



# fact sheet

## Community Renewal in Goonellabah



### Goonellabah Background

The Goonellabah public housing estate is located near Lismore in northern NSW. It comprises a total of 150 free standing cottages.

The Community Renewal Strategy in Goonellabah addresses key issues raised by residents of the estate.

### Key Issues for Goonellabah

Prior to the intervention of the Neighbourhood Improvement Program in 1995 and the Community Renewal Strategy in 1999, the estate had the following characteristics:

- High unemployment rate
- High concentration of public housing on the estate
- High turn-over of housing stock and high vacancy rates
- High levels of vandalism, nuisance and annoyance and other anti-social behaviour.

*“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 estate has become stable with most residents eager to stay and remain part of the community. Tenants when possible are being employed to undertake the physical improvements to dwellings.

## What We Set Out to Achieve

The objectives of the Goonellabah Community Renewal Strategy are to:

- Reduce the concentration of public housing on the estate through sales and stock transfer
- Improve employment prospects for residents of the estate through joint initiatives with other community groups
- Closer management of the estate through outposting staff to the estate to work closely with tenants.

## What We Did:

- Client service staff became involved with residents in identifying problems and developing solutions
- Developed tenants' negotiation skills so they can advocate their needs to other agencies
- Established links with training providers to develop tenant skills that can lead to employment
- Established local allocation strategies so that tenancies are more likely to last
- Participated in the Goonellabah 'Families First' Project which provides early intervention and supports at risk families
- Negotiated the scope of improvements to the housing, the residents owned the decisions, such as:
  - Provision of front fencing and painting of existing fencing to many properties on the estate
  - Provision of car ports
  - Landscaping of back yards, including terracing of steep sites and building retaining walls
  - Provision of decking to the rear of some dwellings and enclosing verandahs on others.

## Where We Are Today

The following improvements to the Goonellabah estate have been achieved so far:

- The Lismore Skills Centre provided a Neighbourhood Improvement worker during the year to focus on employment and enterprise development



Tenant comment about the Community Renewal Program

**"I can't speak highly enough about the work that has been done. It was worth waiting for, we love it."**

- Up to 10 residents are employed at any one time through the employment initiatives at Goonellabah
- Sales and stock transfers have resulted in a reduction in public housing on the estate from 150 in 1996 to 120 in 1999
- Tenancies of less than 12 months are down from 29% to 8%
- Offers per tenancy are down from between six and 10 per allocation to only six rejections for the whole of 1998/99
- Only five rehousing applications were received in 1998/99.

NSW Department of Housing

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

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