Resident participation in urban and community renewal

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

Drawing upon current ideas about social exclusion, social capital, capacity building and communitarianism several state housing authorities have re-emphasised the notion of resident participation in its renewal activities. At the root of their position is the assertion that neither the state nor the market can provide the solution for disadvantaged communities without the active engagement of local people. A fundamental tenet of this new consensus is that renewal work is unsustainable unless the community becomes actively engaged in ongoing arrangements. However, despite the almost ubiquitous call for community participation the term is frequently undefined or used uncritically with no recognition of the contested nature of the structures and processes that have been used by those wishing to promote the activity.

This report is based upon a qualitative study of six community renewal initiatives (two each in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia). It provides an overview of renewal initiatives in the three states and presents findings from these initiatives. This includes: a description of the renewal initiatives in each case study; a detailed account of the rationale for participation as presented by professionals and residents and the perceived benefits of participation. Managerial and citizenship perspectives are considered together with the relationship between resident participation, social cohesion and issues of sustainability. The report compares and contrasts the various types of structures and processes that have been developed in the localities studied and describes in some detail how the life experiences of residents in 'disadvantaged' neighbourhoods militate against participation. It highlights a series of practical barriers that stand in the way of wider resident involvement and explores the 'good practice' lessons that might be derived from the fieldwork and from other sources. In conclusion it examines the relative merits of the approaches that have been adopted and identifies potential policy implications.

Why Participation?

Two broad sets of reasons were presented in support of resident participation in renewal. The first set comprises the *managerial* or pragmatic benefits of involving local people such as the efficiency savings that might be derived from their inclusion. The second *citizenship* perspective consists of the notion that residents have a right to influence the decisions that affect them. Across both of these perspectives lies the notion that participation improves social cohesion and leads to the development of more sustainable communities. Participation was often described as an important aspect in making programs sustainable but respondents did not always explain why they believed this to be the case.

Structures and Processes

The fundamental structure adopted in the three states studied included the creation of forums whose function was to represent the views of the wider community. In all of the localities studied, the forums comprised representatives of local agencies and voluntary groups in addition to local resident representatives. The selection process for the local (rather than agency) representatives varied across the localities. The normal procedure was to begin with a public meeting advertised locally through the use of letters, newsletters and articles in the local press. The intention in each case was to encourage a number of local residents to attend a regular meeting at which they could represent the views of local people. In Queensland, the Community Reference Groups (CRGs) were open to all residents who wished to attend, whereas elsewhere the forums were restricted to specified delegates. There was some suggestion that the initial 'recruitment' of representatives at the public meeting would need to be repeated to ensure that those attending were fully representative of a changing population and there was some evidence to suggest that the scale and enthusiasm for getting involved in community activity was limited. In some cases the local representatives were nominated by a broader 'resident only' community group but the number of resident delegates was constrained. Elsewhere, smaller 'precinct' level groups called Neighbourhood Committees had been established on a monthly basis but it was apparently not always easy to maintain involvement at this smaller geographical level.

Without exception the process for resident involvement in the physical elements of urban renewal were restricted to consultation exercises. In contrast, the social and community elements of renewal were subject to more sophisticated participatory approaches. So far as urban renewal was concerned there was only limited evidence of resident involvement prior to the initial development of refurbishment plans and the level of consultation and resident involvement at subsequent stages varied.

The means of ongoing consultation in all of the localities revolved around the representative forums. However, only in two of the localities was there a direct mechanism allowing residents' views to be fed directly into the project decision making process. This involved resident delegates actually sitting on the project steering groups. In Queensland the CRGs played a fundamentally different role in the ongoing decision making process. The forums, in a sense, vetted the applications for Community Renewal support that had been submitted by various Government Departments that, in effect, gave the local group the power of veto.

Barriers to resident participation

All of the neighbourhoods examined were regarded as disadvantaged and were considered to have more than their fair share of social problems. The life experiences of residents were not always straightforward and aspects of this situation militated against their inclusion in the renewal process. The fieldwork demonstrated a number of ways in which stigma and unfair treatment impacted upon residents' life opportunities. In particular, higher than average levels of crime and the experience of poverty affected residents and resulted in a reduced inclination for local engagement. Residents in all the localities felt they were stigmatised simply because they lived in an area that had been denigrated for several years and reported high levels of cynicism and scepticism. This had clearly translated into negative views about renewal initiatives and was in some instances, was also clearly wrapped up with low self-opinions. Previous poor experiences of consultation, however, played a large part in moulding these attitudes.

While residents and professionals alike described high levels of apathy among local residents there were several explanations that were proffered to explain why even those residents who had been able to find the human resources necessary to attend were subsequently dissuaded from participating.

Reasons given include:

- the limited co-ordination of renewal projects;
- raised expectations that had not been met;
- previous poor experiences of decisions being made by the housing authorities without their involvement.

While active residents might have felt over-consulted, residents in the random groups, in contrast, often suggested that the reason for their non-involvement was because they had simply not been asked.

Many residents described difficulties with the structures and procedures that had been established. Expectations placed upon led to feelings of inadequacy. Some had problems with basic literacy and there were other major language barriers for some. Several residents and professionals commented about the difficulties of involving people from non-English speaking backgrounds. A frequent complaint among active residents was that renewal professionals failed to listen or take notice of what was being said by local people. This, in their view, was the main cause of the communication barriers. Others were upset by the levels of conflict they experienced in the community meetings. This had clearly put people off. The conflict and different perspectives sometimes related to cultural tensions and differences in value between different ethnic groups. .Active community representatives often felt that all the work was being left to them. Some of these sentiments also reflected a concern about the potential for recrimination either from 'authorities' or from other residents.

Community representatives described how many 'would be' participants were put off by the dominance of renewal professionals and other agency representatives in the decision-making or consultation process. This was particularly the case where key resources were at stake.

Renewal professionals were often concerned about the dominance of key community representatives and the representativeness of the community forums. Their concern, on the one hand, was about the extent to which representatives speak as individuals rather than putting forward the views of the community and, on the other, about the extent to which they represented the views of the whole community rather than just one particular part. There was a danger, for example, expressed by a number of renewal professionals that the focus had been on recruiting representatives from previously existing community groups and organisations. These were often already dominated by older white men and consisted of what were often referred to as the community 'elite'.

Residents also noted practical difficulties with attending the meetings. Timing and location were contentious issues, particularly for those with a disability.

Policy Implications - Towards Good Practice

A range of implications for developing good practice in participation were identified. These include:

- *Community Development*

Community development approaches, that start with the people, identify local issues and facilitate an educational process and the development of skills, emerge from the study as the most significant factor in promoting and developing community involvement in renewal. The terms connector, promoter and facilitator were used to indicate the way in which this intervention was intended to promote the development of individuals and groups as a means of enabling them to have more control over their collective situation.

It was common in the fieldwork, however, to hear those with a community development role described as 'the go between' or as a source of information, rather than as a facilitator of individual and group development. This may be problematic for a community worker who is committed to genuine self-reliance and empowerment.

Good community development work was thought to require a range of investigative, analytical and networking skills through to inter-personal and communication skills but there was a particular emphasis on the manner in which community workers should operate with members of the community. It was stressed for example that workers need be 'in touch' with the needs of the people and avoid patronising them.

- *Starting with the people.*

There was a high level of unanimity about the importance of involving local people from the outset, before any significant action had been taken. Ultimately, this means before any plans have been drawn up but certainly before any plans are implemented.

- *Building on local activism*

Concern was expressed about the practice of starting with existing community group representatives. Some renewal professionals doubted the extent to which they truly represented the views of the wider community. Guidance often encourages agencies to go beyond local activists but it is also possible to identify and work with the most representative and open groups: facilitating and encouraging democratic practices and the widest possible involvement of local residents.

- *Reaching other groups*

The tendency across the localities was to seek community representatives from previously existing voluntary and community groups. There was, as illustrated earlier, an awareness of the potential failure of these groups in representing certain ethnic and religious groups and young people. Specific efforts had been made to include minority ethnic groups in a number of cases.

- *Early Visible Success*

While starting with the issues identified by the people was considered essential for involving people in the first place, 'getting things done' was described as the most important way of keeping them involved and preventing the development of scepticism.

- *Local Resources*

A common theme emerging across the localities was the importance of locally based resources. Local community centres and neighbourhood houses in particular were singled out as an important aspect of resourcing community involvement. In a similar vein, it was suggested that renewal professionals needed to be seen locally.

- *Training*

The need for training throughout the participation process was clearly expressed by community representatives and renewal professionals. There was some evidence that community activists felt inadequate and unprepared for their role, and that while training opportunities had become available, this had often been too late.

- *Congenial structures*

Efforts clearly need to be made to ensure that the structures and processes that they adopt are more congenial to residents. While training can be provided to enable residents to participate in conventional frameworks there are dangers that this simply leads to their co-option and an alternative approach is to adopt structures and processes that facilitate wider involvement in decision making. A key part of this and something highlighted in the fieldwork is the use of small group techniques.

- *Devolving Power*

Evidence from the study and from experience elsewhere suggests that giving residents a choice over their level of involvement, with opportunities for devolved power and decision making, is essential if residents are to be persuaded to participate. With the exception of the Queensland examples, however, there was only limited devolution apparent in the study.

- *Actual influence*

While structures and processes can have a significant effect on levels of involvement it is clear it cannot in itself compensate for a failure to act on the views expressed by local people. Many community representatives questioned the actual level of influence that they had had and it was therefore clear that even where the influence had been limited or gained as a result of a long struggle, 'getting results' was highly encouraging to the participants.

- *Regular and clear communication*

There was a danger that adequate levels of communication were not being maintained once structures and processes had been put in place. Newsletters were being produced in all the localities although knowledge of these appeared limited within the random focus groups. Personal letters were used, particularly when work was proposed on an individual's home but the effectiveness of these mechanisms had not been assessed by the housing authorities. Community representatives stressed the need for plain or everyday English suggesting, possibly, that much of the current material was inaccessible to some members of the local population.

- *Change in culture*

Traditionally bureaucratic processes have not been particularly amenable to participation and many bureaucrats are unused to the notion of involving 'clients' in the decision making process. If government departments are to be successful in creating more congenial structures and processes then it is clear that a cultural change needs to occur within these organisations. This requires careful management. In all three states there were accounts of resistance emanating from longer serving staff members and it was recognised that it would take time to change traditional 'command and control' cultures.

- *Need for monitoring and evaluation*

It is generally recognised that the community, as the indented beneficiaries of renewal, should have a role in the monitoring and evaluation of renewal. This was not an aspect of participation that was highlighted during the study. While the representative forums established in each state allowed for ongoing feedback there appeared to be no formal mechanism which allowed residents the opportunity to comment on the success or otherwise of initiatives.

- *Time and Resources*

Good participation needs to be nurtured. It needs time to develop and it needs to be adequately resourced. The need for local facilities, accessible community development support and training have already been highlighted but these should not be seen as quick-fixes. A long-term commitment is required to overcoming social problems and empower local people in these localities. This means ensuring that the process is adequately resourced. While, the localities covered in the report displayed high levels of creativity and imagination, it was often recognised that these interventions had only gone so far.

Conclusion

It is clear from this study that commitment to higher levels of participation varied. There was, for example, an element of expediency among renewal professionals who adopted a managerial or pragmatic perspective about participation. In contrast, those whose rationale was rooted in citizenship or empowerment perspectives had higher commitment to participation and power sharing. The emphasis on the need for participation to maintain the gains that have been derived from renewal and make them sustainable were, however, apparent from both perspectives.

Community development approaches, that start with the people identify local issues and facilitate an educational process and the development of skills, emerge from the study as the most significant factor in promoting and developing community involvement in renewal. The process of empowerment that is central to this intervention is a necessary requirement for tackling the barriers posed by previous life experiences. It should be recognised, however, that individual workers were often constrained by the nature of the renewal programs, especially where physical refurbishment had, in effect been pre-determined. In contrast the good practice, examined in the report, stresses the need to start with the views of local people. This can be achieved by strengthening and resourcing existing groups and working for the inclusion of excluded groups.

Care needs to be taken when establishing structures to allow for a wide range of representation. Closed forums, such as those that were present in South Australia and New South Wales need to be treated with caution as they can rapidly become exclusive, but even open structures, like those developed in Queensland, will also fall into the same trap if ongoing communication and publicity wanes.

Participation has resource implications. It is not an easy option. Skilled and experienced workers need to be employed to facilitate a process that might take several years to develop. Local facilities need to be made available to community groups and they require financial, training and community development support. Ideally local people should ultimately be employed in community development roles and this should be the objective at the outset.

Monitoring and evaluation can play an important part in confirming that residents have influenced the renewal outcomes and this should be prioritised by those who wish to take resident participation seriously.

Fairly grandiose claims have been made for resident participation. For some, it is the ultimate solution to the social problems that are manifest in disadvantaged localities. While participation itself is unlikely to overcome the multiple causes of these problems it emerges as a central aspect of the process of empowerment. Arguably, developing a critical understanding of the problems in a disadvantaged locality leads simultaneously to the development of the individual and collective agency which is necessary for challenging and changing the problems that they face.

INTRODUCTION

During 2001 the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) University of New South Wales and University of Western Sydney Research Centre conducted a study examining the role of resident participation in neighbourhood renewal in Australia and its contribution to the development of social cohesion and sustainability in a series of neighbourhoods. This final report builds on the earlier AHURI Positioning Paper, which provided a detailed literature and policy review, and presents an account of the research process and findings from an empirical study of six neighbourhoods: two each in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia.

The first part of the report summarises and, to some degree, updates the earlier Positioning Paper. This is followed by an account of the methods adopted. Chapter 2 sets out the objectives of the research and the methods that were used in the study. Chapter 3 provides an overview of renewal initiatives in the three states. The main body of the report – Chapters 4 to 8 – presents the findings from six study localities. This includes a description of the renewal initiatives in each locality with an account of their initial objectives as described in policy documents and as presented by key officers in each state. A detailed account of the rationale for participation as presented by professionals and residents and the perceived benefits of participation is presented in Chapter 5. This explores managerial and citizenship perspectives and considers the relationship between resident participation, social cohesion and issues of sustainability. Chapter 6 compares and contrasts the various types of structures and processes that have been developed in the various localities to promote resident participation. This, for example, includes the representative forums that had been established in each area to facilitate the participation of local people. Chapter 7 describes in some detail how the life experiences of residents in 'disadvantaged' neighbourhoods militate against participation and highlights a series of practical barriers that stand in the way of wider resident involvement. Chapter 8 explores the 'good practice' lessons that might be derived from the fieldwork and from other sources. The concluding Chapter reviews the relative merits of the approaches that have been adopted and identifies potential policy implications.

Note about extracts and anonymity

Extracts from the transcripts have been used throughout this report in order to illustrate the research findings and retain the richness of the research data. Names and locations have been changed to retain anonymity. The attributed gender of individuals (she or he) has also been reversed on occasions and the phrases 'Renewal Professionals' and 'Community Representative' have been adopted to prevent the identification of individuals by their actual titles. The term 'representative forum' has also been used rather than the actual title of the forum in each locality for a similar reason.

Square brackets are used in the extracts cited to indicate possible hearings during transcription where the recording was not completely clear or to provide more clarity in meaning. Three dots are used to indicate where a transcript has been edited and sections deleted to improve clarity.

CHAPTER 1 – BACKGROUND

1. Participation and urban renewal

While the notion of resident or community[1] participation in neighbourhood renewal is not a new one, it has assumed a new prominence in the policy agenda of the State and Territories of Australia over the last ten years. This resurgence has been influenced by the emergence of a 'third way' post-socialist position (Scanlon, 2000) on the left and the continuation of a conservative emphasis on family and community on the right (Giddens, 1994; Giddens, 1998; DFCS, 2000). It is also clear that the practice of 'community development' that emerged in the late 1960s has continued to influence a wide range of government and non-government services and that communities themselves have maintained their long tradition of organising around local problems (Popple, 1995; Meekosha and Mowbray, 1995).

While economic rationalisation and the restructuring of welfare were clear motives for the promotion of 'community' participation in public services, a new and extremely influential theoretical base has emerged from the mid 1990s onwards, with slight variations in the UK, the United States and Australia. This base draws upon and amalgamates current ideas about social exclusion, social capital, capacity building and communitarianism. While these terms have their own history and, to some degree, represent distinctive cultural traditions they have emerged as common ingredients in a post socialist, post neo-liberal melting pot. At its root, is the assertion that neither the state nor the market can provide the solution for disadvantaged communities without the active engagement of local people. Community participation is therefore cast as an essential if not central element in the process of renewal and as an end in itself. A fundamental tenet of this new consensus is that renewal work is unsustainable unless the community becomes actively engaged in ongoing arrangements. This, in large part, has been stimulated by the social exclusion, social capital and social cohesion debates and has led in turn to a renewed emphasis on community development and the emergence of notions like capacity building.

2. What is participation?

Despite, however, the almost ubiquitous call for community participation the term is frequently undefined or used uncritically with no recognition of the contested nature of the structures and processes that have been used by those wishing to promote the activity. This begs the question: 'what is meant by participation?'

Most theoretical examinations of participation start with the seminal work of Sherry Arnstien and her ladder of participation (see Fig. 1). Top-down approaches are located at the bottom of the ladder and deemed to be 'non-participation'. The middle rungs show increasing levels of citizen engagement but are essentially viewed as tokenistic and it is only at the upper end of the hierarchy that a shift in power relations is perceived. For Arnstein, citizen participation is predicated on:

> The redistribution of power that enables have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future (1969, p. 216)

The idea, in brief, is that there is a scale of involvement, from at one end, providing participants with information about their services, to a level where they have direct control over decisions and outcomes at the other end. At the lowest point the level of influence is minimal, if present at all. At the upper end participants have high levels of community influence. This model is, therefore, based upon the degree of participant power.

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[1] The term resident participation is often used in this report in preference to community participation to highlight a geographical context, since the term community may also connote a geographically diverse group with a common identity or common interests rather than local residents *per se*. In practice, however, the term community participation has been dominant in most of the sources that have been cited.

However, these sorts of models are in some respects confusing because they conflate power with process (Cooper and Hawtin, 1998). So, for example, consultation is a process which may permit high degrees of influence if the views received are noted and acted upon, whereas 'delegated power' may be severely circumscribed. Delegating the responsibility to decide how a small budget is spent may, by way of illustration, be less empowering than giving residents influence over the way the budget is set. In other words the form of

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│  Fig 1.  Arnstein's Ladder of Participation               │
│                                                            │
│                                  ┌──────────────────────┐  │
│    1.  Citizen Control           │  Degree of citizen   │  │
│    2.  Delegated Power           │  Power               │  │
│    3.  Partnership               │                      │  │
│                                  └──────────────────────┘  │
│    4.  Placation                 ┌──────────────────────┐  │
│    5.  Consultation              │  Degree of tokenism  │  │
│    6.  Informing                 └──────────────────────┘  │
│                                                            │
│    7.  Therapy                   ┌──────────────────────┐  │
│    8.  Manipulation              │  Non participation   │  │
│                                  └──────────────────────┘  │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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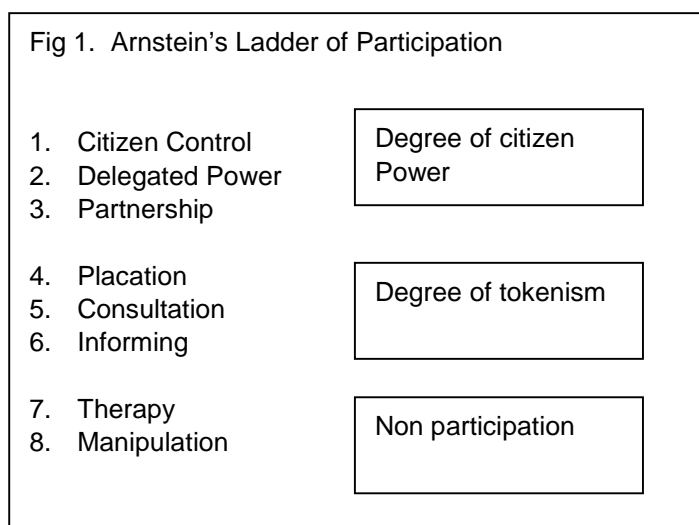
participation does not necessarily determine the final level of influence and there are a whole set of external factors that may also place a restriction on the outcome.

