

**Housing NSW
Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project**

Telling the Story: Community Engagement in Bonnyrigg

**Prepared in consultation with the
*Living Communities Consultative Committee***

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January 2008

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1. Executive Summary

Bonnyrigg is one of a number of large public housing estates in Western Sydney that were built in the 1970s and 80s using Radburn urban design principles. Bonnyrigg has many strengths as a community, but the deteriorating condition of the housing stock and the high level of concentration of public housing have resulted in it shouldering a high burden of social and economic problems.

The Bonnyrigg Project was developed with the aim of making Bonnyrigg a good place to live, a place offering good quality homes, facilities and services.

The Bonnyrigg Project is the first to carry the 'Living Communities' brand, an approach representing the most recent thinking by Housing NSW on the renewal of large disadvantaged public housing estates. The Living Communities approach signifies an integrated response to the social and physical environments in estates. The approach has three simple core objectives:

1. Providing better services and opportunities for residents.
2. Building a stronger community
3. Renewing the houses and public areas

The Living Communities approach has a strong emphasis on community engagement. Community engagement was conceived as a means of developing community support and enthusiasm for the project by giving the community an important role and a voice in shaping the project implementation.

Community engagement is sometimes used as a synonym for community consultation, but in Bonnyrigg it denoted a more complex set of functions and activities. The project adopted the following working definition for community engagement:

activities and processes that seek to **inform** affected people about the project, **include** them in project decision making structures, **consult** them about their views, **involve** them, where possible in decision making, provide opportunities and support for residents to **participate** in community projects, committees and events and **partner** with them on specific aspects of the project. This has entailed significant **capacity building** to provide them with the skills and confidence to enable local people to make a meaningful contribution to the project.

This definition was reflected in a simple schema developed for community engagement work, as follows:

INFORMATION → CONSULTATION → PARTICIPATION → CAPACITY BUILDING

The community engagement process faced particular challenges in Bonnyrigg as some 65% of the population were born overseas and almost half did not speak English or did not speak it well.

Broadly, it is acknowledged that Bonnyrigg achieved very high levels of engagement, developed a number of innovative approaches and, as a result, achieved significant community support for the project.

This report aims to outline the approach and key activities used for community engagement in Bonnyrigg and review their outcomes with a view to describing the lessons for future renewal projects and to inform the further development of practice within Housing NSW.

Addressing the questions:

- How has the project achieved such a high level of engagement?
- How has community engagement added value to the project?
- What level of resourcing was required and is this level of funding sustainable for future projects?
- If resources are limited, what are the critical aspects and approaches and what provided best value for money for future projects?

The report outlines the community engagement approach and activities undertaken by Housing NSW in partnership with Fairfield City Council during the first three years of the project. Achievements such as high levels of engagement across most population groups; innovations such as the use of bilingual community educators to delivery engagement activities; and limitations such as difficulty engaging some target groups are all discussed.

The Report describes key learning generated through the project which could provide guidance to other large scale renewal processes. These include understanding that project outcomes can be better achieved when:

- engagement is a core project activity
- a local multi-skilled engagement team is established
- professional communication processes are used
- there is a focus on good project leadership
- specific strategies for NESB and hard-to-reach groups are developed and used
- an effective engagement toolkit with a wide range of approaches is used
- investment is made in capacity building
- client service is realigned
- good governance structures are created
- The project team strives for continuous improvement
- advocates are also involved and engaged

This review of community engagement has established the value and the importance of community engagement as a core project activity for large scale redevelopment projects in public housing estates. There are critical lessons from the success of this project that may form the basis for a set of principles and benchmarks for other projects to be undertaken by Housing NSW.

It has demonstrated:

- That a community can have effective input that adds value to the project.
- That community engagement is an effective risk mitigation strategy.
- That community support for a major redevelopment is possible to achieve and maintain provided the community has a respected voice and an influence in the project and that the project is able to deliver adequate benefits for the affected tenants and the community.

The key lessons for future projects are that community engagement needs to be considered a core project activity requiring serious resourcing, appropriate skills and sustained effort. Project staffing structures, governance, partnerships and review/continuous improvement processes are important considerations for the effectiveness of community engagement and hence to the achievement of project outcomes.

2. Background

Bonnyrigg is one of a number of large public housing estates in Western Sydney that were built in the 1970s and 80s using Radburn urban design principles. Like most of these estates, Bonnyrigg has many strengths as a community, but the deteriorating condition of the housing stock, safety and crime problems related to the Radburn layout and the high level of concentration of public housing has resulted in it becoming, over time, a highly disadvantaged community, shouldering more than its share of social and economic problems.

The Bonnyrigg Project was developed with the aim of making Bonnyrigg a good place to live, a place offering good quality homes, facilities and services, much like the areas surrounding it. By significantly increasing the number and proportion of private homes in the estate, the project aims to make Bonnyrigg a socially mixed community and thereby to achieve a sustainable end to disadvantage.

The Bonnyrigg Project is the first project carrying the 'Living Communities' brand, an approach representing the most recent thinking by Housing NSW on the renewal of large disadvantaged public housing estates. The Living Communities approach signifies an integrated response to the social and physical environments in estates, and has three simple core objectives:

1. Providing better services and opportunities for residents.
2. Building a stronger community
3. Renewing the houses and public areas

In developing the Living Communities approach, Housing NSW drew on extensive International research on estate regeneration and local experience drawn from a variety of approaches to the renewal of large estates in NSW over the previous 15 years. In particular, the approach drew extensively on lessons learnt in the Minto Renewal Project in South Western Sydney which began in 2002.

Bonnyrigg has been positioned as a pathfinder project, allowing a number of new approaches to be tested, with the lessons learnt informing the Living Communities approach and future Housing NSW renewal projects. Bonnyrigg was the first large renewal project to feature use of a Public Private Partnership (PPP), whereby a special purpose PPP company, composed of a number of existing legal entities, would be formed to manage all aspects of the project for a 30 year term. Under the PPP, the Company would undertake the redevelopment of the estate, build the new public housing, build and sell new private housing and provide the full range of services including tenancy management and maintenance of the public housing and provision of significant community renewal services. Housing NSW will pay for these services through a monthly service payment over the 30 year term, linked to the achievement of specific Key Performance Indicators.

In this context, community engagement was given a particular priority in Bonnyrigg. The clear evidence from international experience is that renewal in disadvantaged areas needs to engage the affected communities in meaningful ways if the broader project objectives of improving the outcomes for individuals and the community are to be realised. It was also the experience of Housing NSW staff that project goals, strategies and action are improved with the active input of those who know the place best and have direct experience of the problems.

As the project began, the community engagement process faced particular challenges in Bonnyrigg. Some 65% of the population were born overseas and almost half did not speak English or did not speak it well. Reflecting Bonnyrigg's role over many years as an entry point for refugees, residents spoke over 150 languages or dialects, with Vietnamese speakers the largest single cultural group, and many were from traumatised backgrounds. The early indications were that there was significant interaction and capability within individual cultural groups in Bonnyrigg but not much interaction across the groups. As a result, Bonnyrigg was not a community that could easily identify common problems and take action to address them, nor organise in pursuit of its own interests. In this respect it was a community with only limited community capacity.

In addition, Bonnyrigg has been home to a low number of non-Government, charitable organisations, compared to many other similar estates, and human services as a result are limited compared to the size of the needs. In part this is the result of Bonnyrigg's location within the Fairfield local government area, an area with a very high overall level of disadvantage and characterised by overstretched welfare services. The Bonnyrigg community has had only limited exposure to community development work over the years, focussed on a community centre running a number of low key projects targeting mainly families and children. This effort was complemented by Housing NSW, which had, since 2002, delivered a successful Intensive Tenancy Management (ITM) service - using a community development model - to about half the estate from two converted townhouses within the estate.

The project, as proposed by the successful proponents, Bonnyrigg Partnerships (BP), will see the replacement of the current 833 public housing dwellings with 2330 new homes, of which 30% (699) will be new public housing homes. The additional private housing adds to an existing 100 privately owned homes. An additional 134 public housing homes provided by BP in other areas within Western Sydney to maintain existing public housing numbers (833 homes). Public and private homes will be scattered throughout the 81 hectare site and be indistinguishable one from the other. The redevelopment will be undertaken in 18 stages over about a 12 year period. In addition, the development will involve construction of new high quality parks and public domain improvements, the construction of a new community centre and, potentially, new retail and professional service facilities.

Existing Bonnyrigg tenants can choose to remain in Bonnyrigg, subject to a suitable home being available, and be rehoused in temporary housing until new homes are built. Or they can choose to be rehoused in alternate public housing off the estate. BP is required to provide all necessary services to support the renewal of the estate, including tenancy management and maintenance of the public housing, rehousing tenants on estate, communication and consultation services and community renewal services. Community Renewal proposals span a wide range of social, economic and environmental projects (including affordable housing, aged and disabled services, youth services, services coordination and community capacity building). In developing its community renewal program, Bonnyrigg Partnerships will put in place an innovative Community Trust Fund resourced from a share of funds from the sale of new private homes and other sources.

Housing NSW managed all aspects of the project from announcement through to transition to Bonnyrigg Partnerships in October 2007, a period of almost 3 years. In that period, Housing NSW carried out extensive community engagement and community renewal programs, in partnership with the Fairfield City Council. This program was set out in a published Community Renewal Plan and was developed with input from an active Community Reference Group of residents and Non Government agencies and a Community Renewal Steering Committee composed of government and Non-Government service providers.

A formal partnership with Fairfield City Council has been important to the success of the project to date, with Council contributing significant skills, knowledge and resources to the project. The community engagement program was delivered by the community building team within the Strategic Projects Unit of Housing NSW, which had organisational responsibility for the Project. A local project team was established, composed of staff from Housing NSW and Council, located in a project office within the Bonnyrigg estate. The team worked closely with Council's Outcomes group, in particular the Place Manager for Bonnyrigg (who had her office in the Project office) and with the community development team at Council. The team also worked closely with the Client Service Team within the Greater Western Sydney division of Housing NSW to ensure coordination between project activities and core tenancy management services.

Bonnyrigg Partnerships comprises four entities – Westpac (financier), Becton (property developer), Spotless (facilities manager) and St George Community Housing (tenancy manager). Equity in the company is held by Westpac and Becton. A second PPP company – Bonnyrigg Management – has been established as part of the BP structure with responsibility for delivering some services (communication, consultation, community renewal) and providing a vehicle for coordination across all project activities.

3. Aims of the Report and Methodology

This report aims to outline the approach and key activities used for community engagement in Bonnyrigg and review their outcomes with a view to describing the lessons for future renewal projects and to inform the further development of practice within Housing NSW. This aim responds to the significant level of interest the project has attracted from within Housing NSW and from other agencies with an interest in community renewal in disadvantaged communities. Broadly, it is acknowledged that Bonnyrigg achieved very high levels of engagement, developed a number of innovative approaches and, as a result, achieved significant community support for the project going forward.

People have therefore particularly wanted to know:

- How the project achieved such a high level of engagement?
- How has community engagement added value to the project?
- What level of resourcing was required and is this level of funding sustainable for future projects?
- If resources are limited, what are the critical aspects and approaches and what provided best value for money for future projects?

There is also organisational interest in how the Bonnyrigg experience might contribute to the development of better community engagement practice within Housing NSW projects and to guidelines to frame future projects.

