



## Stirling City Centre Alliance

A demonstration of collaborative  
leadership in a  
city building context

## THE STIRLING CITY CENTRE ALLIANCE

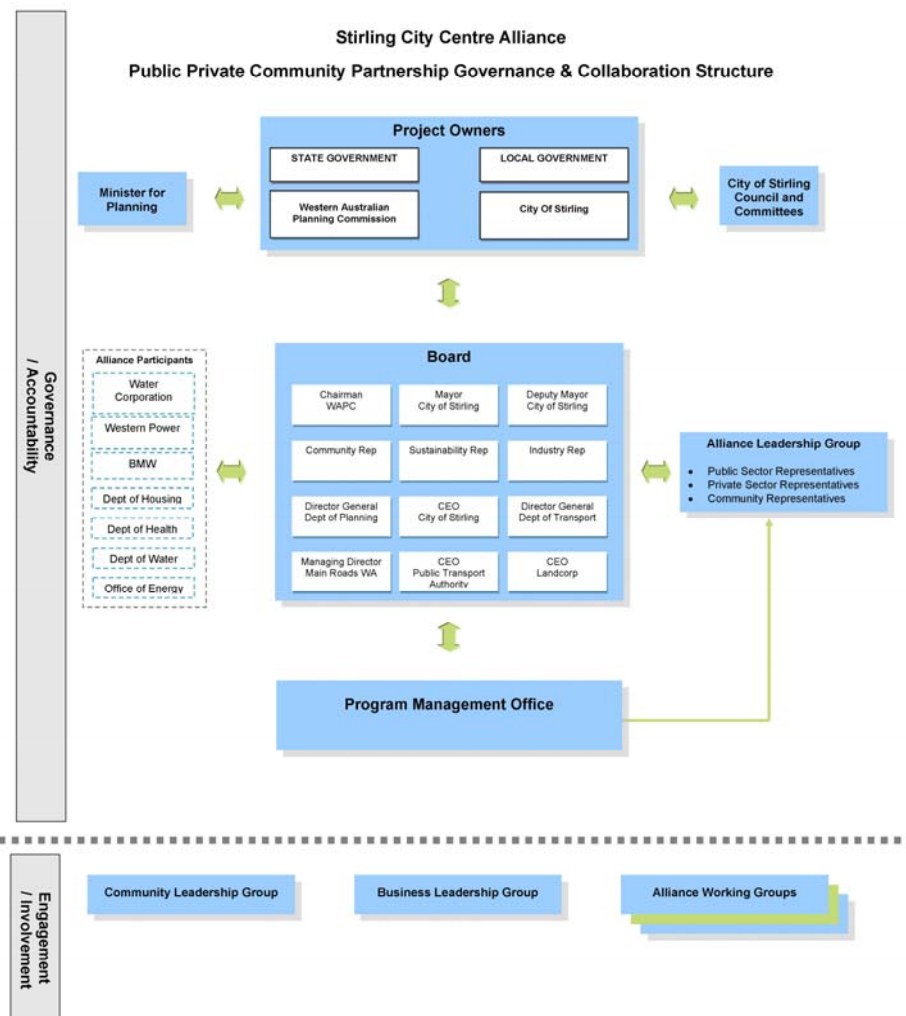
The Stirling City Centre Alliance was formed to deliver a Structure Plan and Implementation Strategy for the Stirling City Centre. The Alliance has adopted a collaborative, planning and delivery process, that is focussed on stakeholder outcomes, including those for local residents, government agencies, commercial landholders and developers.

## GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The Alliance is comprised of the City of Stirling, WA Planning Commission, Department of Planning, Department of Transport, Main Roads WA, Public Transport Authority and LandCorp, with representation at all levels by the community and the private sector. (See figure 1)

The Board consists of the highest level of representation from partner agencies, with further representation from the community, industry and a sustainability representative. The Board meets every six weeks.

The structure encourages greater stakeholder inclusiveness (including the community as a key stakeholder), involving partners and stakeholders in the decision-making and problem-solving processes collaboratively. In doing so it creates a greater level of transparency and accountability and represents an intent to use collaborative processes to solve complex issues and to drive innovation.