Ladders of participation are also criticised by Cairncross *et al* (1997) who suggest that it is impossible to construct a hierarchy because the processes vary on more than one dimension. Writing from the perspective of tenant participation in public housing management in the UK, they overcome this problem by developing three types of landlord-tenant interaction. This is based upon structures or methods (from letter writing to tenant representation); processes (from providing information to giving control); and objectives, such as better housing and housing management, more choice and power to tenants and tenant satisfaction. From these three dimensions Cairncross *et al* construct three ideal types of participation; namely, traditionalist, consumerist and citizenship models. In summary, the thesis is that the structures and processes adopted relate to the political culture of the local administration. The citizenship model is predicated on increasing the collective powers of tenants and consequently adopts structures and processes that move beyond simple consultative mechanisms such as feedback forms. They aim to shift the balance of power by adopting mechanisms of participation that provide tenants with higher levels of influence.

3. Participation and the policy context

The current emphasis on community participation in renewal has emerged directly from the interplay and convergence of the ideological perspectives discussed earlier. There has been what might be described as a dramatic rediscovery of the themes of community involvement and service co-ordination so prevalent in the late 1960s and early 1970s although the terminology has shifted to that of partnerships, capacity building and social capital. This development can be seen in a wide range of developed countries (Alterman and Cars, 1991 and Henderson, 1997) but it is particularly apparent in the Australian and UK experience.

The review of the Australian policy context in the Positioning Paper (Wood *et al*, 2002, p. 24 - see www.ahuri.edu.au/pubs/positioning/pp_resparticipate.pdf) confirmed that there was a renewed emphasis on participation in public policy across the states and territories and that this has also become a part of the federal government's agenda. However, the review revealed a number of key issues concerning the way the concept had been used in developing these policies

Firstly, it was apparent that the term 'participation' was frequently used in connection with tenant involvement in housing management, while the term 'consultation' was adopted more often with reference to involvement in the regeneration or renewal process. While it may be that terms such as these were simply being used inter-changeably and not in any technical sense, the review suggested that there was a potential danger that 'consultation' was simply being seen by local people as a token gesture with little substance behind it. As the literature review revealed these terms are contested and careful scrutiny is required in order to establish how they are being used (Wood *et al*, 2002, p. 35).

Secondly, while community development was referred to by all of the states and territories, there was no clear indication about what was being described. To an extent, resident participation is normally taken to be central to the process of community development, but there is a danger that the 'top-down' approach apparent in the communitarian view of 'building community' or in some perspectives on 'place' or 'neighbourhood management' might have detracted from this tradition (Wood *et al*, 2002, p. 35).

Thirdly, the documentation reviewed in the Positioning Paper (Wood *et al*, 2002) also often failed to clarify what the long-term objectives of participation in renewal initiatives were. Phrases like 'building community spirit', 'creating quality neighbourhoods', making 'communities stronger' or 'more vibrant' raise questions about what is meant and how it will be known when that had been achieved. Other than this, there was no clear description of what was to be achieved through resident participation nor any consideration of how this might be sustained in the long run (Wood *et al*, 2002, p. 35).

4. Lessons from the UK

However, while the Australian examples have not been studied extensively, UK regeneration programs, beginning in the early 1990s, have been subject to considerable analysis. Several critical issues have emerged from this research. Most independent critiques of the regeneration process, for example, have questioned the extent to which local people have genuinely been involved. It has consistently been asserted that involvement was inadequately funded and that unrealistic time-scales militated against local participation (Stewart and Taylor, 1995; Hastings *et al*, 1996; Geddes, 1997).

Furthermore, Wood (2000) has argued that programs often fail to recognise the previous life experiences that cause disaffection, on the one hand, and a range of practical barriers that 'prevent local people from getting involved or obfuscate those that do', on the other. It is claimed, for example, that 'life experiences of residents on low incomes in marginalised localities reinforce low self-opinions and lead to feelings of inferiority and powerlessness' (Wood, 2000). This is attributed in part to the processes which stigmatise people because they live in areas with a poor reputation. The psycho-social effects of the feelings of failure that result from this experience, it has been claimed, 'invariably lead to apathy, withdrawal, depression and aggression' (Wilkinson, 1994).

It is the consensus of a growing body of UK research that considerable amounts of time and resources are needed to allow participants to develop skills and gain the confidence that they require to participate in renewal initiatives. Beyond this general point, it is also suggested that a lack of attention to principles of equal opportunities may further alienate many. This may, for example, have to do with the inaccessible timing and location of consultation meetings but also concerns the formality of the proceedings and the 'exclusive' nature of the language used (Wood *et al*, 2002 p. 17).

Despite, however, the longer history of regeneration initiatives and the Debates about the sustainability of renewal initiatives have emerged as a direct result of the failure of past initiatives in the UK. This has been particularly apparent where the same neighbourhood has been the subject of special intervention on numerous occasions over a period of twenty to thirty years. Fordham comments, for example, 'there is overwhelming evidence that earlier programmes were unable to stimulate regeneration on a scale or with sufficient durability to make further special funding unnecessary' (1995). The main problem with the use of the term

'sustainability' is that it assumes that there have been significant gains from regeneration that can be maintained. However, the evidence is that the gains have been very limited and are, if anything, restricted to minimising the effects of structural economic decline – local communities were 'swimming against the tide' (Power and Tunstall, 1995).

In the UK, community development emerges as the most significant factor in ensuring the genuine involvement of the community in regeneration, with the primary tasks for workers in the regeneration process described as working with the community to:

> … identify priorities, develop a community vision or plan, establish consultative and participatory structures and implement a comprehensive programme of support and resources for community-based activity and projects through a capacity building plan (Duncan and Thomas, 2000, p. 29).

This is described as a long-term process, however, that requires:

- considerable experience of facilitating group development;
- a strong commitment to equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice;
- high levels of inter-personal skills;
- an ability to support and encourage learning;
- a good understanding of local government policy and practice;
- a keen political awareness (Wood, 2000).

There was, however, no clear indication at the start of this research project about the extent to which these points might be applicable here. This research project therefore aimed to explore the role played by participation and the extent to which it ensured the sustainability of renewal. It considers a range of initiatives that have been developed in the three states of New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia.

CHAPTER 2 - RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

Objectives

The research objectives of this study may be divided up into five categories each comprising a series of research questions, as follows:

Models of renewal

- what are the objectives of renewal?
- what are the models of neighbourhood renewal being adopted?
- what are the relationship between the asset renewal and community development/ renewal projects and how do they interact?
- what is the purpose of the community renewal initiatives and what role do residents play in these?

The rationale for participation

- what is the rationale for pursuing participation policies as part of renewal activity?
- what are the perceived benefits for both housing managers and residents?
- what do housing managers expect to get out of the participation strategies they have developed?

Models and practices of participation

- what are the structures and processes employed to implement resident participation strategies and policies?
- how were residents involved?
- to what extent can the range of participation models identified be judged against the classificatory devices reviewed in the Positioning Paper (Wood *et al*, 2002)?
- what role do residents have in both the *community* renewal and the *urban* renewal activity?
- How much influence have residents had?

Barriers to participation

- which life experiences act as a barrier to resident participation?
- what practical barriers hinder participation?

Good practice

- what has encouraged participation?
- which processes or structures facilitated their involvement?
- what lessons have local housing managers have learned from earlier initiatives?

Chapter 3 responds to the first set of research questions by describing the various objectives of the renewal programs in the three states but this is amplified in the subsequent chapter where the specific objectives for renewal in each of the localities are examined. This draws on documentary sources and the fieldwork experience. The subsequent four categories are each examined in separate chapters.

Methods

Building on the policy and literature reviews contained in the Positioning Paper (Wood *et al*, 2002), qualitative research was undertaken in a series of neighbourhoods (two each in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia). While the policy review indicated that there had also been significant renewal activity elsewhere in Australia - notably in Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia - insufficient resources were available for additional fieldwork in these localities. The states selected for the study were chosen because they appeared from documentary sources to provide a diverse range of examples of renewal.

While it was clear that in an exercise of this nature it would be impossible to capture a completely representative 'sample' of the renewal experience across Australia these states offered a range of interesting initiatives. All three states had projects, for example, that had been running for a number of years and others that were more recent initiatives. The localities were selected following a careful analysis of the documentary evidence available and in discussion with state policy officers. The aim was to select areas that varied across a number of dimensions but were characterised by an emphasis on community participation. Riverwood in New South Wales, Inala in Queensland and Salisbury North in South Australia were selected because renewal work had been undertaken over a period of at least five years. East Nowra in New south Wales, Kingston in Queensland and Westwood in South Australia were newer initiatives. All of the areas had been predominantly public housing estates although some had been 'broken up' through the renewal process. While the South Australian and Queensland examples are essentially suburbs of the state capitals, Riverwood is more centrally located and East Nowra is situated outside of the metropolis of Sydney altogether. While all areas were to a degree multi-cultural, Riverwood brought a specific ethnic dimension as almost 60% of its residents were Arabic speaking.

The aim was to ensure that a reasonably comprehensive range of experiences was included, but the final selection was influenced by policy officers in each of the states and the policy and literature review. It was clear, for example, that there had been a shift from the emphasis on physical renewal in the older initiatives to 'community' renewal in more recent projects and it was anticipated selection of neighbourhoods might indicate how the experience of participation had varied in these different settings. While it is generally recognised that time is required to develop effective participatory structures it is also widely appreciated that broader resident interest in renewal projects will drop off after the initial phase. There were no crude expectations that the level of resident influence would therefore vary across this dimension. It was also apparent from the literature review that different ethnic or cultural groups were often excluded from participation processes and structures. The Riverwood locality in particular allowed researchers to grapple with this issues and the subject was considered in the analysis of all of the cases. While comparisons and connections are made between cases simplistic generalisations have been avoided.

Qualitative techniques were selected, as the main objective of the study was to explore the experiences of professionals and local residents in renewal areas.

In-depth stakeholder interviews were conducted with state housing and renewal staff, residents' representatives/leaders (either individually or in groups), and other appropriate stakeholders in each estate locality (see Appendix). In each case, researchers interviewed at least one key policy officer to establish the current approach to participation in renewal areas, the aims and objectives of the policy and the models adopted. Interviews with other stakeholders provided the opportunity to explore how these objectives and models had been delivered.

While only one focus group session (with a randomly recruited selection of residents in each locality) had been planned it became apparent after initial fieldwork in South Australia that it was beneficial to also undertake a focus group with community representatives on existing renewal forums rather than interviewing them individually. Two separate focus groups were therefore conducted in 5 out of the 6 localities – one with the representative forum and the other with a randomly selected group of residents. In the remaining locality a personal interview was conducted with the chair of the resident forum only (rather than the whole group). The random groups comprised between 6 and 12 residents, whereas the resident forum groups were smaller, involving between 4 and 6 people.

The aim of the randomly recruited focus group was to explore perceptions about the effectiveness of the participation process that they had experienced. In Riverwood, recruitment was restricted to the Arabic speaking population and researchers worked with interpreters and translators to facilitate group recruitment and administration. The representative forum groups allowed a detailed investigation of resident perceptions and their experience of participation in the renewal process. This fieldwork is summarised in Table 1.

Semi-structured schedules were utilised in both the stakeholder interviews and focus group sessions (see Appendix).

Table 1: Summary of Fieldwork

	NSW RW	NSW EN	SA WW	SA SN	QLD IN	QLD KT
Policy Officer	1		1		2	
Community Renewal Officer	2	2	1			1
Housing Manager	1	1		1	1	1
Community Development Officer	1	1	2	1	3	1
Project Manager						
Relocation Officer			2			
Local Councillor/Council Officer		1		1	3	1
Private Developer			1	2		
Community Representative				1		
Community Reps Focus Group	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Random Focus Group	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Note: RW = Riverwood, EN = East Nowra, WW = Westwood, SN = Salisbury North, IN = Inala and KT = Kingston

Each of the stakeholder interviews and focus group sessions were recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were subjected to textual analysis using the software package QSR Nvivo. This allowed the researchers to design and modify an index system of categories. Some of these categories were predetermined by the schedule and research objectives others emerged during analysis. The strategy that was adopted in analysis follows what Atkinson (1992) has described as:

> That well established style of work whereby the data are inspected for categories and instances. It is an approach that disaggregates the text (notes or transcripts) into a series of fragments, which are then regrouped under a series of thematic headings (Atkinson, 1992)

Considerable time was taken in the development of an index 'tree' which allowed themes to be grouped together, merged and split. QSR Nvivo allows researchers to attach direct extracts from the transcripts to one or more theme and therefore to identify patterns within the data. The final themes and patterns adopted in the analysis emerged through an iterative process until they were organised in a manner which permitted the key research questions to be addressed. The aim was not to make generalisations on the basis of a statistically reliable sample but rather to describe 'authentically', through a rigorous analysis of the text an understanding of the participants' perceptions and experiences. However, two crucial points should be made in relation to the analysis. First, the context of the case studies varied significantly across key dimensions (as already noted) consequently the common patterns that emerge from these diverse cases are of particular interest and value as they clearly capture the core experiences and central, shared aspects or impacts of the various renewal programs. Secondly, while the number of respondents and focus group respondents are clearly too small to allow for statistical inferences this does not mean that the frequency with which a theme might appear within the data is of no significance.

Consequently, it has been the approach in this study to indicate the relative frequency with which particular themes were raised. While the actual number of participants making similar points has not been enumerated, where a consensus was apparent either across all the research subjects (interview respondents and focus group participants) or among a sub population such as the community representatives, this has been indicated in the text.

The significance of themes was also established by the strength of their expression and, in focus group settings, by the extent to which the views expressed were accepted without contradiction by the other participants.

There has also been a level of internal and external triangulation. Findings from the documentary sources, focus groups and personal interviews have been compared and contrasted and the good practice findings, in particular, have also been considered in the light

of research findings generated elsewhere, notably from an extensive body of research in the UK. In this way the findings presented in this report are presented as a valid and reliable account of the experience of participation in three states of Australia. Following Hammersley (1990) this means they have been identified with confidence rather than with certainty.

It should also be noted at this point that from Chapter 5 onwards the analysis has been undertaken thematically rather than on a case-by-case basis. In other words, for each of the research questions examined in Chapters 6 to 8, all the relevant data from each of the localities has been brought together for each topic or aspect under examination. This approach has been adopted as the analysis revealed strong commonalities across the diverse cases – the experience of renewal professionals and residents was in essence characterised more by similarities than it was by differences. This is perhaps hardly surprising given that all the cases were undertaken in areas that were (or had until recently) been public housing estates, all were currently the subject of a renewal program and all shared similar socio-economic and demographic characteristics. Nevertheless, where there are key differences across the cases, these are highlighted in the concluding section of each chapter.

CHAPTER 3 – NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL: STATE PERSPECTIVES

Neighbourhood renewal in Australia comprises either *urban renewal*, such as the physical refurbishment of properties and neighbourhoods, *community renewal*, which is aimed at making social improvements, or a combination of the two. The nature of the objectives for renewal has evolved over time in each of the states. In most cases, however, renewal started with physical objectives to the fore and has then been progressively expanded to include social or community objectives. While the objectives of renewal have been very similar in the three states examined here, there has been variation in the relative emphases and also in the mechanisms that have been adopted. This chapter summarises the policy framework in which current renewal projects in each of the states might be found.

New South Wales

The Community Renewal report, *Transforming Estates into Communities: Partnership and participation* (NSWDOH, 2001), outlines the State's response to the current high levels of disadvantage present in public housing estates. It advocates a multi-pronged approach to tackling the inter-connected problems of unemployment, low levels of formal education and skills, low incomes, dependence on welfare, poor health, physical isolation, lack of transport, anti-social and criminal activity, and/or poor personal and family supports. The new strategy builds upon the earlier Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP) which was primarily concerned with physical renewal.

The document sets out a vision for the estates and reviews progress over the period 1994-95. It notes that, while most of the projects aimed at addressing the problems of concentrated public housing during this time had focussed on physical renewal and development, these were often supported by community development initiatives and in some cases the development of employment opportunities. The vision is that, among other things, the estates will: look more like the surrounding neighbourhoods; comprise well maintained properties; be managed flexibly at the neighbourhood level; be broken up and diversified to include private housing; and be the subject of agreements with key service providers, such as DOCs, local government and the police. Within the vision residents would 'have a say in the Department's decisions on matters which affect life on the estate' and would be 'active partners with housing managers in making the neighbourhoods clean, safe and settled places to live' (NSWDOH, 2001).

In addition to the ongoing physical renewal that had started with the NIP, the document outlines a variety of community initiatives that had been undertaken in Community Renewal estates. This included the development of employment initiatives providing jobs for more than 200 tenants primarily through maintenance and building contracts. Community development had also been promoted in two demonstration Intensive Tenancy Management (ITM) initiatives and through the Housing Community Assistance Program, which was being implemented in nine estates (including the two ITMs) (NSWDOH, 2001).

The Department had carried out consultation with tenants in all estates where substantial upgrades had been carried out. This had included street meetings and surveys. Neighbourhood Advisory Boards (NABs) had also been established on most renewal estates. These boards brought tenants together with DOH client services staff and representatives from local agencies. NABs were intended to provide a structure through which services to tenants on the estates could be co-ordinated and a forum where issues that were of concern to tenants could be addressed. The Community Renewal report suggests that in some estates the NAB has been the forum for consultation on the physical improvements being undertaken, while on others this has occurred independently of the NAB. Independent tenants organisations were also being supported through the Tenant and Community Initiatives Program (NSWDOH, 2001).

The document outlines further plans for community renewal. It was indicated, for example, that the Department would:

- seek the support of a number of key agencies to establish Integrated Community Renewal Action Plans on a limited number of high priority estates;

- develop Memorandums of Understanding/Joint Guarantees of Service with key agencies to ensure tenants are provided with the range of services necessary to support tenancies and communities;

- establish one-stop-shops on major estates and encourage key government agencies to locate at these sites;

- continue to participate in the regional management groups to improve coordination of services; and

- seek the support of the Human Service agencies to establish a small number of "Service Integration" demonstration projects (NSWDOH, 2001).

Further work was also planned to build community capacity and social networks. This included a commitment to:

- further develop tenant capacity and skills in advocacy and local decision making through Neighbourhood Advisory Boards and the revised Tenant Community Initiatives Program;

- continue to support community development activities and integrate these into housing management approaches on the estates; and

- continue to support and promote the Community Gardens Initiative[2] (NSWDOH, 2001).

Interviews with key policy officers suggest that there was a strong emphasis on 'normalising' estates and making them blend in with other residential neighbourhoods. There was a belief that in some estates previous policies had created communities that had become isolated and dislocated. The initiatives that were being developed therefore aimed at 'building communities that were more like other communities'.

While some of these objectives reflected the earlier physical emphasis, others were expressed community orientated objectives, aimed at the development of 'community capacity'. Two elements of community capacity were described. On the one hand the objective was to enable residents to develop the skills they required to be involved in the renewal process. On the other, it was seen as a means of enabling residents to 're-enter the workforce'.

Queensland

In Queensland there was a clear dividing line between Urban Renewal initiatives and more recent Community Renewal initiatives. Both programs had been sponsored by the Housing Department and both were operating during the fieldwork. They were, however, managed by separate sections within the Department.

Community Renewal was introduced in 1998. Its intention was to broaden the approach, build on past experience and strengthen a planning and 'whole-of-government' approach to service delivery. The new program was established as a partnership between the Queensland Government, local councils and communities in renewal areas with the aim of increasing safety and security and establishing pride and confidence. While the program is being managed by the housing department, it is a key part of the Queensland Crime Prevention Strategy.

The Urban Renewal program was intended to rejuvenate the physical environment. Specifically the objectives were to:

- have a positive impact on the visual appearance and physical environment of the suburb and create an aesthetically pleasant and desirable residential environment;

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2 The Community Renewal Strategy is promoting a partnership with the Royal Botanic Gardens to promote and develop community gardens in renewal areas.

- apply principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) in improvement process;
- reduce public housing ownership in the area by offering opportunities for home ownership at affordable prices to create a more balanced community profile;
- enhance the physical quality of housing by undertaking appropriate improvement works;
- provide increased choices in housing by realigning current housing stock to meet changing community needs;
- create employment opportunities for local unemployed people through involvement on the capital works program (www.communityrenewal.qld.gov.au)

A considerable amount of documentation had been produced at the state level describing the Community Renewal Program (CRP). This includes an information paper (QDOH, 1999a), a submission kit (QDOH, 1999b), a capability statement (QDOH, 2001a) and several flyers and leaflets. An internal evaluation of the CRP was also in the process of being completed at the end of 2001, although the findings are not yet publicly available.

