

## Part D Project Description of Linkage Grant Application

### 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.

### INVESTIGATORS CAPABILITY

All CIs are senior academics with considerable experience in undertaking research of this kind.

**Professor Tim Mazzarol** (CI-1) has significant experience in working with industry and coordinating both ARC linkage and other industry projects, including the CME sector at a state, national and international level. Tim has extensive experience in the supervision of doctoral students. He will commit 0.25 FTE to the project including overseeing the budget, accounting, and delivering the industry reports, coordinate the work of the APDI. He will liaise with the industry partners about the research program and play a key role in the writing of the academic and industry papers including providing input in theory development and model building, case study and questionnaire design, data collection and analysis.

**Professor David Gilchrist** (CI-2) is a chartered accountant, as well as an economic historian specializing in Western Australian economic history and cooperative history. He has written extensively on the co-operative history of WA and on the economic and political history of the State, including use of the Synthetic Control Method. His expertise will contribute directly to this study. Importantly, CI Gilchrist also researches and undertakes activities in the WA economy and so brings a very practical perspective to the value of history in modern policy and analysis. He has accumulated and delivered upon funding for industry projects more than \$5m over his career. David will contribute 0.20 FTE to the project.

**A/Professor Andrea Gaynor** (CI-3) is a leading historian of Western Australia and has a track record of successful engagement of both rural and urban communities as well as other end users in historical research projects. She has supervised 14 doctoral students to completion and is presently principal supervisor of 5 PhD/MPhil students and co-supervisor of 5. When not on sabbatical she is the Director of the Centre for Western Australian History at UWA. She holds another ARC grant (DP180100807) at 0.3FTE concluding in April 2021. She thus has capacity to commit 0.2FTE to this project. She will liaise with the APDI on project work as well as jointly writing the academic and industry papers, providing input on Western Australian history.

**Emeritus Professor Geoff Soutar** (CI-4) has extensive experience in undertaking industry research projects, including multiple ARC Linkage Projects. He also has distinguished track record in academic research within the marketing and management fields. He will commit 0.20 FTE to the project, specifically in design of the quantitative elements within Phase 4 and the data analysis, such as structural equation modelling, as well as providing his expertise in the development and validation of scales measuring member and community perceptions of value. Geoff has supervised to completion a substantial number of doctoral students and is currently supervising several such students.

**Dr Amin Mugeru** (CI-5), is a researcher in agricultural economics, and agribusiness, addressing policy issues using a combination of mathematical programming and econometric methods. He has published research associated with WA and Australian agricultural economics (e.g., West, Mugeru & Kingwell, 2021), and his skills and experience directly support the objectives of this study with 0.2FTE time commitment.

**Peter Wells**, (PI) is the Executive Secretary of Co-operatives WA and will work closely with the CI team to

provide strategic advice throughout the project as well as managing the interaction between UWA, Co-ops WA and the industry partner organisations. Peter has been the principal industry lead on the previous Linkage Project (LP100200874), and as Secretary of Co-ops WA he has detailed knowledge of the WA CME sector. He was also a member of the Industry Reference Group and has been instrumental in advising government on the content of the Co-operatives Act 2009.