In reaching the conclusions in this review, the authors had reference to a number of processes:

- A review of written reports prepared for each of the significant community engagement activities in the project over the first 3 years (these are listed in Appendix D)
- Regular reflection within the local project team on what worked, and what lessons were learnt

- Feedback from key groups including the Bonnyrigg Community Reference Group, Bonnyrigg Public Tenants Group, Bonnyrigg Network and the Community Renewal Steering Committee and from research carried out by University of Western Sydney focussed on adult education that operated in Bonnyrigg over a number of years.
- The Living Communities Consultative Committee - comprising representatives of key advocate organisations in social housing and academics in the community renewal field - played a key role in providing comment on a series of drafts of this paper and by providing their own reflections on lessons learnt.
- Cultural Perspectives Pty Ltd, a Sydney based consultancy, conducted a brief audit and review of the community engagement and community renewal approach.

4. Community Engagement

Community engagement is sometimes used as a synonym for community consultation, but in Bonnyrigg it denoted a more complex set of functions and activities. The project adopted the following working definition for community engagement:

activities and processes that seek to **inform** affected people about the project, **include** them in project decision making structures, **consult** them about their views, **involve** them, where possible in decision making, provide opportunities and support for residents to **participate** in community projects, committees and events and **partner** with them on specific aspects of the project. This has entailed significant **capacity building** to provide them with the skills and confidence to enable local people to make a meaningful contribution to the project.

This definition was reflected in a simple schema developed for community engagement work, as follows:

| |
|---|
| INFORMATION → CONSULTATION → PARTICIPATION → CAPACITY BUILDING |
|---|

The schema recognised a hierarchy of community engagement functions beginning with 'provision of information' about the project as the base level. The schema assumes that with accurate information, the community is in a position to be meaningfully consulted about the project, to express views and preferences and to give feedback on proposals or options. Having gained confidence in expressing views, and with confidence that the project is listening and responding to those views, community members are more likely to participate in project activities. At each point, the project aims to build community capacity through the development of increased skills, confidence and leadership. These processes are designed to increase the capacity of the community to champion its own interests and speak on its own behalf. Although the schema expresses a linear set of functions, in practice, activities often aim to achieve a number of the functions simultaneously. In particular, capacity building was mostly achieved by leveraging off consultation or community project activity, rather than as stand alone activity.

The approach was both planned and opportunistic, with significant flexibility to reshape or refocus activities at any stage in response to outcomes achieved or feedback from those involved. The team also welcomed inputs from all team participants and stakeholders and was committed to on-going learning. Regular team meetings and planning sessions provided the structure for reflection, reprioritising and for identification of new strategies and

approaches. The team believes these open and flexible approaches contributed to the high level of engagement achieved.

In this way, community engagement sought to contribute to the achievement of the overall project objectives as follows:

1. Providing better services and opportunities for residents.

Community engagement allows service improvements to be identified through consultation, giving the community the opportunity to contribute ideas and help make decisions about how services and opportunities can be enhanced and for the community to participate in service improvement projects.

2. Building a stronger community

Community engagement activities contribute to skill development and therefore to the building of a stronger community, better able to meet the challenges which face it and work for common purposes.

3. Renewing the houses and public areas

Community views about the new houses and changes in the public domain can contribute to the quality of the plans, to community support for proposed physical changes and to community participation in projects to implement those changes and build ownership, community pride and social cohesion - all critical to the success of new communities.

5. Community Engagement Activities

The Project went through a number of distinct stages since its launch by the (then) Minister of Housing, Carl Scully, in December 2004 through to the point where Bonnyrigg Partnerships took prime control of the project in October 2007. The stages relate primarily to the necessary steps in the PPP procurement process and each marked a distinct phase in the community engagement process, as detailed below:

| PPP Procurement Stages | Timing | Major PPP Activities | Key Community Engagement Activities |
|---|--------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Project announcement | Dec 2004 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public announcement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Produce written material about the project and its impacts ▪ Conduct community information sessions ▪ Build relationships with the community |
| 2. Call for Expression of Interest (EOI): | Dec 2004 – Feb 2005 (2 months) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop the EOI documents ▪ Call for EOIs from the market | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide basic information and answer questions about the project |
| 3. Develop the Request for Development Proposals (RDP): | Feb 2005 – Aug 2005 (8 months) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluate and shortlist proponents from EOI submissions ▪ Develop the contract documents ▪ Develop the RDP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct Phase 1 community consultation to provide input to the RDP |

| PPP Procurement Stages | Timing | Major PPP Activities | Key Community Engagement Activities |
|---|--------------------------------|---|---|
| 3. RDP submissions put together by shortlisted proponents | Aug 2005 – Mar 2006 (7 months) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Receive RDP submissions form shortlisted proponents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consult regarding community renewal ▪ Build capacity |
| 4. Evaluation of RDP submissions and selection of preferred proponent | Mar 2006 – Sept 2006 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluate RDP submissions ▪ Secure Cabinet agreement to preferred proponent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitate neighbourhood participation ▪ Conduct information activities |
| 5. Contract negotiations with preferred proponent | Sept 2006 – Dec 2006 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contract negotiations with preferred proponent ▪ Cabinet agreement to contract | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain neighbourhood participation ▪ Continue information activities ▪ Conduct special projects with population groups not well represented previously (Indigenous people; youth) |
| 6. Financial close of contract | Dec 2006 – Apr 2007 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Announcement of successful PPP company ▪ Financial arrangements finalised | |
| 7. Mobilisation | Apr 2007 - Oct 2007 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bonnyrigg Partnerships (BP) get ready to provide services ▪ BP assume responsibility for the project ▪ Further development of BP's plans ▪ BP assume prime responsibility for all project activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide information on the BP draft plans ▪ Consult on the proposed development plan ▪ BP establish their relationships with the community |

A complete list of activities held and the number of people who attended is at Appendix A. An analysis of activities by type is at Appendix B. The key community engagement activities are outlined by stage below.

Prior to announcement

Prior to the public announcement of the Project, there was a relatively short period available for planning the community engagement program, assembling resources and drawing together available information about the Bonnyrigg community. Activities included:

- The collection of baseline data from Housing NSW and Census sources
- 'Low key' research undertaken by Prof Tony Vinson, of Sydney University, on the characteristics of disadvantage at Bonnyrigg, interviews with some key informants about the dynamics of the community and identification of community leaders.

- A brief review of practice in community engagement and renewal in a range of International estate regeneration projects and in previous Housing NSW projects.
- The finalisation of the communication strategy prepared by the Clifton Group and the appointment of Sarkissian and Associates as community consultation consultants.
- The appointment of a Housing NSW project officer with local knowledge to take charge of tenant liaison and local communication with the community and to support local implementation of the consultation program.

This period also saw the formalisation of a partnership with Fairfield City Council under a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

Project Announcement (Dec 2004)

The public announcement of the project in December 2004 took many Bonnyrigg residents by surprise, and created significant anxiety about what would happen and when. The first task for Housing NSW and Fairfield City Council therefore was to provide the community with information, and address community concern about the impact of the project, while building trust and credibility. Specific activities included:

- Production of the first Bonnyrigg Project *newsletter* (which was then produced every two months thereafter) in 6 community languages.
- Production of a series of *fact sheets*, a *Question and Answer* publication and information for the *Housing NSW website*, all translated into the 6 main community languages.
- Conduct of a series of 7 *community information sessions* over 8 days in December 2004, targeting the affected community, agency stakeholders and broader advocate groups. These were lively sessions conducted using translators in the main community languages. Over 300 people attended.

EOI Stage

During this short stage the focus continued to be on providing basic information about the project, answering resident's many questions and addressing their fears about the impact of the project on them. Further community information sessions were held, until the local team was satisfied that most people had the information they needed and the project could move on to the initial consultation phase.

RDP Development Stage

The dominant activity in this stage was the extensive community consultation process run for Housing NSW, in partnership with Fairfield City Council, by Sarkissian and Associates. This included:

- A *stakeholder workshop*, with invited stakeholders from local government and Non Government organisations, cultural groups and community leaders.
- Two large community events:
 - The '*Speak Out*' at which resident participants were invited to express their views, concerns and ideas in relation to a list of topic areas, including

community safety, issues for children and youth and design for parks and public spaces.

- *Our Bonnyrigg Dream* – a series of two workshops at which participants developed a set of principles for the development of Bonnyrigg which was documented as the Community’s masterplanning principles.
- A number of smaller *workshops, precinct barbecues* and *information stalls* at cultural events such as Chinese/Vietnamese New year. These provided a ‘street-level’ presence allowing residents to raise issues and ask questions, and enable the project team to dispel the inevitable rumours.
- *Small scale consultation sessions* with a range of target population groups, including seniors, Indigenous residents and private owners and a series of consultation sessions conducted in the 5 main community languages (Arabic, Spanish, Khmer, Lao and Vietnamese).
- A *‘Week with a Camera’* involving 170 students (of whom 60 lived on the Bonnyrigg estate) in Grades 5 and 6 at the two main local primary schools being asked to take photos of the things they liked and didn’t like about Bonnyrigg and then to make a collage of the photos for public display.
- Two *field visits* to housing projects (in Liverpool and Canberra) which allowed residents to reflect on what they liked and did not like about the houses and the layout of the developments.
- At the end of this period, the outcomes from the consultation were assessed and summarised in a glossy *‘What you told us’* document, which was distributed widely in the community.

In all, there were more than 45 consultation events conducted in this period, with total attendances numbering 1100 people. The outcomes of these activities were thoroughly documented in detailed reports and all the materials and reports were included in the Request for Detailed Proposals, with proponents being invited to consider community needs and preferences expressed through the consultations in developing their detailed proposals.

In addition, in this phase:

- The *Community Reference Group* was established, initially open to any resident in Bonnyrigg who wanted to participate, with an invitation also to the major community and non government organisations operating in the area to be involved. Over time the membership of the group evolved and was ‘closed’, so that new members needed to be approved to join.
- A *Baseline Survey* involving interviews with 72% of households in the project area was undertaken by the City Futures Research Centre at the University of New South Wales. It covered demographic data as well as information on neighbourhood cohesion and housing and relocation preferences.
- The *Living Communities Consultative Committee* was set up, composed of key stakeholders and external advisors. The group was given a broad but simple brief to hold the project accountable for community commitments, to raise issues and to provide ideas. The group has made a valuable contribution to the thinking in the project at its monthly meetings throughout the project.

RDP Evaluation Stage

In this period, the focus was on activities that would deepen the connections of the project with the community and build community capacity and skills, particularly in relation to urban and housing design. In part, this focus resulted from the commercial-in-confidence nature of the RDP phase, which meant that there was little new, publicly available information that could be provided to the community and the opportunities for involving the community in the RDP phase were very limited. Key activities were: :

- A *student project* with architecture students from the Faculty of the Built Environment at UNSW to design a masterplan for Bonnyrigg with residents acting as the client.
- A Building the Dream' *workshop series* to educate the community in housing and design concepts, including how to read a plan, masterplanning, open space, streetscapes and home design.
- Five *field trips* to master planned private housing estates in Western Sydney, so residents could identify urban design concepts and what they liked and did not like. These were conducted for each of the main cultural groups in the community.
- A *Tenant Support and Advocacy Service* was established, with grant funds being provided to a respected local Non-Government Organisation. The service focussed on supporting and advocating on behalf of tenants through the rehousing interview process, being conducted by the Housing NSW Client Service Team.