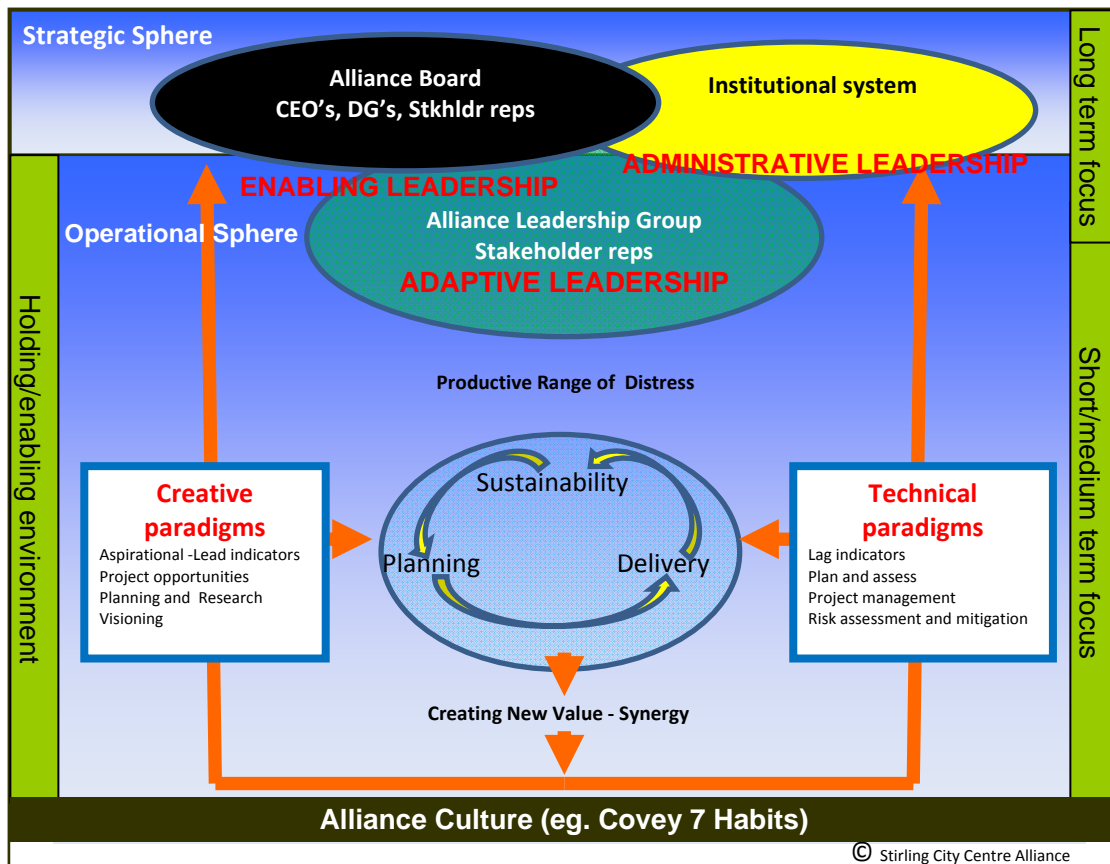
Adaptive leadership appeals to the participants' sense of values, urging them to see a higher vision and to encourage them to exert themselves in the service of achieving that vision. It requires a shift in values or in ways of thinking and involves working with the community to increase their awareness of a problem. It is appropriate in the collaborative environment of an alliance to draw on adaptive leadership skills to deal with complexity and uncertainty. This style of leadership is favoured in a changing and complex project environment as it attempts to transcend task biases of participants to engage in a higher level of understanding and encourage new thought patterns and processes.

**We know the problem → We are the problem → We are the solution**

Applying adaptive leadership to problem solving empowers the group rather than the individual. The adaptive process requires a shift in mindset from simply recognising that there is a problem that someone else should fix, to acknowledging that we are part of the problem and therefore should be part of the solution. In the adaptive process participants need to explore and accept:

- Non-linearity – not all things can be systematically known and described
- Emergence – reformulation of existing ideas to produce outcomes that are qualitatively different from original elements
- Rapid change – what we know now will change depending on what we learn in the future. Therefore we need to deal with interdependencies (systems) rather than find solutions for dissected stand alone elements.
- Tension – a productive range of distress is necessary to foster creativity and innovation.

The model below demonstrates how the Stirling Alliance applies enabling, administrative and adaptive leadership whilst combining creative and technical mindsets to encourage innovation. The Board enables the process by providing the resources and allowing a level of autonomy for the Alliance Leadership Group to be adaptive and explore innovation. The institution/s provide the necessary administrative control to ensure that the project remains on target and is accountable for its activities.

