

Linkage Grant – 7 Key Research Questions

PROJECT TITLE:

Looking Back – Looking Forward: The economic and social contribution of the Western Australian Co-operative and Mutual Enterprise (CME) sector to the state's development

PROJECT AIMS AND BACKGROUND

This study will examine the economic and social contribution the CME sector has made in WA, through the lens of selected organisations that represent a cross-section of the State's industries. In doing so, it will build on a multi-disciplinary foundation, drawing together the disciplines of history, economics, management, and marketing, to provide a unique perspective of the roles played by these enterprises, which while small in total number (e.g., 108 enterprises), they have a combined annual turnover of more than \$10 billion, assets of over \$16 billion, provide direct and indirect employment for thousands, and comprise over 2.4 million memberships across multiple industries (Mazzarol, 2020). Despite the importance of the CME sector to the state, there has been no systematic examination of the economic and social contribution these organisations make to WA, and relatively little attention given to this economic and social history at a national level (Patmore & Balnave, 2018; Balnave & Patmore, 2008; Cutcher, 2008). This project assembles an experienced, multi-disciplinary team to undertake the research in collaboration with industry partners and, in doing so, will deliver new insights that will assist researchers, industry practitioners, government policy makers and the wider community gain a better understanding and appreciation of the contribution of this important sector.

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What main economic and social contributions have been made by the CME sector to WA since 1829?
- 2) How did community collaboration and existing social capital influence the foundation and sustainability of CMEs in WA?
- 3) What role has government legislation and policy played in shaping the growth and decline of the CME sector in WA?
- 4) How have CMEs played a role in addressing market failures within selected industries across WA?
- 5) What impacts have changes in industry structure and market competition had on CMEs within WA?
- 6) What role have CMEs in WA played in addressing the impacts of environmental shocks such as droughts, cyclones, bushfires, climate change, disease, wars and global economic shocks and depression?
- 7) How have WA CMEs adapted their business models to respond to political, economic, social, technological, and environmental challenges, and what was the role played by their organisational purpose and ability to offer member's value?