## **PROJECT QUALITY AND INNOVATION**

### ***The project's innovation and novelty:***

CMEs, which include Friendly Societies, have origins dating back at least to the fifteenth century (Gide, 1922; Williams, 2007; Fernández, 2014). Since that time, CMEs have developed a myriad of governance, trading, and social models in response to differing political and economic circumstances and in accordance with differing social values as they were from time to time (Gilchrist, 2014). The foundation of the *Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers* in England in 1844 is viewed as an important milestone in the evolution of the co-operative movement (Drury, 1937; Fairbairn, 1994; Patmore & Balnave, 2018). Indeed, that firm's constitutional structure and guiding principles are often referred to in the context of management and development of today's CMEs, including its focus on democratic governance and the pursuit of members' economic and social benefits (Rochdale Society, 1877; Wilson, Shaw & Lonergan, 2012; Nelson et al., 2016; Gilchrist, 2016). Today, CMEs can be found in most countries and across most industries, providing services, employment and economic and social opportunities to millions of people and small firms that might otherwise not have been possible (ICA-Euricse, 2017). Australia's engagement with CMEs commenced during the 1820s and 1830s with the foundation of Friendly Societies, leading to the *Friendly Societies Act, 1843 (NSW)* (Green & Cromwell, 1984). By 1859 the first co-operative following Rochdale-style principles was established in Brisbane, with more emerging throughout the 1860s in all Australian colonies (Balnave & Patmore, 2012; Patmore & Balnave, 2018). The first co-operative in WA was founded in Albany in 1868, followed by a small number in the following decades (Gilchrist, 2016). These can be divided broadly into consumer and producer co-operatives focusing respectively on offering goods through retailing to members, or the processing and marketing of fishing or agricultural produce for members (Baskerville, 2019). Mutual firms, such as the *Perth Building Society* (1862), also emerged during the nineteenth century (Moore, 1989). During the twentieth century, particularly after the First World War, the WA CME sector expanded rapidly. This was supported by a combination of factors that included the introduction of the *Co-operative and Provident Societies Act, 1903 (WA)*, the foundation of *Westralian Farmers Ltd.* as a co-operative in 1914 (now Wesfarmers Ltd.) and the establishment of the *Co-operative Federation of WA* in 1919 (Baskerville, 2019). Most importantly, support provided by government was critical and this model was fundamental to building the State's economy (Gilchrist, 2016). However, the ubiquitous nature of CMEs does not mean they operate the same way or are impacted by the same issues regardless of location. As such, a research program examining the Western Australian CME sector is expected to support improvement in that region as well as inform the wider Australian sector.

This project will place the evolution of the WA CME sector within an historical context and examine the major external and internal forces that shaped its fortunes. While individual histories of CMEs are not uncommon, many are a celebration of achievement without much attention to economic, social, or business concepts or theory. Alternatively, they are academic studies focusing on social or economic issues that address CMEs within narrow domains. By contrast, this study will take a systematic, multidisciplinary, and critical approach that will enable a comparison of the strategies and experiences of different organisations over time. In doing so, it will examine how they navigated the changing social, economic, and legal contexts from the mid-nineteenth to the early twenty-first centuries. As discussed below, the study will be guided by a set of conceptual frameworks that will provide the structure for the individual organisational histories and their critical comparison and cross-case analysis within the broader historical context. At the heart of this study are the business histories of our CME research partners. The field of business history has traditionally focused on the primacy of the firm, specifically the major corporations, and their role in shaping or being shaped by economic forces and government policies. However, this has been recognised as overly narrow and there are calls for new directions to be undertaken in which the business entity is examined within a wider context of its political, social, economic, and industrial ecosystem (Scranton & Fridenson, 2013). This has been identified as offering opportunities for new approaches to methodology, with a greater emphasis on multi-disciplinary studies with use of both qualitative and quantitative analysis that offer more hypothesis testing than has been possible with the traditional 'descriptive' case study approaches within business history (de Jong, Higgins & van Driel, 2015). In many respects our study will address these concerns.

### ***Enhancing links with industry and other organisations:***

In addition to applying a multi-disciplinary analysis to this historical economic and social research project, the study will also collaborate closely with industry partners that include some of the largest and most successful CMEs in Australia and represent a diverse range of industries, including agriculture, fishing, automotive, finance and banking, insurance, retailing and health. This collaboration will involve drawing lessons from the corporate histories of these organisations; information and lessons that can be applied to the development and strengthening of these enterprises' member engagement and loyalty, as well as enhancing their marketing communications by promoting greater awareness of their contribution to the wider community. The study will also build a foundation for the development of a repository of historical data and source materials that is currently held in less-than-ideal conditions or are at risk of being lost. This includes documents, photos, oral histories, and other artefacts. These will be examined and discussions with the sector and the State Library of Western Australia will be undertaken to produce a dedicated collection of historical records relevant to the CME sector in WA.