These activities used a new approach to the complexity of language diversity in Bonnyrigg. Instead of using translators, a *Bilingual Community Education (BCE)* model was used, adapted from a South West Sydney Area Health Service approach. The BCE's delivered the workshop series, having had training from an adult educator who had developed the workshop curriculum with inputs from experts in each topic area. The workshops were held in each of the main language groups and then all groups mixed over a light lunch, thereby adding to community capacity. The workshops were designed to suit prevocational learners and were highly participatory and informal and proved an effective tool for engagement in the 6 main language groups, in addition to English.

In addition, regular precinct BBQs were held and two new initiatives began:

- *Morning coffee sessions* - held in individual homes hosted by a community member who would invite their friends and neighbours to meet a person from the project team and get hold of the information they wanted.
- *Printed calendars* of a wide variety of activities for residents provided by Council, the Department and local community groups were produced, distributed to households and displayed as large posters in community spaces.

The morning coffee sessions proved an effective means of reaching individuals and population groups who had not attended the larger events, who were in a harder-to-reach population group or who were housebound.

During this phase, the Housing NSW Bonnyrigg Client Service Team also began the process of interviewing all tenants to identify their needs and preferences for rehousing. The *rehousing interviews* used an interview tool developed for the purpose with input from the Community Reference Group. Tenants could invite someone from the Tenant Support and Advocacy Service to be present at their interview or to otherwise support or advocate on their behalf. This proved a very popular service, particularly with Non English speakers.

Contract Finalisation

In this period there was particular emphasis on the development of community projects in which residents could participate or which residents could run independently of the project team. There were also a number of service improvement projects.

Initiatives included:

- The first *Bonnyrigg Bargain Day* was held with residents being invited to put all their unused household items out for sale. This helped support residents to begin to sort through their possessions, and begin to discard those they didn't want, ahead of rehousing. It was followed up during the following week with a hard rubbish collection, for any garbage that had accumulated. Residents were invited to attend a BBQ at the conclusion of the day to talk with others involved.
- The *Men's Shed* project, supported by the Parks Community Network, was initiated to support men in the estate to undertake practical projects and to build social support amongst men, a minority group in the estate.
- A number of new services were supported to relocate to Bonnyrigg or to improve access by Bonnyrigg residents, including *Centacare* (counselling and family support), *Benevolent Society* (services for women and families) and the *Vietnamese Women's Association* (services for women).

In this period, as well:

- Regular informal *precinct barbecues* continued but no new large scale community events were held.
- Community *skill building workshops* continued to be run using the BCE (bilingual) model in six languages and covered a wide range of topics.
- The *urban design and planning workshops* were adapted to be presented at the local high school to local young people.
- These initiatives were combined with a *'Life Experience Counts'* portfolio project which aimed at assisting residents to identify their skill base and set up a pathway onto further learning or employment.

Mobilisation

The mobilisation stage featured a *major consultation program* conducted by Bonnyrigg Partnerships, focussed on the development plans and house designs they had submitted at the RDP stage. Following further technical development of the plans and consideration of comments from the consultation, BP finalised their plans and submitted them for planning approval at the end of this period.

The process for this was seen as crucial for supporting the development of the community's relationships with BP in the longer term. It also involved the project team working with BP to align its community engagement approach with successful approaches to date and to assist BP to develop its relationships with the community.

The consultation featured 3 two day events over a 7 month period held in large public venues within the estate, and the display of plans and explanatory materials. BP staff supported by Housing NSW and Council project staff were available to explain the materials and to record participants' comments. There were three phases:

- A public *consultation event* in early April 2007 designed to relaunch the project, introduce the Bonnyrigg Partnerships (BP) team, and display the first draft concept plans for public comment.
- A further consultation event in **June** over two days, focussed on a further refinement of the development plans and the display of house designs for comment, particularly from the public tenants.
- Plans were then further amended and displayed for information at a further 2 day event in October, prior to lodgement for planning approval.

This stage involved a gradual transfer of responsibility and building of relationships between the community and BP. To meet the pressures of the contractually agreed time frame, consultation and engagement by BP was necessarily undertaken in parallel with other start up activities such as assembling resources and resolving implementation details.

6. Achievements

This section addresses the question of whether the community engagement program met its aims and the extent to which it contributed to the achievement of the overall project objectives.

Achievements have been measured in a range of ways:

- By recording the names and addresses of people who attended the major events and recording the overall level of attendances at project events and activities.
- Analysing attendance data to identify the reach into population sub groups and by mapping participation by household address across the estate, wherever possible.
- A number of surveys were conducted at events to record participants' views on the successes and shortcomings of specific project activities.

In addition, achievements and learning was captured through a number of processes:

- At regular review sessions by the local project team
- Through a series of professional audits conducted by consultants for the project, in particular by Clifton Group.
- The twice monthly meetings of the Community Reference Group and monthly meetings of the Living Communities Consultative Committee also provided two regular forums for reflection on achievements and learning.

Over the first three years of the project, over 400 events were held attracting over 4000 participants (See Appendix A for more detail). This has been widely accepted as indicating highly successful community engagement outcomes. Indications that the engagement has been successful from a community perspective include;

- Very high participation rates compared to other renewal projects with 60% of Bonnyrigg households attending one or more events, and 25% attending four or more events.

- Sustained participation rates in on-going activities. Housing and urban design capacity building workshop attendance maintained an average of 85 participants. Site visit attendance grew from 35 to 90 over the five field visits.
- Broad participation across language groups with 60% of participants drawn from non-English speakers, matching the proportion in the local population.
- A high level of early acceptance of the redevelopment project with 65% of households providing provisional support for redevelopment in the baseline study, conducted five months after the 2004 announcement.
- Low levels of opposition to the project indicated by few negative media reports and no representations to the minister or local politicians opposing the project.
- A high degree of value reported by participants. For example 70% of participants reported that the capacity building activities better equipped them to participate in consultation and discussions about the redevelopment.
- Bonnyrigg Partnerships has noted a high degree of knowledge demonstrated by local people in their 2007 consultation process and the positive impact this has had on the plan making process.
- Commonly expressed views from community members appreciating the value and benefit of the engagement process – including reduced social isolation and increased skills and confidence in interacting with Government and business representatives.

Innovation

The project was characterised by an innovative approach and a willingness to continually review and redesign methods to improve effectiveness. Innovative practices included:

- The use of bi-lingual community educators (BCE's) as a response to the cultural and language needs of the communities of Bonnyrigg.
- Community input into master planning principles for the PPP bid documents.
- Capacity building workshops to prepare the community to comment on the development and housing plans when presented by the PPP company.
- A series of popular housing and urban design field visits, conducted in the main language groups.
- A seamless day to day partnership between Housing NSW and Council staff which included decision making, planning and review as well as operations.

Limitations

There were, of course, a number of limitations in relation to the effectiveness, reach and success of the community engagement work. The *Audit of Community Engagement* noted the following:

Indigenous Voice

Despite attempts in the early months, the community engagement approach has not targeted the Indigenous community in a linguistic or a culturally focused way.

Bonnyrigg's Indigenous community have missed out on tailored opportunities to get involved in the engagement process. Many of the key informants were regretful that an educator or an advocate was not appointed to this community. Some expressed concern about the extent to which community renewal is likely within this already highly marginalised community given that there have been no specific interventions to increase their knowledge or skill sets as part of the engagement approach.

Relationship between Renewal and Engagement

The relationship between the community engagement approach and the community renewal approach has been described as 'dislocated'. Although the community engagement process has, without doubt, built the community's ability and willingness to participate in community endeavours, a reported limitation of the project was that engagement has focused mostly on the built environment. Some key informants felt that engagement could have incorporated key areas of the renewal plan into the workshops in the participation phase. Despite this, it was generally felt that the engagement approach has, overall, created enough community networks and infrastructure to facilitate an effective and dynamic implementation of the community renewal plan.

Coordination of Local Service Providers

Some of the local community service providers felt that the Living Communities Project could have better coordinated NGO networks and service providers in the area. A number of service providers interviewed felt undirected, unsure of what structures or groups to become involved in and some felt they needed invitation from the project to work with the community. Whether warranted or not, this attitude of local service providers will impact the ultimate outcome of community renewal. For the Bonnyrigg environment, well facilitated community renewal will require a structured, planned and coordinated approach to community service where gaps in service provision cannot be attributed to a lack of leadership in the area.

Youth

Making up a quarter of the community's population, Bonnyrigg has a significantly high number of children and young people. The close working relationship with Bonnyrigg High School created some great opportunities for engaging and consulting with young people. However, the Living Communities Project has not supplemented these initiatives in the residential setting. Young people who do not attend the local High School have minimal opportunity to participate in the project or receive information that is tailored in a youth-appropriate or child-appropriate way.

Providing evidence to the community

Many informants reported that tenants expected a higher degree of feedback from the Living Communities Team that acknowledged their input into the engagement approach. Throughout the engagement process, the communities felt that they had little indication that decision makers were considering their input and addressing their concerns. The communities expected more ongoing feedback from the Living Communities Project in the participation phases of engagement.

Conclusion

The project team believes that all the indications were that, at the point of hand over to Bonnyrigg Partnerships, the community had a good level of general knowledge about the project and a sound level of acceptance of the broad approach and key project proposals.

Indications are that the community also believes it has had the opportunity to have an influence over the shape of the project and that the project team has listened to community views and preferences and attempted to respond positively to them. This view is not however universally held nor evenly accepted across all population groups. The community is also likely to say that, at this early stage, they are not yet convinced that the incoming PPP company is committed to the same level of community engagement and influence that Housing NSW, with Council, has maintained to this point, though Bonnyrigg Partnerships is making every effort to demonstrate such commitment.

Some population groups have been underrepresented. For example, Indigenous Australians have not participated in great numbers, despite some significant effort in targeting events to this group. Indigenous involvement increased greatly however following the employment of a skilled Aboriginal housing support worker by Housing NSW during 2007.

Overall, engagement and participation levels are very high compared to similar projects in public housing estates elsewhere and to other Housing NSW renewal projects.

In relation to the achievement of project goals, the *Audit of Community Engagement* concluded:

Providing better services and creating new opportunities

Key informants have suggested that prior to the Living Communities Program, residents of the Bonnyrigg estate were not engaged with community service provision. Under the Living Communities Program, Bonnyrigg has a structured and focussed network of service providers who the community are willing to access. Key informants have been particularly confident that the Living Communities Program has had a positive impact on the five key social issues identified in the social renewal plan.

Building a stronger community

For meaningful community participation in the Living Communities Program, substantial capacity building and knowledge development was required of the Bonnyrigg community. Communities have participated in community engagement activities and developed their capacity to contribute to and influence the project in an eloquent and well informed manner. Throughout the Living Communities engagement process, opportunities for the communities of Bonnyrigg to become involved in workshops about urban design and social development have contributed to the skill base and knowledge of tenants, as well as contributing to the social development of this community.