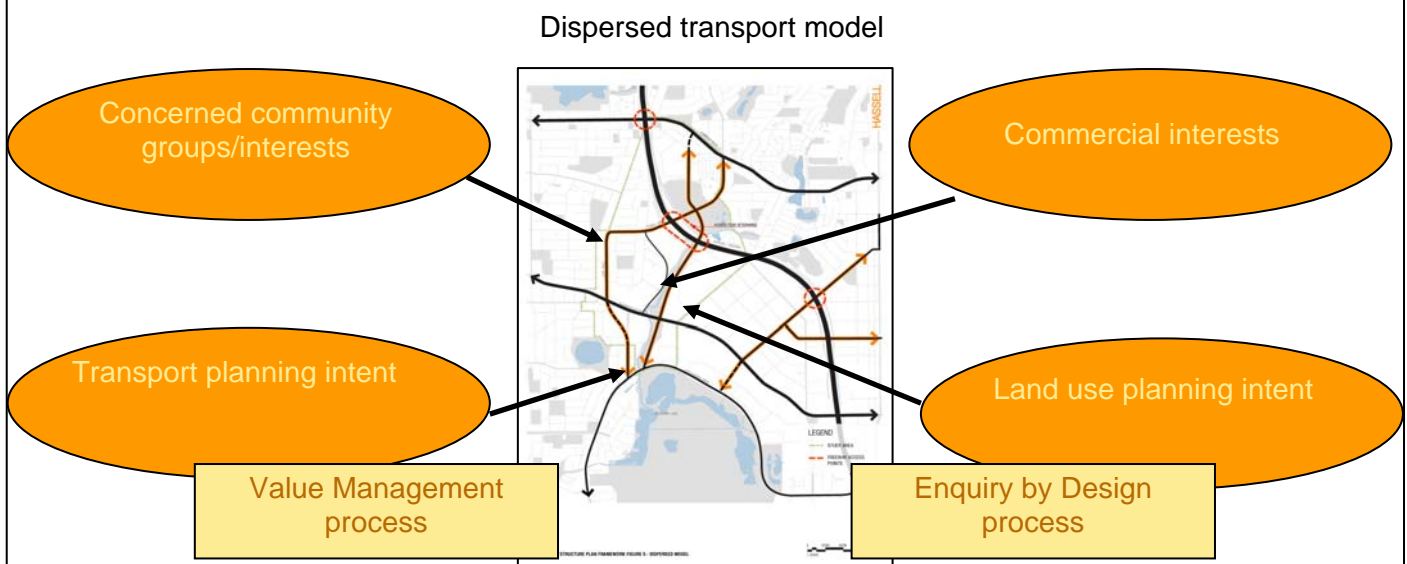


## THE WICKED PROBLEM

In 2007, the Australian Public Service Commission released a document entitled “Tackling Wicked Problems” (2007) which identified the changing nature of the Australian public sector environment and the need to deal with complex problems that “go beyond the capacity of any one organisation to understand and respond to”. Other characteristics of “wicked problems” include unclear definition, interdependencies and multi-causality, instability, unclear solution path and social complexity. Solutions to wicked problems often result in unforeseen consequences and usually involve changing human behaviours and/or mindsets. (Tackling Wicked Problems 2007) The paper supports the use of collaborative strategies as “the best approach to tackling wicked problems which require behavioural change as part of their solution.” However, it acknowledges that these types of problems are “difficult to tackle effectively using the techniques traditionally used by the public sector” and that current structures of most government agencies are “not well-adapted to support the kinds of process necessary for addressing the complexity and ambiguity” of such issues. (Tackling Wicked Problems 2007)

The Stirling City Centre long term transport issue exhibited all the characteristics of a wicked problem that required collaborative problem-solving strategies. The long standing conflict between long term regional transport and land-use needs was made more complex by the community's concern for local congestion and amenity issues and the commercial sector's interests in maximising land development potential while providing time and cost efficient approval mechanisms.

## Long term regional transport solution



Competing and complex stakeholder interests requires innovative problem-solving methods to achieve win-win outcomes

## DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY AND COMPLEXITY

The uncertainty that was inherent within the process required a supportive working environment to enable productive outcomes. A relationship based approach provided this support through a framework which is embedded within a shared cultural environment (i.e. Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People). The key attribute of the framework was to provide a resilient safe environment that supports and combines innovation and technical excellence, by building a new culture of trust and respect.