### ***Research approach and training - Conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses:***

Our understanding of the CME business model is tempered by its history, as well as by the current environment. As such, our project intends to use an historical lens to respond to the research objectives outlined in Section A5. The project will build on previous work undertaken in Linkage Project LP100200874 by CIs Tim Mazzarol, Geoff Soutar, and colleagues, in conjunction with PI Peter Wells. This includes the application of their *conceptual framework for research into co-operative enterprise* developed from the earlier ARC Linkage project (Mazzarol, Reboud, Mamouni Limnios & Clark, 2014; Mazzarol, Simmons and Mamouni Limnios, 2014), providing a holistic framework that examines three primary levels. First, the macro or “systems level” comprising four inputs:

- i) social cooperation between members of the community;
- ii) the role of government (e.g., legislation, regulation, and policy);
- iii) industry competitive forces; and
- iv) effects of the natural environment (e.g., droughts, floods, fires, climate change);

and two outputs: economic capital and social capital. Second, the enterprise level, comprising the main elements of the business model of a CME.

Third, the member level, comprising four attributes of CME membership:

- i) investor;
- ii) patron;
- iii) owner; and
- iv) member of a community of purpose.

At the “enterprise level” a second conceptual framework for the co-operative and mutual enterprise business model, developed from the same ARC Linkage project will also be used. This will examine nine key elements that comprise the CME business model and helps explain its operation and distinctive difference from other types of business enterprise (Mazzarol, Clark, Reboud & Mamouni Limnios, 2018). Finally, at a “member level,” the study will use a third conceptual framework (also developed in the previous Linkage project) that examines the nature of the four CME member attributes or “hats” members of such enterprises wear, and which explain their attraction to, engagement with and loyalty to these businesses (Mamouni Limnios, Mazzarol, Soutar & Siddique, 2018). Concurrent research into member engagement and loyalty within CMEs will also be used to help shape the analysis (Mazzarol, Mamouni Limnios & Reboud, 2013; Mamouni Limnios, Watson, Mazzarol & Soutar, 2016; Mazzarol, Soutar & Mamouni Limnios, 2019).

### ***Key units of analysis:***

Our methodology aims to use the abovementioned research frameworks to guide data collection in both within-case and cross-case analyses. As already noted, the study will build on an examination of a series of critical historical case studies (corporate histories), at an individual organisation and industry level, to develop a response to the project objectives. Each case and cross-case industry analysis will be examined using the conceptual frameworks with a focus on six key units of analysis:

- 1) *Community cooperation* – specifically the factors influencing community collaboration and willingness to establish, support and operate these CMEs and the factors that have led to their survival and/or demise. Specific attention will be given to social capital building and the influence of other factors and social change within communities. This will draw on social cooperation theory (Birchall & Simmons, 2004) and the theory of community-based enterprises (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006).