Renewal of houses and public areas

It is too early in the Living Communities Program to evaluate the impact the Bonnyrigg approach has had on the renewal of public houses and public areas. However, the communities of Bonnyrigg have contributed to the shaping and design of the physical redevelopment of Bonnyrigg through consultation and participation processes. Key informants have all been impressed with the degree to which the tenant communities of Bonnyrigg have become informed and involved in the design and renewal process.

Cost benefit

Stakeholders have been interested in the level of resources that has been required to achieve this high level of engagement, and whether benefit has been demonstrated relative to cost. The main community engagement resources have consisted of:

(i) Housing NSW Staff

Within Strategic Projects, the staff resources were:

- A Director of Community Building who has overall responsibility for the community outcomes of the project, for strategic vision, leadership and direction of the engagement program.
- A Project Coordinator who coordinates interaction between residents, the project and the Client Service Team of Housing NSW.
- A Project Manager, Community Renewal who links between agencies and fosters service improvement to meet identified needs.
- An Administrative Assistant, who also manages the project office.
- The team has also included a range of short term contractors bringing specific communications and adult education professional skills.

This equated to the equivalent of 5 full time staff averaged across the 3 year period. Other costs include the rent and establishment costs of the local project office, written materials, translations and the cost of staging events.

To manage tenancy and asset management services, the client service team was restructured to create a specialist project team, so that front line staff had an awareness that their function was being undertaken within a redevelopment context and that staff needed to have a stronger community liaison and community development function than is usual. Over time, conventional Client Service Officer positions were rewritten to specialist Rehousing Coordinators and the project funded a range of new functions and roles to allow the specialist team to respond more effectively to identified needs and to play a role in the community engagement activities of the project.

The project funded an average of **4 positions** across the 3 year period.

(ii) Consultants and Advisors

Two primary consultants were appointed for the community engagement program:

- *Sarkissian and Associates* to undertake the initial consultation for input to the RDP during 2005. Thereafter, consultation activities were managed and staffed within the Project team.
- *Clifton Group* provided strategic communication advice. Clifton developed the communication strategy, undertook periodic audits of communication effectiveness and provided specific communication advice including advising during the evaluation of the RDP submissions.
- *City Futures (University of NSW)* conducted the Baseline Study of Bonnyrigg residents.

In addition a number of other consultants or advisors undertook specific activities as follows:

- *Tony Vinson* provided early advice on the dynamics of disadvantage in the Bonnyrigg estate and strategies for addressing disadvantage.
- *Nick Warren* gave advice in establishing the resident governance structures, and coordinating skill development for the resident groups and advising in relation to community development strategy.
- *Helen Burney* undertook writing and editing for documents and developed the curriculum for some capacity building workshops.
- *Vivian Milligan* was involved in evaluating community engagement and community renewal for the RDP evaluation process and was part of the RDP Evaluation Panel.
- *Steve Wilson, Mona Shrestha and Michael Singh* of the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Sydney undertook work to develop an evaluation methodology and undertook participant observation of community engagement activities.

The role of *Bruce Judd* (City Futures, UNSW) is especially acknowledged. Bruce contributed significantly to community engagement in relation to urban design issues, by providing advice to the Bonnyrigg Public Tenants Group on urban design, advising on the field trips to master planned estates and assisting with the evaluation of that program and in many other ways. Bruce participated without payment.

(iii) Fairfield City Council Staff

Council contributed significant resources to the project, in particular:

- A significant percentage of the work of the New Residential Neighbourhoods *Place Manager* (which includes Bonnyrigg) within City Outcomes was devoted to Bonnyrigg over the 3 year period.
- The Place Manager was supported by a range of project officers and support staff at many of the large public events and by a range of specialist staff.

In addition:

- Within City Service's Community Life Team a *Community Project Officer* position was created, funded by Housing NSW, to undertake community development and community engagement work and provide liaison across Council's community development team. The officer sat in the Bonnyrigg project office and operated as an integral member of the local project team.

(iv) Grants to Community Organisations

The project funded a number of community projects over the 3 year period, in particular:

- The Parks Community Centre was provided with funds to establish the Bonnyrigg *Men's Shed*.
- A number of organisations were funded to provide *school holiday activities*.
- A number of small contributions to *community festivals and events* were made.

- The Department also provided funding through a tender process for the creation of the *Tenant Support and Advocacy Service*.

Overall the community engagement direct expenditure over the relevant 34 months is in the order of \$3.5m or less than 0.5% of the anticipated project capital cost (of \$733m) In kind contributions from individuals and organisations could add a further \$0.4m.

The Strategic Projects team believes this expenditure has delivered strong value for money. All key community risks have been avoided and the community engagement program has made a significant contribution to the achievement of project goals in the first 3 years. The PPP Company has inherited an informed community with a sound understanding of the project and its impacts, with a significant level of goodwill towards the project and with a history of positive involvement in it. These position the project very positively for the future.

In addition, the Audit of Community Engagement had this to say about cost benefit:

As a pathfinder project, it has been essential that the Bonnyrigg Living Communities Program have significant community support and cooperation. Resource allocation has been substantial, especially for a community who has a thin history of community engagement and activities.

Almost all informants believed that the project was 'worth every penny'. The quality of engagement and degree of capacity now evident in the community are reflective of the high number of resources invested in this process.

This is an outcome of a high degree of investment in community renewal and a well considered and well resourced approach to community engagement.

7. Learning from the Bonnyrigg project

This review seeks to identify the factors that are relevant to the achievement of success in relation to community engagement in future community renewal projects. It is considered that the relative success of total community engagement, and the reach of engagement into sub population groups, has been due to several key factors:

- First was the belief from the outset that wide participation and providing the community with meaningful opportunities to have influence would add value to the project and sustains community support

Following from this principle, other key success factors included:

- Genuine respect by the staff for the community in particular respecting that the public housing properties being redeveloped are people's homes and acknowledging the disruptive and stressful impact of the project on people's lives.
- The stability of the resident community and their strong connection to Bonnyrigg.
- Low staff turn over in the project team allowing for continuity of trust and relationships.
- A real and continuing commitment across the project to make meaningful opportunities available for everyone and every group in the community.

- Making the commitment to, and providing the resources for, various means of participation by all individuals and groups in the Bonnyrigg community.
- Ongoing review and reflection by the Team to identify groups who were not being reached and to try out new approaches that might engage them.
- Being innovative and flexible in consultation and engagement practice.
- The effectiveness of the partnership between Housing NSW and Fairfield City Council at all levels of the two organisations

While it is possible to reflect on the processes, inputs and immediate outcomes of the community engagement approach undertaken at Bonnyrigg, it will be some time before the long-term impact of the community engagement effort can be fully assessed. Nevertheless, there is important learning to be drawn from what has been experienced to date. This can inform best practice for current and future community engagement initiatives.

Key learning has been identified by the project team and the Living Communities Consultative committee and has been informed by the *Audit of Community Engagement* report. It is developed under these headings:

- Engagement is a core project activity
- Engagement requires sustained effort
- Establish a local multi-skilled engagement team
- Ensure professional communication
- Focus on good project leadership
- Employ strategies for NESB and hard-to-reach groups
- Develop an effective engagement toolkit
- Invest in capacity building
- Realign client service
- Ensure good governance
- Strive for continuous improvement
- Involve advocates

Each is discussed briefly below:

Engagement is a core project activity

Engagement of the affected community needs to be recognised as a core project activity that requires skills, appropriate resources and frameworks. Community engagement is important to the achievement of the project objectives, particularly with respect to building community capacity and improving services and opportunities. Effective engagement also mitigates significant project risks, adds value to the project and can achieve community support for the project if well planned and managed.

Engagement requires sustained effort

An engagement strategy (and engagement team) needs to be in place at the beginning of a project and to be properly planned ahead of the project launch. The engagement effort then needs to be maintained throughout the project at an appropriate level.

Establish a Local Multi-skilled Engagement Team

A locally based engagement team is essential, and can be made up of seconded Housing NSW staff, contractors, consultants and staff from other agencies. The team needs to have responsibility for the local delivery of the engagement strategy including communication, consultation, tenant liaison (in conjunction with the Housing NSW client service team), capacity building and community development. The team should support local resident structures as needed. It will greatly assist if the team includes local Housing NSW staff that are trusted in the community and staff from other agencies with a history and commitment to community involvement and development in the locality.

Ensure Professional Communication

A professional approach to communication with the affected community is essential and communication effort needs to be maintained throughout the project. Communication and consultation approaches need to be closely co-ordinated, varied and cater for all population groups and preferences.

Focus on good Project Leadership

The skills and personal qualities of Project leaders are critical in being able to build rapport with the affected community, forge the necessary partnerships, inspire and support project staff, reinforce the values and objectives of the project and to effectively manage issues as they arise. Project leaders, both for the overall project (Project Director) and of the engagement aspects are critical to the success or failure of the engagement effort and they need to be selected for their values, skills and personal attributes. A single senior officer having overall accountability for all the community outcomes of the project has proven of particular benefit in the Bonnyrigg project.

Employ Strategies for NESB and Hard-to-reach Groups

Targeted strategies for non English speakers and harder-to-reach groups should be developed to achieve good levels of engagement across all population groups. The project needs continually to strive to reach these groups and to test new approaches where existing ones have not worked adequately. It will help to involve organisations and consultants who have skills and experience working with these groups, where the expertise is not available in-house.

Develop an effective Engagement Toolkit

A wide ranging toolkit of creative approaches to engagement need to be available that meet the spectrum of involvement including: information, consultation, participation and capacity building. Approaches should include a range of scale and formality of events – from neighbourhood BBQs to large scale community forums. If the skills to carry out a wide range of approaches are not available in-house, then they need to be brought into the team through consultants, contractors and advisors.

Invest in Capacity Building

There is great value in building capacity within the community so that it is better able to speak in its own interests and lobby for resources and attention from Governments and others. This can be achieved in a number of ways, including by:

- Providing training for community members – eg. in media, activism, meeting procedures and first aid.
- Supporting resident driven initiatives.
- Providing opportunities for skills development – eg. leadership and presentation skills.
- Including tenants on Project staff recruitment and selection panels.
- Facilitating interaction between tenant groups in different localities
- Developing and supporting Community organisations and processes which allow all sections of the community to work together to identify issues and to formulate effective action to defend or further the interests of the community.

Realign Client Service

Housing NSW Client Service needs to be closely coordinated with project activities and realigned to project objectives. In particular, it will be important that Client Service staff are resourced to provide a good level of core service and to respond to service deficiencies identified by the community. Client service teams also need a capacity to be involved in community development activity as part of the project. Accordingly, there is an argument for the project to supplement core client service resources for a higher level of responsiveness and to perform new roles. It may therefore be necessary to reconfigure or realign the functions and staffing in the client service team.

Ensure Good Governance

Good coordination and project control structures are necessary to link the project with client service and other Housing NSW structures and to take up opportunities for productive partnerships. Projects delivered by centralised Housing NSW units (such as Bonnyrigg) need to treat the Housing Services Division as an internal client. Project governance structures could include any or all of the following:

- A community reference group of residents, local NGO's and advocacy groups.
- A steering committee of government partners.
- An expert advisory committee of advocates and opinion leaders.
- Strategic partnership agreements with local council and key service providers.
- A internal department advisory or control group with appropriate representations from different divisions.
- Partnership MOUs with key partners such as councils.

