

## **AN AUSTRALIAN WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY**

The challenges facing Western Australia today are too numerous and too complex to continue to be addressed in piecemeal ways. The silos really do need to come tumbling down if sustainable development is to mean anything at all. It is argued here that the *Safer WA* and *Stronger Communities* programs have real potential to deliver substantial and lasting benefits given adequate cross-government commitment and funding. A QLD case in point is the Queensland Department of Housing *Community Renewal Program*. *Community Renewal* has attracted significant medium term funding to facilitate sustainable social and economic outcomes for a number of disadvantaged QLD communities. The program is summarised below.

### **Program Overview**

Community Renewal is a partnership between the Queensland Government and people living and working in renewal areas to promote safe, healthy and confident communities. The program is administered by the Queensland Department of Housing and works closely with other state government agencies, local councils and communities in the 13 target areas to identify and implement renewal initiatives.

The Department of Housing's Community Renewal Unit is responsible for planning, developing, implementing, coordinating and evaluating the Community Renewal Program. The Community Renewal Program, established in September 1998 following the election of the Labor Government, is a key component of the Queensland Crime Prevention Strategy – *Building Safer Communities*.

### **Program Focus**

As a core component of the Queensland Government's Crime Prevention Strategy, the primary goal of the Community Renewal Program is to fund and implement strategies to:

- reduce crime
- raise the confidence and image of identified communities.

The Community Renewal Program undertakes a wide range of projects and activities. These reflect the needs and aspirations of people living and working in target communities. Revitalisation initiatives are underpinned by the following objectives:

- improve the safety and security of people and property
- better integrating socially or economically disadvantaged residents into broader community and economic networks and systems
- ensure accessibility of residents to community services and facilities they require
- strengthen and expand opportunities for young people
- improve neighbourhood amenity
- ensure public expenditure is directed to projects and activities which will have lasting and positive impacts on the communities
- make the communities central to achieving program objectives

**Core outcomes to be achieved include:**

- enhanced community confidence and pride with improvements to local housing, services, facilities and infrastructure
- a stronger sense of safety and security through reduced levels of neighbourhood crime and disorder
- higher levels of home ownership as growth in employment, training and education opportunities generate more jobs and higher household incomes
- more prosperous neighbourhoods as local businesses take advantage of opportunities to participate in implementing program initiatives
- longer duration of residential occupation because of a more positive local image and greater prosperity.

**Key elements of the Community Renewal Program**

- coordinating a range of initiatives between participating agencies to improve the quality of life in targeted communities
- involving communities in planning and developing initiatives
- coordinating projects locally through Department of Housing working with local councils and relevant government agencies
- linking with public housing redevelopment programs to enhance housing livability
- coordinating tenancy allocation and management with Community Renewal objectives
- complementing but not replacing state and local government responsibilities in renewal areas
- exploring opportunities to trial new models of service

**How is Community Renewal different from Urban Renewal?**

The Community Renewal Program sits alongside the Department of Housing's Urban Renewal Program which funds public housing upgrades and redevelopment in areas with a high concentration of older public housing.

As a result, there is Urban Renewal expenditure in most of the Community Renewal areas because they contain a large amount of public housing stock.

In contrast Community Renewal addresses issues relating to the social and economic well being of particular communities and their physical environment beyond the front fences of public housing.

Together these two important programs play a valuable role in building sustainable communities where residents can enjoy a better quality of life.

## **Community Action Plans**

Community Action Plans (CAPs) provide a planning framework and process for Government and the community to identify issues and coordinate resources to revitalise disadvantaged areas.

Good planning is essential to the success of the Community Renewal Program.

The development of a CAP involves extensive consultation with all stakeholders in the target communities. It is an integrated plan with a three to five-year time line. The CAP guides future initiatives by the local community, State and Local Government, as well as other stakeholders in the renewal area.

People and organisations involved in developing the plan include relevant Queensland Government departments, local councils, service delivery agencies and members of the target community. The plan summarises issues identified during the consultation and planning process and outlines specific actions to address these issues. It also nominates agencies responsible for implementing the actions and desired timeframes for completion. The implementation schedule is developed in collaboration with regional managers of government agencies.

Community Action Plan initiatives can involve:

- ☐ improving public housing stock, streets, footpaths and natural areas to increase neighbourhood safety and amenity
- ☐ upgrading or building community cultural and recreational facilities
- ☐ enhancing access to community services
- ☐ increasing opportunities for education and training
- ☐ increasing business and employment opportunities

Community Action Planning includes the following stages:

- ☐ consulting all stakeholders
- ☐ identifying key issues and a shared vision for the future
- ☐ researching background information and exploring the issues
- ☐ formulating a Community Action Plan documenting actions agreed by stakeholders
- ☐ implementing responsibilities and deadlines
- ☐ evaluating the plan for its ongoing relevance

A Community Action Plan is similar to but not the same as an Integrated Local Area Plan, which is a comprehensive Local Government plan covering all aspects of land-use planning, development, environmental quality and service provision. In contrast, Community Action Plans cover a much smaller geographical area and population base. Their primary focus is also different, namely meeting the objectives of the Community Renewal Program.

Community Action Plans bring together the planning initiatives of all the stakeholders to foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility in implementing renewal strategies.

Preparing a Community Action Plan can take between six and twelve months to complete. Normally preparation is undertaken by the relevant council with a grant from the Community Renewal Program. The final plan becomes a Community Renewal document on completion.

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