- 2) *Government legislation and policy* – specific attention will be given to the role played by imperial, colonial, State and Federal Government legislation, regulation and associated policies designed to encourage co-operative and mutual organisations, or to restrict or impede their development. A separate review of relevant legislation for CMEs will be needed. This will be guided by previous research into the role of government policy and legislation relating to CMEs (e.g., LeVay, 1983; Lyons, 2001; Goddard, Boxall & Lerohl, 2002; Spear & Bidet, 2003; Keneley, 2005; Kalmi, 2007; Cutcher, 2008; Balnave & Patmore, 2008; Apps, 2012; Whyman, 2012; Mikami, 2014; The Senate, 2016).
- 3) *Industry structure and competition* – here the focus will be on the influence of industry dynamics, with such issues as increasing market competition, market regulation or deregulation and its impacts on CMEs, government competition policy and the ability of CMEs to compete successfully within more dynamic and turbulent markets. This will be guided by established models of industry competitiveness (e.g. Porter, 1980; 2008), as well as the existing literature relating to how CMEs compete in open markets (e.g. Nilsson, 1999; Palmer, 2001; Goddard et al., 2002; Cutcher & Kerr, 2006; Balnave & Patmore, 2006; 2015; Margetts, 2007; Battilani & Zamagni, 2012; Juliá-Igual et al., 2012; Toms, 2012; Gupta, 2014; Harper et al., 2015; Jain, Keneley & Thomson, 2015; Bretos & Marcuello, 2017).
- 4) *Natural environmental impacts* – the impact of changes to the natural environment (e.g., droughts, floods, fires, reducing rainfalls), as well as things such as government restrictions (e.g., fishing catch limits; controls of pests, road safety; air pollution; water supply for irrigation etc.) will be examined. This will be guided by historical records and reference to relevant academic literature (e.g., Banerjee, Iyer & Kashyap, 2003; Brown et al., 2015; Plunkett, Chaddad & Cook, 2010).
- 5) *Business model adaptation* – analysing changes to CMEs’ business models in response to the four previous “systems-level” factors. Here specific reference will be made to the main elements of the CME business model (Mazzarol et al., 2018), and reference to other relevant literature (e.g., Cook, 1995; Birchall & Ketlison, 2009; Grassl, 2012; Birchall, 2013; Wirtz, Göttel & Daiser, 2016; Wirtz et al., 2016; Massa, Tucci & Afuah, 2017; Teece, 2018; Wirtz & Daiser, 2018).
- 6) *Member level engagement and loyalty* – the analysis will also look at members’ individual and collective motivations for engagement with, and loyalty to, these organisations, with respect to community cooperation and both the economic and social capital benefits yielded from membership. How the successful surviving CMEs have adapted their business models to help sustain member engagement and loyalty should be part of this analysis, with reference to the “four hats” of the member (see: Mamouni Limnios et al., 2018).

#### *Lessons from previous historical studies into WA CMEs:*

The project team has already funded and supervised a centenary history of the Co-operatives Federation of WA (Baskerville, 2019). That study was undertaken as a foundation for this ARC proposal, as it used the abovementioned research approach to help shape data collection and analysis and provided a valuable pilot study to explore the history of the co-operatives and wide CME sector in WA. It identified many insights into the forces that have shaped the development of the State’s CME sector, as well as helping to identify sources, gaps in the extant literature and major units of analysis for a wider examination of WA’s CME history. Further, the centenary history project also enabled the research team to engage the local CME business community, including the funding of a separate but related corporate history of the RACWA taking place within the first half of 2020.

#### *Methodology, intellectual content requirements and scale of activity:*

The methodology used in this study is that of a multiple case study research design focusing on the corporate histories of several important CMEs that have shaped WA’s economic and social environment. As already noted, it will apply a multi-disciplinary conceptual framework and analysis to the examination of the historical narrative obtained from these cases. We are fortunate to have secured the participation of the RAC WA (est. 1905); Wesfarmers Ltd. (est. 1914); York & Districts Co-operative Ltd. (est. 1917); Mt Barker Co-operative (est. 1918); Co-ops WA (est. 1919); CBH Group (est. 1933); United Crate Co-op Ltd. (est. 1963); and Capricorn Society (est. 1974). Additional historical case studies will be undertaken on CMEs that have ceased to operate but have had a significant impact such as: Perth Building Society (1862 to 1987); Albany Cooperative Society (1863 to 1903), and Swan Taxi Co-op Ltd. (1928-2007). In addition, there are many

other CMEs actively trading in WA that we anticipate may join the project when it commences, adding to the overall corpus of data and historical material.

