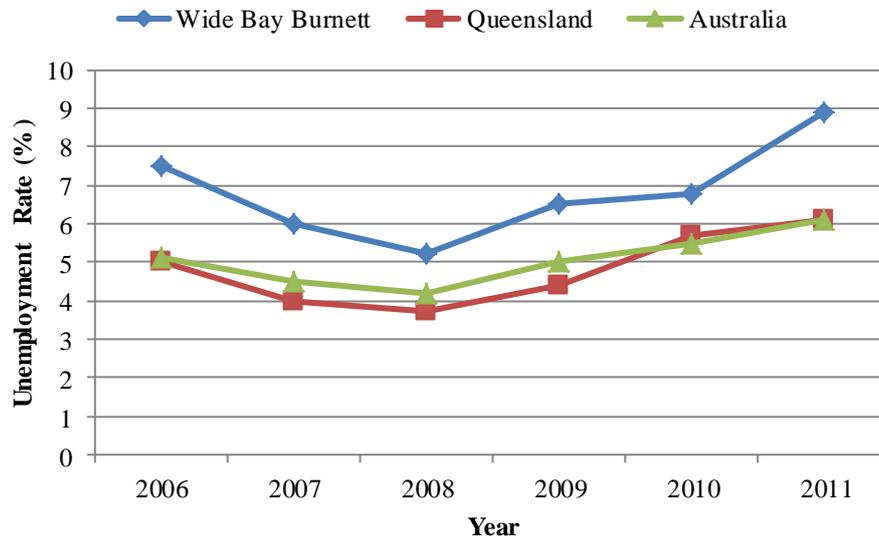
The WBB region, like most of Australian regions has been experiencing population growth. Australian Bureau of Statistics time series census data showed a population change of 10.3% between 2001 and 2006, and 7.3% between 2006 and 2011 (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011). In particular, the WBB region has been experiencing an increasing proportion of those in the 65 and over age group (Figure 1). The National Institute of Economics and Industry Research (2006) characterised WBB as a “God’s waiting room” due to the high prevalence of the aged and the associated regional challenges. Based on the 2011 census, WBB had a population of 279 000 people. This population is projected to grow by over 150 000 by 2031 (Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning, 2012).

The main economic sectors of WBB include manufacturing, and agriculture, forestry and fishery contributing 10.4% and 9.7% of Gross Regional Product respectively (Regional Development Australia, 2012). The region’s businesses are largely small businesses (over 95%) that employ less than 20 while 0.7% are large businesses employing 100 and more people (Regional Development Australia, 2012).

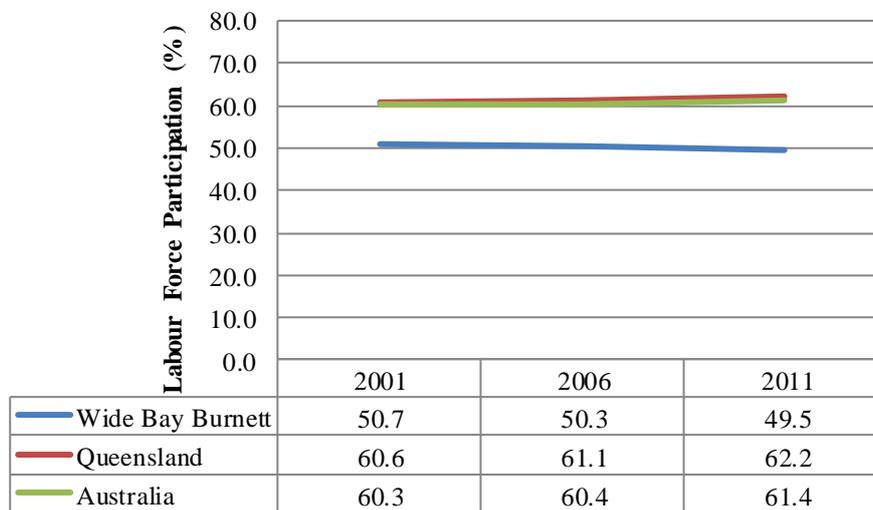


**Figure 1.** Percent of total population by age group. Data source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Census Data.

Suppressed economic development has continued to characterise WBB despite the region being renowned for its unique natural assets including diverse landscapes, and its relative close proximity to major trading and service centres of South east Queensland. The region has consistently experienced high unemployment, outmigration of young talent combined with in-migration of an ageing population. In addition, the region has been characterised by low socio-economic and low labour participation rate compared to Queensland and national averages (Figure 2 and 3).