*The solution to this complex 'wicked' problem has eventuated in a minor MRS amendment which will unlock land for development, meet community expectations in resolving traffic congestion and enable certainty for development.*

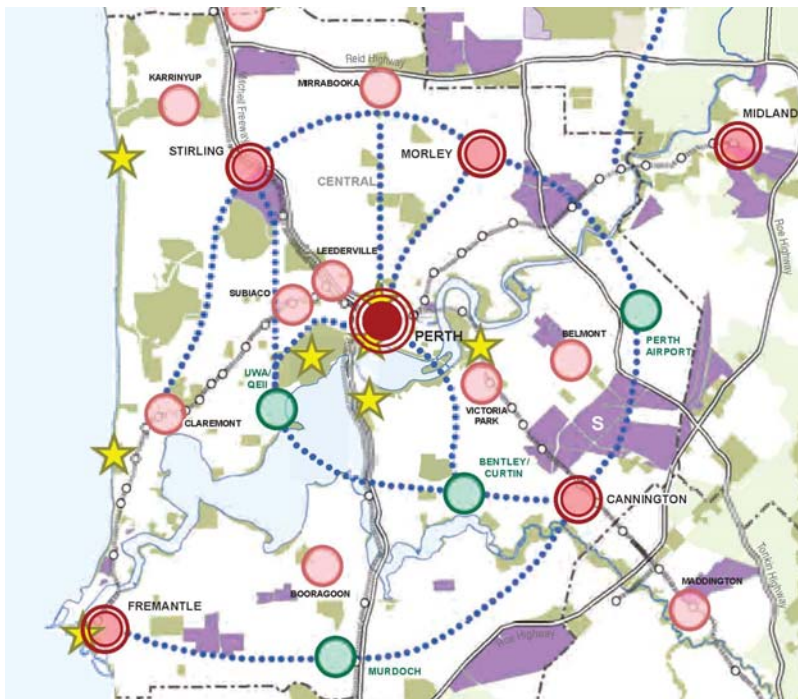
## ALLIANCE APPROACH IN A PLANNING CONTEXT

This governance innovation has helped to transcend the silo thinking and adversarial/competitive behaviour in infrastructure delivery projects. The stakeholders examined whether the alliance approach could be used to resolve a complex land use/transport planning problem. Would it be possible to form a planning (as opposed to an infrastructure delivery) alliance, including state and local government, private and community sectors, in order to address this wicked problem?

The Alliance is committed to win-win outcomes and provides a 'holding' environment in which stakeholders can explore a range of options and possibilities. Where previously 'business as usual' processes would attempt to reduce complexity by restricting the problem to narrow or single issue goals, reducing uncertainty and limiting stakeholders, the relational project approach seeks collaborative processes that will acknowledge the complexity of the problem. It does this by agreeing goals, developing strategies to deal with uncertainty, involving many stakeholders and searching for an optimal combination of solutions. Following this vein, the alliance employs a combination of processes, including Dialogue Mapping, Enquiry by Design and Value Management. Key to the success of this process is the on-going involvement of the community. This facilitates a multi-directional knowledge sharing that builds stakeholder understanding, capacity and relationships that facilitated the resolution of this issue .

## REGIONAL CONTEXT

The recently released draft spatial framework for Perth, Directions 2031, identified the Stirling Centre as a "Strategic Metropolitan Centre", a "multi purpose centre that provides a mix of retail, office, community, entertainment, residential and employment activities, and is well serviced by high frequency public transport." The centre also plays a strategic role in the regional transport network, with a substantial proportion of traffic flow through the centre being attributable to regional movements, contributing to local congestion. The centre is well served by both public and private transport modes. Metropolitan Perth's main freeway system bi-sects the centre into two discrete areas located north and south of this infrastructure. An integrated transit station for trains and regional bus services has been constructed over the freeway median at Stirling. This transit system connects Stirling with central Perth and the southern suburbs via the recently constructed Mandurah line.



To ensure that the strategic planning intentions for the centre are realised in the implementation phase, it was recognised that:

- a long term commitment was required;
- a range of specialist expertise would be required at different phases of the project;

*Alliance principles of trust, accountability, respect and transparency guide the Stirling Alliance to achieve win-win solutions that deliver strategic objectives of local and state government while addressing the needs of the local residents, businesses and property developers.*

The aim is to provide enough short term certainty to meet immediate commercial and community needs, whilst maintaining enough resilience in the planning for long term flexibility. The extensive consultation processes to date (reference groups, open days and planning festivals, on-going representation at project and board level) have led to a high level of ownership from community and business sectors, who are now taking on leadership roles.