Strive for Continuous Improvement

Strive for best practice and continuous improvement in engagement practice through:

- Updating communication and consultation strategies regularly.
- Adopting a professional approach with high standards and expectations.
- Sharing information about the successful and unsuccessful methods and outcomes.
- Scheduling sufficient time for debriefing and reflection in the team program.
- Welcoming examination and review from external sources.

Involve Advocates

Projects will benefit from input from key stakeholder and advocate groups and to achieve this, it will be necessary to bring those groups into the confidence of the project and to ensure transparency and openness in the flow of project information to them.

8. Conclusions

This review of community engagement has established the value and the importance of community engagement as a core project activity for large scale estate redevelopment projects in public housing estates. It is the view of this review that there are critical lessons from the success of this project for future renewal projects in public housing estates and that the principles and many of the approaches are transferable to other future projects. Bonnyrigg is therefore a demonstration project that may form the basis for a set of principles and benchmarks for other projects to be undertaken by Housing NSW. It has demonstrated:

- That a community can have effective input that adds value to the project.
- That community engagement is an effective risk mitigation strategy.
- That community support for a major redevelopment is possible to achieve and maintain provided the community has a respected voice and an influence in the project and that the project is able to deliver adequate benefits for the affected tenants and the community.

It further demonstrates:

- The value of a simple engagement schema spanning communications, consultation, participation and capacity building and the need to plan how to apply and balance these functions across the project procurement process.
- That it is possible to achieve high levels of engagement across most population groups, including traditionally “harder-to-reach” groups using a flexible, creative set of engagement tools and approaches combined with regular reviews of practice, both internal and external.
- That dynamic partnerships are possible with other agencies in the renewal projects where there are sufficient shared objectives and values and aligned structures.

In relation to the level of funds required for an effective community engagement program, it is acknowledged that the cost of the program in Bonnyrigg has been high compared to other programs. However, the outcomes and benefits have also been significant and key risks have been mitigated to a significant extent. In this respect this review establishes that effective, properly resourced and skilled community engagement can contribute significantly to the achievement of project objectives and delivers a high level of cost benefit.

The key lessons for future projects are that community engagement needs to be considered a core project activity requiring serious resourcing, appropriate skills and sustained effort. Project staffing structures, governance, partnerships and review/continuous improvement processes are important considerations for the effectiveness of community engagement and hence to the achievement of project outcomes.

Appendix A

A list of the Community Engagement Activities and the Number of Attendees

| Category and Month | Activity | Registered attendances |
|-----------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Large Group Events | | |
| December 2004 | General initial briefing (8 sessions) | 300 |
| February 2005 | Stakeholder workshop | 38 |
| April 2005 | Speak Out | 82 |
| May 2005 | Our Bonnyrigg Dream workshop (2 sessions) | 169 |
| July 2005 | Canberra Site Visit Debrief | 17 |
| August 2005 | What you told us – milestone celebration | 64 |
| November 2005 | Talk-about - community renewal consultation | 76 |
| July 2006 | Bonnyrigg High School student information workshop (2 sessions) | 110 |
| April 2007 | Milestone Event (2 sessions) | 398 |
| May 2005 | Draft Plan consultation (14 BCE* led sessions) | 74 |
| Information sessions | | |
| February 2005 | General project information session | 25 |
| | Lao project information session | 7 |
| | Spanish project information session | 12 |
| | Khmer project information session | 12 |
| March 2005 | Arabic project information session | 10 |
| | Vietnamese project information session | 20 |
| | Private Owners project information session | 21 |
| April 2005 | Arabic project information session | 12 |
| | Khmer project information session | 28 |
| June 2005 | Vietnamese project information session | 22 |
| | Carers project information session | 4 |
| September 2005 | Youth session | 9 |
| | General coffee session | 7 |
| October 2005 | General Coffee Session | 8 |
| | Youth Session | 7 |
| November | Coffee Session | 6 |
| February 2006 | General coffee session | 12 |
| April 2006 | Khmer coffee session | 6 |
| May 2006 | Lao outreach session | 7 |
| June 2006 | Rehousing Policies BCE Workshop (8 sessions – main languages) | 110 |
| | Tenancy Management BCE Workshop (8 sessions – main languages) | 47 |
| November 2006 | Assyrian Coffee Session | 2 |
| | Chinese Coffee Session | 7 |
| April 2007 | Arabic Coffee Session | 16 |
| Neighbourhood BBQs | | |
| March 2005 | 3 Neighbourhood BBQs | 68 |
| April 2005 | 4 Neighbourhood BBQs | 72 |
| May 2005 | 3 Neighbourhood BBQs | 49 |
| June 2005 | 1 neighbourhood BBQ | 14 |
| August 2005 | 1 neighbourhood BBQ | 21 |
| September 2005 | 2 Neighbourhood BBQs | 21 |
| October 2005 | 1 Neighbourhood BBQ | 6 |

| | | |
|------------------------------------|--|----------|
| May 2006 | 2 Neighbourhood BBQs 1 Youth BBQ | 26 10 |
| June 2006 | 1 Neighbourhood BBQ | 6 |
| July 2006 | 1 Men's BBQ | 8 |
| August 2006 | 2 Neighbourhood BBQs | 16 |
| September 2006 | 2 Neighbourhood BBQs | 11 |
| November 2006 | 2 Neighbourhood BBQs | 21 |
| December 2006 | 1 Neighbourhood BBQ | 7 |
| February 2007 | 1 Neighbourhood BBQ | 5 |
| March 2007 | 2 Neighbourhood BBQs | 16 |
| Capacity building workshops | | |
| August 2005 | UNSW urban design workshops | 22 |
| September 2005 | UNSW urban design workshops | 22 |
| October 2005 | UNSW urban design workshops | 22 |
| November 2005 | How to Read a Plan BCE Workshop (8 sessions – main languages) | 96 |
| | Master Planning BCE Workshop (8 sessions – main languages) | 88 |
| February 2006 | Better Parks & Places for Children BCE Workshop (8 sessions – main languages) | 62 |
| | House Design BCE Workshop (8 sessions – main languages) | 81 |
| March 2006 | Precinct Design BCE Workshop (8 sessions – main languages) | 92 |
| | Design to Prevent Crime BCE Workshop (8 sessions – main languages) | 91 |
| April 2006 | Housing Density BCE Workshop (8 sessions – main languages) | 83 |
| August 2006 | Building the Dream Workshop – high school (2 sessions) | 52 |
| September 2006 | Building the Dream Workshop – high school (2 sessions) | 52 |
| Site visits | | |
| May 2005 | Liverpool Gateway seniors redevelopment | 25 |
| June 2005 | Canberra community housing redevelopment | 39 |
| February 2006 | Park Site Visit (BCE) | 37 |
| March 2006 | House Design Site Visit (BCE) | 72 |
| | Precinct Design Site Visit (BCE) | 71 |
| | Design To Prevent Crime Site Visit (BCE) | 57 |
| April 2006 | Density Site Visit (BCE) | 89 |
| | Masterplanned Estate Site Visit (BCE) | 62 |
| August 2006 | Building the Dream Highschool student site visit | 26 |
| Community Participation | | |
| February 2006 | Resident to Resident exchange -Northcott Community Arts Trip | 9 |
| March 2006 | Safety Forum (residents, students and stakeholders) | 36 |
| | Men's shed activity | 11 |
| April 2006 | Men's shed activity | 8 |
| | Youth Activity | 7 |
| | Neighbourhood safety activity (sensor light project) | 7 |
| | Resident to Resident exchange - Northcott Residents to Bonnyrigg | 12 |
| May 2006 | Men's shed activity (2 sessions) | 17 |

| | | |
|----------------|--|----|
| | Neighbourhood safety activity (sensor light project) | 8 |
| June 2006 | Men's shed activity (2 sessions) | 13 |
| August 2006 | Health and well being (BCE) workshop (8 sessions – main languages) | 54 |
| September 2006 | Safety at home (BCE) workshop (8 sessions – main languages) | 91 |
| October 2006 | Creative Communication (BCE) workshop (8 sessions – main languages) | 62 |
| November 2006 | Transcultural Mental health (BCE) workshop (9 sessions – main languages) | 23 |
| | Community Voice Counts (BCE) workshop (9 sessions – main languages) | 52 |
| | Bonnyrigg is Growing Stronger (BCE) workshop (9 sessions – main languages) | 36 |
| December 2006 | Working Across Cultures (BCE) workshop (9 sessions – main languages) | 40 |

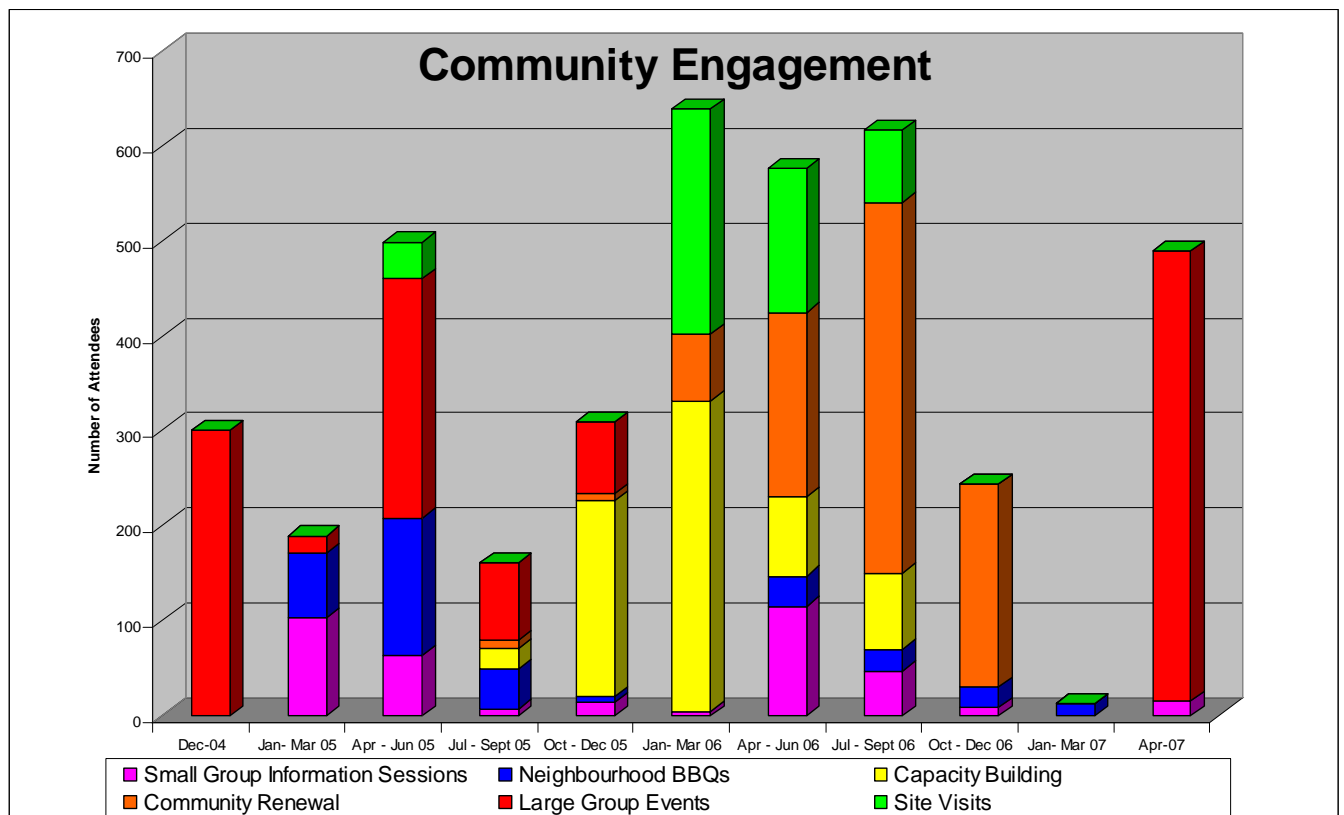
Appendix B

A summary table of community engagement activities December 2004 – May 2007 with attendances for each month.