The CRP information paper noted that the initiative had a targeted local area focus and played a co-ordinating role across participating agencies to address area disadvantage. It stressed community involvement in the planning and development of specific initiatives and suggested that projects should be co-ordinated at a local level by the DOH working with local councils and other State Departments. Another key feature of the program, as already mentioned, was its incorporation into the Government's overall Crime Prevention Strategy which was being co-ordinated through the Crime Prevention Task Force.

In the renewal areas, the objectives of the program were to:
- improve safety and security of people and property;
- better integrate socially or economically disadvantaged residents into broader community and economic networks and systems;
- ensure accessibility of residents to the community services and facilities they require;
- strengthen and expand opportunities for young people;
- improve neighbourhood amenity;
- ensure public expenditure is directed to projects and activities which will have lasting and positive impacts on the communities;
- make the communities central to achieving program objectives (QDOH, 1999).

The program had undertaken a wide range of projects and activities reflecting the needs and aspirations of people living in target communities. The core outcomes that were aimed for included:
- enhanced community confidence and pride;
- a stronger sense of safety and security;
- higher levels of home ownership;
- more prosperous neighbourhoods; and
- longer duration of residential occupation (QDOH, 2000)

The program aimed to achieve these outcomes by facilitating a range of initiatives, such as co-ordinating initiatives between participating agencies, involving communities in the planning and development of initiatives, linking with public housing redevelopment, co-ordinating tenancy allocation and management.

A key element in the process is the allocation of funds to renewal initiatives. Central to the process of allocating funds is the development of a Community Action Plan in each of the renewal areas. On the basis of this plan agencies were able to submit applications for funding. While the final approval lay with the Minister, it was stressed that approval would

only be given if the project had been supported by a Community Reference Group (CRG), which comprised representatives from community groups, local non-government organisations and state government departments but was also open to any local resident who wished to attend.

In contrast to the renewal programs in New South Wales and South Australia, the Queensland Community Renewal Program involved the sponsorship of stand-alone targeted initiatives. Each area was free to identify the issues of concern through the development of a Community Action Plan. While the overall aims were described as 'improving the lives of people living in disadvantaged areas where the problems are concentrated' and the Program was certainly tied into the State's Crime Prevention Strategy, the local initiatives had a high degree of autonomy. They were able to prioritise a range of problems including the creation of employment opportunities, providing activities for young people and overcoming stigma.

The strategy emphasised a process which started by engaging with the local community and key stakeholders such as the local State Member, local council and other agencies operating in the locality. Planning was undertaken jointly, projects were prioritised by the CRG and joint funding was sought from a range of agencies.

South Australia

Urban renewal appears central to the South Australian Governments 'Directions for South Australia' statement and is a key aim of the Department of Human Services. The South Australian Housing Trust (SAHT) has had a growing focus on urban regeneration from the late 1980s. In the first instance, this was primarily, orientated to asset management and included the sale of land and renovated stock. By 1998, however, success was being measured by tools such as 'community perceptions' studies (SAHT, 1998) and one of the expressed purposes of the South Australian Housing Trust is to 'contribute to the stability and the renewal of communities' (SAHT, 1998).

The SAHT Charter also indicates that, among other things, they will:

- consult tenants where they may be affected by an initiative of the Trust in managing their tenancy and inform tenants when the Trust is responding to government policy direction;

- develop partnerships with government agencies in pursuit of innovation and best service outcomes for the community through a whole of government approach (SAHT, 1998; SAHT, 2000a).

Between 1997 and 1999 a study was conducted in the northern metropolitan area. The aim of this study was to develop strategies that would address social disadvantage and the old and inappropriate public housing that was present in this part of Adelaide. One of the principles identified by this study was that 'community development be encouraged through partnerships with appropriate agencies' (SAHT, 1999).

From 1999 onwards Neighbourhood Development Officers were appointed to aid customer consultation on some renewal estates. Their role included the planning and implementation of community development programs and communication strategies in partnership with the community (SAHT, 2000a). This has apparently led to a greater emphasis on employment initiatives and an emphasis on economic as well as community development (www.housingtrust.sa.gov).

By 2000 the Trust had sponsored a variety of consultative mechanisms to facilitate customer involvement. This included the following:

- Operational Policy Advisory Committee – this provides a forum for customer contribution to improving public housing in the State. It comprises representatives of tenants, housing organisations and community organisations. It provides a mechanism for customer comment and feedback on policy and operational directions affecting the Trust;

- The Public Housing Tenant Forum – this provides a forum for tenants from Regional Advisory Boards and community representatives to meet on a monthly basis to share ideas and raise issues of concern for Trust customers;

- Regional Advisory Boards – these work in partnership with Trust regional offices to provide customer input at both a regional and broader policy level;

- Community Reference Groups – these have been established in urban renewal areas and focus groups have been conducted to obtain broader customer feedback on particular issues such as relocation, maintenance, upgrades, amenity targets and environmental issues;
- The Trust Talk Tenant Link – this is a newspaper produced by an editorial committee comprising customer and staff representatives. This publication provides a unique opportunity for the integration of both tenant and Trust articles;
- The Community Project Grant Fund – this fund provides up to $2000 for initiatives that benefit Trust customers and local communities (SAHT, 2000a)

Key policy officers explained that renewal areas had been selected on the basis that they were experiencing serious socio-economic problems and high levels of crime combined with physical deterioration. Overall policy objectives for renewal work were described as the transformation of the area both physically and socially. Specifically, the intention was to improve the general environment and the standard of housing, increase the social mix and the tenure balance as a means of achieving a more sustainable community and address the social problems such as crime that were present in these localities.

Summary

This review demonstrates, as noted earlier, the shift that has occurred across all three states from the earlier restricted emphasis on physical renewal to the incorporation through various means of community or social objectives. In Queensland a new program had been developed. This operated separately from the urban renewal program but the aim was to link the programs at a local level. In South Australia and New South Wales the urban renewal initiatives had been expanded to incorporate community objectives.

There were remarkable similarities in the objectives of the programs although the level of detail presented in policy documentation varied between the states. The form in which objectives were expressed did vary, however, and there appear to be subtle differences in their relative emphases. On the physical renewal side the emphasis presented in the most recent policy documentation from New South Wales was on ensuring that properties were 'well maintained' while in South Australia the need to replace older properties was more prominent. Tenure diversification or breaking up concentrations of public housing is an objective indicated by all three states though it is not clear from the sources currently available how far this has been implemented. In contrast the emphasis on improved housing management appears from the documentation to be restricted to New South Wales.

So far as community renewal is concerned objectives were characterised by generalities such as 'normalising estates' in New South Wales, 'improving lives' and creating 'more prosperous neighbourhoods' in Queensland and 'addressing disadvantage' in South Australia but it is not clear from the documentation to what extent these terms reflected a different emphasis. All three states identified improved safety and security as an objective but Crime Prevention through Environmental Design was only identified as an aspect of urban renewal in Queensland. Queensland was also the only state to specifically mention improvements to local amenities although this might also be assumed elsewhere.

Interestingly, community participation is presented more as a means than as an objective in its own right. The New South Wales vision included having residents as partners and the community was described as being central to the Community Renewal Program in Queensland but on the whole participation was cast as a means of achieving the stated objectives. So, for example, New South Wales' documents refer to the consultations they engaged in regarding physical upgrades and Queensland noted how residents had been involved in the development of the renewal plans.

The nature and objectives of renewal were explored in more detail during the fieldwork and these are described on a case by case basis in the next chapter which also utilises case specific material supplied by each of the three states.

CHAPTER 4 - THE STUDY AREAS

As described earlier, the localities were selected following a careful analysis of the documentary evidence and in discussion with state policy officers in each of the three states. The aim was to select areas that varied across a number of dimensions, were characterised by an emphasis on community participation and were a rich source of examples. Some of them had been the subject of a number of renewal initiatives and community development interventions for several years while others had only recently experienced specific interventions of this type.

These brief descriptions provide the context for the subsequent analysis of participation. As the amount of documentary material available for the localities varied, interview material has been used more extensively in some of the descriptions.

East Nowra – NSW

The East Nowra estate is located in the Shoalhaven district of NSW. It is a relatively small estate of around 600 houses. In 1999 the Housing Department described the properties on the estate as 'hard-to-let'; needing multiple offers before reletting. High levels of violence and crime on the estate and excessive levels of nuisance and annoyance were also reported (NSWDOH, 1999).

Renewal work in the area began in 1998/99 before the estates had formally become part of the Community Renewal Strategy (CRS). Unlike Riverwood (the other locality in NSW) East Nowra was never part of the earlier Neighbourhood Improvement Program. During the first year of renewal there was a small program of asset improvement. Painting and fencing work was undertaken on 49 properties, a laneway was closed and 'superlots' were surveyed with a view to subsequent subdivision. Various management initiatives were also implemented during this time; such as the development of an allocation strategy that would ensure a more representative demographic mix on the estate and support for a tenants' association. The tenants' association, Nowra Tenant's Support, assisted the Department with the development of a Local Action Plan by undertaking a survey among local residents to identify key issues for the community. Furthermore, efforts were made to improve social and community outcomes. A partnership was developed between the Shoalhaven City Council and the tenants association with the intention of improving facilities in the area. The tenants association also established a Park Care and Crime Prevention Group and a bi-monthly newsletter distributed to public housing residents and private households has been produced with the aim of increasing community awareness and participation (NSWDOH, 1999).

Key stakeholders indicated that the main aim of renewal work in East Nowra was to change the image of the estate and overcome the stigma associated with the locality. This strategy was aimed both at improving the way the community operated and increasing the level of community pride. For one officer it was about making the estate a place where people wanted to be and empowering residents to take some control of their community.

While these community objectives were clearly identified as the central aim, respondents also referred to asset improvement objectives such as reducing the concentration of public housing in order to improve the saleability of stock:

> It's about the Department's assets being maintained or improved so that [they] aren't down graded because [the] area is seen as being undesirable.

The asset improvement program appeared to have responded to security and safety concerns expressed by residents. This included the program of replacing garden fencing, improving street lighting and closing off problematic laneways. Other initiatives had included the upgrading of local park areas.

Riverwood – NSW

Riverwood public housing estate is located in Sydney's southern suburbs. It was constructed over three decades from 1950. There are currently around 1,300 dwellings comprising blocks of walk-up flats and two high-rise towers. Prior to renewal work the Housing Department reported that the area suffered from a range of social and economic problems including significant levels of poverty and unemployment, high crime rates. Property management difficulties such as high vacancy rates were also reported (www.housing.nsw.gov.au).

The initial renewal work was undertaken through the Neighbourhood Improvement Program 1996 – 1999. This program consisted primarily of the physical refurbishment of over 350 dwellings; such as, bathroom and kitchen upgrades, provision of internal laundry facilities, the addition of balconies to some units; and the construction of garbage storage bays. There had also been an emphasis on the creation of garden areas from land that had previously been 'common' and on the provision of secure parking areas. During the spring of 1999 the Department reported that in addition to the physical improvements they had witnessed a decline in vandalism and graffiti. In 2000 the program was subsumed under the Community Renewal Strategy and a new emphasis was placed on social and community objectives (www.housing.nsw.gov.au).

The 2000/2001 *HCAP Service plan, Riverwood* outlined a series of objectives in respect of community renewal, namely:

- Ensure the community is aware of and actively participating in the outcomes of Community Renewal Strategies and associated estate activities;
- Assist the community to participate in Community Renewal Strategies, or other community planning processes which identify local needs and priorities;
- Resource the community to develop and implement initiatives to target identified priorities;
- Develop the skills and confidence of tenants to act with and on behalf of their community including those skills needed for tenants to meaningfully be involved in decision making
- Link the community to resources/other organisations that can assist in the achievement of local actions including the development of activities and communication with other agencies (local government, health and community services and community-based initiatives);
- Work with the Department's Employment Program Team to assist the community to participate in employment and training options associated with the Community Renewal Program;
- Assist in the design of planning and consultation processes for Community Renewal Strategies (including projects formerly known as Neighbourhood Improvement Projects) and establish mechanisms to obtain feedback from the community about the effectiveness of local strategies (NSWDOH, 2000).

Officers from the Department interviewed during the fieldwork indicated that the area had previously been seen as a 'no go area' and that the aim of the renewal had been to 'de-institutionalise' the estate by 'getting rid of the housing commission look'. The style and layout of the estate was described as inappropriate and doing little to address the needs of the residents. Particular mention was made of the common areas and the 'streetscapes' and there was mention of a feeling that these had been neglected because no one had a sense of ownership. Crime and safety issues were also high on the agenda together with the physical improvement of the estate. Interestingly, one respondent mentioned a desire to 'improve the relationship between the Department and residents'. Other initiatives implemented through the local Community Centre had included a Community Garden Project.

Inala – QLD

Inala is a suburb located on the south-east fringe of Brisbane; 15 kilometres from the CBD. Between the 1940s and 1970s over 4,000 houses were built in Inala by the then Housing Commission. Currently the Department of Housing owns approximately half of the 5,000 dwellings. Most of these are prefabricated three bedroom detached dwellings. The area suffers high levels of unemployment. The rate for 1996 was 21.8 per cent compared with only 9.6 per cent for Brisbane as a whole (QDOH, 2001b).

The area received renewal status in 1997 with the launch of 'Inala – A New Beginning'. In the first instance this was to involve the physical revitalisation and redevelopment of 2,525 public sector houses (QDOH, 2001b). Physical work, described by key stakeholders, included upgrading the old houses, providing new kitchens, bathrooms and toilets, the extension of some patio areas, installation of carports, new fencing, and new drainage works. Respondents reported that there had been about 160 upgrades completed per year over the last three years but it was noted that future work would be dependent on ongoing funding support from the State. It was also reported that approximately 300 'Baltic Pine'[3] houses which had 'passed their reasonable lifespan', had been demolished and the land sold to private developers. The plan was to develop a greater concentration of new houses on the cleared sites.

Respondents revealed that a community employment and training scheme had been started to coincide with the urban renewal initiative and local unemployed people had been employed to do much of the basic work.

The Community Renewal Strategy was introduced into the suburb in 1998 and work on a Community Action Plan been undertaken by November 2000. A range of community projects and initiatives have subsequently been approved by the Community Reference Group (CRG). This included, among other things: support for the upgrade of the Inala Police Citizens Youth Club; support for a community centre providing a range of child care services, employment related training and community development; a young persons holiday project; improved sporting facilities; support for a drugs project etc.. (QDOH, 2001b).

A draft Community Action Plan was developed following consultation exercises with local community members. This plan built upon earlier studies which focused on traffic and transport, education and employment, housing, community organisation and development, community services and facilities, centres, and open space and recreation (three of which had been funded through the Community Renewal Program) (QDOH 2001c).

Kingston – QLD

The suburb of Kingston is located approximately 24 kilometres south west of the Brisbane CBD in the Logan Central cluster of suburbs. Kingston, like Inala, experiences high levels of unemployment (18.1 per cent) and has disproportionately low household incomes. The area is also characterised by high levels of crime, health problems and welfare dependency. Community renewal activities began in November 1999 with the development of a Community Action Plan and urban renewal began in January 2000. A range of community projects and initiatives has been approved by the Community Reference Group. This includes, among other things: a schools project, support for Neighbourhood Watch, a domestic violence initiative, vacation care initiatives and a family support project (QDOH, 2001d).

There was a level of consistency among the renewal professionals about the ultimate objective of community renewal. Primarily this was identified as crime reduction in areas of high concentrations of public housing, but there was a general recognition that this could be achieved by interventions in other areas. Two renewal professionals asserted the view that

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[3] Baltic pine was commonly used in house construction in Australia from 40 to 140 years ago. It is still occasionally used for floorboards and weatherboards. It often attracts Anobiid borers, which are widespread in Australia. See http://www.greenweb.com.au/archicentre/html/guide_on_termites_and_borers.html

by starting with the problems and issues that residents considered a priority this would ultimately have an impact upon crime rates in the locality. Another asserted that crime was the least mentioned objective, with the beautification of parks, improved facilities and better service provision prioritised.

It was reported that ten broad strategies had been identified in the Community Action Plan (which has not yet been ratified) and a series of working groups had been established. The aim was that each group would tackle two or three of the strategies considered to have the greatest priority. Five working groups had been established with responsibility for: parks; community safety; art, culture and recreation; employment, education and training and media.

Interviews also revealed that a number of initiatives had been established through this process including the development of several new Neighbourhood Watch groups, infrastructure improvements at a local community radio station (which subsequently permitted programming opportunities for community groups), and providing sporting opportunities for 280 young people over 40 weeks by subsidising places at a local private sports club.

Salisbury North SA

Renewal work in Salisbury was initiated by SAHT and the City of Salisbury in the autumn of 1997 through the Urban Improvement Study. The first phase of the study involved an 'action research' communication and consultation program. Participants in the study were viewed as co-researchers or partners in the research process. The aim was to encourage the direct involvement of community members as active participants in the research process. The approach was to hold community workshops where information collected could be interpreted jointly (SAHT, 2001).

A range of strategies was adopted to support the work of the study. This included the distribution of a newsletter and personal letters sent to all SAHT tenants in the project area. Community information sessions were held in October 1997 providing an overview of the initial study and an interim Community Reference Group (CRG) was convened in November 1997 to assist in the consultative process, provide information on the needs and issues to be addressed and comment on preliminary urban planning, housing and community development proposals (SAHT, 2001). The group comprised of individual residents and community group representatives. Meetings took the form of interactive workshops in which consultants employed by SAHT attempted to address and work through a range of issues including:

- traffic management;
- urban design;
- the level of public housing;
- preferred levels of demolition/retention and upgrade of existing houses;
- social issues;
- community development possibilities and strategies;
- further consultation strategies;
- the ongoing role of a community consultative group (SAHT, 2001).

Following detailed consultation with the CRG and the wider community the following goals were prioritised:

- reducing the concentration of public housing in the area, while still retaining a level adequate to meet demand, and introduction of private housing into the area;
- upgrading houses, streets and reserves;
- traffic management improvements;
- opportunities to become involved in landscaping;
- the development of strategies to address safety issues;
- more recreational facilities for youth;
- more opportunities for community involvement (SAHT, 2001).

The Community Reference Group indicated, at its August 1998 meeting, that all residents of the suburb had been given ample opportunity during the communication and consultation process to be informed of the urban improvement proposals and they were confident that the proposals reflected the community's aspirations for the future well-being of the area. SAHT endorsed the proposals in October 1998 after the clear demonstration of the community's approval and the Salisbury North Urban Improvement Project was subsequently launched. A Neighbourhood Development Officer was also appointed to support these strategies and to provide a single direct access point to the process for community members (SAHT, 2001).

Ongoing consultative processes included:

- the establishment of an information shop in the project area;
- locating the Neighbourhood Development Officer in the local Neighbourhood House;
- the continuation of residents newsletters;
- the re-nomination and appointment of the CRG (by the community);
- the development of terms of reference for the CRG through independently facilitated workshops;
- establishment of CRG representation on the Salisbury North Project Steering group;
- CRG representation on Salisbury North Community Connections Committee to oversee the implementation of the Community Development Strategy;
- regular updates on project plans sent to CRG;
- community participation in activities initiated through the implementation of the Community Development Strategy to ensure ongoing opportunity for community opinion to be expressed (SAHT, 2001).

By 2001 the following achievements were claimed:

- Progressive demolition of 35% of public housing and re-subdivision to create allotments for private house and land packages and some new-built public and social housing;
- Upgrading and sale of 30% of public housing into the private market;
- Upgrading of all public housing retained (35%);
- Major street-scaping incorporating paving, tree planting, improved street lighting and undergrounding (sic) of power commenced and ongoing;
- Improvements to reserves including new wetlands and landscaped areas in place and ongoing;
- Traffic slowing strategies and calming devices introduced e.g. roundabouts, median strips, designated parking bays, distinctive paving, pedestrian refuges and tactile devices;
- CRG involved in selection of tree species to be planted;
- Student participation in the planting at roadside protuberances and in reserves;
- Community Club establishing a landscaping feature and environmental group care for wetlands;
- Working party formed to progress 'safe community' and Neighbourhood Watch re-vitalised;
- Safety Audit conducted by residents with recommendations incorporated into project plans;
- Community Police Officer appointed to the suburb to work with the community;
- Youth Activities Co-ordinator appointed to progress events e.g. Dance Parties, Drop-in Centre;
- Youth recreational Area significantly upgraded, with Skate Park and multi-purpose activity areas introduced;
- Neighbourhood activities fostered through new Community House e.g. gardening workshops, resident based IT initiative, community arts project and cultural events;
  Training and employment opportunities created within project activities (SAHT 2001).

