



fact sheet

Community Renewal in Waterloo



Waterloo Background

Waterloo is an inner city suburb of Sydney with more than 2000 units of public housing developed over a number of years.

It is a mix of high-rise, three storey walk-up apartments and medium density housing.

Issues for Waterloo

The Waterloo Community Renewal Strategy commenced in 1995/96 to address a range of problems associated with the predominance of public housing in a high density residential community.

Tenants, as well as staff of the Department of Housing, community advocates and local social service providers raised their concerns about the social and physical amenity of the estate.

The issues raised by the community became the catalyst for the Community Renewal Strategy for the estate.

They included lack of security, problems with lack of ownership of common space, the quality of the dwellings, particularly bedsits and the level of unemployment on the estate.

“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 improvements have fostered a greater sense of community. Tenants feel more secure, have more contact with others through precinct committees and community activities and have developed a sense of ownership of the improvements.

What We Did:

A major security improvement program has been completed which includes:

- Installation of electronic security intercoms in apartment building entrances
- Installation of a security access system to high rise car parking areas
- Improved lighting in common areas
- Installation of fences in unit blocks.

Improvement to Dwellings

Since the project started 120 bedsit units have been converted to one and two bedroom apartments in high rise pensioner blocks. 66 walk-up apartments have been upgraded to contemporary standards.

Employment

Waterloo has a higher unemployment rate and at the same time a significantly lower labour force participation rate than the Sydney Statistical District and South Sydney Local Government Areas. Some initiatives under the Community Renewal Strategy included:

- Odd Jobbers is a tenant developed handyman and home help service

that is provided by tenant volunteers. The aim of the project is to provide a range of handyman services to the community and at the same time develop vocational skills that may lead to paid employment.

- The Department has made it a condition of contracts for common area cleaning and lawn and grounds maintenance that 30% of the contractors workforce is public tenants.

Community Gardens

In response to requests from tenants, particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds, the Department of Housing provided a community garden on the Waterloo estate with 45 plots for the use of tenants. The garden proved to be so popular that a further two gardens were provided. At least 10 cultural groups use the gardens which has helped develop a sense of community amongst the residents.

Community Facilities

The provision of enhanced neighbourhood facilities has enabled improved

tenant participation, increased presence of residents in common areas and provided much needed facilities for children, youth and other groups. Facilities include:

- Waterloo Neighbourhood Centre
- 3 Community Gardens
- Improved common area seating
- Chess boards
- Soft fall play areas for small children
- 2 multi-purpose tennis/basketball/roller hockey courts for young people.

Tenant Participation:

- Is a strong feature in Waterloo
- The primary vehicle is the Neighbourhood Advisory Board
- The Board operates on a precinct model which ensures all areas are equally represented
- A special worker has just been recruited to increase the participation of Aboriginal tenants.

Partnership with the University of New South Wales

The Department developed a unique relationship with the University of NSW, particularly the School of Social Work and the faculty of The Built Environment. Students from the University have undertaken a series of research projects including:

- Research into unemployment on the estate and projects to increase access to employment opportunities
- Survey of residents living in the high-rise accommodation to identify levels of satisfaction and other issues in the community.

They have also developed design options to upgrade assets or improve common areas, including:

- Upgrading Purcell, a seven storey high-rise project, turning bedsitters into one bedroom apartments
- Options to improve bathrooms and kitchens
- Various common area improvements to enhance security and general amenity.



Tenant comment about the Community Renewal Program

“We feel much safer ourselves and are happier taking our grandchildren out to play when they visit.”

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