



fact sheet

Community Renewal in Bidwill



Bidwill Background

In 1996/97 a Neighbourhood Improvement Program commenced in Bidwill to remedy significant problems associated with this public housing estate.

Issues Faced at Bidwill

Built along the Radburn planning principles, the Bidwill estate failed to provide a safe and friendly community for its tenants.

Radburn principles saw public housing estates built with:

- large areas of open, void space
- dwellings oriented towards common space or a pedestrian walkway
- the provision of vehicular access from the rear of properties
- isolated pedestrian walkways.

Rather than facilitating neighbourhood and community interaction, Radburn planning principles created a physical environment which actually isolated tenants from one another.

“Community Renewal is about reclaiming communities for people ...communities where no one is left out.”

Community renewal is about partnerships between communities and service providers, it's about recognising the benefits of diverse communities, closing the gap between the socially included and the socially excluded, responding to peoples needs for stable, well balanced communities, and building community confidence.

The process of community renewal is ultimately about community re-engagement of disadvantaged communities with each other, with services and employment, and with the broader community.

“It's our best opportunity to restore pride and a 'sense of place' to dislocated communities.”

Problems with the estate model

About 30% of New South Wales public housing is located in estates where there are more than 100 properties. These estates were developed from the 1950s to the mid 1980s and many experience similar problems including:

- housing which is poorly designed and maintained
- poor access to necessary services such as health services, transport and family support
- concentrations of disadvantaged families who are stigmatised by the rest of the community
- problems with crime and personal security.

Key strategies of Community Renewal

- make client service staff more accessible and visible so they can respond to problems quickly
 - work with the Police to identify trouble-spots and ways to reduce criminal activity
- improve housing so it better meets contemporary standards so residents want to stay
- improve social mix through identified sales and use housing associations to diversify management
 - work with groups of residents so they can develop new skills and help prioritise work
- link residents with training and employment opportunities
 - encourage other service providers to work in partnership with residents and the Department.



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Major Achievements

The Radburn planning principles have been literally reversed in Bidwill, reorientating dwellings to create homes which facilitate interaction between neighbours and communities.

What We Sought to Do

The Neighbourhood Improvement Program in Bidwill sought to:

- re-orientate dwellings
- close pedestrian pathways
- revamp open areas
- refurbish dwellings
- create new road links
- upgrade service infrastructure
- change the mix of tenants
- improve housing management
- subdivide and separate the title on 130 properties so existing tenants can have the opportunity to purchase their own homes.

What Has Been Achieved

Under the program the following initiatives have been implemented:

- in 1996/97 26 Radburn cottages were reversed, 44 conventional cottages were rejuvenated and six pedestrian pathways were closed

- in 1997/98 170 properties were refurbished, some of which were reorientated
- in 1998/99 a further 30 Radburn cottages and 12 conventional dwellings will be refurbished
- two new road links are nearing completion
- in 1999/2000 a further 17 Radburn cottages will be reoriented and refurbished.

Community Participation

The Neighbourhood Improvement Program has seen employment opportunities created for Bidwill residents through an accredited 12-month course in Conservation and Land Management which saw 12 trainees landscape gardens and common areas on the Bidwill estate. While the program instilled a sense of ownership and pride in the community it also led to full time employment for some of the trainees.

The Results Speak for Themselves

The results of improving the management systems and physical environment of Bidwill have led to:

- a stabilisation of the community
- lower vacancy rates
- a significant reduction in the workload of local Client Service Staff
- lower levels of re-housing
- a decrease in neighbourhood disputes and incidents
- a decrease in maintenance requests
- lower rental arrears figures
- lower levels of vandalism
- participation in community based activities including gardening and craft
- a list of clients who have expressed a specific desire to live in Bidwill.

Tenant comment about the Community Renewal Program

"Everyone is taking pride in their homes now and getting along much better. The street is much safer and we can see when someone is hanging around that shouldn't be there."



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