**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?

The study will be undertaken in the following phases:

*Phase 1 – A review of extant literature and oral history source data leading to a CME history timeline:*

The aim of this phase will be to pursue the project's aims and outcomes to identify the public and private archival materials likely to be accessible in the context of this project, along with the key themes in the extant literature, and the main theories and explications. This will create a **framework for assessing the validity of current theories** and to gain greater specificity in the pursuit of our objectives to inform the next phases in the research process. It will also assist in developing a list of any additional CMEs (i.e., from the historical record) for the case study element of the project. A **systematic literature review** (SLR) (see: Tranfield, Denyer & Palminder, 2003) will be undertaken within the major online research databases (e.g., Scopus, Trove, WA State Library). This will use selected Boolean search phrases and the researchers' knowledge of the CME sector to locate, access, review and assess available literature relevant to this project. Preliminary examination of these databases suggests there are several books, research papers, doctoral thesis and other documents that address CME history or their role in economic and social development. A concurrent **review will be undertaken of the relevant oral histories** held in the J.S. Battye Library of West Australian History and other repositories to build on the literature review and to confirm the themes and framework for assessment and to inform the next phases in the research program. The literature review and the oral history review phases will assist us to place the individual corporate histories and the cross-case analysis, within a wider context at the state, national and international level. This will provide a strong foundation of exploration in pursuit of the study's objectives. A key outcome from this review will be to draw up an **historical timeline of CME related events in WA history** from 1829 to the present that maps the establishment, demise, or continuation of CMEs within the state and examines them against the six key units of analysis. This would include the impacts of settlement patterns, introduction of legislation and government policies, development of industries and environmental shocks (e.g., drought, fires, cyclones, disease, wars), on the emergence and decline of CMEs and their potential economic and social contributions as reported in the historical records.

*Phase 2 – Development of individual corporate histories:*

As already noted, **the focus of this study is on the lessons learnt from the corporate histories of a cross-section of significant CME** that have had significant impacts on the economic and social development of WA. These corporate histories will be developed using a case study protocol designed to focus the research around the six common units of analysis and the historical timeline outlined above. This will enable subsequent cross-case analysis (Yin, 2014). A key element of this phase will be **a review of participating firms' primary source material**. This will include corporate archives (e.g., documents, artefacts, photographs, and audio-visual oral histories), as well as corporate histories. These materials will provide a valuable foundation for guiding the data collection and the process will also help to identify the quality and quantity of these records as well as the overall condition of these often-perishable materials. This will be useful in helping to address our fourth research objective (see A5). Our recent experience with the

development of the centenary history of Co-ops WA highlights the importance of focusing the historical narrative on key people and activities that have played an instrumental role in the foundation and development of these organisations (Baskerville, 2019). While some of this will emerge from the review of these organisations' source material, data will also be collected through interviews with current and former directors, senior executives, employees, and members. These interviews will be guided by the same case study protocol focusing on the six common units of analysis and the historical timeline. They will provide rich oral history data that can be triangulated against the available secondary sources and internal corporate archival material. The analysis of these individual cases will follow a **descriptive framework structure**, which has proven a valuable approach in sociological and managerial studies (Yin, 2014). In this study, the analysis would adopt a rich narrative structure explaining the evolution of the CMEs throughout their respective histories, but with reference to the wider systems level forces impacting upon them. This includes an examination of the role played by these CMEs within the state's history from a critical incident perspective.

**An important outcome from this phase of the study will be the drafting of a series of stand-alone corporate histories** that can be provided to participating organisations and customised to suit their requirements. For example, discussions with industry participants have identified an interest in using the historical evidence to assist them with the promotion of their corporate purposes and successes to current and potential members, their employees, and the wider community. This will form a valuable platform in enhancing their marketing communications and member engagement, as well as helping enhance their capacity to reflect upon their history and learn from them.