**Figure 2.** WBB Unemployment rate (%). Data Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011).



**Figure 3.** Labour force participation. Data Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011).

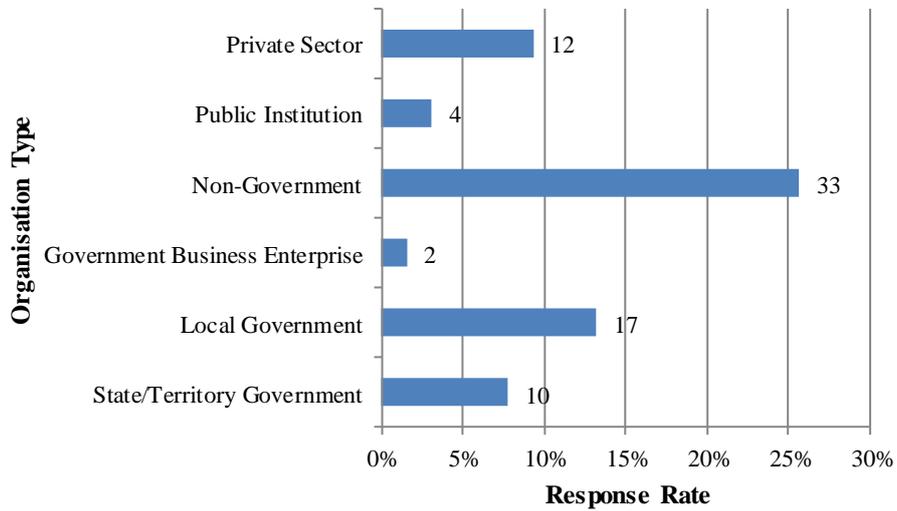
### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

The study used literature review, a stakeholder workshop, key informant discussions and an online questionnaire survey to collect data. This combination of data collection methods was selected to build a comprehensive picture about the nature, scope, opportunities and limitations of collaboration in WBB through triangulation of data.

Qualitative data was opportunistically collected in a workshop that was conducted in November of 2012 to introduce and set the context for the project titled “From Tired to Wired – Transforming Regions to Innovate and Compete in 21st Century Economies”. The workshop discussed issues relating to the extent and outcomes of collaborations, prospects for future collaborations and limitations. The workshop was attended by fifteen people drawing from local government, industry, education, employment agencies, community and health sector, and business. The participants were identified using existing networks in the WBB region. These networks were identified through consultation with State and local governments in WBB and literature review.

Eight key informant interviews were conducted involving senior educationists, industrialists, community services’ providers and regional development practitioners in local and federal governments and private businesses. The selection of key interviewees was informed by a stakeholder mapping exercise conducted through consultation with regional government departments (including an evaluation of stakeholder data bases), an evaluation of existing networks in the region and using the experience of one of the researchers who has over 20 years’ experience in regional development work in Australia. Interviewees were purposively selected to provide different views on various aspects of collaboration for regional development. The interviews were largely open ended mainly to discuss collaboration opportunities, limitations and possible collaboration project ideas for the WBB region.

The questionnaire mixed open and closed questions. The questionnaire targeted individuals within all government levels working in the WBB region, government business enterprises, public institutions, the private sector and non-governmental organizations working in WBB region (Figure 4, Table 1). Participants were primarily recruited through email invitations sent to their organisations. Invitations were sent to 230 people. Invitees were encouraged to further circulate the questionnaire to their networks.



**Figure 4.** Organizational type and response rate. Source: the Authors.

**Table 1.** Response rate by position in an organization.

Position in an organisation	No. of responses	Percentage
Management	31	43
Senior Officer	25	35
Junior Officer	9	13
Support Staff	4	6
Self Employed	3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	

Source: the Authors.

Drawing insights from key issues raised in the workshop and key informant discussions and literature, the closed questions asked for the nature of collaboration objectives, extent of success, length of collaborations and participation of individuals, scope of a collaborative initiative, geographic spread, circumstances under which participant would participate or not participate in a collaboration and funding mechanisms for collaborations. Each closed question provided space for any further details. There were two open ended questions which sought comments on any particular social, institutional, economic and environmental factors that impeded or supported regional collaboration in the WBB region. A total of 78 people responded to the questionnaire.

