



fact sheet

Community Renewal in West Dubbo



West Dubbo Background

The West Dubbo estate is located on the western fringe of Dubbo and comprises 290 free standing cottages. The estate was built during the 1970's to meet growing demand for public housing in rural NSW.

Issues for West Dubbo

In the early 1990's the West Dubbo estate was suffering from:

- unacceptably high vacancy rates with over 140 homes, or 48% of the total 290 properties, being vacated by tenants each year
- incidents of nuisance and annoyance
- problems with crime, particularly amongst juveniles
- up to \$21,000 being owed to the Department each year from outstanding rent.

In 1995/96 the Community Renewal Strategy was introduced to address these issues along with the stigma attached to living on the West Dubbo estate.

By working with tenants of the estate to rebuild their community from within, the Strategy focussed on improving individual living conditions and the physical aspects of their environment.

“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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Where We Are Today

Under the Community Renewal Strategy the following initiatives have been implemented:

- a Legal Officer has been seconded to manage serious nuisance and annoyance issues and prepare cases for the Residential Tribunal
- a Community Access Centre has been established to provide residents with information about additional Government and non-Government services available to them
- a Local Allocations Strategy has been implemented to limit high-risk tenancies on the estate
- an interagency advisory committee has been established with representatives from the Department of Housing, Community Services, Police, Health, Council and associated agencies
- a local Tenant's Group has been set up with ongoing support from the Department. Among other initiatives, this group has introduced a very successful Breakfast Club to provide meals to school-age children during the week
- home security has been increased with the installation of door and window locks
- vacant properties have been boarded up to help reduce vandalism
- a Community Arts Project saw the application of a mural to the fence surrounding the estate's community centre. The project was co-ordinated by two well known Aboriginal artists and involved residents from the estate
- a substantial amount of graffiti has been removed from around the estate.

Vocational Skills Program for Tenants Launched

In June 1999, the Department of Housing and the Western Institute of TAFE launched a vocational skills program to give residents of West Dubbo the

opportunity to learn new skills, make tangible improvements to their environment and renew pride in their community.

During the program the Department will provide \$230,000 for fencing and landscaping 150 of the estate's properties while TAFE will manage the training, much of which will be delivered on-site.

Apart from the immediate benefits for the community, it is hoped the program will also provide participants with future employment opportunities.

Outcomes

In response to the Community Renewal Strategy, the following results have been achieved:

- nine unsatisfactory tenancies have been terminated
- rental arrears on the estate fell from \$21,000 to \$17,000 over the 12 months to 30 June, 1999
- vacancy rates have dropped by 22% over the past two years
- local Police advise the crime rate for the estate is declining
- there has been a notable reduction in graffiti around the estate.

Tenant comment about the Community Renewal Program

"There's a long way to go here in Dubbo but the work has started, ...it's started."



Major Achievement

Through our programs the estate is being rebuilt from within and tenants are being empowered to develop new skills and care for their environment.

NSW Department of Housing

 <http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au>

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