#### *Phase 3 – Cross-case analysis:*

Following the completion of the individual corporate histories, the data from the Phase 2 individual cases will be analysed in conjunction with the data from the Phase 1 literature review by way of a cross-case analysis. As already noted, it is anticipated the study will have at least 10 individual cases of CMEs and former CMEs that have played a significant role within key industry sectors over much of the State's history. Employing a common case study protocol offers a sound foundation for cross-case analysis where a common case study protocol has been employed (Yin, 2014). Although many cases will exist within different historical timelines and industry contexts, the use of common units of analysis, and the historical timeline generated from Phase 1, should enable the data analysis to create a coherent narrative that provides evidence of the role played by these organisations. This cross-case analysis can be undertaken from a variety of perspectives (Yin, 2014). This will include a **chronological structure** following an historical timeline, or a **theory-building structure** focusing on specific units of analysis that provide both descriptive and explanatory information relating to issues such as social capital building, the role of government legislation and policy, industry structure and competition and the impact of natural environmental (e.g., bush fires, drought) or external threats (e.g., wars, global economic cycles). The final approach chosen will depend on the outcomes from the preceding phases. The qualitative data analysis will use NVivo and Leximancer software to better explore the obtained data. The CI team has used these software options extensively in previous studies and will develop a coding structure based on the suggested conceptual frameworks and key units of analysis.

#### *Phase 4 – Quantitative Analysis: Econometric Analysis and Member-Community Surveys:*

This element will be conducted in two parts. The first stage will be an econometric analysis of the impact of structural change in the economy on WA's co-operative sector. Using Synthetic Control Method, we will identify structural breaks in the WA economy and then assess their impact on the co-operative sector via an analysis of numbers of registered entities, annual reports' content, and qualitative commentary at each structural break. To undertake this analysis, we will use data assets created by CI Gilchrist, including back estimates of GDP for those periods where the data does not exist. These data have already been created. In the second stage, a survey of CMEs will be undertaken using a questionnaire designed to test the findings from the case study analysis and to gather quantitative data to confirm our findings and assess our ability to extrapolate them across the broader sector. This phase would involve the development of a questionnaire for distribution to members and customers of our industry partner organisations. Question items will be developed from the findings of the case studies. The work undertaken by the CI team in the previous ARC project (LP100200874), which examined member engagement and loyalty, will provide a strong foundation. This will draw on findings from the previous phases of the study, as well as existing scales that have been developed within the marketing domain and which provide reliable measures for customer/member engagement (e.g., Hollebeek et al., 2014; Jaakola & Alexander (2014); Harrigan et al., 2018; Roy et al.,

2018a/b); loyalty (Söderlund, 2002); word of mouth referral (Harrison-Walker, 2001; Teo & Soutar, 2012) and loyalty (Mazzarol, Soutar & Mamouni Limnios, 2019). The CI team has extensive experience in questionnaire design, working with industry partners to obtain member participants for such surveys and using online data collection providers. The project team has worked closely over many years with several data collection agencies. The recruitment of participants will be managed with our industry partners and through data collection agencies. Surveys will be approximately 10 to 15 minutes duration, anonymous and voluntary. Data analysis will be undertaken using the SPSS statistical software package as well as the partial structural equation modelling software to assess interrelationships between the constructs. The survey will be pilot tested with a small sample prior to final data collection and, as with the overall methodology, appropriate approvals from UWA's Human Research Ethics Committee will be obtained.