Qualitative data from the questionnaire, interviews and workshop notes were analysed with the aid of software packages Nvivo and Leximancer. Nvivo was used to code data into emerging common themes or categories and sub-categories, and relationship nodes which were used to establish any connections between issues in categories and sub-categories. Arranging data in these structures helped catalogue and combine fragments of ideas from individuals or related patterns into themes and subthemes. In particular data would easily be categorized into broad themes including nature, opportunities and limitations of collaboration in the WBB region. Leximancer was used to develop concept maps to ensure that no themes were missed in NVIVO analysis. SPSS was used to carry out descriptive statistics of survey data.

### **3 FINDINGS**

#### ***Geographic Spread of Collaborations***

The majority of questionnaire survey respondents (69%) indicated that they had been involved in a collaborative activity in the last 10 years with 31% (22 respondents) indicating that they had never been involved in any collaborative work in the same period. About 51% of those involved in joint action had participated in 6 – 10 collaborative initiatives in the last 10 years while 20 % had only been involved in one collaborative initiative in the same period. Most of these initiatives (46%) were occurring within the respondent's local government area in WBB while 34% were across local government areas within WBB. Only 16% and 4% of respondents were involved in collaborations outside the WBB region within Queensland and across States respectively. No respondent indicated any international collaboration. These results show

collaborations that are mainly localized in local government areas (LGA's) with minimum connections occurring across the WBB region, Queensland, interstate and internationally.

The region's geographic configuration, particularly the physical distances between regional centers or local government areas, was considered as a limitation to effective collaboration by all key informant interviewees and by 11 survey respondents. For example, SR 11 noted that "distances and time between communities and people" meant that those "willing to collaborate would incur additional costs". IR4 also noted that the long distance between areas was resulting in "regional community separation" and "lack of regional identity". IR7 noted that the region needed "a major population centre" to effect sustainable joint regional action.

However, IR8 noted that the distance between WBB key centers needed to be "tied into the region's strengths and not weaknesses" as this provided an opportunity for a "wider array of regional assets and resources to be mobilized through collaborative efforts". SR16 also noted that the distance itself was not a problem but "lack of broadband to effectively collaborate across the region" was the limitation.

### ***Scope of Collaborative Initiatives***

There was a strong belief in workshop discussions that collaborations in the WBB region were limited across organizations and sectors with limited joint action across people from different organisations and lines of work. For example, respondent WR1 demonstrated a case example where lack of collaboration between education and industry was occurring as below;

A young student studying at senior secondary years 11 and 12 is undertaking a qualification in the Certificate II in Engineering. The school is judged by outcomes such as the number of students completing a vocational education training qualification. It (the school) therefore has an interest in ensuring the young person completes the Certificate II. An employer wishes to employ the now recently graduated Year 12 student as an apprentice. He recognizes that the student has limited work experience practical skills for the trade, but will need to commence as a second year apprentice due to him having completed the Certificate II. The mismatch is that the school outcome has met the school requirements but has potentially harmed the employment outcomes for the student. How do we work

together better to avoid these issues? Or how can we provide more appropriate work experiences for school students to accompany their secondary studies that would ensure the employer believes they do have the sufficient workplace skills to commence as a second year apprenticeship (WR1).

Lack of collaboration across sectors was generally confirmed by the survey results. Dependent on 166 responses (accounted by the number of collaborations each respondent was involved in), the study showed that joint action was more likely to occur within organizations (66%) than across organizations (34%). Collaborations across organizations were reported highest between a government department and a non-governmental organization or community group (39%) and were least likely to occur between a private organization and a community or non-government organization. Government and private partnerships also recorded a comparatively lower occurrence (23% of the total reported collaborations). About 65% of cross organizations collaborations were within the same sector compared to 35% which crossed sectors.

The results above were further confirmed in interviews. For example, SR8 observed a culture of “siloes” collaborations in WBB;

“I’ve observed a culture of organisational silos where groups with similar intentions progress their own economic agenda without collaborating to see where they may add value, fill gaps, take leading roles in particular regions and generally to the wider community. The groups are insular in focus.” (SR8)

### ***Objectives and Outcomes of Collaborative Initiatives***

Most respondents reported joint planning and strategy development as a major reason for a collaborative initiative while pooling financial resources was least reported as a reason for collaborating (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Responses on activities, objectives, outputs and outcomes.