As an inter-disciplinary team representing diverse organisations, the Alliance is evolving into a unique Public Private Community Partnership. Adaptive leadership involves working with the community to increase their awareness of a problem and then working with them to address it. To this end, the Alliance has established a set of leadership teams representing Government, Community and the Private Sector.

The Government Leadership Group provides high level strategic input into the work of the Alliance. The Business Leadership Group is currently represented by the main commercial landowners and the CEO of the State's Property Council. This group is providing a critically important role in ensuring that the plans for the centre are commercially realistic and achievable. The Community Leadership Group (CLG) is working on resolving "transitional" issues relating to disruption of lifestyles by the proposed changes. The CLG has also expressed the desire to raise the bar on community involvement and develop long term/big picture aspirational objectives as well as short term solutions. The community wants to be part of the solution to creating a good city for people. Integration of these groups is critical to the success of this model, to ensure that the over-arching 'vision', as it evolves and shifts, is shared and agreed.

## A BROWNFIELD SITE

The implementation of the original Stirling Regional Centre Structure Plan (1995), had a vision to deliver an interesting, vibrant centre with good access to public as well as private transport; characterised by a wide range of functions, activities and employment. Its implementation progressed well in some areas but not so well in others.

After the structure plan had been in place for approximately a decade, it became obvious that the area was still increasingly beset by a number of problems and was failing to evolve into a distinct centre with a sense of place. The majority of trips into and around the centre were continuing to be undertaken by private vehicles, and many of the new land uses that had been approved were only reinforcing the node's car dependency.

Stirling in 2006 was a suburban centre characterised by dispersed developments surrounded by surface parking. There had been a noted failure to attract higher density residential developments or foster economic diversification. Much of the retailing was car oriented, and offices continued to disperse into Herdsman and Osborne Park. The area lacked a distinct "heart" and was therefore without any real sense of identity.

*The Stirling Alliance has enabled multi-directional information exchange outside of formal approval processes, with the intent of facilitating more time and cost efficient approval processes at the time of application.*

## FACILITATING DEVELOPMENT IN A BROWNFIELD SITE

The Alliance provides a "holding environment" in which development intentions can be discussed prior to engaging in formal assessment processes. It plays a program coordination role to align developments in the area to strategic objectives while adding value at project level. The expertise in the alliance provides an excellent pre-application forum in which stakeholders can be informed of strategic intention in the area.

The Alliance framework allows the project to test and examine "Business as Usual" practices and processes in a safe environment, with the aim of achieving innovative solutions to complex issues. Business as Usual practice sees a Structure Plan delivered by the local authority, endorsed (or not) by the State and often implemented in an ad hoc fashion that provides little certainty of outcome over time. The inherent risk in this process is that the original vision and aspirations of the structure plan are sometimes, over time, diluted and manipulated to suit individual interests that may not necessarily support the broader strategic goals. Other pitfalls lie in the uncertainty surrounding development applications, incongruous timeframes between developers, commercial entities and government, and competing agendas between sectors and individuals.

By adopting policies of transparency and inclusion in the early planning stages of the project, the Alliance aims to inform applicants of strategic objectives and therefore encourage applications that support these objectives and contribute to delivering an integrated and vibrant city centre that provides benefits to all stakeholder groups.

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*NOTE: The Alliance maintains an absolute commitment to fairness and equity in these processes, making information available to all stakeholders, having an open door policy to all the Leadership groups and maintaining the strictest confidentiality when engaging in commercially confident conversations. The Alliance is not a statutory body and does not have the authority to approve development applications. In this regard, the Alliance has an advisory role only, and all development applications are dealt with through the formal approval processes of state and local government.*

## DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Alliance program manages the planning process to meet the future needs of the developer, investor and community. The future opportunities for the Alliance will be to coordinate and/or facilitate a multi-million dollar development program that may include:

- Public transport initiatives such as extension of the Stirling Bus Terminal, potential to deliver light rail linking Stirling and Glendalough train stations, extension of station car park
- Construction of urban stream within a high quality public open space network, pedestrian and cycling paths.
- Improved local road networks and freeway access
- Environmental remediation of contaminated surface and ground water
- Potential to deliver alternative energy and water management initiatives and infrastructure
- Other development opportunities that will arise from the release of land and reconfiguration of road network.
- Opportunity for the relocation of State government offices into the Strategic Activity Centre
- Provision of diverse housing initiatives in partnership with the Department of Housing
- Westfield Shopping Centre Redevelopment