A review of the Salisbury North Community Development Strategy was undertaken in May 2000. The key objectives of this Review were to:

- ensure the strategy remains relevant and consistent with community aspirations;
- ensure priorities of key stakeholders are identified and included;
- include priorities of other key stakeholders in the project since originally formed;
- and include any new directions identified since the initial strategy (SAHT, 2000b).

The process adopted for the Review included holding a series of cluster group interviews, facilitating a stakeholder workshop, and the examination of relevant and recent reports. The consultation with stakeholders incorporated a re-assessment of the priorities of the area (SAHTS, 2000b).

The Review reinforced the importance of local community involvement in devising and implementing strategies for its own improvement and to engender a sense of ownership of the renewal process, and to ensure that the benefits of the renewal project are sustained over the long term. It identified a need to target community involvement strategies to young people, the Aboriginal community, and older residents and suggested that it was 'particularly important to secure the active involvement of special interest groups where projects are designed to assist these groups' (SAHT, 2000b).

Key officers explained that the area had been prioritised for renewal work because there were signs that the housing stock was beginning to deteriorate, there were increasing levels of vacancy and a high level of turnover. It was suggested that there were high management and maintenance costs and that the housing had become unviable as 'a financial proposition'. From this perspective, it was maintained that 30% of the houses should be demolished. The model that was developed facilitated demolition by raising capital from the sale of other units but it was suggested that this figure could be increased if land values were raised.

> One of the objectives has always been to try and get land values up to a level where we could contemplate a greater percentage of demolition. But at least initially that's all we could sustain.

Significant physical improvements were being undertaken in the property that had been retained. This included internal and external work and improvements to the gardens and fencing.

On the community development side, officers suggested that the main commitments were the employment of a Neighbourhood Development Officer and an Employment Officer. These were joint SAHT and Salisbury Council initiatives. Support had also been given, it was explained, for the establishment of the CRG and there was a commitment to a series of 'employment outcomes'.

While there had always been a sense that social issues might be addressed through the renewal work and that the physical aspects could be 'a good catalyst for that to happen' one officer noted that

> the urban improvement side of it has to be financially viable … and that's ultimately why the project looks the way it [does] - because it's been assessed on a financial basis.

Other officers privileged the community objectives but returned rapidly to the asset management issues that SAHT had to face in the suburb. The objective was described as reducing the concentration of public ownership in the area to improve the amenities of those that are retained.

Westwood SA

Westwood is amongst the largest of renewal schemes in Australia with the project area comprising 5,100 houses. The total project area stretches across the area of Adelaide known collectively as 'The Parks' in the inner North West. Stage one of the project is in the Ferryden Park area. Before renewal most of the stock belonged to the SAHT. The renewal initiative has involved a partnership between SAHT and Urban Pacific Limited (the developers) and the City of Port of Adelaide Enfield (SADHS et al, 2000).

There had been, for a number of years, common agreement that the area needed fresh investment to improve the housing, environmental and social conditions. Renewal work aimed to change the tenure mix and the physical appearance of the area. This it was asserted would also lead to significant changes in its demographic profile (SADHS *et al*, 2000).

The project involves the demolition of about 2,000 older SAHT properties, the development of 2,400 new houses, which will mostly be for sale, and the improvement of the remaining housing landscape and infrastructure (480 SAHT homes will be substantially refurbished of which half will be sold). It is anticipated that the whole project will take 15 years to complete and some $340 million will be invested in upgrading the area with new homes, roads, parks and facilities. A holistic approach has been aimed for in the development of the renewal initiative and this has included community and economic development objectives (SADHS *et al*, 2000).

A Community Consultative Team (CCT) was established in 1997 as a mechanism for ensuring that community views were taken account of as the redevelopment took shape. The team consists of local residents and representatives from local community organisations (SADHS et al, 2000.

The Westwood project has established the Community Development Alliance to tackle the interconnected social and community problems that exist in the area. This forum brought together senior management representatives from SAHT, the Department of Human Services, Community Health, Port Adelaide Enfield Council, Department of Education, Training and Employment and Urban Pacific. The project was also supported by a Neighbourhood Development Officer who works with local groups and tenants with the aim of identifying any problems with the project and ensuring that the project meets their needs (SADHS et al, 2000).

A series of workshops were conducted with local residents and service providers (including schools, health, local government, police, youth and aged groups) in 1999 and community development action plans were developed. The action areas identified were:

- Employment and training;
- Education;
- Community integration and cultural development;
- Community safety (WPC and WCDA, 2000)

A local employment and economic development reference group was also established in 1999. The group comprised senior representatives from SAHT, the Department of Education, Training and Employment, the Western Area Business Enterprise Centre and Urban Pacific. A strategy has been drawn up which includes:

- a job search facility at the local library;
- the development of a local business directory;
- upgrading a local business strip;
- developing a business development program (SADHS et al, 2000).

By the summer of 2001, the project had sponsored two training courses for 30 local people. Six of the first fifteen secured employment following their Transport and Distribution course and a further fifteen trainees were pursuing a course in General Construction. As part of the training the group worked alongside trained professionals to refurbish one of the SAHT properties that was earmarked for improvement (*WestwoodNews*, Summer, 2001).

The key officers interviewed in Westwood described the objectives as two-fold: an integrated approach that involved both physical and social renewal. On the physical side the description of objectives reflected the points made in the policy documentation, but it was also noted that 'improving opportunities for home ownership' was also an objective in its own right. It was suggested that the program would reduce the percentage of public housing from 58% to 23%. This it was suggested would assist community objectives by reducing 'the level of disadvantaged housing to get a better social mix'.

The community or social aspect of renewal was described as improving the quality of people's lives. One of the renewal professionals indicated that this meant pursuing the Department of Human Services' objectives of increasing social capital and increasing community capacity in order to 'overcome a dependency culture and to build on the existing strengths of the community'.

Practically, it was suggested, this involved trying to 'improve employment outcomes for people as well'. There were several references to education, skills development and job improvement opportunities but little detail was available on the practical initiatives that had been implemented.

CHAPTER 5 - WHY PARTICIPATION?

This chapter addresses the conceptual rationales for participation in renewal as expressed by those involved in the programs reviewed in the three states. In particular, it addresses the question of why housing authorities have promoted participation as a central element in their renewal programs. Not surprisingly, given the range of stakeholders, there were both positive and negative views held about why housing authorities promoted participation.

It has been possible to identify two broad sets of reasons presented by stakeholders in support of resident participation in renewal. The first set comprises the managerial or pragmatic benefits of involving local people such as the efficiency savings that might be derived from their inclusion. The second consists of the notion that residents have a right to influence the decisions that affect them. These perspectives reflect the typology developed by Cairncross *et al* (1997) who constructed three ideal types of participation; namely, traditionalist, consumerist and citizenship models. The consumerist model is influenced by the 'values and methods of the market'. Rented housing is, from this perspective, treated as a tradeable commodity which is 'not the subject of political debate or collective action'. Cairncross *et al* explore the extent to which this approach empowers tenants in relation to their landlords. They note how advocates of this approach stress 'consumer sovereignty' but question the degree to which tenants have a choice and therefore the extent to which a free market exists. The citizenship approach is characterised by the engagement of the landlord in dialogue with tenants' representatives. While the consumerist model stresses an individual relationship with the tenant as consumer, the citizenship approach stresses the importance of tenants acting collectively as well as individually. In other words, the model is largely determined by the context. From this perspective all of the cases examined in this study would fall into the citizenship model but it was clear from the analysis that a distinction can be made between those whose rationale is based on a notion of citizenship and those whose rationale is based more on pragmatic criteria or on the 'managerial' benefits of participation. These approaches have been labelled the managerial and citizenship. Both these perspectives are identifiable from the fieldwork. Across both of these perspectives lies the notion that participation improves social cohesion and leads to the development of more sustainable communities.

The managerial perspective

The managerial perspective can be split into two broad approaches, one reflecting a "bottom up" concept of the value of local participation, while the other might be best seen as a "top down" approach to managing change. On the one hand, it is argued that that local people are best placed to identify what is problematic in their locality and therefore what issues should be prioritised. This argument is normally developed to include the view that it is more financially effective to spend resources on that which is deemed to be needed by local people rather than on the perspective of an outsider. While this might be taken to be self evident, not all renewal professionals hold this view. Some, for example, maintain that they hold expert knowledge to which local people are not privy. From this perspective participation may have a role but only in as much as it is deemed to contribute to the perspective of the expert. The following two interview extracts reflect this kind of distinction.

> … there's lots of Government funding going into an area, the last thing you want to do is go and build something or do something that the community doesn't want.

> I can see that some of the comments that come forth are very relevant. You actually get the perspective of local people and they sometimes pick up on things [that] outsiders, if you want to call them that, miss out on.

The perceived managerial benefits derived from resident involvement therefore include financial efficiency and effectiveness. Housing managers also reported the gains to be derived from 'keeping tenants happy'.

And its good management from my point of view to have happy residents, content with their home, because that spins off in all sorts of areas: rent payments, maintenance of properties, the whole thing. If they're happy in their home, they're happy in the area they're likely to look after their home and their [neighbourhood] better than what they did. And they are also likely to accept their tenancies better than what they have - like paying their rent, making sure they're not making a nuisance with noise and that sort of thing.

From a more strategic perspective there is an acknowledgement that local perspectives may affect property values. From this point of view tackling the issues of concern to residents has a direct impact on asset values. This is reflected in the perspective of private developers involved in building or converting property for sale:

If you're going to sell real estate its all about perceptions as well as realities and so if you can get the local community talking positively about the sorts of things that are happening, well that has a major impact on saleability of properties

Private developers were also keen to minimise conflict and maximise the acceptance of the local community:

So having their involvement *getting them on side* as a strong community was a crucial link to having the acceptance in the area, acceptance of [the] credibility of ourselves and really getting the right product and doing the right things (emphasis added)

While these views were not prominent among housing and community development professionals, the suggestion by some housing officers that participation gave them an easier life also indicates a pragmatic 'conflict minimisation' approach that fits more closely with the managerial perspective.

The citizenship perspective

Managerial perspectives can be contrasted with the other broad set of reasons for participation provided by stakeholders. This could be described as the citizenship rationale. From this perspective, residents should be involved because it is their political right to influence the decisions that are made about their neighbourhood. This was most frequently described by the statement that it is 'their place'. One officer explicitly recognised the normative nature of this perspective as the following extract reveals:

[I]t is their community, it's their lives that are affected by the renewal process, so from a moral point of view it's absolutely critical that they are involved.

Closely associated with this perspective is the notion of 'empowerment'. That is the view that community involvement encourages people to act individually and collectively to take control of their destiny. For some, the notion extends further to the idea that if local people are 'empowered' changes introduced through the renewal process will be more sustainable. This view is summed up by a community development professional:

We see [community involvement] as the basis of empowering people to take control over their own lives. We believe that it is only through involving local communities in decisions that affect their lives can we make sustainable change in the local area. And we believe that any alternative options such as imposing what we thought should happen on the area wouldn't work; it would fail.

Unsurprisingly, the local residents that were actively participating in renewal initiatives tended to stress the citizenship perspective. When asked why local people should be involved the response was often adamant: 'It's our bloody place - it's as simple as that' or 'well, because we've got to live here'.

A resident activist expanded upon this point by expounding the view that rights were accompanied with responsibilities.

I think we should know what is happening in the area, what the [Housing Authority] has on line, and also we should, if we're not happy, … speak up. So I think for me it's a two-way thing, we should be speaking up for ourselves and at the same time we should be knowing what the [Housing Authority] is doing as well.

Another community representative also indicated that from his perspective it was inappropriate to complain about the decisions that had been made if you did not become involved in the structures that had been put in place. Elsewhere it was suggested that without the residents active engagement there would be no sense of community.

Residents also recognised the pragmatic benefits for renewal professionals of their involvement referred to above and others went as far as to suggest that the renewal initiatives would fail without their involvement.

A small number of resident representatives were clearly committed to higher levels of direct control, such as the development of housing co-operatives where tenants managed the properties and estates themselves. This perspective was based on the view that corporately 'you've got to be responsible for our own problems'. The following view was expressed by an active resident who was concerned, for example, about welfare dependency.

> I've got sons who are the mortal combat generation and that's what the overall message of mortal combat is isn't it? Look after [their] own destiny...

But while the above positive 'citizenship' views were dominant among many active residents, others questioned the extent to which these views were shared by the renewal professionals with whom they were involved. Indeed, some saw the promotion of participation in a more cynical light. One local community representative argued vehemently that the professionals were motivated by a desire to reduce opposition to their plans:

> It seems to me the main driver for any community involvement has been so that they can move people out without hassle because it was [the developer who said they were] … in it to make money, and the [Housing Authority] didn't want people barricading themselves in their homes and refusing to be relocated. They wanted plain sailing and that was … their only impetus at … making some attempt at community consultation.

Others expressed cynicism with the process of consultation suggesting that the professionals were simply paying lip service to the concept and that they could have all the input they liked but 'they'd still do it their way'. From this perspective the consultation process was viewed as tokenistic:

> What they wanted was a few people for photo opportunities and to sign on agreements and things so that they could make it look good because [the developer] apparently has won awards for [the] community development side of its housing developments. That's all they wanted out of it: … that marketing stuff.

This was not a view shared by all active community representatives, however. Some suggested, for example, that the consultation had been inadequate but that the intentions of the renewal professionals were genuine. From this point of view the frustrations were treated as a learning process and while active residents felt their influence had been modest they believed the renewal agencies had learned from them and that they had at least ensured a degree of 'damage limitation' through their interventions.

Social cohesion and sustainability

Common to both the managerial and citizenship streams was the notion that increased resident participation would promote higher levels of social cohesion and that this would in turn ensure the sustainability of the renewal work. However, both terms were used loosely by interview respondents and it was not always clear how these ideas fitted together. Where social cohesion was more carefully defined it was used in the context of crime reduction. One renewal professional claimed for example that the major objective of community renewal was:

> To provide a more cohesive and responsible community where people basically police themselves rather than have [the] law enforcement agencies … taking the major responsibility.

The sustainability of renewal was of concern across the three states. All of the programs were seen as time-limited and there was therefore a question mark over what might happen to projects once the funding came to an end. As with similar renewal initiatives elsewhere (Wood *et al*, 2002, p 18), there was concern about how the benefits that had been derived

from these interventions might be maintained in the longer term. Participation was often described as an important aspect in making programs sustainable but respondents did not always explain why they believed this to be the case. It was seemingly assumed that this was self-apparent – part of the credo that was presented along with the other assumed criteria: such as the need for a greater tenure mix.

Interestingly, participation was applied equally as a criterion for the success of both urban renewal and community renewal programs. However, those involved in urban renewal, particularly private developers, were less concerned about promoting active influence on the physical aspects of renewal through participation. In this context, getting the right level of private development and the required amenities were considered to be more important, from a sustainability point of view, than resident participation. They, along with the other renewal professionals, nevertheless maintained that community participation in *community renewal* projects on the renewal estates was essential for the long-term viability of the physical renewal.

What emerges is the notion that encouraging residents to participate in community renewal projects develops a local skill base that is necessary to tackle ongoing problems in the community and therefore prevent the locality from slipping back and losing any gains that might have been made through the renewal process. From this perspective there are, implicitly, long term benefits in relation to the commercial viability of the physically renewed estate. So, for example, developers in South Australia were keen to see the development of 'self sustaining' community groups such as 'Tool Libraries' and local employment initiatives as a means of promoting the gentrification of the neighbourhood.

The clearest description of the role of participation in the process of promoting 'social cohesion' and sustainability was provided by a renewal professional in South Australia:

> If the local people … aren't involved, then the suburb really has not got a lot of vitality. … It's about the quality of life of the people living there. And it's not about other people coming in and making things happen for the people. It's about people being involved and making things happen for themselves. It's about long-term sustainability. I mean the project is there working for a certain length of time but one actually wants … the community to be active within itself so that when the project's work in … physical terms is done, the community is still healthy and ticking over and, … in today's terminology, the social capital is improved and [the community] will sustain itself. It's about the intrinsic thing of people's well being. I mean … if one goes back into all of the basic principles of neighbourhood community development - people's long-term physical and mental health can, in a great part, [be] sustained to their optimum level if people are actually involved in part of and living as part of a community.

The rationale for this position is often couched in the rhetoric of 'social capital' (Wood *et al*, 2002 p 10) but much of the argument remains untested. Whether or not the process of participation in renewal is a necessary or sufficient condition for achieving sustainable renewal remains to be seen. Certainly a level of scepticism was expressed by other renewal professionals who claimed, in contrast to the rhetoric, that 'the realities were fairly fragile' and that a long-term community development intervention was required:

> Trying to change a whole community is a fairly big project. … One of the things you get used to when you're working in [a renewal] area is … having to start again. And I guess I don't know how the [Housing Authority is] going to sustain the reruns because … you can't just say this is the start date and this is the finish date. You might start, you go along, what you started with completely crumbles, [people] move away, move on, have a catastrophe in their life, something like that. You come back here and you start again. I don't think you ever start from scratch again because there's some remnants of change but … it's one of those things where you constantly feel like it's three steps forward and 10 steps back. … But I guess that's one of the things that does concern me. Is it sustainable for the [Housing Authority] to keep some focus on that community development part of things? Because I think without it the whole thing

will fall down.   … We don't need to be putting a lot of money in to [the] estates [on an] ongoing basis but we need to … keep the wheel turning. And hopefully there will be more people in the community that will help turn the wheel, but I think we actually need to have some sort of presence all contribute to some sort of resources to keep that wheel turning.

Summary

There were a variety of reasons put forward for encouraging resident participation by renewal professionals both across and within each of the six neighbourhoods. These have been broadly characterised as coming from either a managerial or citizenship perspective.   In reality, a complex web of views and justifications emerged where the motivation for resident participation was contested, with individual stakeholders themselves holding a range of views on its value and role.   Even within the same renewal project it was possible to identify contradictory perspectives about the value of resident participation, from those who strongly advocated an 'empowerment model' to those whose motivation was more tokenistic or even self-interested.   Views about prevailing participation strategies ranged from positive advocates to the more cynical, a division which ran across all stakeholder groups, from residents to housing authority professionals and to non-government partners.

This is not an unexpected finding, given the need for a range of stakeholders with differing motivations and perspectives to 'buy in' to the renewal process. However, it does highlight the difficulties faced in implementing participation strategies that are coherently focused and therefore understood and accepted by all involved.

Nevertheless, ideas about the place of participation in creating social cohesion and increasing the longer term sustainability of renewal projects appeared to unify both these broad perspectives.   The underlying belief that resident involvement *in some form* is a necessary component of renewal was widespread and largely unquestioned. Neither were its supposed benefits really questioned, both in mediating the process of change and renewal on the estates, or on the longer term well being of residents and communities involved. At this stage, however, even in the more established initiatives, it is impossible to say how successful the current processes of participation have been in achieving these longer term objectives. Indeed, the consensus was that it was 'too soon to say'.

CHAPTER 6 - STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES OF PARTICIPATION

The structures and processes adopted for resident participation were investigated in each of the localities. This included a detailed examination of the type of representative forum adopted, the nature and scope of resident involvement in the development of renewal plans and strategies and the methods adopted for ongoing communication and consultation.

Representative Forums

The basic structure adopted in the three states studied included the creation of forums whose function was to represent the views of the wider community. In all of the neighbourhoods, these forums comprised representatives of local agencies and voluntary groups in addition to local resident representatives, although the selection process for the local (rather than agency) representatives varied across the cases. A summary of the main features of each of the representative structures adopted in the case studies is shown in Table 2.

The normal procedure was to begin with a public meeting advertised locally through the use of letters, newsletters and articles in the local press. The intention in each case was to encourage a number of local residents to attend a regular meeting (normally monthly) at which they could represent the views of local people. In Queensland, the Community Reference Groups (CRGs) were open to all residents who wished to attend, whereas elsewhere the forums were restricted to specified delegates. Even in Queensland, however, only a limited number of people actively took part in these meetings and there was some suggestion that the initial 'recruitment' of representatives at the public meeting would need to be repeated to ensure that those attending were fully representative of a changing population.