<b>Planned collaborative activities, objectives and related outcomes</b>	<b>Collaborative objective (Number of responses)</b>	<b>Achieved outcome (number of responses)</b>	<b>Outcomes/Objectives</b>
Joint planning or strategy development	35 (29%)	23 (24%)	0.96
Joint project implementation	25 (21%)	16 (17%)	0.64
Joint M&E	16 (13%)	15 (16%)	0.94
Information sharing	23 (19%)	36 (38%)	1.6
Innovation – process improvements and new products/technologies	11 (9%)	5 (5%)	0.45
Pool financial resources	9 (7%)	3 (3%)	0.33
<b>Total responses</b>	<b>122 (100%)</b>	<b>98 (100%)</b>	<b>0.80</b>

Source: the Authors.

Key informant IR4 additionally noted that some collaborative actions had resulted in action plans that were not implemented.

“I guess the intent (to collaborate) is there. We’ve had meetings where everyone was enthusiastic (about collaboration). Often there was no follow up. In some cases we’d end up with a strategy document or some sort of joint action plan, again, that didn’t take us anywhere. It was also a funding issue. You can come up with collaborative or innovative ideas but if the funding is not there that’s the end.”  
(IR4)

Another respondent further commented;

“... across a number of different collaborative projects there has been varied success. Across the initial project (objective) to develop a plan - yes. For smaller outcomes based projects differing success.” (SR12)

Information sharing emerged a significant outcome of collaborative initiatives in WBB. This category was deliberately included in the survey questions as a collaborative outcome following workshop discussions which noted that most people in WBB considered information sharing a major objective of collaboration with little effort to jointly or individually advance the shared information to higher level or innovative outcomes. The aggregate survey results, however, showed that the general rate of collaborative implementations was 64% indicating that the majority of planned implementations were achieved. This result may be explained by the nature of collaborations and easiness of implementation considering that information sharing was a significant outcome.

#### ***Funding for Collaborative Initiative***

The study showed that the region was largely dependent on government funding to drive regional collaborative initiatives. For example, the majority of respondents indicated that their collaborative initiatives were funded by the different levels of government (87%) with very little contribution by the private sector (9%). The majority of government contribution (40%) was from state government while local government contributed 19%.

#### ***Collaboration Challenges in WBB***

Funding was generally considered to be a significant challenge for the success of collaborative initiatives. For example, IR4 argued that collaborative initiatives needed to be supported by “sufficient funding”, while SR14 pointed that “insecure funding arrangements” had influenced the failure of their collaborative initiative.

However, some respondents did not perceive lack of external funding as a challenge as they considered significant availability of local resources that could be mobilized to collaboratively build the region. For example, IR8 revealed that the region was characterized by a “parochial

and underdog mindset ....always looking for external hands-up”. This was also echoed by SR13 who indicated that, “Fraser Coast seems to almost defend its problem saturated dominant story” with little effort towards “self-saving”.

Maintaining momentum within a collaborative group emerged a key collaboration challenge in workshop discussions and interviews. This challenge was attributed to lack of time on the part of participants, high staff turnover in the region and negativity by some participants. IR1 commented that they constantly get new people in their collaborative group. More senior staff would also send junior staff often not interested in the core of the collaboration but only fulfilling an employment obligation. This stalled any progress towards getting the work implemented. This was also highlighted by IR7 who noted that;

“With frequent turn over in staff within organisations it’s hard to maintain enough stability to provide the necessary consistency to see longer term collaborative initiatives succeed. The creation of healthy work environments is just as significant, if not more significant, for the successful implementation of collaborative initiatives.” (IR7)

A number of survey respondents indicated that they lacked time to participate in collaborations. SR19 indicated that “balancing workload and collaboration demands” was a challenge. SR13 also noted that if collaboration was not part of key performance appraisal it was not worth their time. However, IR5 noted delayed realization of collaboration outcomes contributed to unwillingness of people to give their time to collaborative initiatives. Many people would want “to see quick results for their reporting purposes”. In addition, SR16 did not think it was so much about availability of time to participate in collaborations but people are disenchanted by failure to build on previous efforts (mainly through inadequate funding) which resulted in unwillingness to commit to such initiatives;

“...to me it is a lot about not recognizing past collaboration so people are not to put more work in if it’s all for nothing. I have been in the community sector in this region for 20 years and so much work has been done but it is lost. We should be building on what we do.” (SR16)

Others also felt that it was more a fear to fail that limited willingness to collaborate. For example, SR1 commented;

“Collaboration takes time. We need to model, talk, review, pick apart failures in a public and accountable way. We should not be fearful of being seen to fail as this is an integral part to any journey of success.” (IR1)