| | Large Group Events | Information Sessions | Neighbourhood BBQs | Capacity Building | Site Visits | Community Participation | Printed material distributed |
|--------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Dec-04 | 300 | | | | | | |
| Jan-05 | | | | | | | |
| Feb-05 | 38 | 56 | | | | | |
| Mar-05 | | 51 | 68 | | | | |
| Apr-05 | 82 | 40 | 72 | | | | |
| May-05 | 169 | | 49 | | 25 | | |
| Jun-05 | | 26 | 14 | | 39 | | |
| Jul-05 | 17 | | | | | | |
| Aug-05 | 64 | | 21 | 22 | | | |
| Sep-05 | | 16 | 21 | 22 | | | |
| Oct-05 | | 15 | 6 | 22 | | | |
| Nov-05 | 76 | 6 | | 184 | | | |
| Dec-05 | | | | | | | |
| Jan-06 | | | | | | | |
| Feb-06 | | 12 | | 143 | 37 | 9 | |
| Mar-06 | | | | 183 | 200 | 47 | |
| Apr-06 | | 6 | | 83 | 151 | 34 | |
| May-06 | | 7 | 36 | | | 25 | |
| Jun-06 | | 157 | 6 | | | 13 | |
| Jul-06 | 110 | | 8 | | | | |
| Aug-06 | | | 16 | 52 | 26 | 54 | |
| Sep-06 | | | | 52 | | 91 | |
| Oct-06 | | | | | | 62 | |
| Nov-06 | | 9 | 21 | | | 111 | |
| Dec-06 | | | 7 | | | 40 | |
| Jan-07 | | | | | | | |
| Feb-07 | | | 5 | | | | |
| Mar-07 | | | 16 | | | | |
| Apr-07 | 398 | 16 | | | | | |
| May-07 | 74 | | | | | | |

Appendix C

A graph illustrating community activities by type and attendance for each quarter.



Appendix 3

Peer review by Cultural Perspectives

Strategic Projects Division

Department of Housing

Review of Community Renewal and Engagement in Bonnyrigg

Audit

Cultural Perspectives Pty Ltd

21st December 2007

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1. SUMMARY

Cultural Perspectives was commissioned by the Strategic Projects Division of the Department of Housing to conduct an audit of the community engagement approach and the community renewal approach for the Bonnyrigg Living Communities Program.

The Bonnyrigg Living Communities Program has three core objectives.

These are:

1. Providing better services and creating opportunities;
2. Building a stronger community; and
3. Renewal of houses and public areas.

This audit sought to identify the extent to which the community engagement approach has facilitated the achievement of the core objectives of the program. Cultural Perspectives has undertaken a document review and qualitative research to identify the degree to which community engagement and community renewal have occurred in Bonnyrigg.

This audit acknowledges that preliminary measures have been undertaken in the five key areas for community renewal, being:

- Community Safety
- Health and Social Wellbeing
- Education, Training, Employment and Economic Development
- Recreation and Neighbourhood Life
- Supporting and Managing Change

The community renewal approach has guided the interventions undertaken as part of the community engagement approach. Cultural Perspectives was cautious not to prematurely comment on the community renewal, because outcomes will need to be considered in conjunction with the physical renewal of Bonnyrigg. Given this, Cultural Perspectives has reviewed the community engagement approach within the framework identified for community renewal.

The processes for community engagement have been considered according to the components of the community engagement schema adopted by the Department of Housing. The community engagement approach adopted the following schema:

INFORMATION _ CONSULTATION _ PARTICIPATION _ CAPACITY BUILDING

Although linear by design, the four components of the schema have been flexible and somewhat concurrent. This is seen as a strength of the approach as engagement has been designed according to the needs of the communities in Bonnyrigg. Information provision has been comprehensive, balanced and objective. The processes of information delivery have been tailored to culturally and linguistically diverse communities. However, key informants suggested the sites and networks for delivery could have been more inclusive of established cultural networks and sites as well as the ethnic press. The process of information provision has served the engagement approach well as it has provided the communities of Bonnyrigg with the necessary framework for more complex forms of community engagement to occur. Consultation structures have been inclusive of information and capacity building exercises. Consultation was crafted such that processes contributed to the skills and knowledge base necessary for communities to contribute in meaningful, well informed and articulated consultation.

Community participation has relied on involvement in the Community Reference Group and workshops designed to address the key areas identified in the community renewal plan for Bonnyrigg.

Low participation rates of culturally and linguistically diverse communities at the Community Reference Group have led to the development of feedback mechanisms where Participation of these groups became contingent to the Reference Group and were not lost.

Capacity building has occurred throughout the community engagement approach. Because community engagement required such a specialist degree of knowledge and skills, tailored capacity building exercises have enabled the diverse communities of Bonnyrigg to be involved in consultation and participatory structures in a meaningful and informed way.

Limitations of the engagement approach have been few. However, key informants felt that community engagement could have been more proactive in targeting Indigenous and youth communities. It was also suggested that the Living Communities Program could have adopted stronger leadership in the coordination of local service providers.

Several informants felt that the Bonnyrigg communities expected more feedback from consultation as part of the engagement approach. Despite preliminary design outcomes being indicative of decision makers acknowledging the concerns identified in consultation, the communities of Bonnyrigg expected more of this feedback on an ongoing basis.

Key informants have identified a weak relationship between the community engagement approach and the community renewal approach. It was felt that community engagement focused more on the built environment than it did on social renewal. Despite this, all key informants felt that the process of community engagement has established the necessary foundations for dynamic social and community renewal.

The community renewal plan has acknowledged the social and historical features specific to Bonnyrigg. These include a history of minimal engagement, high incidences of crime and a very diverse and substantial ethnic population. The community renewal plan identified strategies to target these, which has informed tactics of community engagement.

This audit sought to identify key elements of the Bonnyrigg approach that are necessary to replicate the success of the Living Communities Program in a different locality. The use of Bilingual Community Educators was identified as the most effective way for the project to develop trust and rapport with the community. Time and the demonstration of patience were factors contributing to building community support for the project.

Overall, informants believed that the engagement approach has worked well for the communities of Bonnyrigg. Key informants recommended the community engagement approach for future localities and it was generally felt that the approach has laid the foundations necessary for meaningful community renewal. So far, community engagement and processes of social renewal have had a significant impact on the two core objectives of the program directly related to community and social life, being providing better services and creating opportunities and building a stronger community.

2. BACKGROUND

Bonnyrigg has been identified as the pathfinder project for the Living Communities Program. It is the first estate redevelopment model committed to keeping community central to the decision making and planning for estate renewal. The project's success will provide a benchmark for community renewal and engagement processes in future estate

redevelopments and may provide guidance to subsequent community engagement in human service public-private partnerships.

The Living Communities Program has intended to engage the community throughout the development process, aiming to 'make Bonnyrigg a place where you want to live'. The Department of Housing has developed three core objectives for the program and provided a framework for implementation. The following concepts have been provided by the Department of Housing.

The Bonnyrigg Living Communities Program has three core objectives. These are:

1. Providing better services and creating opportunities
2. Building stronger community
3. Renewal of houses and public areas

These objectives are addressed through two distinct but connected plans: the community renewal plan (which this audit will focus on) and the physical redevelopment plan.

The community renewal plan sets out a range of activities and initiatives intended to address five priority outcome areas for social renewal. These are:

- Community safety;
- Health and social wellbeing;
- Education, training and economic development;
- Recreation and neighbourhood life; and
- Managing change and supporting transition.

The community renewal approach to Bonnyrigg was designed to be highly consultative. Keeping with the Living Communities Program's commitment to having community central to the development process, a community engagement schema was adopted. The community engagement schema:

INFORMATION - CONSULTATION - PARTICIPATION - CAPACITY BUILDING

The success of the Bonnyrigg Living Communities Program will be determined by not just the physical redevelopment of the estate, but also by social renewal. Unlike previous estate redevelopment processes, social renewal has been kept central to the objectives of the Bonnyrigg program. Whereby community engagement not only serves as a mechanism to consult with the community, but also serves as a process by which social renewal can be incorporated.

3. OBJECTIVES

Cultural Perspectives has been engaged by the Strategic Projects division of the Department of Housing to review the community renewal and community engagement approaches of the Living Communities Program. This audit will identify how the approaches have been implemented in Bonnyrigg for the period December 2004 to June 2007.

Cultural Perspectives has been provided with the following directives:

1. Review documents and interview key stakeholders to validate the degree to which the community renewal and community engagement approaches used at Bonnyrigg have supported the achievement of the objectives of the Living Communities Program;
2. Recommend how approaches could be enhanced in future localities to better achieve objectives;
3. Consider the role of and approach to community engagement and community renewal;

4. Consider the features specific to Bonnyrigg; and
5. Consider the cost benefit of this approach in relation to achieved outcomes.

4. METHODOLOGY

The Department of Housing recommended Cultural Perspectives to undertake a review of documents and interview key stakeholders. Cultural Perspectives has used these resources to provide comment on the framework adopted for community renewal approach as well as inform of the strategies and activities implemented as part of community engagement processes.

4.1 DOCUMENT REVIEW

Cultural Perspectives has reviewed the following documents provided by the Department of Housing:

- The Building of Social Capital through Bilingual Community Education: A Case Study of the Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project Capacity Building Sessions Jody Kamminga, University of Western Sydney & Fairfield City Council 2006/2007
- Community Renewal Plan: Bonnyrigg Estate (Preliminary Report) Dallas Rogers, University of Western Sydney 2005
- Community Renewal Plan: Initiatives and Activities for 2005-2007 (Draft)
- Towards an Understanding of Community Participation in Public-Private Partnerships: A Case Study of the Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project (Confidential Draft) Dallas Rogers, University of Western Sydney & Fairfield City Council March 2006-October 2006
- Telling the Story: Community Engagement in Bonnyrigg (Draft) Bernie Coates, Dare Kavanagh, Bruce Judd & Lesley Unsworth, NSW Department of Housing 2007
- IPAP2 Public Participation Toolbox International Association for Public Participation 2000-2004
- Mixed Communities: Success and Sustainability Joseph Rowntree Foundation March 2006

4.2 PRIOR PARTICIPATION IN LIVING COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

Cultural Perspectives has participated in Bonnyrigg Living Communities Program structures in various capacities:

- Attended, in an observational capacity, the Community Reference Group 17th September 2007
- Facilitated the Living Communities Consultative Committee 25th September 2007
- Evaluated the Bonnyrigg Tenancy Support & Advocacy Service, 28th September 2007
- Provided peer comment on the Department of Housing Report Telling the Story: Community Engagement in Bonnyrigg, October 2007

The insight and information gathered through these processes have been fundamental to the detailed understanding Cultural Perspectives has about the Bonnyrigg Living Communities project. The consultant's involvement in these structures has augmented the information gathered as part of this Audit, hence expanding Cultural Perspectives' understanding of the project.