Table 2: A comparison of renewal forums across the case studies.

	NSW RW	NSW EN	SA WW	SA SN	QLD IN	QLD KT
Initial public meeting	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Delegates from resident only group	✔	✔	✔			
Open to all residents					✔	✔
Mix of agency representatives	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Approval mechanism				✔	✔	✔
Delegate(s) sit on project steering group		✔		✔		
Chaired by resident					✔	✔

Note: RW = Riverwood, EN = East Nowra, WW = Westwood, SN = Salisbury North, IN = Inala and KT = Kingston

Selection of representatives

In both New South Wales and South Australia it was anticipated that there would be a turnover of delegates but the mechanism for achieving this was not clearly expressed. There was some evidence to suggest that the scale and enthusiasm for getting involved in community activity was limited and that consequently it made more sense to talk about 'self-nominated' volunteers rather than delegates. As one renewal professional in South Australia commented:

> In both areas it was really a case of who was willing to come forward … to participate and to be involved. So essentially it has evolved on that basis.

In East Nowra and in Westwood the local representatives were nominated by a broader 'resident only' community group but the number of resident delegates was limited to one person in the former case. In Riverwood the structure was more elaborate. Smaller 'precinct' level groups called Neighbourhood Committees had been established and these met on a monthly basis. Officers from the DOH were required to attend these meetings. These groups also provided the means of promoting a more democratic approach to selecting delegates. This was the only locality where representatives were the subject of an election. Voting took place by a show of hands at the precinct meetings that were open to all residents in that precinct. Fieldwork suggests however that it was difficult to maintain levels of involvement at the 'precinct' level. As one delegate explained:

> The thing that happened, as Chris[4] said, they had their meeting to be voted back in again. Nobody turned up so they continued [as delegates].

In Salisbury North the Housing Trust had decided to restrict community representation at the implementation stage to a reference group, although they too felt that the current make-up of the group should be renewed after a two-year period. One officer explained that once the decision had been made about the form that renewal would take the reference group could then handle ongoing issues:

> There's no framework in the community development program to hold public meetings or to have specific focus groups about where we're heading because we see the Community Reference Group … as serving that role. And I guess that's why we renew the participation on a two-year basis to recognise that the project does move on and there may be other issues.

This raises important questions about the extent to which groups of this nature are deemed to be representative of the wider community. This issue is explored in Chapter 7.

Development of plans

There was a remarkable degree of consistency across the localities in the method of developing and progressing plans. Without exception the process for resident involvement in the physical elements of urban renewal were restricted to consultation exercises while the social and community elements were subject to more sophisticated participatory approaches which indicated citizenship aspirations. Consultation on urban renewal took two forms. Collectively those affected by renewal work were normally invited to a meeting to comment on overall plans but this was perceived more as an information session as plans were often at a late stage of development. In contrast, individual consultations on work to an individual tenants home would normally offer a degree of choice (e.g. colour schemes). There was only limited evidence of resident involvement prior to the initial development of refurbishment plans and the level of consultation and resident involvement at subsequent stages varied. In contrast community renewal initiatives were characterised by attempts to establish structures which allowed residents to determine the renewal agendas, though levels of influence appeared to vary between states and across the cases.

i) New South Wales

- *Riverwood*

In Riverwood the NSWDOH had developed a five-year plan for the refurbishment of the estate. A consultant was employed to develop a master plan for the estate. Meetings were organised at the local community centre in conjunction with the local Housing Communities Assistance Program (HCAP) worker and officers described how the initial plans were to take account of residents' views:

> It starts with a process of consultation about what are the problems and then they go back when they've drawn up the first draft designs to show how some of those things they may have raised would have been altered.

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[4] All names and place names have been changed to protect the identity of respondents and focus group participants.

There were, however, slight contradictions in the reporting of these events. Another renewal professional suggested, for example, that:

> They presented plans to the clients, showed them plans and got their input right at the very beginning on what was going to be done and [got their] … suggestions. … It was all taken on board. … There was a lot of initial consultation with the client and they were involved heavily from the word go and that's been maintained throughout.

In contrast residents described how they had in their view simply been invited along to a meeting, informed about the planned renovations and explained that a choice of colour scheme was offered to each individual tenant.

During the course of the improvements the Department's interests were expanded to include social and community aspects of renewal. There had already been a community development input on the estate through the HCAP worker at the local Community Centre for a long time prior to this and it would appear that the change of name of the program (from NIP to Community Renewal) had had a negligible effect upon community initiatives. One renewal professional made the following comments, for example:

> I think that the tenants would perceive that it was about physical improvement and when it was called the Neighbourhood Improvement Program I feel that that was the focus of it. Now the Department changed the name to Community Renewal but I'm not sure tenants ever understood that change of name. Anyway … by the time of that name change they [had already been] brought on board in a more participatory way so I don't think the name change made any difference.

- *East Nowra*

In East Nowra the planning activity began before the area became a part of the Community Renewal Strategy. In 1997 the DOH developed a Local Area Plan (NSWDOH, 1997). This outlined a series of strategies and priorities that were based upon consultation with tenants, residents, young people, DOH staff, service providers and Government departments working with the East Nowra community. Research conducted in the preparation of the plan included a survey of local tenants and service providers. The aim of officers was to develop a plan based firmly on the understanding of key stakeholders; such as schools, the Neighbourhood Centre, the Police Youth and Citizens Club. Renewal professionals worked closely with the local Tenants Association in the administration of the local survey but expressed a concern that they had not been fully briefed about the results.

As there was only limited physical refurbishment taking place in East Nowra participation in this aspect of renewal was restricted to having a choice of colour schemes. This was undertaken individually. There was also a selection of fences from which the occupants of the affected properties could choose.

ii) South Australia

- *Salisbury North*

Early consultation occurred in Salisbury North in regard to both the proposed physical refurbishment and the development of a Community Development Strategy. This was achieved during the study phase (which pre-dated the establishment of the urban renewal project) through the Community Reference Group but also included the use of resident newsletters, personal letters, the local media, community information sessions, a focus group with young people and stakeholder interviews.

While the nature of the physical renewal of the estate was largely predetermined by the SAHT and the developers, the CRG provided an opportunity for community involvement during the redevelopment work. The CRG implemented a 'standards' approach to the approval of proposals submitted within the Urban Improvement Project. Members of the CRG consulted with the community groups which they represent and with 'a number of other residents and community members' before final decisions were reached and before the proposal was endorsed (*Salisbury North: Resident Newsletter*, 9 May 2001).

The original Community Development Strategy was developed during
phase 2 of the study process (late 1997 to early 1998). This was
led by an independent consultant and overseen by the project Steering Group. The Strategy
responded to a range of social issues identified in consultation processes by major
stakeholders, human service agencies, the Department of Human Services and the
community.

It was reported that the CRG had had a significant input into the development of the
Community Development Strategy through independently facilitated interactive workshops
where community and social issues were identified and prioritised, and where possible
responses were explored.

Westwood
A similar process had been adopted in Westwood where a significant outcome was described
as the creation of a Neighbourhood Development Officer position. The main focus of the
CRG, however, appeared to be on the physical aspects. It was suggested by the community
representatives that they had been largely pre-occupied with the development of the
relocation policy. Renewal professionals working primarily on the physical aspects of renewal
suggested that residents had been able to influence some of the localised estate layout
issues, such as the need for a roundabout or more parking in their part of the neighbourhood,
rather than the 'big picture' outcomes.

iii) Queensland

In Queensland each Community Renewal Area was in the process of preparing a Community
Action Plan at the time of the fieldwork for this research project. The plans for Kingston and
Inala were not available as they had not yet been ratified, but the process was described in
some detail. The DOH appointed consultants to work with the local communities in the
preparation of the plans and the focus groups established by the consultants led to the
development of the CRGs.

There was an element of doubt expressed by some renewal professionals about the
processes that had been adopted by consultants, particularly at the early stages, and some
contradictions emerged, as the following extracts reveal.

> [One] example of how we didn't quite get it right … [in] the development of the
> Community Action Plans … [was the way in which] the community was engaged in the
> development of the … plan [and] [the way] we briefed the consultants to develop the
> … plan. So … it took something like 12 months or more to actually get the
> Community Action Plan in a [usable] format.

> I mean the Community Action Plans set down and said we're going to do a number of
> things and the people, residents, attending the focus groups or working groups or
> whatever were asked to make comments on those.

The confusion relates to the extent to which the plan was already well progressed by the time
consultation occurred, with another respondent suggesting that the consultant was brought in
after the CAP had been developed. It would appear that the process was more consultative
in the early stages but should be noted that the final CAP had not, at the time of writing, been
ratified and it would seem, therefore, that renewal professionals were going through
something of an iterative process to refine the plan with the CRG following the workshops.

One respondent suggested that the internal review of Community Renewal had demonstrated
that there had been 'broad based community involvement in the consultation phases of the
development of Community Action Plans', with 'in some cases up to 10% of local residents
involved' but some concern was expressed about the program's reliance on CRGs as the key
mechanism for community involvement. This issue is explored further in Chapter 7.

Ongoing communication

Ongoing communication was thought to be essential for maintaining resident involvement and
newsletters were identified as the main method for achieving this. However, the method of
producing this type of media was more participative in some areas than in others. In
Westwood residents involved in the CCT were also involved in the production of their own

newsletter 'Under the Apple Tree'. This was often used as a means for promoting and disseminating the activities of the CRG but was clearly separate from the 'glossy material' circulated by the SAHT and the developers. In Salisbury North a newsletter was produced by a community group with support from a SAHT officer. The local *Riverwood Inside News* was produced by the HCAP Worker (employed by the DOH) but contributions from local residents and community groups were actively encouraged. It was also used as a vehicle for community renewal with regular contributions from the local renewal professionals. Elsewhere it was less clear where the ownership of newsletters lay. In the two Queensland localities community representatives identified the Neighbourhood Watch newsletters as the main source of ongoing information about the renewal programs. Questions were raised in a number of areas about the effectiveness of this form of media and community representatives in Salisbury North and Kingston were beginning to use local radio as a means of communication with the wider population.

Ongoing consultation

The means of ongoing consultation in all of the localities revolved around the representative forums. In New South Wales and the South Australian examples, it was suggested that they provided a means of monitoring community reaction to the ongoing development and responding to the concerns that had emerged during implementation of the plans. Only in East Nowra and Salisbury North was there a direct mechanism allowing residents' views to be fed directly into the project decision making process. This involved resident delegates actually sitting on the project steering groups although this was restricted to one delegate in East Nowra. In Salisbury North, it was suggested that the wider community were aware of these arrangements and where appropriate, could channel their comments or complaints through the CRG to the steering group.

In Queensland the CRGs played a fundamentally different role in the ongoing decision making process. The forums, in a sense, vetted the applications for Community Renewal support that had been submitted by various Government Departments. A fairly complex process of ratification was explained by renewal professionals. Submissions for funding went through the CRG where they were either endorsed or rejected. They were then taken to a multi-agency Regional Managers' Forum comprising local representatives of relevant Government departments. A technical view was taken at this point and if the project was supported it was then submitted to the local MP and the local Minister's office where a final decision was taken. However, the Minister responsible for Community Renewal had indicated that projects should only be approved if endorsed by the CRG and this in effect gave the local group the power of veto.

In all three states it was suggested both by residents and by renewal professionals that local neighbourhood or community development officers had an ongoing role as an intermediary between the representatives and the State authorities. In most cases this was an employee of the respective housing authority but in some instances the person was working for a third party. It was suggested that those undertaking this role were able to have contact with residents on a day-to-day basis that allowed regular and clear communication on an ongoing basis.

Community representatives, in particular, considered this an essential aspect of their involvement:

> The key to getting anything done and getting any information - it's just like the communication hub thing - without [the Neighbourhood Development Officer] we don't operate together. [This officer is] pretty much the only person we have any contact with. If we've just got a general enquiry … we just … speak to whoever's on the front desk … and they'll try and help us; when it comes to serious communication it's [the NDO] or nobody. We['ve] got her phone number, fax number, [etc.]. … She just puts us in the right direction and gives us information.

The personal contact and support coming from a designated officer was, therefore, seen as particularly useful for promoting an ongoing process of participation.

Summary

A range of structures and processes had been established to initiate and develop participation in renewal. While the objectives in some senses varied across the three states, the structures bore striking similarities. In particular, while the degree of participation on the physical aspects of renewal were essentially consultative in nature, higher levels of participation (predicated on a citizenship or empowerment model) were being developed in relation to the community renewal objectives.

There were variations in this, however. The model of decision-making adopted in the Queensland Community Renewal Program allowed for a greater level of resident control through their power of veto. In most cases, the involvement of residents in determining the initial stages of physical renewal plans was limited.

Ongoing communication and consultation had been facilitated through various means including newsletters, but representative forums emerged as the central mechanism for maintaining links with the community's perspective. Finally, individual neighbourhood or community development officers had been a key mechanism for achieving this.

CHAPTER 7 - BARRIERS TO RESIDENT PARTICIPATION

Resident participation is not easily established. In most cases, there has been a history of unfulfilled expectations on the part of residents to initiatives on the estates, or no history at all. In either case, the level of involvement in these kinds of participatory structures had been limited. Residents had not been used to being involved or consulted to any great degree before the renewal programs had commenced. With this background, this section considers the barriers facing effective participation in renewal schemes.

A series of factors emerged from the fieldwork that demonstrates the difficulties involved in promoting and facilitating the participation of local people in the renewal process. In each of the three States that have been examined there had been an emphasis on participation whether motivated by a citizenship or managerial perspective and each had engaged in a wide range of activities to try to overcome these barriers. However, a series of issues were raised by residents (both active and non-active) and by renewal professionals that continue to put barriers in the way of genuine and extensive public participation. These are reviewed in the following section.

Life experiences

All of the neighbourhoods examined in the case studies were regarded as significantly disadvantaged and, as noted above, were considered to have more than their fair share of social problems. The personal life experiences of residents were not always straightforward and aspects of this situation militated against their inclusion in the renewal process. Fieldwork demonstrated a number of ways in which residents suffered stigma and unfair treatment which impacted upon their life opportunities. It also showed how higher than average levels of experienced crime and poverty affected residents and resulted in a reduced inclination for local engagement.

i) Stigma and unfair treatment

Residents in all the localities felt they were stigmatised simply because they lived in an area that had been denigrated for many years. Much of this related to the 'housing commission label' that was attached to these neighbourhoods as the following extracts illustrate:

> In this area there is a stigma … about living in a Housing Commission house; the people that own the private houses don't like the people that live in the Housing Commission.

> You're low classed; you're labelled, definitely.

The name of the estate or suburb had become a tag or form of shorthand connoting a range of negatives and while renewal work had made a difference there was still a long way to go:

> To me I think it's going to take a while, … I try not to say I'm from [this suburb] … If I don't want people to judge me, I don't mention [it], I just say [the name of the town] kind of thing

One member of a representative forum asserted that the stigma leads to discrimination in the job market and a reduction in access to finance. Whether this was more perceived than real was impossible to test, but the erosion of mainstream services was a common theme emerging in the account of local residents across all of the case studies.

Particular mention was made of poor police response times, a poor repairs service from the housing authorities and a lack of public transport. Police responses were attributed to prejudice about the localities concerned and people generally felt that their reports were not taken seriously.

> Police response [*dismissive*]! I live opposite the school here, and many many times you see kids running around on the roof, damaging the windows and trying to pull the air conditioning apart. Immediately, I ring the police: they come out a half hour later and the kids are gone.

The housing authorities themselves were a common target for the random focus group participants and some community representatives. Here too, poor levels of service served to reinforce feelings of insignificance:

> I have a problem with my bathroom. They dropped my ceiling and they left it. One year off! One year, going to the Housing Commission about it. I told [the housing authority]. I go to them and they just put a patch in the ceiling and I have the leaking again from upstairs. I live in ground floor and I can see bubbles all over the wall. I feel like it's going to fall on me one day.

> Well yeah, I've to ring them three or four times just for them to come out and do something. I've been living in the house nearly 12 months and they don't even listen.

Residents in four of the six localities also described how they felt abandoned by various private businesses. Inala residents claimed that three banks and a post office had been recently closed down and they described how a drive-in movie theatre and a local swimming pool had been closed down. It was reported that the pool had been filled in with cement. In Salisbury North residents described how local shops were empty and boarded up. Many of them had apparently been vandalised. In East Nowra residents described how the bus shelters had been taken down and not replaced and also complained about a scarcity of pay phones and their general lack of maintenance.

These experiences served to lower morale and reinforce low self-esteem. Residents recognised that they often lived in areas that suffered from a range of social problems including higher than average levels of unemployment, high levels of drug usage and criminal activity, but they were irritated by the ways in which the stigma they experienced seemed to reinforce this situation. These problems, in and of themselves, were also a source of great distress.

ii) Crime

A wide range of problems, experienced on a day-to-day basis, emerged through discussions in the focus groups and with the representative forums in all the areas. Of these, crime was highlighted in all the areas apart from Westwood. One focus group participant in Inala reported that he had been broken into three times and all but two of other twelve participants had experienced burglary while living in Inala.

Feelings of insecurity were acute in many areas. In Riverwood a focus group participant explained how residents felt uncomfortable about allowing their children to play outside and how they felt particularly vulnerable at night:

> They don't feel safe, after the sun goes down, to go for a walk. This is true.

> And for me, I've seen it sometimes, people get bashed in the street from teenagers or throwing things on them, burning them, snatching their bags, things like that.

One older resident explained how someone had been killed in the flats where she lived and how she felt lonely and scared.

Much of the crime was attributed to drug users or associated with drug dealing. Drug usage was described as particularly problematic on four of the six estates. The following two extracts reveal how these issues impact upon other residents and become emotionally upsetting.

> The majority of people around here are good honest decent people but it's the scumbag low-lifes that come around and they're ripping off and they're stealing … to support their habit or whatever.

> I [have] got some neighbours that oh boy I'm [so] scared of that maybe I think I [will] have to move. They [were] fighting the whole night and screaming. I think [they were] mixed up with drugs [and] that sort of thing. It was a bit scary for a couple of months. But I have to say …. that's the only problem I had.

Residents in East Nowra described how they were concerned for their children because of the number of used needles left lying around in common areas.

iii) Poverty

Residents rarely attributed their impotence to their poverty or difficult life experiences but this view was apparent among renewal professionals. One went as far as to suggest that the lack of work opportunities for local people created a feeling of depression and dislocation. One community worker, for example, made a direct link between these feelings and a lack of enthusiasm for participation.

> I think you've got to recognise that … you're … undertaking a renewal project because … it's been an area where people have gone … as a last resort. There's high [social] issues and people are dealing with their own personal issues, they've got a lot more than most people. So their interest in what's happening out in the broader community is zip and that's understandable, they're just trying to get by from one day to the next. So it's not surprising that some people are [not] interested.

Another renewal professional suggested that life experiences had created a high level of dependency

> They are used to receiving and not feeling that they've got any ability to influence to what happens to them.

In summary, the combined experience of poverty and the extensive use of drugs in these localities was reported to be highly stressful for residents and it was apparent that these experiences had an effect upon self-esteem and levels of morale among the local population. When asked what had discouraged them from participating in renewal initiatives common responses included 'it won't make any difference', 'your voice won't be heard' and 'what's the point in complaining?' Residents were therefore starting from a low base in terms of their collective self-esteem and experience of expecting their views to be either regarded by the professionals or making a difference.

Cynicism and scepticism

High levels of cynicism and scepticism were reported in all localities and this had clearly translated into negative views about renewal initiatives. This is, in some instances, was also clearly wrapped up with low self-opinions as the following extract reveals:

> To become involved would be a waste of time because you mightn't be heard because *you're a nobody* (my emphasis)

Previous poor experiences of consultation, however, played a large part in moulding these attitudes. One participant in a random focus group explained how she had attended a consultation forum regarding improvements to a local park but had felt completely ignored.

> Before they did the park, they decided to … put the plans up and you could go there to have a look, put your two bobs worth in. I went over there and I was there for 25 minutes and [in the] 25 minutes nobody but nobody bothered to come anywhere near me while I had a look at the plans. [No one asked] who I was. I was there on invitation and absolutely nothing was done. I mean they had a sausage sizzle but all these little white-collar workers were standing around. All the bureaucrats who were council workers, Housing [Authority] workers, whoever, in their little groups talking about their overseas trips, whatever, their new cars, all of this and just putting out bad vibes.