Differences in goals were considered an obstacle to collaborations not only across organizations but also at individual level. For example, IR11 commented that;

“People have different levels of ambition and desire within their organisations, for example, growth strategies vs just making enough to pay the bills and get by. They (organisations) are also at different stages, some start up, rapid growth, sustainable or unsustainable etc. and will contribute to collaborations in different ways and for different reasons.” (IR6)

Competition amongst organisations was also considered as limiting collaborations. For example SR25 commented;

“(There are) too many providers that are all competing for the same customer, funding and business opportunity.” (SR25)

This result was complemented by the response to the question which asked the conditions under which participants would better prefer to collaborate. Only 9% showed strong preference to work with people from other organizations in the same line of work compared to 20% with strong preference to work with people from other lines of work.

Workshop discussions showed that most people in the regions were unaware of the more modern or best practice approaches to sustainable collaborations. For example, it was revealed that most people wouldn't consider participating in a collaboration unless clear benefits and goals were set out in a top-down style as opposed to joint identification of regional needs, assets and resources that could be translated into collaborative ideas and associated goals/objectives. There were also a number of survey comments that reiterated lack of knowledge and experience in collaboration in the region. For example, SR25 noted;

“Little experience in genuine collaboration seems to exist here in this region. Big fish in small ponds have led to creations of small fiefdoms across local areas and industries ..... Perhaps a more visual and academic culture where professional ideas are developed might model some of those characteristics of robust and creative communities that come together to vision a future.” (SR25)

However, some respondents refuted the idea of coming together to vision the future with no predetermined innovative ideas or collaborative objectives. It was strongly believe that it was the role of leadership to identify possible collaborative ideas, set out clear visions and goals and clarify on possible benefits to buy in participation. For example, SR6 commented that there is need for the region to identify a “lead organization that could step up and take on a leadership role to drive collaborative projects without intimidating and putting off others” and an “organization that would encourage collaboration across sectors without being seen to favour certain groups”. The role of collaborators in this model is “to see if they can fit in the scheme of things and how they can make a contribution to the collaboration” SR2.

A number of comments indicated the prevalence of apathy, the strong existence of conservative attitudes and existence of generally negative people in the region driven by different agendas. IR7 revealed that there were some people in the region who would “require a position to take part in things” a reflection of “lack of knowledge about the importance of collaboration”. SR31 also noted that good “collaborative efforts seem to be dependent on the right personalities”. SR25 indicated that there was a “siege mentality (in the region), where new ideas and new people are viewed with suspicion and hostility by the old guard” while SR28 thought the “old boy network was still very prevalent” with the aging population not willing to “hand over and give the next generation a go” (SR14). SR3 also noted that the composition of a collaborative group was critical to the success of collaborative initiatives they had attempted;

“Some external factors that caused projects to fail were around funding and composition, sometimes the 'right' people were not identified until well after the project was underway or winding down.” (SR3)

This result is also complemented by 44% and 46% (total respondents - 59) of people who indicated that it was “very important” and “important” respectively to select collaboration team members who played well with others. Comparatively, 30% and 16% (total respondents - 59) indicated that it was “very important” and “important” (respectively) to select team members who bring real knowledge and expertise to collaboration. Notably though, 32% and 6% indicated that it was “less important” and “not important at all” (respectively) to select people you have worked with before compared to 2% and 7% who thought it was “very important” and “important” respectively (out of 58 respondents).

Despite the need for the right composition of the group being a dominant view in workshop discussions, interviews and survey data, there were some few people who indicated that willingness to participate was more important than having the “right” people. SR25 commented that “no one section is more important to solving a puzzle than the other and therefore waiting to get the right people was not only counterproductive but also disrespectful to those willing to make a contribution”.

#### **4. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

This study has enabled an exploration of the contextual nature of collaboration in WBB. The study showed that there was a generally strong will to collaborate as evidenced by the number of people involved in collaborations. However, collaborations were generally short-term in nature and largely government funded with little private sector involvement. The lack of private participation in WBB regional collaborations limits innovation and precipitates hierarchical regional management as government departments assume sole mandate to achieve the broader regional development objectives. A number of approaches to regional development and collaborations are placing an increasing importance on the role of private organisations in regional development. For example, the national systems of innovation approach argues that the extent to which private organisations participate in a complex web of long-term interactions with other actors such as universities and public research institutions is critical to developing a knowledge economy, boosting innovation capacity of places and supporting sustainable economic growth (OECD, 2012).

