



fact sheet

Community Renewal in Inverell



Inverell Background

The Inverell public housing estate largely comprises free standing cottages for families and couples. The estate is designed predominantly along 'Radburn' principles which includes:

- the segregation of pedestrian paths and roads through the use of footpaths, underpasses and bridges
- the provision of rear access to properties for cars with dwellings orientated towards either common open space or a pedestrian walkway.

Tackling Issues in Inverell

The Inverell estate faced the following issues:

- extremely high levels of unemployment amongst tenants
 - unacceptable levels of rental arrears
 - some difficult to let properties
 - high turnover and vacancy rates
- houses poorly maintained by tenants.

“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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The "Inverell Times" Comments

"What impressed us was the honest effort that ordinary people are putting in to build the community spirit that can provide the solution for some of these problems ...there was genuine (if cautious) pride in some of the steps that have already been taken to improve an area at which many Inverell residents look down their noses".

What We Sought to Do

The aims of the Community Renewal Strategy in Inverell were to:

- increase employment opportunities for residents of the estate
- reduce the level of public housing by sale of dwellings to private owners
- improve the overall value of assets on the estate
- reduce the overall cost to governments of social support
- reduce the level of rental arrears and the cost of repairs
- reduce rejection levels and the number of vacant properties.

Where we are today

The Inverell Community Development Plan has the following results:

- the Linking Together Centre has become the base for a number of community activities as well as educational opportunities including Adult Literacy classes and computer courses through TAFE
- improvements in rent arrears which have been reduced from 11% to 6.7%. Accounts in credit have increased from 45% to 80%
- rejection rates have declined with only one home being rejected in the past 4 months
- all properties are being let compared to 18 months ago when over 40 homes were vacant
- major improvements to 52 houses including front fencing, sensor lighting, ceiling fans, and a number of full home refurbishments
- a total of 24 homes were sold to private owners, with seven of these being tenants.



Tenant comment about the Community Renewal Program

"We feel real progress is being made as we meet some of our neighbours for the first time. Now we can work together to look after our neighbourhood and each other."

NSW Department of Housing

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