When asked why they had not got involved, the same person made the following response:

> I would like to have got involved but after the park I couldn't see the point. These people were not interested in what I had to say about their plans for the park or anything else.

Elsewhere officers suggested that the community had been 'consulted to death' and even active residents who had participated for a number of years explained how disillusioned the community had become:

> The prevailing feeling in the community now is that they will do - *they* will do - what they want and there's no point in becoming involved in community consultation because the decisions have all been made.

A common complaint from professionals that communities have been "consulted to death" is in many ways countered by the residents' own perspectives that they were not taken notice of in many cases, or had not been greatly involved in previous initiatives. It is possible that the professionals were translating the residents' typical scepticism in many cases into a misplaced idea that there had been too much consultation in the past. Rather, from the evidence of these six case studies, it is may be more likely that there had not been enough effective and inclusive consultation, rather then too much, and that the expectations that accompanied initial activity had either not materialised or have been slow in coming. Evidence on this issue is pursued in the next section.

Reasons for Apathy

While residents and professionals alike described high levels of apathy among local residents, there were several explanations that were proffered to explain why even those residents who had been able to find the human resources necessary to attend were subsequently dissuaded from participating. This was particularly the case in areas that had been the subject of various renewal initiatives over several years.

A renewal professional in Inala, for example, indicated that there had been a long history of initiatives 'thrown at it with very little coordination'. As she explained:

> There's a lot of stuff that's not been followed through so there's a general [scepticism] in the community [about] whether it's ever going to achieve anything

A similar view was expressed by a community representative in South Australia who had been very 'iffy' about getting involved, as he believed it was another case of 'they'll get around to it someday'.

On occasions the cynicism resulted from raised expectations. An active resident in Westwood, for example, suggested the initial level of publicity had been a mistake:

> There had been a lot of political capital made out of [the renewal]. 'Its going to happen, we're going to do something' - but then nothing did happen.

A renewal professional in Riverwood also suggested that much of the initial scepticism resulted from their previous experience of decisions being made by the Housing Department without their involvement:

> Well we'd give them what we thought they needed. We'd spend money on, I don't know, upgrading with landscaping into the area but there was no one to back it up with maintaining it.

In fact, while the active residents might have felt over-consulted, residents in the random groups, in contrast, often suggested that the reason for their non-involvement was because they had not been asked:

> We weren't asked what we wanted. … That's right. The plans were set and they were telling you this is what would be. So you had to accept what was there or if you had the money to [do so] change it afterwards.

Renewal professionals were aware that the previous behaviour of their authorities had hindered their attempts at participation as one officer reported:

> There's been those who've been grey suited public servants for many years and they knew what was best for the public. … 'They didn't really know what they wanted', that was their attitude.

Formality of process

Numerous accounts were provided about the anxieties created by the invitation to participate. Participation structures placed expectations upon residents and frequently led to feelings of inadequacy.

> For someone who's not used to a committee system even having an agenda is intimidating. You can't run a meeting without an agenda but they're just intimidating.

Even the focus group itself proved to be a concern for some. One of the focus group participants noted how his wife had asked him to go to the focus group as she was 'terrified' about attending.

> She didn't want to come. She's the one who made the appointment but she was actually scared of this. And the one that Housing Commission did she wouldn't go to that either. She finds it very daunting.

Literacy and language

On occasions this was because of anxieties about their ability to express themselves clearly. Also, in one very frank account, this concerned problems with basic literacy:

> I have to say for myself, personally, I prefer [these] sorts of meetings (the small focus group) because I'm actually illiterate. I can't read or write. Now I have to specify that because illiteracy means something different to the educated people; [for them it] means that you have difficulty reading and writing. No! I can't read or write. That's what it means to me. And when I can just come and voice my opinion or voice what I feel, I jump at the chance when I can. But if I [was] to come in here and you said here fill this form out, I would have said 'look I'll see you guys later'.

The issue of literacy was linked by one renewal professional to the levels of disadvantage in renewal areas:

> That's probably the biggest thing. People in a lot of areas - because [they're] disadvantaged - a lot of them don't have reading and writing and everyday skills and that's been identified in a number of the … plans too.

It was also clear that there were other major language barriers for some. Several people commented about the difficulties of involving people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

> I think one of the things that can stop people is literacy, people even reading that there is something going on or getting a copy of the minutes to know what's happening in a meeting and in [this area] there are something like 120 different cultural groups so there would be language issues for significant numbers of people … We need to engage interpreters to get basic information from people. So there would be pockets of the community who, whilst we all think we've done a fantastic job letting people know about community renewal, wouldn't have a clue because they can't access the information.

In Riverwood around 60 per cent of the population were Arabic speaking and relatively few were able to get by adequately in English. Members of the Estate Advisory Board described, for example, how the Arabic speaking population were effectively excluded from the consultation forums.

> There is a problem with communication … not only [with] the Australian speaking or English speaking tenants but I find myself … the greatest problem is that there is very little ethnic interpreters. So that the biggest majority of people in this area (I think it works out to something like 64 per cent at the moment) are of Arabic nationality. We hold our committee meetings, our area meetings and you get English-speaking people come to them. A failure of being able to pass the information of those meetings to the Arabic speaking people. There is no one other than Pete here who is in the Arabic Association and you can put as many pamphlets as what you want in their own language but it is surprising the amount of people that do not read and therefore … the lack of communication going to that 64 per cent of people. [They] have no idea of what the program is about and what is going on in their area. It is only through word of mouth of people such as Pete who take the time to come to those meetings and take that information back to them.

While much had been done to encourage the Arabic community to participate in the activities of the local community centre, renewal professionals suggested that it was harder to involve them in the community renewal processes.

This perspective was reflected in Westwood where the allocation of housing to refugees had exacerbated the problem.

There's been a higher vacancy rate and people haven't wanted to take up those houses because once again the lack of maintenance etc. So they've used that housing as the place where a lot of refugees and so we've had the South East Asians, the Turks, the Bosnians and now we've got the Somalis. It's the latest wave, that's what this area has had, wave after wave of refugees so its not just one language problem, there's a continuing language problem.

Not listening to residents

A frequent complaint among active residents was that renewal professionals failed to listen or take notice of what was being said by local people. This, in their view, was the main cause of the communication barriers. This problem was conceded by one renewal professional who claimed that the problem was more one of failing to provide feedback and ongoing information.

Now I think a lot of times they make … comments and nobody takes much notice of them. In fact, I was at a meeting just recently where one of the residents stood up and … said "you've consulted with us a dozen times on the transport options, you've not taken anything into account that we've said". Now to look at it, you'd say they probably had [taken account] and with many things you can't. But I think … we're not good at saying to people we did hear [what you said] but weren't able to do anything about it.

Avoidance of conflict

Others were upset by the levels of conflict they experienced in the community meetings. This had clearly put people off, as a participant in the random focus group session in Kingston explained.

I could have got involved but there was too much bitching going on. … Virtually everybody was trying to get a point across but it was bitching. And then you had these other people up here explaining to you the Community Renewal and the Urban Renewal and you're sitting there and you're trying … to fully understand it but you've got all these other people sitting there saying 'no that's not going to work' and 'I can't see that' and 'you can see this group's here is going to grab more money than what we're going to get', and what have you, and I said no I'm out of it.

The conflict and different perspectives sometimes related to cultural tensions and differences in value between different ethnic groups. There were examples of this described in both Queensland and South Australia.

The other issue is values, I mean in a suburb that reflects diversity such as this you'll have tensions between groups. You'll have differences of values so how do you develop the inter-cohesive environment. That's a challenge I think. So it's a very difficult issue.

Then … unfortunately you've got animosity between very [different] cultures too. It's very noticeable. See we've got between 60 and 70 different nationalities.

An active resident in East Nowra summed up how many would-be participants felt:

Yeah, do I really want to jump in to this frying pan? I mean it's sizzling already.

Lack of confidence and feelings of inadequacy

Many community representatives explained how they lacked confidence or felt inadequate. One active resident explained how she had been unsure about the role she had taken on and felt 'left to it' by the renewal professional who had invited her to get involved.

I was looking for some sort of volunteer work to do because I got sick of looking at four walls … but when I first joined I was thrown in at the deep end. … There was no one here, we didn't know what we were doing and there was a desk just full of mail, [which we] had to sort out and find out. … This woman said come in - I forget what day - for a bit of volunteer info and that. And there was nobody here and she's off and 'see you later'!

This respondent naturally felt that she did not know what she was doing and had been ready to quit, at that point.

Overburdened Activists

Active community representatives often felt that all the work was being left to them. Members of the representative forum in Inala, for example, described how they had called a meeting about a fire ant problem. While 40 to 50 people attended, they explained, there were only two names on the list of people willing to participate in a committee. This was the two activists that had called the meeting.

There was, in fact, a feeling across all the forum representatives, clearly expressed in the following extracts, that it was always 'left to them' to play the role of community representative and that no one else understood or took an interest:

> I don't know whether I speak for all of us. I feel as though … I put myself in the firing line as the saying is. We do take calls at odd hours from those people that do not understand that we can only do so much. We can't go and demand things to be done.

> We're called stakeholders … but often I [felt] held at the stake!

This was felt acutely at the times when others had been sought to fulfil the community representative role. In South Australia, for example, one participant explained how no one else had come forward when they had sought nominations earlier in the year.

Some of these sentiments also reflected a concern about the potential for recrimination either from 'authorities' or from other residents. Active residents felt there were dangers both ways. You might upset the local renewal professionals and you might also become alienated from those that you sought to represent.

Other members of the community were aware of these concerns. When asked what reasons they gave for not getting involved one renewal professional responded as follows:

> Quite often [it] is around recriminations. [They think] that they'll be targeted if they're seen to be one of the people who [gets involved]. For instance there was a park group that … was, as I said, caring for the plants and picking up syringes and that sort of thing, they also had like a park watch function that they would call police when things were going on that shouldn't have been. Now that group unfortunately folded in the end because people just felt that they weren't getting the support that they needed to continue with it and they felt that they were actually being the targets of some of these people that they'd dobbed in.

It is understandable given these sorts of concerns that active residents feel overburdened when faced with this kind of response and many clearly felt like pulling out.

Dominant professionals

Community representatives described how many would be participants were put off by the dominance of renewal professionals and other agency representatives in the decision-making or consultation process. This was particularly the case where key resources were at stake. The points made by community representatives at Kingston illustrate this experience, although they also maintained that this situation had begun to change as they were now learning to assert themselves.

> You might get someone. Maybe a Councillor might come and try and be a bit pushy. … A lot of people don't like it … [They] say 'stuff it, I've had enough of that'.

> We were being overridden; we were railroaded. …

> 'Manipulated' I think would be a better word. …

> I really do think that's the main issue. I for one … stood up that night and said 'hey I've had enough of this'. I was ready to [go] but the only thing that stopped me was I'd put in so many months of work and I just thought I'm not just going to walk away from it now and let you win.

One renewal professional noted how, even at the early stages of consultation there were powerful interests wielding significant influence, particularly where funding was at stake and often competing with each other. However, this respondent also suggested that the situation was changing:

In the very early stage of the programs our agencies came in and said 'look, this is a social issue, this is a problem, here's a solution' and they just presented it and asked for endorsement. Now it's getting to the stage where the community are seeing that in addition to those preventative things, maybe a proactive approach - a celebratory approach in projects, [might] bring people together, lift the spirit and maybe reduce crime.

Elsewhere there was a feeling that community influence had been negligible and limited to the early consultation stages. The consensus of one community forum was that they had only managed to influence a minor design change, otherwise, the 'housing authority had done as they had pleased'.

Some believed that the internal organisation of the forum had worked against resident participation, particularly when officers or non-residents had taken the key roles. One renewal professional picked up on this point, suggesting:

Well I have nothing against [the chair], he's a lovely fellow, and the [community forum] love him being the Chair and he's just been appointed for another [term], but really I see that role for a community leader and the opportunity to actually have somebody trained up so that they could do the job.

Exclusive and unrepresentative forums?

Ironically, given these examples of dominant behaviour, renewal professionals were often more concerned about the dominance of key community representatives and the representativeness of the community forums. This is also a recurrent theme in the renewal literature. The concern, on the one hand, is about the extent to which representatives speak as individuals rather than putting forward the views of the community and, on the other, about the extent to which they represent the views of the whole community rather than just one particular part.

In South Australia, for example, one renewal professional reported that:

The community reference group could potentially [comprise] people with individual objectives and motives [for] being involved and we could be thinking [that] we're talking to a group that's representative and in actual fact [they're] not feeding back through.

There was a danger, for example, expressed by a number of renewal professionals that the focus had been on recruiting representatives from previously existing community groups and organisations. These were often already dominated by older white men or consisted of what were often referred to as the community 'elite', for example, activists who were already involved in numerous community organisations and local clubs.

You see a community [forum] that is barely representative certainly in terms of demographics of the area. In most [forums] you tend to get older people … because they're the people with the time to be involved. Ours tends to have a predominance of older males on it … the same faces at the … Progress Association, probably the Neighbourhood Watch … probably at the Transport Focus Group … [and] so on and so on. I can go to a number of meetings and the same people are representing that group and … they represent another six groups.

One renewal professional reported that an active member of the community had indicated that he should join another group because that would 'make 18 committees' in total. In his view there was a clear danger that the wider population were being excluded and that simply going to a range of existing groups in order to secure community representation was somewhat flawed.

This raises important questions about how representative the forums actually were of the community and also the way in which 'the community' is perceived. Even in Queensland where the Community Reference Groups were open to any local resident, the representativeness of the group was questioned.

It is more than suggesting - I'm stating that [the CRG] isn't completely reflect[ive] of the community. Community Renewal is certainly aware of that and … are taking steps right now, and have been for the last 12 months, at trying to bring [in] other communities - other groups within that community.

Renewal professionals expressed some frustration with the task of including such diverse groups in the consultation/decision making process. Particular difficulties were expressed in relation to certain cultural groups. Renewal professionals explained that the difficulty of including cultural groups was exacerbated by the presence of sub-groups:

You've got various numbers of clans from the indigenous population from here, from NSW and Stradbroke and up North and wherever it might be. You've then got the Buddhist Vietnamese and the Catholic Vietnamese and then you've got the various clans and the different islanders. And so [if] you take all that into account when someone says go and talk to the indigenous community or the Vietnamese community you've got to do a lot of background work about who's truly representative and the many different organisations. And most of the time they don't necessarily agree.

In an other instance it was the failure to engage with younger people that was highlighted:

The youth don't generally want to come to meetings because there's a lot of oldies there.

Where estates were undergoing major redevelopment an additional problem was the inevitable turnover of the population as people relocated and new people moved in:

You've got groups of existing residents, some who still won't be residents in the area and then this influx of new residents, private owners the issue of integrating them and getting the community representation to evolve so that it is representative also of the needs of the new community is interesting and I think its probably an issue that the [community forum] is currently grappling with.

However, few of the random focus group participants commented about the representativeness of the forums as only one or two of them in each locality had any knowledge of the existence of these forums. Those who did comment expressed concerns. From their perspective, they were not considered 'representative of the whole area' and one person suggested that 'they were only selecting people who probably would agree with them mostly'. Another regular complaint from the random groups was that they felt that they had not been asked. Possibly, the most significant problem raised in the random focus groups was the lack of knowledge about who their representatives actually were.

Some of these concerns were recognised by community representatives:

That's where we've fallen short a little bit too. Because there's a lot of these groups that I don't hear about and a lot of people don't probably get to attend or even feel like they have an opportunity or the right to attend.

There was, therefore, a very clear risk that forums were failing to represent all of the various interests in the community and that a small elite were speaking on behalf of the rest. When this situation occurs it is also possible that the group becomes embedded in the agenda of the renewal program and loses its critical perspective (see Taylor, 2000).

Accessibility and timing of meetings

In addition to these issues, residents noted practical difficulties with attending the meetings. Timing and location were contentious issues, particularly for those with a disability. In the focus group recruitment process it was necessary to offer lifts to ensure that certain people were able to attend. Others related how they had been put off by the time and venue.

Well unfortunately most of the meetings are held at [a youth centre] I don't drive at night because I can't see. I've got night blindness so I can't see where I'm going and I guess I'm a hazard to other people so I can't drive at night and this is when most of these sort of meetings are conducted, usually. Or in the middle of the day, when you can't attend it, or for young mothers it's usually when the kids are there. They need to be with the children so they can't attend. So the time that they set down [for] the meetings for are not appropriate [for] the people living in the area. They don't seem to take that into consideration.

There was no consensus about what the best time for a meeting would be, however, and the conclusion was that there was possibly a need to hold meetings at different times to allow for wider participation or to provide facilities for childcare during meetings. In this sense, there seemed to have been a lack of attention to basic equal opportunity issues and there was a serious danger emerging of indirect discrimination.

Much of this discussion also assumed that people were actually aware of the various forums and meetings that had been held in an attempt to encourage participation. As mentioned earlier, this was not always the case. Only a limited number of residents who attended the randomly focus groups in each of the localities were aware that meetings had been held and local forums established. This is often despite the extensive communication strategies adopted (e.g. personal letters, newsletters, newspaper articles and local radio coverage). This situation seems to have been exacerbated by a subsequent decline in communication with the wider population once community forums had been established.

Summary

Promoting participation in disadvantaged localities is clearly not a simple and straightforward operation. Human agency has clearly been eroded in these localities by the combined experience of poverty, stigma and unfair treatment. Getting by on a day to day basis is for many a major task leaving little time for their active engagement in the community. Low morale and reduced self-esteem reinforces dependency and denies any notion of autonomy. While many of the barriers identified in this section may appear minor, for many residents these life experiences are fundamental.

Given, however, this apparently insurmountable starting point it is even more crucial that renewal professionals address the practical issues raised in this chapter. With levels of cynicism and scepticism as described above it is imperative that those who wish to start with the 'understanding of local people' ensure that the structures and processes they adopt are appropriate for this task. This requires a better appreciation of the process of community development that is used to develop participatory structures and a commitment to equal opportunity and anti-discriminatory practices. Existing community groups should be strengthened and excluded groups involved. The next chapter considers the good practice lessons that have been learned from this study and from a range of other sources.

CHAPTER 8 – TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

Given the barriers to resident involvement in neighbourhood renewal described in the previous chapter it is clear that those wishing to pursue this option have a difficult task on their hands. As the above analysis has shown, however, there was a good level of awareness among renewal professionals about these difficulties and several principles of good practice had been identified. This has led in turn to the development of practical initiatives aimed specifically at overcoming the barriers to participation. In this chapter we document the principles and the practical initiatives that were being implemented across the six case study estates. Good practice experience emerging from elsewhere, notably the UK, is also included where relevant.

The importance of community development

The community development role played by key renewal professionals (described variously as Neighbourhood Development Officers, Facilitators, Community Workers or Community Development Officers) was, of all the factors discussed with professionals, thought to be the most significant in ensuring participation was made effective.

Residents too were unequivocal:

> It's so important that we have [the community development worker]; he's like our interface between us and the Government.

> The community itself insisted that it had a community development process. We finally, this year, managed to get somebody who coordinates all the bits.

Individuals fulfilling the community development role were mainly employed by the agency responsible for renewal (the respective housing authority) but in some situations there were also local government and voluntary sector employees fulfilling this type of role. To a degree, those who were not immediately employed by the renewal agency were freer to work in a more neutral supportive manner with community groups. In one case a renewal manager commented, humorously, about the contradictions in his agency's employment of a community development officer, who in his view had made his life more difficult by empowering the tenants to take action.

i) The community development role

There is a long tradition of Community Development in Australia (Kenny, 1999) but it would also appear that the profession went into a decline in the 1980/90s (Meekosha and Mowbray, 1995) and much of the theoretical base that it developed has been obscured. Nevertheless, respondents provided considerable detail about their perceptions of the role. Fundamentally they described the process of working alongside or with local people. The terms connector, promoter and facilitator were used to indicate the way in which the intervention was intended to promote the development of individuals and groups as a means of enabling them to have more control over their collective situation. Several renewal professionals that were engaged in community development described this simply as facilitating their participation.

Respondents who were actively engaged in this type of work were asked to describe further the nature of their input and to describe the skills and training that they thought were necessary. The actual process adopted was described by one renewal professional as a developmental process. Starting with the needs identified by the community the worker in effect facilitated a 'question and answer' educational process that encouraged residents to explore their situation further and in the process identify potential action outcomes. As he described it:

> Like with our tenant groups for instance … What I've said to them is what do you want to do? 'Well we want to develop our membership, we want to develop them to get jobs, we want to maybe have new innovative employment schemes'. But what are you going to do about it? How are you going to achieve it? 'Well we have to upgrade our skills'. There you go! How do you upgrade your skills? 'I would like to just investigate the possibility of doing a TAFE course maybe and getting a piece of paper that enables us to continue on and further develop the community'. It's a very long-term process but it can snowball after a while.