Geographic boundaries seemed to play an important role in determining collaborative projects in the WBB region. Collaborative initiatives in

WBB were highly localised in LGA's with minimum cooperation across LGAs and regional areas within Queensland. Localised collaborations, within the context of a place-based focus, are increasingly accepted as a mechanism to implement bottom-up community based approaches to decision making and to promoting self-sufficient and viable communities (Hogan *et al.*, 2012). Central to this view is that local interaction and networking will ultimately result in the mobilization of local assets and resources combining in ways that lead to local development and ultimately regional and national development. However, localised interaction without cross sectorial networking results in "siloed" initiatives, which reduces regional capacity for integrated development. This is likely to constrain the ability for WBB to achieve collaborative advantage. Hutcherson and Morrison (2012) argued for networks with more porous boundaries that are ready to accommodate not only new memberships but also other existing networks to achieve loosely joined open networks that cross geographic and sectorial boundaries.

While physical proximity of regional stakeholders provides the convenience of face to face interaction, it becomes less important in the technology age where political boundaries are of little economic relevance (Ascanzi *et al.*, 2012; Dabson, 2012). Information and knowledge exchange beyond local geographic borders increasingly become critical for regional development (Inne and Rongerude, 2005; Rodríguez-Pose and Storper, 2006). Despite the increasing support for wider and broader collaborative networks, geographic distance within WBB region was considered a pressing limitation to regional collaboration. There is therefore need for further understanding of factors underlying this view particularly in light of a number of technologies that support cross-boundary networking.

It emerged in the study that regional stakeholders were generally "inward" looking more concerned about what they would get out of a collaboration than the contribution they would make in joint action for the general development of WBB. The study particularly noted general unwillingness to commit to collaboration unless objectives were clearly defined rather than jointly visioning collaboration. This was further reflected by suggestions to establish an organization that would create ideas and set the pathway for collaboration instead of bringing people on the table to establish and discuss potential ideas. This is a reflection of collaborations overly dependent on government initiatives, not only as it relates to funding, but also a possible overreliance on existing government organisations to lead processes, for example, call for

meetings, determine the nature and scope of the meetings and specify intended outcomes while other stakeholders follow or participate if in line with expectations.

A number of studies have discussed the general role of leadership, particularly, organizational leadership in government, businesses, non-governmental organisations and military (Isaacs, 1999; Considine, 2005). However, there are different views about its nature and role in collaborative networks. There is a growing recognition that the role of leaders need to change for effective joint action since collaborations do not follow authority lines and more formalized governance structures prevalent in organisations. The key to creating an effective collaborative network for regional development is leadership in non-hierarchical terms. This new kind of leadership is depended on consensus in more networked than formalized systems (The Council on Competiveness, 2010). The role of a collaborative leader therefore becomes that of guiding the course of action determined in participatory ways rather than hierarchically dictated by leaders. Hutcheson and Morrison (2012) argued that leadership in open networks becomes a shared responsibility as opposed to engaging a visionary leader who determines the course of action. While an enabling role is important to guide collaborations, joint ownership of processes and responsibilities are of paramount importance as this not only results in consensus driven leadership but also enables joint creation of a shared regional narrative.

Collits and Mangoyana (2013) argued that lack of interest to take a more active role in collaborative initiatives in the WBB region could be attributed to “the highly stressed key performance indicator focused public institutions” and the associated trouble of convincing one’s superior of the benefits of being part of a collaborative initiative. The same study further concluded that many decades of developing planning and strategy documents that led nowhere could have disillusioned people who often fear that any call to discuss potential collaborations will end up in another “talk fest” or strategy document that is never implemented. The challenge therefore becomes that of selling the idea of collaboration and providing new tools to build collaborative capacity and support collaborations that go beyond information sharing and planning. Any collaborative initiative should therefore aim to jointly map the pathway for regional development through joint generation and implementation of innovative ideas.

Collaborations are resource intensive and time consuming. Quick fixes that perfectly fit the dictates of key performance indicators and reporting

timeframes are not always forthcoming. Moreover, changes in existing institutional arrangements may be required for more effective collaborations. Geographic boundaries will inevitably become irrelevant as collaborations aim for high end innovations and improved system efficiency. Therefore the establishment of new networks and/or broadening or opening of existing sectorial networks would provide better integration of regional initiatives and associated outcomes in the WBB region. Furthermore, the adoption of existing collaboration tools (e.g. strategic doing approach) and communication technologies provide opportunities for a better coordinated region despite the wide spread nature of regional locations.

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