### **FEASIBILITY AND COMMITMENT**

The project is well-supported by strong industry partners with whom the CI team has worked in the past over many years. These organisations represent some of the largest and most successful CMEs in Australia and include Wesfarmers Ltd., which is not only one of Australia's most successful companies but was instrumental to the development of the WA co-operatives sector during the twentieth century. The industry partners have pledged significant cash and in-kind contributions, including access to their archives, senior executives, directors, and members. Co-ops WA has collaborated with UWA in ARC Linkage and other research successfully since 2008 and is well-prepared to provide the necessary commitment and assistance to the project during the research and afterwards. UWA has the necessary research environment within which to undertake this project. The Centre for Western Australian History (CWAH) has been in operation for many years and has earned a strong reputation within the field of historical studies. The Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU) within the UWA Business School has been a pioneer in the field of CME research at the national level building the foundations of this industry collaboration. UWA is a research-intensive institution that offers high-quality research facilities and project management experience. The appointment of a full time APDI, Dr. Bruce Baskerville (see E2), and part-time Research Assistant (see E2 & E3), will significantly increase the ability of the CI team to undertake this large research project and enhance its capacity.

### **BENEFIT**

This project will fill-in existing gaps in the historical record relating to the economic and social contribution of the CME sector within WA. It will also provide new and innovative approaches to the study of business history. The findings will also provide substantial benefit to the individual industry partners, as well as insights that will be valuable to the promotion of the sector at a national level. Finally, it will provide a significant foundation of data upon which to develop industry and policy advice for industry representative bodies such as the Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals (BCCM). From a government policy perspective, the importance of the CME sector was recognised in the Harper Review of competition policy (Harper et al., 2015) and the Senate's inquiry of 2016 (The Senate, 2016). Furthermore, the creation of the *Co-operatives National Law, 2012*, and the amendments to the *Corporations Act, 2001 (Cwth)* in 2019 providing a formal definition of a mutual enterprise, and the creation of a new type of investment class known as a Mutual Capital Instrument (MCI) (Dodd et al., 2019); and create a positive environment within which the Australian CME sector can grow. The findings from this study will provide evidence that will help to shape the policy debate, specifically the lessons that the historical record demonstrates in relation to the impact of legislation and policy decisions by state and federal governments. The study will also further strengthen the relationship between the academic research community and industry demonstrating the value of focused research in enhancing the level of knowledge and understanding of the contribution that these organisations have had upon the economy and society, emphasizing the overall value of the CME business model.

## COMMUNICATION OF RESULTS

A major forum for the dissemination of the results will be via the annual conferences of the Co-ops WA Federation and the national leadership summit of the BCCM. Since 2014 the Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU) at UWA has undertaken the research the BCCM uses in its National Mutual Economy reports and the findings from this project will be fed into that communication channel. Commencing in 2021, UWA and Co-ops WA, in conjunction with the CME sector, will hold special research conferences in September when the Co-ops WA conference is normally held. This will involve an additional day to be added to the normal one-day conference that will focus on the research and with the opportunity to bring academic researchers from across Australia and overseas to Perth for the sharing of papers and research findings. Industry will also be engaged via keynote speakers, discussion panels and workshops. This was a formula used in 2012 for the UN International Year of the Co-operative under LP100200874. The results from the project will be published in high impact international journals (e.g., *Business History*; *Business History Review*, *Enterprise & Society*), as well as through papers at international and national meetings and conferences. The industry partners will also disseminate the findings at a public level within the wider community. This will most likely take the form of dissemination of their individual corporate histories and the application of the findings into marketing communications and member engagement strategies. As such it will be distributed through press releases, newsletters, and corporate websites. The findings will also be distributed through a series of books. The CI team has well established links to a range of publishers (e.g., Springer, Routledge, and Edward Elgar) who are likely to be interested in this project. Co-ops WA at a State level, and the BCCM at a national level, will also promote the research findings within their sectors and within the State and Federal Governments where relevant policy related findings are identified. In addition, a website will be designed and developed in conjunction with Co-ops WA, UWA and the sector, that will provide an online portal for the dissemination of the research. This will be targeted at achieving the fourth objective of this research project. Finally, UWA has a joint venture alliance with the Australian Institute of Management (AIM) WA and, since 2014, has run a three-day executive development program for directors and managers of CMEs. This has attracted participants from across Australia and Malaysia and will be another channel through which the research findings can be disseminated.

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