*As a whole-of-government initiative, the project management is focussed on a program of works rather than individual discrete projects that may eventuate within both the private and public realms. The project management approach is therefore predominantly about integration, communication, resource management and funding of infrastructure to facilitate the project vision.*

*The Stirling City Centre Alliance is a demonstration project that has been charged with the challenge of delivering innovation and excellence in a city building context. Using values driven decision making processes within a strategic relationship framework, the Alliance addresses the complexity of “wicked problems” by moving outside the logical and linear process. It enables flexibility, promotes resilience, communicates respect and trust, to deliver a sustainable city centre for the benefit of all stakeholders.*

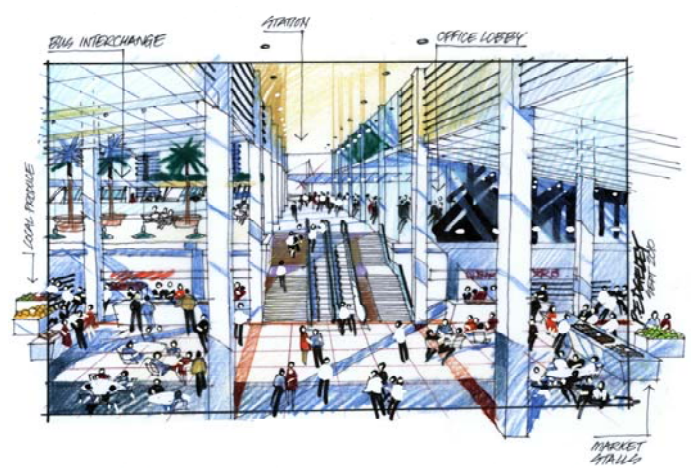
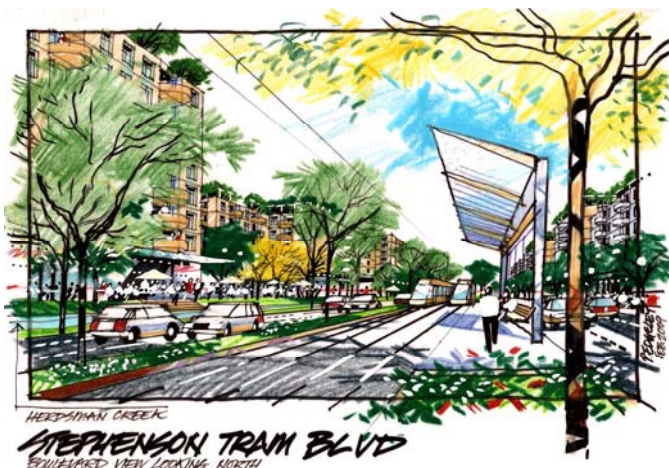
## ENABLING LEADERSHIP

The Alliance is empowered to effect change and deliver solutions, reporting directly to a Board of Directors consisting of the heads of each member organisation. Adaptive and ethical leadership that seeks to empower and enable has been a key element of the project management approach. Collaboration and trust are key supporting attributes of the governance model and management hierarchy. Integration of disciplines that seeks to combine outputs builds relationships and trust, resulting in efficiencies across a range of parameters. The structure of the project is flexible to evolve as needed at different stages of the project (such as from planning phase to delivery phase).

Whilst the Project Director oversees the project whole and is a representative of State Government, the operational qualities of the Alliance do not adhere to a typical hierarchical structure, with most activity taking place in self-directed work groups that are empowered by the strategic direction of the project and agreed Alliance principles. A project office has been established in the study area, to bring together the project team and foster a sense of ownership amongst staff, stakeholders and consultants alike.

The collaborative, relationship building elements of the alliance model have been adopted in the planning phases of the Stirling City Centre Alliance project to address complex issues and to provide a framework for collaborative planning and implementation. It is envisaged that the model will adopt the fuller extent of alliancing principles, such as contractual risk/reward sharing, as the project progresses into infrastructure delivery and site development.

The alliance model has been a key enabling element that has provided the framework for productive collaboration across organisational “silos” that typically impede a “whole of government approach” to solving difficult challenges. The alliance model is strongly endorsed as a successful means to foster collaboration across government, community and private sector entities. This governance model can be adapted to suit local conditions and solve a range of problems across widely differing sectors and jurisdictions.



## REFERENCES

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