

**The Extent to Which Clubs Are Perceived As Learning
Organizations©**

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Abstract

In 1995 a Federal Government Report, *Enterprising Nation: Renewing Australia's Managers to Meet the Challenges of the Asia-Pacific Century* (Karpin, 1995) was published. One of the key themes of this report was that *"The 'learning organisation' will be standard philosophy for many Australian enterprises and a major way they cope with change and turbulence. Managers will create conditions conducive to learning for both individuals and the enterprise as a whole, within and between groups, across individual business units and between enterprises and their external environments."*

There is a dearth of published literature internationally, not only on clubs and the degree to which they are learning organizations but organizations in general. A systematic search of the literature identified only one published report in which there was an in-depth exploration of an organization to determine if it was a learning organization. Therefore, this study has a dual purpose. Firstly, it provides an in-depth study of a specific industry; and secondly it helps to fill a knowledge gap in the study of organizations.

This study has used as its theoretical framework Marquardt's (2002) learning organization model to determine the extent to which the characteristics of the learning organization are perceived to apply to a group of clubs in a regional area of Australia. The study has used a survey method utilising the Learning Organization Profile (LOP) questionnaire developed by Marquardt (1996) and validated by Griego, Geroy and Wright (2000) and interviews with the CEOs and Human Resource Managers from

four clubs. The LOP was distributed to permanent staff working in these clubs resulting in 36% of the LOPs being returned.

Statistical analysis of the returned LOPs indicated that the clubs had not adopted the characteristics of the learning organization to any great extent. The clubs divided into two groups. The perceptions of staff from two clubs were that the clubs had adopted learning organization characteristics to a minor extent. The perceptions of staff from the other two clubs was that the two clubs had adopted learning organization characteristics to a moderate extent. In all cases the pattern of perceptions of staff represented differences of degree rather than fundamental differences.

When the data obtained from the managers were examined, managers perceptions were that the clubs had adopted the characteristics of a learning organization to a moderate extent. These results compare favourably with the results of the Byers study (1999), which found that the perceptions of senior managers in Australian organizations were that the characteristics of a learning organization applied to a moderate extent. The perceptions of non-managers were that the characteristics applied to a minor extent. Statistical analysis of the data indicated that there were no significant differences between managers and non-managers, with the differences being in the degree rather than there being any fundamental differences.

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