While Cultural Perspectives was not directed to consult with all members of the Living Communities Consultative Committee, an opportunity arose for Cultural Perspectives to

facilitate the Committee members' discussions for input into the paper, *Telling the Story: Community Engagement in Bonnyrigg*. During this process, Cultural Perspectives received comment from these key stakeholders which served to compliment the interview data received as part of this audit.

4.3 KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Cultural Perspectives interviewed the following key informants identified by the Department of Housing:

| Informant | Position | Organisation |
|------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Deborah Follers | Project Officer, Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project | Department of Housing |
| Paul Gilbertson | Executive Director, Strategic Projects | Department of Housing |
| Phanna Pao | Project Officer, Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project | Fairfield City Council |
| Amanda Bray | Manager, Community Life | Fairfield City Council |
| Deborah Cameron | Team Leader, Community Development | Fairfield City Council |
| Nancy Ramirez | Coordinator, Bilingual Community Education | Department of Housing |
| Claudia Stevens | Community Educator | Department of Housing |
| Ricci Bartels | Supervisor, Bonnyrigg Tenants Support Advocacy Service | Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre |
| Barbara Hillman | Coordinator, Youth Team | Cabramatta Community Centre |
| Elaine Hirst | General Manager | Community First Step |
| Andrea Otto | Community Development Services | Community First Step |
| Sharron Matayalo | Manager | Centacare, Cabramatta West |
| Chris Smith | Principal | Bonnyrigg Public School |
| Sharron Borg | Parent and Community Coordinator | Bonnyrigg High School |

4.4 KEY AREAS FOR DISCUSSION

The Discussion Guide for the interviews covered the following topics:

- The community engagement approach
- Information capacity
- Consultation structures
- Participation capacity
- Evidence of capacity building
- Limitations of the engagement approach
- How the approach has been tailored specifically to Bonnyrigg
- Impact on the community renewal plan
- Cost benefit in relation to outcomes achieved

The Discussion Guide is attached as Appendix 1: Key Stakeholder Interview Discussion

5. COMMUNITY RENEWAL

5.1 FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY RENEWAL

Community renewal refers to all social renewal and community building activities part of the Living Communities Program. The renewal approach has guided community initiatives and resources to achieve the social objectives of the Living Communities Program for Bonnyrigg. The approach set out to coordinate the initiatives and resources of local service providers, and aimed to increase the collaboration between the different tiers of community interventions and community groups. The approach aimed to enhance local services and initiatives, identify gaps in service provision and respond to the emerging needs of the Bonnyrigg community.

5.2 THE COMMUNITY RENEWAL PLAN

The community renewal plan identified five key outcome areas of social and community renewal.

5.2.1 Community Safety

Public safety and the perception of crime were high on the agenda for residents of Bonnyrigg. Consultations with the community identified the need for renewal to not only be cognisant of crime issues in the planning of estate renewal, but identified the need to incorporate safety issues into broader community life. The Bonnyrigg Neighbourhood Watch Committee and the street light program have been initiated as part of the community renewal plan.

5.2.2 Health and Social Wellbeing

The community renewal plan seeks to foster a vibrant, healthy, integrated and mutually supportive community. Initiatives like improving health and counselling services have aimed to increase the overall health of the community as well as build on the coping strategies of individuals in their management of the anxiety associated with relocation.

5.2.3 Education, Training, Employment and Economic Development

By facilitating the activities of local education and training service providers, the community renewal plan aims to increase the learning and economic opportunities for residents. Consultations indicated that 'early school leavers' and residents with poor English skills were most in need of increased learning opportunities. The community renewal plan seeks to facilitate a greater coordination of training and education services to increase residents' access to employment.

5.2.4 Recreation and Neighbourhood Life

While Bonnyrigg has a number of culturally and linguistically diverse communities residing on the estate, it was recognised that neighbourhood life demonstrated little inter-ethnic relations. The community renewal plan seeks to promote unity, identifying public space and community facilities as a common-ground for linking communities with communities. The Men's Shed and the Bonnyrigg Bargain Days are lead initiatives of this component of the plan.

5.2.5 Supporting and Managing Change

The community renewal plan acknowledges the potential stress and anxiety associated relocation. The plan seeks to increase the individual capacity of tenants to manage change as well as to build the overall resilience of the Bonnyrigg community. Further, the plan aims to develop opportunities for residents to identify positive outcomes from the change process. The History Project and the coordination of community celebrations like Big Rigg and NAIDOC Week have been fundamental to community renewal.

5.3 IMPACT OF COMMUNITY RENEWAL

Social renewal has been kept central to the core objectives of the Bonnyrigg Living Communities Program. Although it is too early in the Bonnyrigg Program to audit the outcomes of the community renewal approach, informants suggest that preliminary applications have impacted the social and community life of Bonnyrigg.

Informants to this audit perceive community renewal to be an ongoing process, still in its infantile stages. Despite this, informants have been confident that the Living Communities Program has had a positive impact on community renewal, providing a framework of social objectives for which community engagement could be structured.

6. THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

The community engagement approach is guided by the five key areas for community renewal and is underpinned by a commitment to a strong degree of meaningful community engagement and consultation. The Department of Housing have provided the following definition of community engagement:

‘Community engagement will refer to activities and processes that seek to include people affected by the project in project decision making structures by informing them about the project, consulting them about their views, involving them, where possible, in decision making and partnering with them on specific aspects of the project. This has entailed significant capacity building to enable local people to make meaningful contributions to many aspects of the project.’

As part of this audit, Cultural Perspectives asked key informants how they conceived the community engagement approach. This is how they responded:

Community engagement is connecting the development of the estate with the wider Bonnyrigg community.

Community engagement works to increase the capacity of residents so they can implement and live out the renewal plan.

As a practitioner, community engagement is linking with the community at different levels.

From a housing perspective, it's about supporting and empowering individuals and families to operate more effectively in their daily lives. On a structural level, it's about networking and increasing social capital so voices can be heard. From a civic perspective, it [community engagement] is achieved through educating people, helping them to be heard, and hooking them up with networks that they would be confident to work with.

Many varying interpretations of the community engagement approach were received from key informants. Generally, community engagement was thought of as an approach that structured the relationship between the Living Communities Project and the Bonnyrigg community. Community engagement was considered a framework that facilitates community empowerment and encourages the development of social capital.

Discussions with key informants about the community engagement approach rarely drew inference to community renewal. Interviews did not reflect the relationship between the two approaches and community engagement was only once referred to as the method of implementing community renewal.

6.1 THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SCHEMA

The Department of Housing adopted a simple schema to guide community engagement. This is:

INFORMATION _ CONSULTATION _ PARTICIPATION _ CAPACITY BUILDING

The community engagement approach has intended to guide both planned and opportunistic activities. Although the approach adopted a schema that is linear by design, the approach has demanded a high degree of flexibility such that activities could be facilitated for the community according to surfacing needs as issues arise.

Underpinning the approach was a philosophy that accepted the need for flexibility, responsiveness and ongoing learning throughout the process.

A proportion key informants could not identify the schema and there was little knowledge of the framework adopted to undertake community engagement.

6.1.1 Information

Providing the tenant population with balanced, objective information about the project and the perceived impact on individuals and community.

Printed information was distributed to the Bonnyrigg community through bi-monthly newsletters produced in six languages and information displays at the sites of community activity, most notably around the Bonnyrigg Plaza. Community gatherings, barbecues and meetings have delivered information to the community in a more personalised manner and provided opportunities for community members to ask questions directly to key staff.

The scope for gossip and the misappropriation of information has been minimal as the Living Communities Project has reportedly been highly approachable and accessible for both community members and community workers. The Bonnyrigg Department of Housing office and the Contact Centre have been well staffed and apparently very proactive in providing accurate information in a timely manner that has prevented rumours and appropriately responded to misinformation.

The information stage of the approach has been highly effective in reaching non-English speaking communities. The project has been commended for moving away from an interpreter model of information provision to using Bilingual Community Educators. Accordingly, a strength of the engagement schema has been the allowance for this transition. By all accounts, the Bilingual Community Educator model has worked very well for the Bonnyrigg community. The educators have built strong relationships with the community and information has, at all times, been delivered in ways appropriate to and tailored for the

intended audience.

The sites and networks of information provision is an area of the engagement approach that could have been more inclusive of Bonnyrigg's diverse networks. Although schools have played an important role in hosting information sessions and being a site for community gathering, the Bonnyrigg Living Communities Program have not engaged the local cultural and community structures in this same way. Community temples and other local places of worship were not engaged to distribute information, neither was the ethnic press, even though these resources are a significant source of community advice for non-English speaking communities.

The process of information provision has served the approach well as it provided the foundation for more complex forms of community engagement. It has provided the communities of Bonnyrigg with the necessary frameworks for proceeding with the subsequent elements of the engagement approach.

Overall, key informants have regarded information provision to be comprehensive, balanced and objective. There have been no identified gaps in the content of information provided either to the community of Bonnyrigg or to the service providers in the area. The Living Communities Project Team have been very effectual in preventing gossip and the spread of misinformation.

6.1.2 Consultation

Obtaining community feedback about information and propositions, facilitating community opinions and preferences. Consultation exercises have taken shape as large-scale community activities and executing feedback mechanisms like the 2005 Bonnyrigg Baseline Survey. Small group sessions have offered language support and provided a more informal approach to directing discussions.

The Department of Housing recognised that the consultation process needed to be crafted such that the community had language to express themselves accurately and understand the issues put before them. As such, consultation exercises were, in part, also designed to be information provision and skill development. This was regarded to be an effective way of ensuring consultation is meaningful and is attributed to the flexibility of the not-so-linear engagement schema.

Keeping with the organic design of the community engagement approach, large-scale structured consultation has been complimented by small, opportunistic and language specific consultation. A strength of the engagement approach has been the flexibility of consultation to create environments most conducive for the intended community.

Many of the key informants felt that the consultation phase of the engagement approach was most substantial, consuming the majority of community interactions. Some informants felt this process was too long whereby the process was referred to by some informants as 'consultation overkill', apparently affecting the community with 'consultation fatigue'. Service providers often received comment from the community who were apparently frustrated at the high level of consultation and low provision of feedback.

Overall, consultation has been successful in retrieving informed feedback from community groups.

There have been a variety of frameworks for facilitating consultation appropriate to culturally and linguistically diverse community groups. The flexibility of the approach has responded

adequately to the need for communities to be provided with the information basis and skill sets as part of retrieving feedback.

6.1.3 Participation

Working with the community on initiatives that shape the project, demonstrating that concerns are understood and considered on an ongoing basis. Community participation has relied heavily on tenant involvement in the Community Reference Group. The Community Reference Group was designed to be the site for the multi-directional flow of information where the Living Communities Program could demonstrate that community feedback is acknowledged on a decision making level.