This description begins to reflect the form of 'dialogical pedagogy' advocated by Paulo Freire (1970) which has been extremely influential in the emergence of community development practice both in Australia and across the globe (Society of St Vincent de Paul, 1998; Hope et al, 1984; Kirkwood and Kirkwood, 1989). It was apparent, however, that there was only a limited critical understanding of the role of community development as expounded in the literature (Ife, 1995 and Kenny, 1999). Notably there was a danger of emphasising representational roles such as obtaining resources and advocacy at the expense of facilitative and educational roles. It was common in the fieldwork to hear those with a community development role described as 'the go between' or as a source of information, rather than as a facilitator of individual and group development.

> She's in touch with a lot of organisations and resources and she keeps us informed with what's going on. Sometimes, well, she's planned a lot of meetings for us to attend and get more information, or give information, so I suppose keeping us in touch with what's going on.

> He knows the right people and when we have a problem he knows who to talk to in the [housing authority].

Ife (1995) cautions against this role describing them as "problematic for a community worker who is committed to genuine self-reliance and empowerment".

ii) Skills and Knowledge base

Respondents also described a range of skills and knowledge that they felt a good community development worker required. This included a range of investigative, analytical and networking skills through to inter-personal and communication skills.

Again, there was a danger that research and information finding was perceived as the exclusive role of the community worker:

> [He] knows where to find information when we need it.

> It is the ability to actually be able to analyse what's happened in the past and develop an understanding as to why the suburb developed the way it has developed in its social fabric.

This might be contrasted with a 'co-investigative' approach where community groups are seen as an integral part of the research and information gathering process (Kirkwood and Kirkwood, 1989).

With respect to communication, the ability to communicate with people at a variety of levels was emphasised by respondents.

iii) Attributes and values required

Many suggested that good community work was about more than the application of a set of skills. Rather, there was a need for particular personality traits, clear values and a high level of commitment.

There was a particular emphasis on the manner in which community workers operated with members of the community. It was stressed for example that workers should be 'in touch' with the needs of the people and avoid patronising them. Essentially this meant working in such a way that shows respect for local residents – 'working with them, not for them or directing them'. One respondent also emphasised the need for creativity and innovation in exploring the way in which things could be achieved. Others stressed the need for a clear value base:

> I mean obviously things like having the belief in what you do. In believing, I guess, [in] building a sense of community.

> It's … basically come from a social justice value base. If you don't have that value base then I don't think you'd be able to handle community development work … because you need the empathy to be able to go out and help or do your best in assisting those kinds of people.

The need for a clear value base is also stressed within the literature where the subjective has been covered extensively (Henderson and Thomas, 1987 and Thomas, 1983). The key value is that 'people should take control of and responsibility for their own resources', but this is placed within a structural analysis of social problems (Kenny, 1999).

From this perspective community development is committed to tackling issues of powerlessness. It has a firm commitment to promoting participatory structures and therefore developing a radical view of citizenship. Ideas such as empowerment and self-determination are central to this position as is the commitment to diversity and respect for all (Kenny, 1999).

iv) Local people

One of the issues raised during fieldwork was the lack of local people in community development roles. This was noted by the community representatives in particular as being a potential barrier to their appreciation of local issues.

> I do find that there are very few people that represent the [Housing Authority] that live in the area. They're from the other side of town and do not really have knowledge of the area they represent.

The benefit, and significance, of having this direct experience was highlighted in one example where the worker had previously lived in the area (although she had subsequently left).

> She's an ex … resident herself of many years standing. She knows the problems of the … area and she knows the people and I think this is the great asset that [the stakeholders involved] have got.

Ife takes a particularly strong position on this issue suggesting the community work undertaken by people living outside a locality "runs counter to the ideals of empowerment, local initiative, self reliance and autonomy, and effectively reinforces the community's dependence on external resources" (Ife, 1995).

While none of the respondents shared this perspective, it was recognised that by encouraging local people to be involved in the process of community development it was possible to overcome some of the bureaucratic barriers explored earlier. Often, however, those who become experienced in this sort of work eventually become employed elsewhere often at a cost to the local community.

> They're basically volunteers and … they're doing it for free as it is. And they then … go off [as] they want to better themselves and so we should be able to give them the opportunity [here] because they're good.

v) The community development process

The community development process, in and of itself, presents a format for exploring the different facets of good practice in urban and community renewal revealed in this study and presented in the literature. This involves:

- Starting with the people
- Identifying local issues, needs or problems
- Setting up and working with groups
- Facilitating the development of skills
- Enabling action

The following sections develop some of these processes further.

Starting with the people

There was a high level of unanimity about the importance of involving local people from the outset, before any significant action had been taken. Ultimately, this means before any plans have been drawn up (other than the plan to consult), but certainly before any plans are implemented. In Riverwood, for example, renewal professionals were clear that 'starting with the people' was one of the keys to encouraging participation:

> One of the things that [the renewal professional] did was involve the clients initially in the setting up of the brief … before they actually turned a sod of earth or drove a nail. [He] firstly found out exactly what the tenants wanted. What was the underlying thing that was upsetting them most that we could resolve by this program, rather than just go[ing] the old way of getting what we thought they needed and 'they'd be happy with that' - it was a reversal of that whole process.

However, this process is much easier when there are no external constraints. Renewal in the two South Australian localities involved significant private sector involvement and there was an understanding, across all parties, that residents would not be able to challenge those aspects that were commercially predetermined. This was made most clear in the Westwood example:

> In terms of Westwood, for example, the consultation that took place about what was valued in the area by the community was important in terms of … mak[ing] an overall specific plan for the project. I don't think they [were] able to influence, particularly, the major decisions in terms of [the] extent of relocation [that] was required and [the] extent of transformation … required. I think that the project itself is using a lot of private funding and therefore in order to obtain an agreement that was going to make the other renewal aspects … take place, those commercial interests have taken precedence, I think, in determining some of those outcomes.

This perspective assumes that commercial interests and local interests are necessarily opposed. Others suggested that if local people are made aware of the financial constraints that are involved in a project of this nature they are more likely to accept commercially driven decisions. From this alternative perspective, it is possible to work with residents in such a way that they are able to cope with the complexity of the decisions that need to be made and have the tools to manage this (Wilcox, 1994). This was apparently less of an issue in the Salisbury North case, for example, as attempts had been made to involve local residents in the study that had pre-dated the planning stage.

> [The] Community Reference Group, in being involved in the steering committee, does have a solid understanding of what the whole project objectives are and not just the community objectives. So they're very understanding in most things.

Here too there was a strong emphasis on getting the process right from the earliest stages.

> I think how you get them involved initially is pretty important. You can't just have a token newsletter, call a public meeting and feel that you've got there.

Experience elsewhere suggests that:

- action to define problems and priorities should start with residents rather than outside perceptions;
- residents need to be given adequate time to build up their confidence and skills;
- Government programmes should develop measurable criteria for community involvement, allow sufficient time and resources for such involvement and require evidence that it is taking place (Taylor, 1995).

Others suggest that rushing in to public meetings with 'a fixed agenda, platform and rows of chairs' might alienate local people and lead to conflict and resistance. Alternative options would for example include identifying and meeting key interests informally, running separate sessions for separate interest groups and bringing participants together in a report back seminar at a later stage (Wilcox, 1994).

Consultation on property changes that affect individual households need to be undertaken personally preferably through one to one meetings, particularly where work might require temporary relocation.

Building on local activism

Concern was expressed about the practice of starting with existing community group representatives. Some renewal professionals, as noted earlier, doubted the extent to which they truly represented the views of the wider community. Guidance often urges caution and encourages agencies to go beyond local activists (Wilcox, 1994) but it is also possible to

identify and work with the most representative and open groups: facilitating and encouraging democratic practices and the widest possible involvement of local residents. (Chanan, 1997).

The practice in localities was divergent. In Riverwood the consultation process had built upon the long historic connection between the residents and the local Community Centre (which was managed by local residents). There were strong connections between the Community Centre the local Tenants' Association, the Community Garden Group and the Estate Advisory Board. The Community Centre was also a hub of activity for several cultural groups and while they were not involved formally in the consultation process, informal links were clearly present. East Nowra Tenants' Association were in a transitional phase during the fieldwork as the previous activists had withdrawn. This is quite a common occurrence (Smith, 1992) and reinforces the need to offer community development support to groups of this nature if you wish to work with them to achieve renewal objectives. A significant factor in the development of the new group, however, had been their campaign of opposition to the establishment of a bottle shop in their locality. Support for this campaign by renewal professionals had been effective in generating trust between the agencies and the residents and had acted as a catalyst for the new group.

Reaching other groups

The tendency across the localities was to seek community representatives from previously existing voluntary and community groups. There was, as illustrated earlier, an awareness of the potential failure of these groups in representing certain ethnic and religious groups and young people. This too, closely parallels experience in the UK (UKDETR, 1997). Specific efforts had been made to include minority ethnic groups in a number of cases. In Westwood support was enlisted from the Migrant Resource Centre to achieve this.

> We also held a culturally specific session … where the Migrant Resource Centre actually brought along their workers and information was translated into quite a number of different languages. [These groups] had representatives there. The Vietnamese speaking especially because there's quite a large population of Vietnamese obviously in the district.

The Riverwood Community Centre had developed a strong relationship with key cultural groups over a number of years. The Chinese, Vietnamese and Arabic speaking population had all established community groups at the Centre. It was reported that 60 or 70 Chinese people had established an independent group that was resourced by the Centre but run by volunteers; a Vietnamese group was supported by a part time worker (five hours a week); and an Arabic group that was supported by a full time worker. A settlement worker was also based at the centre two days a week. While there had been attempts to build upon this strong relationship in the development of the renewal program, the success of this had been limited to the dominant Arabic speaking population.

> We also have two … Arabic speaking people that we've managed to bring on board. So at least there is some representation and they're quite strong leaders in the community too. … We haven't got, definitely, any Chinese or Vietnamese coming to these meetings at all but the Arabic people because they have quite strong links now with the Arabic people, we do get them coming.

Clearly, however, the work of the centre presented enormous opportunities for developing the input of other cultural groups.

A wide range of guidance has emerged form overseas experience in way of promoting the involvement of commonly excluded groups including ethnic minorities, young people, women and children. Essentially, guidance suggests that initial research should:

- map out the different ethnic and cultural groups that are present in a community paying careful attention to the presence of sub-groups;
- tap into local sources of knowledge;
- network and profile existing groups;
- conduct specific meetings for these groups;
- keep all groups informed;
- encourage representation on renewal boards/forums (UKDETR, 1997).

Early Visible Success

While starting with the issues identified by the people was considered essential for involving people in the first place, 'getting things done' was described as the most important way of keeping them involved and preventing the development of scepticism. This was recognised by renewal professionals and community representatives alike.

> I vividly recall my first meeting with the community renewal group and I said what do you want and they said we want action and we want it fairly soon. We don't want any research … we want action.

In Riverwood, where language barriers were very significant, one renewal professional indicated that quick action and results were paramount for retaining the involvement of local people.

> It's not really language I feel that doesn't make them attend. It's that when they come and bring a problem they expect instant results. That's the hardest thing to overcome because you can't have instant results. With a lot of things they ask for they take some time to work through and I feel that there's an expectation that if they bring their problem to that forum that it will be fixed.

From this point of view, however, those facilitating involvement need to work carefully with residents to ensure that there is some early visible success arising from resident involvement, whatever the long-term plans. This, in turn, raises a difficult and potentially contradictory issue, however. On the one hand 'good practice' suggests that there should be no predetermined agenda but on the other it is difficult to get people involved if there is nothing apparently happening. This needs to be handled carefully. Good practice guidance, particularly that emerging from the UK's Single Regeneration Budget experience suggests that:

> In communities that have been marginalised for many years, the confidence of local residents will often be at a low ebb and they may well be angry and frustrated. At an early stage, it can be helpful to encourage the community to take on some modest tangible projects that meet local needs (JRF, 1999).

In Inala, a renewal professional suggested that the urban renewal (physical work to the houses), which, although largely predetermined by the DOH, had involved some individual consultation over preferences, and had acted as a potent symbol that they were serious this time.

> So it was important that … we had to make sure that things were happening on the ground first off, [so] that people actually thought … Government means something this time, they never meant it before.

There is a real danger of tokenism involved in this strategy, however, and the general view is that any early initiative should also be determined through community participation. There is also a fine line between expediency and honesty.

> This office … had been closed for about four years before we came back in 93 and [there had been] a lot of angst; people upset about the office closing. … And when we came back they felt it was their victory because they'd been pushing it for years. … And they felt that they were actual integral in getting the office to come back. We didn't want to dispel that [view]. We said 'fine, if that's what you think, yes thanks to you we're back'. I think that was also a plus in their opinion because they felt they had some sort of ownership about what was happening in their patch and [it] was a little bit of kudos for them and a win for them. So much so that, anecdotally, we turned up here in April 1993 and … we were greeted just about every day with fresh cakes and scones and people bringing things to the back door going 'thanks for coming back here'. It was a real welcome home sensation. I put about a stone and a half on in three months. So I mean that was a huge thing for them that we came back and I think that started the ball rolling with the idea maybe the [Authority] isn't as crummy as we painted it to be.

Cultural events

It is also increasingly recognised that cultural, sporting or artistic activities can help to encourage broader involvement. This had been a particularly useful way of including other cultural groups.   In Inala, for example community representatives described how the organisation of a festival had brought in a wide range of different ethnic and cultural groups and had encouraged them to work together.

> The festival they're going to have in October I reckon it's starting to work, it's only been going a couple of weeks now but then again they've got the ethnic groups working already.

Research in the UK has highlighted the significant gains that might be derived from this and other sorts of artistic activity and the important part that they might play in the process of community development (Landry et al, 1996). Cultural initiatives can be designed to allow local people to explore their experiences and identify the issues that they are concerned about. Programs of this nature can be relatively inexpensive and can be organised quickly to achieve early gains (JRF, 1996 and JRF, 1999).

Local resources

A common theme emerging across the case studies was the importance of locally based resources. Local community centres and neighbourhood houses in particular were singled out as an important aspect of resourcing community involvement. Also considered important was the accessibility of local housing or renewal offices and having renewal professionals based 'on the ground'.

The benefit of having a resource of this nature was particularly stressed in Riverwood. Here the centre had been well established for several years and was managed by the community. By using workers based at the centre in the facilitation of community involvement, renewal professionals believed they had made the process more acceptable to local people.

> I don't think we would have gotten as far as we have [without the Community Centre]. Because I think the Community Centre lent that bit of legitimacy to the whole process. … I think the tenants or the residents feel the Community Centre represents them. And I think that was really an important [part] of the whole acceptance process.

In Kingston the refurbishment of a hall for community usage formed a significant part of their community action plan. Elsewhere, the presence of a neighbourhood house or equivalent was acknowledged as useful for community meetings.

> I guess that's another sort of significant contribution from council is the construction of a community meeting facility in the area.

In Salisbury North the housing officer had been removed to a more remote location and while it was still in walking distance focus group participants were disappointed.

Plainly the presence of a local meeting place promotes attendance and helps overcome difficulties with transport and access.

People on the ground

In a similar vein, it was suggested that renewal professionals needed to be seen locally. In one instance, a participant of one of the random focus groups complained about the local housing officer for 'not leaving the office'. It was suggested that this person couldn't deal with people on a face-to-face basis and that he was in the wrong job.

Accessibility and availability clearly needed to go beyond locating officers in local offices. One renewal manager indicated that his role was to question why a renewal professional was in the office:

> Your job's out there on the road, out there being involved, being at the meetings, being at the community organisations, listening to what they're saying.

This was a pertinent issue in Inala as community renewal staff had only recently (prior to the fieldwork) been relocated into a neighbourhood house from a city location.

The biggest issue that you talk about with [the] community is that you need to be on the ground. People like [the renewal professional] being out here once again. … They don't believe that someone sitting in a central office … in Brisbane is doing … things for Inala, and as such they expect the facilitators and the people to work out here. So [the renewal professional] is out here, … but initially prior [to] Community Renewal they didn't have people on the ground out here [on a] day to day basis. People want to walk in here and chat to someone, get it off their chest, find out what's going on and move on.

The visibility of local renewal professional was deemed to be more reassuring than faceless bureaucracy and the academy. Another renewal professional, for example, commented:

I guess one of the major factors is to have staff on the ground because up till my appointment people were whisking in and out of Central Office or out of universities and God knows what research centre and they'd just disappear - nothing happening.

Training

Many of the barriers discussed in the previous section pointed to a training deficit in the processes that had been adopted to facilitate participation. The need for training throughout the participation process was clearly expressed by community representatives and renewal professionals. There was some evidence that community activists felt inadequate and unprepared for their role, and that while training opportunities became available this was often too late.

I got voted President; it was like, 'what does a president do?' … But … we've come together we've done a bit [of training]. We've got enough money together through contracts to do a training course to get our management organised, work out how to manage ourselves a bit better and work out what our roles are and … we've had to learn from scratch again, what a committee is, how to, what do we do, where do we go from here, so we're getting more empowered as we go.

It appears that assumptions were made by certain renewal professionals about levels of confidence among community representatives.

I think, to a degree, a lot of people … may not have had a great deal of experience of involvement and consultation and [didn't have] the confidence to [represent] the community in a situation where they were dealing with … senior officers from government and from the private sector. So I think some people would certainly … have been intimidated and put off from being involved in the process on that basis. I think there's probably been a lack of training put in place at the early stages to … facilitate the community to participate.

A common message was that more training and education was required at an early stage in the process. This included, for example, the perception that they required a whole new set of skills; such as communication skills, committee skills, negotiating skills. It was also suggested that they might require "training to raise their awareness of the various stakeholder issues and broader objectives of the projects".

The emphasis on skills development is common but a recent study in the UK highlights the need for a broader educational program suggesting, for example, that "the provision of information giving and skills development must be balanced by the provision of opportunities for wider critical reflection on problems, need, policies and practice" (Henderson and Mayo, 1998). Also noted in this study is the need to build confidence for individuals and communities. According to this source, training needs include:

- Jargon-free induction, especially for new representatives struggling with the demands of participating as members of regeneration boards;
- Program administration processes
- Legal frameworks and responsibilities
- How to report back and maintain accountability
- Basic assertiveness
- How to speak effectively at meetings

There is a danger, however, that by highlighting the so-called training deficit that local knowledge and understanding is undermined. Also, an emphasis is frequently placed on the training needs of local people while evidence suggests that it is often the professionals who require more training – with a particular emphasis on 'learning to listen and respect' (Henderson and Mayo, 1998).

One of the community representatives indicated, for example:

> [With] everything in this project it's been a process of the community actually teaching the [renewal agencies] how to handle the [consultation process].

For others, however, a long term process is required that starts with the training needs they identify and allows them to explore carefully and critically their experience of life and enables them to develop the additional knowledge, understanding and skills that they require to respond in the ways that they wish. As one renewal professional acknowledged, some were on a steep learning curve.

> If you look for instance at education, now how do you stimulate people who have been dormant for decades to start upgrading their skills or developing new skills or going for courses, etc., and that's a difficult one.

A range of options for the delivery of training had been tried across the states. Local TAFEs appeared the most popular source of training. Other less formal mechanisms had been adopted in South Australia, although this had not been enormously successful.

> At one point [a voluntary sector organisation] did some training with our [representative forum] … but that sort of stuff … never went anywhere. … It was a good idea at the time, but residents themselves didn't seem to see a particular need for it, which I thought was interesting.

Elsewhere, a range of forms of training that might be relevant have been explored. The variety of forms of participation is important as, it is explained, people learn in different ways. Options include:

- Group-based training
- Course-based training
- Action-based learning
- Consortium-based learning
- Community mentoring
- Placements
- Secondments and volunteering
- Exchange visits (Skinner, 1997)

In their overview of training and education in urban regeneration, Henderson and Mayo (1998) suggest that it is possible to mix and match these options. They note, however, that community based participants are more likely to prefer action-based learning, tailored to meet their particular needs, rather than course-based learning. This involves focusing on the specific issue being addressed and drawing out the learning that has been involved in the process. The use of small group techniques in training is also highlighted in the literature (CETU, 1989) as this mirrors the kinds of participative techniques that may be adopted in alternative structures and processes.