Discussions with key informants suggested that there were practical issues in having representation of culturally and linguistically diverse communities attend the Community Reference Group. From the outset, attendance from ethnic community organisations has fluctuated. Several groups, including Lao, Khmer and Vietnamese community attended regularly for two or more years, but this attendance has declined in recent months, reportedly due to the frequency of meetings (three hours twice a month) and the duration of the lead up to the redevelopment. Key informants noted that some community members had too poor English to contribute to the Community Reference Group, and others were uncomfortable sitting in with government staff, as one key informant commented:

The community just feels they do not belong in that space in that way.

To the merit of the Living Communities Team, feedback mechanisms were developed to compensate for the non-attendance of culturally and linguistically diverse communities at the Community Reference Group. Bilingual Community Educators and the Bonnyrigg Tenancy Support and Advocacy Service developed systems to voice community concern to the Reference Group and report any actions or decisions of the Reference Group back to the community. As such, the participation of culturally and linguistically diverse communities was not lost, but became contingent the Community Reference Group in response to community need.

For culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Bilingual Community Education workshops have become the environment for community participation, a forum for the community to receive updates from the Living Communities Program as well as provide ongoing input into the project. Workshops conducted in relevant community language were tailored to the information and communication needs of diverse communities, maintaining the approach's value of 'meaningful', informed participation. One informant stated:

Something amazing happens to a community when they realise that their opinions are valued and opportunities are created for them to express them.

The project sought to facilitate increased levels of community interventions through participatory workshops that were guided by the framework for community renewal. As a whole, the community of Bonnyrigg have become compliant, engaged and are now representing a body of people who have personal investment in their community. This is the phase of the engagement approach that has demonstrated the strongest relationship with the community renewal plan. One key informant noted People are now coming out of their houses and talking to each other. This never happened before. Real social renewal is happening. It's slow, but it's happening.

6.1.4 Capacity Building

Building skills to make contributions more meaningful, professional or specialised. Increasing the confidence of community members to participate more fully in community life.

Capacity building has been a significant element of the Engagement Approach. In order for communities to participate in the community engagement process, a specialist degree of knowledge was required. Consequently, capacity building exercises have been present at every phase of engagement so there was no collapse between information provision and comprehension. As a phase of the approach, the success of capacity building can be attributed to its placement at all stages of engagement. The fluid and flexible nature of the schema has allowed for this.

In Bonnyrigg, the evidence of capacity building is the mobility and growth of communities. As a whole, the community have come from representing a demographic that was uninformed, unmotivated, disengaged and with minimal ability to express themselves in decision making processes. Now, the community are regarded, by all informants, as articulate to a semi-professional degree, confident to express their concerns and armed with channels for resolution.

Capacity building has delivered enough of a skill set for the community to participate in 'meaningful' and informed processes of participation and consultation. Key informants have commended the Bilingual Community Educators for undertaking these activities from an empowerment framework that has encouraged community members to pursue opportunities of learning and participation, building social capital and the overall confidence of the community. These are the necessary foundations for activating processes of community renewal.

6.2 IMPACT ON CORE OBJECTIVES

Although it may be too early in the Bonnyrigg project to evaluate the ultimate outcomes of community renewal, the impact that the community engagement approach and the renewal approach itself has had upon the core objectives of the Living Communities Program has been substantial.

6.2.1 Providing better services and creating new opportunities

Key informants have suggested that prior to the Living Communities Program, residents of the Bonnyrigg estate were not engaged with community service provision. Under the Living Communities Program, Bonnyrigg has a structured and focussed network of service providers who the community are willing to access. Key informants have been particularly confident that the Living Communities Program has had a positive impact on the five key social issues identified in the social renewal plan.

6.2.2 Building a stronger community

For meaningful community participation in the Living Communities Program, substantial capacity building and knowledge development was required of the Bonnyrigg community. Communities have participated in community engagement activities and developed their capacity to contribute to and influence the project in an eloquent and well informed manner. Throughout the Living Communities engagement process, opportunities for the communities of Bonnyrigg to become involved in workshops about urban design and social development have contributed to the skill base and knowledge of tenants, as well as contributing to the social development of this community.

6.2.3 Renewal of houses and public areas

It is too early in the Living Communities Program to evaluate the impact the Bonnyrigg approach has had on the renewal of public houses and public areas. However, the communities of Bonnyrigg have contributed to the shaping and design of the physical redevelopment of Bonnyrigg through consultation and participation processes. Key informants have all been impressed with the degree to which the tenant communities of Bonnyrigg have become informed and involved in the design and renewal process.

7. FEATURES UNIQUE TO BONNYRIGG

The Bonnyrigg public housing estate is a highly diverse community. According to the Department of Housing's analysis of the 2001 Census, about two thirds of the population were born overseas, speaking over 150 different languages and dialects, with almost half of the population not speaking English or not speaking English well. Bonnyrigg has a relatively high proportion of children and young people, where 24% of tenants are under the age of 18. Almost one third of tenants are unemployed and the average household income is reportedly half the national average.

The Living Communities Program has adopted an approach that has been flexible enough to address these features unique to Bonnyrigg and provided opportunities for residents to participate in proactive and positive social change.

7.1 HISTORY OF ENGAGEMENT

Before the announcement of the Living Communities Project, Bonnyrigg had a history of minimal community engagement and low levels of community service provision. Bonnyrigg was referred to as a community who did not want to be involved. It was recognised early on that Bonnyrigg had very specific consultation needs and conventional means of engagement would not work. The Department of Housing have been commended for using a high degree of creativity and insight in engaging this community to such a significant degree. In this regard, it has been appropriate to use an engagement approach that is flexible and gives merit to the organic development of activity.

7.2 ETHNIC PROFILE

Bonnyrigg has a high number of residents who were born outside Australia. As some communities have poor relationships with government bodies and statutory powers there was a high degree of community reluctance to get involved in the project, which varied amongst communities and language groups. Of enormous benefit to the cultural and linguistic communities of Bonnyrigg was the employment of the Bilingual Community Educators. This has been intrinsic to the building of trust and rapport with the educators and minimised the 'us and them' dichotomy of community groups and service providers. It was generally felt that the non-English speaking communities had been a part of as much activity as the English speaking community. All informants to this audit have commended the engagement approach for being inclusive of Bonnyrigg's cultural and linguistic needs.

7.3 CRIME

Historically, Bonnyrigg has high incidences of crime. The Bonnyrigg community have exhibited high levels of fear of criminal behaviours and low expectations for timely Police interventions. Informants felt that the Living Community Program has acknowledged this issue in Bonnyrigg and created opportunities for community members to address crime and community safety through various initiatives of the renewal plan and the participation process.

8. NECESSARY ELEMENTS FOR FUTURE LOCALITIES

A primary focus of this Audit has been to identify elements of the Bonnyrigg approach that are necessary to replicate the success of the Living Communities Program in different locality.

8.1 STAFF

A key to the success of the Bonnyrigg Living Communities Program has been the unique combination of personalities staffing the peak positions. Some staff had an existing relationship with the community, while others had a solid professional history in the area. Their enthusiasm and commitment to the community, coupled with a belief in the project has been absolutely instrumental to the project being endorsed by the community. The skills and attributes of peak staff most referred to are empathy, confidence, non-threatening attitudes and a 'grass-roots way' of relating to community.

The Bonnyrigg project has benefited from a continuity of staff across the life-span of the engagement approach.

8.2 ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

As a base model, the community engagement approach was well regarded by informants: *The model is the closest thing to something that works. It needs a little refining... but it's there.*

The flexibility of the approach has enabled community renewal to be delivered in a manner most appropriate for Bonnyrigg and predicated by consultations with the community. To replicate success in a different locality, the engagement approach will need to be directed by the community features unique to that locality and community profile.

8.3 TIME

Time has been a reoccurring issue for discussion amongst key informants. The Living Communities Program has demonstrated great patience in the engagement process where successful community engagement has been dependent on the allocation of enough time for significant capacity building activities to be undertaken. Time was also an element essential to the development of strong rapport with the community.

8.4 BILINGUAL COMMUNITY EDUCATORS

Early in the Engagement process there was the invaluable transition from an interpreting model of information delivery to the Bilingual Community Education model. Use of the Bilingual Community Educators changed the communication dynamic between the project

and the community where educators brought language and culture to a forum that encouraged participation, and not just information repository. The use of Bilingual Community Educators has ensured strong rapport with community and high levels of community involvement.

9. LIMITATIONS

The community engagement approach in Bonnyrigg has been remarkable at acknowledging 'what doesn't work' early on and changing tactics. For example, the transition from the translator model of information provision to the Bilingual Community Educator model as well as developing feedback mechanisms on the Community Reference Group for culturally and linguistically diverse representation. However, the key informants interviewed for this audit have reported a couple of key areas where the approach in Bonnyrigg has been limited.

9.1 INDIGENOUS VOICE

Despite attempts in the early months, the community engagement approach has not targeted the Indigenous community in a linguistic or a culturally focused way. Bonnyrigg's Indigenous community have missed out on tailored opportunities to get involved in the engagement process. Many of the key informants were regretful that an educator or an advocate was not appointed to this community. Some expressed concern about the extent to which community renewal is likely for this already highly marginalised community given that there have been no specific interventions to increase their knowledge or skill sets as part of the engagement approach.

9.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RENEWAL AND ENGAGEMENT

The relationship between the community engagement approach and the community renewal approach has been described as 'dislocated'. Although the community engagement process has, without doubt, built the community's ability and willingness to participate in community endeavours, a reported limitation of the project was that engagement has focused mostly on the built environment. Some key informants felt that engagement could have incorporated key areas of the renewal plan into the workshops in the participation phase. Despite this, it was generally felt that the engagement approach has, overall, created enough community networks and infrastructure to facilitate an effective and dynamic implementation of the community renewal plan.

9.3 COORDINATION OF LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

Some of the local community service providers felt that the Living Communities Project could have better coordinated NGO networks and service providers in the area. A number service providers interviewed felt undirected, unsure of what structures or groups to become involved in and some felt they needed invitation from the project to work with the community. Whether warranted or not, this attitude of local service providers will impact the ultimate outcome of community renewal. For the Bonnyrigg environment, well facilitated community renewal will require a structured, planned and coordinated approach to community service where gaps in service provision cannot be attributed to a lack of leadership in the area.

9.4 YOUTH

Making up a quarter of the community's population, Bonnyrigg has a significantly high number of children and young people. The close working relationship with Bonnyrigg High School created some great opportunities for engaging and consulting with young people. However, the Living Communities Project has not supplemented these initiatives in the residential setting. Young people who do not attend the local High School have minimal opportunity to participate in the project or receive information that is tailored in a youth-appropriate or child-appropriate way.

9.5 PROVIDING EVIDENCE TO THE COMMUNITY

Many informants reported that tenants expected a higher degree of feedback from the Living Communities Team that acknowledged their input into the engagement approach. Throughout the engagement process, the communities felt that they had little indication that decision makers were considering their input and addressing their concerns. The communities expected more ongoing feedback from the Living Communities Project in the participation phases of engagement.

10. COST BENEFIT

As a pathfinder project, it has been essential that the Bonnyrigg Living Communities Program have significant community support and cooperation. Resource allocation has been substantial, especially for a community who has a thin history of community engagement and activities.

Almost all informants believed that the project was 'worth every penny'. The quality of engagement and degree of capacity now evident in the community are reflective of the high number of resources invested in this process.

This is an outcome of a high degree of investment in community renewal and a well considered and well resourced approach to community engagement.