Congenial structures

If renewal agencies are serious about involving local people, then effort clearly needs to be made to ensure that the structures and processes that they adopt are more congenial to these kinds of people. While training can be provided to enable residents to participate in conventional participatory frameworks, there are dangers that this simply leads to their co-option (Taylor, 2000). An alternative approach is to adopt alternative structures and processes that facilitate wider involvement in decision making (see, for example, New Economics Foundation, 1998). A key part of this and something highlighted in the fieldwork is the use of small group techniques.

Working in small groups is particularly advantageous for the promotion of community involvement (UKDETR, 1997). This involves splitting larger groups into less intimidating and focussed sessions. A UK guide, for example, highlighted the following advantages:

- They can be held for groups of almost any size, on an open invitation or just for invited guests
- They are a cost effective way of quickly drawing out information about an issue
- Participants are encouraged to share information and listen to the views of others
- More people are able to contribute to the discussion in a small group setting, and hence a wider range of opinion is likely to be exposed than in a public meeting
- Workshops can be fun and by genuinely involving people may build their commitment to involvement at subsequent stages
- Workshops often draw out new activists and interested individuals from the community and thereby help to build capacity
- They bring together individuals and groups who might not otherwise have met or had an opportunity to speak on equal terms (DETR, 1997)

This was quite a common process in the examples examined in this study and focus group participants endorsed the value of these techniques.

Devolving power

Evidence from this study as well as from experience elsewhere suggests that giving residents a choice over their level of involvement, with opportunities for devolved power and decision making, is essential if residents are to be persuaded to participate. With the exception of the Queensland examples, however, there was only limited devolution apparent in the study. The language of partnership was prominent in South Australia and New South Wales, but there was no substantive example of power sharing. The representative forums remained essentially arenas of consultation rather than joint decision-making.

In the two Queensland case studies reference was made to the support of local Members and the Minister responsible for Community Renewal. Community representatives in Inala had been impressed by the willingness of their State Member to attend public meetings and listen to the views of local people. The message from both Inala and Kingston was that the single most crucial factor in giving residents a say had been the decision by the Minister to only fund projects that CRGs approved. As mentioned earlier, this effectively gave the CRGs the power of veto.

In those cases where the renewal agenda has been predetermined because of external or financial constraints, renewal professionals should be clear about this upfront and identify exactly what the residents' sphere of influence might be. In some cases it was not clear to many involved in the renewal process what was actually expected of the residents' participation process or their role in decision making structures.

Actual influence

While structures and processes can have a significant effect on levels of involvement, it is clear it cannot in itself compensate for a failure to act on the views expressed by local people. As noted earlier, many community representatives questioned the actual level of influence that they had had and it was therefore clear that even where the influence had been limited or gained as a result of a long struggle, this 'getting results' was highly encouraging to the participants.

The CCT in Westwood, for example, felt quite cynical about their overall levels of power, but clearly felt that they had significantly influenced the relocation policy. In East Nowra residents felt they had been successful in their campaign to close the laneways and this had clearly boosted a relatively inexperienced community group.

It was only in Queensland that the community representatives had been delegated power, and while this might be simply described as the power of veto, community representatives were clear that they had a significant level of influence. In Inala they claimed for example that 'as a group' they had been able to determine the outcomes and while in Kingston the process had been described as a battle they suggested things were different now.

Regular and clear communication

As mentioned earlier there was a danger that adequate levels of communication are not maintained once the structures and processes have been put in place. Newsletters were being produced in all localities although knowledge of these appeared limited within the random focus groups. Personal letters were used, particularly when work was proposed on an individual's home but the effectiveness of these mechanisms had not been assessed. Community representatives stressed the need for plain or everyday English suggesting, possibly, that much of the current material was inaccessible to some members of the local population.

There were many examples of material being produced in other languages. Some expressed frustration about the scale and cost of the task. In Inala a multi-lingual pilot project was being developed to make information more widely available in a range of languages. This involved the development of a range of 'fact sheets' available on the Internet in 17 languages. It was recognised that not all the target population would have access to this medium personally and the aim was to allow residents to access web pages at local libraries and through other service providers. The *Riverwood Inside News* included material in three languages other than English but the cost of translation was often prohibitive.

In Westwood the local Migrant Resource Centre had been used extensively for translation and their staff had assisted renewal professionals when making contact with a variety of cultural groups.

Beyond the need for clear written communication, community representatives frequently stressed the need for 'face to face' contact and the importance the 'word of mouth'. There was, however, only limited mention of the community group staple - 'door knocking' (Pearse and Smith, 1990). Door to door visits can be undertaken at the same time as newsletters are delivered. The face to face interaction often conveys more information than the newsletter and also increases the likelihood that the written communication will be read.

Keeping up the momentum

One of the dangers of delegate structures, highlighted in this study, is there is no ongoing guarantee that they continue to represent their constituents. Ongoing communication and consultation strategies are therefore absolutely essential if a level of direct democratic control is to be maintained.

This process, if undertaken comprehensively, is extremely demanding, as a renewal professional in Queensland explained:

> The biggest thing is the ongoing need … [for] communication, which can drop off. If you don't get stories in the local papers, … if you don't get advertisements in there, if you don't send out the additional newsletters through the area, if you don't continue to go to interagency meetings and other key arenas, if you don't continue that, then things will drop off, then people only come to you when there's an urgent need about it or you'll get the same mix of the clique of 50 or 20 people who show up for everything.

Change in culture

Traditionally bureaucratic processes have not been particularly amenable to participation and many bureaucrats are unused to the notion of involving 'clients' in the decision making process. If government departments are to be successful in creating more congenial structures and processes then it is clear that a cultural change needs to occur within these organisations. This requires careful management. In all three states there were accounts of resistance emanating from longer serving staff members and it was recognised that it would take time to change traditional 'command and control' cultures.

> A lot of those people left, they couldn't handle the change. Some of them found themselves floundering in the new system because they just couldn't manage the change of focus. They were no longer the focal point - the clients were. And that was a philosophical change in the organisation and people coming on board now are focusing on the clients more.

Similar points have been made in the UK literature (Silburn *et al*, 1999) and these issues were recognised by community representatives too.

> When it first started off, no disrespect to bureaucrats, but they were in that position. They [made] all the decisions and they found it very hard to say 'back … off, the public's got to have a say in this'.

The evidence from the fieldwork is that this traditional 'bureaucratic' approach was being eroded, but some renewal professionals felt that there was a long way to go.

> When I work with the [Housing Authority] now, like setting up the [smaller working groups] and trying to get the [housing officer], which is really a key person … [It] has been very difficult. Now I think this year I've just about got them to come. Some of them absolutely loathe coming, they just see it as unnecessary. They see it as just having to listen to tenants whinge. And they see it as creating more work for themselves.

Clearly, there is a need for a change in culture and housing authorities were beginning to explore how this might be achieved. Initial steps had involved recruiting individuals with community development experience and providing a range of training opportunities for existing and new staff. It was apparent that across the three states that there had been difficulties recruiting people with the kind of experience that was required – with 'only a limited pool to choose from'.

> For this position we went nationwide. … We did one set of initial applications and they weren't suitable enough and therefore we went to an employment agency, nationwide applications … because we knew that it was so important that the person who got the job in here, to do that work, [was] comfortable. That the people are comfortable with them; that they feel like they can come and talk to them.

There was a growing realisation that people with experience and skills in community development had been undervalued in the past and that there was a need to address salary levels in order to attract and retain appropriate personnel.

Training for housing officers was stressed in New South Wales, where a comprehensive training program had been introduced:

> They've actually set up a dummy local office in there and they run through all the trainees through specific tasks. They come out, it's a six-week initial training course, four weeks in house and two weeks in the local office. Then they come and complete their 12 months in the local offices. … At the end of the 12 months they've been exposed [to] just about to everything that [they] could. And that's when they say 'yes or no': whether they want to be part of the team or whether its not for them. A lot drop out because they realise it's just not what they wanted. A lot find it's great: 'where's this job been all my life'. There's that sort of success as well. It's not an easy job. I mean by any stroke of the pen it takes a special type of person to do it.

As mentioned above, however, it might be necessary to build on this form of 'hands-on' training and include joint training of officers and community representatives, with an emphasis on changing the organisational culture.

Need for monitoring and evaluation

It is generally recognised that the community, as the indented beneficiaries of renewal, should have a role in the monitoring and evaluation of renewal (DETR, 1997). This was not an aspect of participation that was highlighted during the study. While the representative forums established in each state allowed for ongoing feedback there appeared to be no formal mechanism which allowed residents the opportunity to comment on the success or otherwise of initiatives. In Queensland one of the community representatives explained that they did not always get feedback about whether the projects they had approved were implemented and were not clear about what had happened to some of the projects that they had supported. As mentioned earlier there was an ongoing evaluation of the Community Renewal Program taking place in Queensland with an emphasis on the nature and extent of community participation but findings are (at the time of writing) not publicly available and it is not clear to what extent residents were directly involved in the evaluation.

The need for independent evaluation of the participation process was raised in one of the randomly selected focus groups in South Australia. A participant in this group suggested, for example, that the researchers conducting this study should return in two years time to see the extent to which the situation had changed. In Salisbury North a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation process had been developed which includes aspects of participation (Judd and Randolph, 2001). In NSW, the DOH had commissioned a substantial evaluation of the NIP, which included some assessment of the levels of participation and resident involvement (Judd, Randolph and Carmichael, 2001). However, assessment of the effect of participation frameworks *per se* were non existent.

Elsewhere there has been a considerable focus both on the evaluation of community participation and on community involvement in the evaluation and monitoring of renewal. Taylor, writing in 1995 noted that any evaluation of community renewal should be based upon "residents' views of what outcomes they want from the intervention in terms of both tasks and processes" (Taylor, 1995). The need to monitor resident involvement in the UK's Single Regeneration Budget funded projects was set out in its Bidding Guidance (UKDOE, 1995) and a number of publications have explored ways of doing this. Burns and Taylor, for example, produced *Auditing community participation: An assessment handbook* (2000) and there has been considerable effort directed at evaluation techniques which involve local residents in the process (Barr and Hashagen, 2000).

Time and Resources

Good participation needs to be nurtured. It needs time to develop and it needs to be adequately resourced. The need for local facilities, accessible community development support and training have already been highlighted but these should not be seen as quick-fixes. A long-term commitment is required to overcoming social problems and empower local people in these localities. This means ensuring that the process is adequately resourced. While, the cases studied here displayed high levels of creativity and imagination, it was often recognised that these interventions had only gone so far.

Summary

This review of good practice derived from the case studies and other guidance has served to impress the importance of a series of community development principles. Involving local people in renewal is not an easy task but it is clear that practitioners are learning from their experience and drawing upon good practice identified elsewhere. Several aspects should be emphasised.

Firstly the principle of starting with the people is now recognised as fundamental to the process of involvement. This means ensuring that plans are developed jointly not simply discussed afterwards. There are dangers involved in simply working with existing groups, but good practice suggests that they should be offered support rather than marginalised.

Secondly, it is also essential that groups and structures allow for the widest possible representation and, as a priority, the inclusion of excluded voices (such as young people and diverse cultural groups). Local residents should not have to conform to pre-determined structures. They should be allowed to mould them to suit their own needs.

Thirdly, given the extensive barriers highlighted in the previous chapter the process will take time and resources to develop properly. Community groups will require ongoing support and training. If agencies are serious about empowerment, they need to allow residents the time and opportunity to:

- build upon their experiences;
- reflect on the problems and issues they identify; and
- increase their awareness of the socio-economic and policy context in which they find themselves.

CHAPTER 9 – CONCLUSIONS

This wide-ranging study has highlighted the considerable emphasis that has been placed on participation in community and urban renewal by New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia. While the rationale for participation varied across the states and between individual policy makers and renewal professionals, it was apparent that there was no actual opposition to the notion that residents should be involved in renewal initiatives. It is clear from this study, however, that commitment to higher levels of participation varied considerably.

There was, for example, an element of expediency among those who adopted a managerial or pragmatic perspective about participation: residents should be consulted in order to get their 'good ideas', garner their support and minimise opposition. In contrast, those whose rationale was rooted in citizenship or empowerment perspectives had higher commitment to participation and power sharing: residents should set the agenda and have high levels of influence throughout the process. However, the emphasis on the need for participation to maintain the gains that have been derived from renewal and make them sustainable were apparent from both perspectives.

A range of structures and processes had been put in place in each of the six cases examined. Notably, this included the development of representative forums. In all cases these forums comprised local residents and representatives of local community and voluntary sector organisations. Concerns were expressed across the three states about the extent to which the forums were representative of the wider population. Action to remedy this problem seems to have been limited. There were good examples of delegate structures where resident only groups selected their representatives and in two cases the forums were open to any member of the local community. However, while efforts had been pursued to ensure that different groups were represented it would appear that this had not been entirely successful. Work aimed at supporting and facilitating the development of the community groups themselves was intermittent.

Findings also support the view that there were a number of serious barriers to the active participation of local people in renewal. Foremost were the barriers that resulted from poverty and social exclusion. Residents felt stigmatised because they lived in areas that had been denigrated and believed they were treated unfairly because of this. They also described how serious social problems had impacted upon them. This had clearly reduced morale and eroded self-esteem. Renewal professionals noted how the life experiences of local residents had resulted in high levels of dependency and disillusionment and a reduction in human agency. From this perspective it is understandable that many choose not to become involved.

Beyond these serious concerns there were a wide range of additional factors that militated against community participation:

- Apathy, cynicism and scepticism stemmed from earlier failed programs or inadequate consultation and it was clear that time and resources were needed to tackle these issues.
- Often the formality of the process of consultation or participation and the exclusive nature of the language used conspired to exclude local voices.
- There was an indication that basic equal opportunities issues had not been fully addressed in the consultation/participation procedures.
- Meeting times and venues had restricted the attendance of certain groups and there was no mention of childcare facilities for parents.
- It was also apparent that key cultural groups were often excluded despite the extensive use of interpreters and translators.

Residents participating in the random focus group sessions revealed that they knew very little about the forums that had been established and claimed that the community members did not represent their views. The community representatives acknowledged these problems. They often, themselves, felt dominated or manipulated by renewal professionals and felt constrained and limited in their role. It is clear from this study that community representatives and community groups need greater support to really assume the roles placed on them.

Many felt overburdened by their responsibilities or unqualified to fulfil the role they had been given in the renewal process. While it may be the case that often representative groups were not truly representative, there was little evidence that agencies had systematically attempted to overcome these problems by working with and alongside the community groups themselves in order that they might develop and flourish.

It would seem that a high level of reliance was placed on the forums that were established after the initial stages of consultation and that communication had subsequently dropped off. This was often despite the considerable amount of energy that had undoubtedly been devoted to the renewal process. The implication of these findings, therefore, is not that the respective housing authorities had been lackadaisical in their efforts, but rather that the task was possibly larger than they anticipated.

The good practice material contained in this report builds upon the experience of renewal professionals in the three states and draws upon material produced elsewhere. Community development emerges as the most significant factor in promoting and developing community involvement in renewal. The process of empowerment that is central to this intervention is a necessary requirement for tackling the barriers posed by previous life experiences. While this was clearly the objective of the community renewal initiatives in the cases examined, evidence suggests that the approach was not completely understood by those involved. There was, for example, a danger that those undertaking the community development role saw themselves as representatives or advocates (securing resources and changing policies on their behalf) at the expense of the facilitative and educational roles emphasised in the community work tradition. It would therefore appear that there is a need to rescue and retain the considerable knowledge and understanding of the processes involved. It should be recognised, however, that individual workers were often constrained by the nature of the renewal programs, especially where physical refurbishment had, in effect been pre-determined.

Good practice stresses the need to start with the views of local people. This can be achieved by strengthening and resourcing existing groups and working for the inclusion of excluded groups. Projects need to recognise the way in which previous experiences have alienated local people and resources need to be targeted swiftly at issues prioritised by residents. Gaining early visible success provides an important boost at the start of a renewal program. Training should be aimed at providing the necessary skills for participation but should also build upon their local knowledge to develop a more critical understanding of local issues.

Care needs to be taken when establishing structures to allow for a wide range of representation. Closed forums, such as those that were present in South Australia and New South Wales need to be treated with caution as they can rapidly become exclusive. But even open structures, like those developed in Queensland, will also fall into the same trap if ongoing communication and publicity wanes.

These issues clearly have resource implications. Community participation is not an easy – or cheap – option. Skilled and experienced workers need to be employed to facilitate a process that might take several years to develop. Local facilities need to be made available to community groups and they require financial, training and community development support. Ideally local people should ultimately be employed in community development roles and this should be the objective at the outset.

However, while it is essential that time is devoted to ensuring that the mechanism of participation is amenable to local people, disillusionment will soon 'set in' if local residents are not given power in the process and can see the effect of their participation. This means having a genuine influence of the development of renewal locally. Monitoring and evaluation can play an important part in confirming that residents have influenced the renewal outcomes and this should be prioritised by those who wish to take resident participation seriously.

Fairly grandiose claims have been made for resident participation. For some, it is the ultimate solution to the social problems that are manifest in disadvantaged localities. While participation itself is unlikely to overcome the multiple causes of these problems, it emerges as a central aspect of the process of empowerment and, as we have seen, is widely endorsed by renewal professionals and residents themselves. Arguably, developing a critical understanding of the problems in a disadvantaged locality leads simultaneously to the

development of the individual and collective agency which is necessary for challenging and changing the problems that they face. This review of the current state of participation in estate renewal offers some clear pointers to how the efforts and experience of the last decade of renewal activity in Australia can be built on to better engage local participation in helping to decide a more inclusive future for the larger public housing estates.

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Appendix - Fieldwork

Interviews and focus groups conducted in New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland in August and September 2001. Some interviews included two or three respondents. The total number of interviews conducted in each locality is indicated.

New South Wales

Key actor interviews

Community Renewal Manager x 2

Housing Manager x 2

Community/Neighbourhood Development Officer x 2

Project Manager x 3

Local Councillor

TOTAL interviews = 9

Focus Groups

Randomly selected residents x 2

Community Reference Groups x 2

Queensland

Key actor interviews

Community Renewal Manager x 2

Project Managers x 2

Community/Neighbourhood Development x 4

Housing Officer x 2

Council Officer x 4

TOTAL interviews = 9

Focus Groups

Randomly selected residents x 2

Community Reference Groups x 2

South Australia

Key actor interviews

Community Renewal Manager (Housing)

Project Managers (Housing) x 2

Council Officer

Community Reference Group Chair (Community rep)

Private developer x 3

Relocation Officer x 2

Community/Neighbourhood Development Officers x 2

TOTAL interviews = 12

Group interview

Community Reference Group – Community Reps (4 respondents)

Focus Groups

Randomly selected residents x 2

Key actor schedule

Neighbourhood Renewal

What was the ultimate objectives of this renewal activity?

What was involved in the renewal of the estate/neighbourhood?

[Wait for responses before prompting with examples of renewal activity from documentation]

Physical renewal – modernisation, landscaping, de-radburnisation, sale of stock etc.
Community renewal – community development, employment, training, etc.

Resident participation

Why did you want local people to be involved?

What sort of structures or processes have you put in place to allow or facilitate resident participation?

How were local people involved?

We'd now like to ask about the things that encouraged and discouraged resident participation. We'll start with …

What has encouraged participation?

[Wait for responses before prompting with potential factors]

History of community activism?
Local involvement in social and cultural activities

Actual examples – describe experience

How much influence did the community have on the decisions that were made about renewal?

What kinds of resident participation worked best?

What, if anything, hindered community involvement?
[Wait for responses before prompting with potential factors]
felt excluded?
practical barriers - timing/access
language barriers

Did anyone in particular help them to be more involved?

[Wait for responses before prompting with potential factors]

community leaders

social entrepreneurs

NGOs

What would have made it easier for them to be involved?

How involved are they now?

What do you think will happen to the level of participation in the future?

Explore why

Do you think local people should be involved – why?

How involved do they think people on the estate would like to be – why?

Experience of Renewal

What have been the overall effects or outcomes of renewal?

[Wait for responses before prompting with two types]

Physical

Community

effectiveness in delivering 'better community' outcomes

social cohesion?

sustainability?

How long do you think these changes (if any) will last?

What do you think the future holds for the area?

Focus Group Schedule

Introductions

General discussion about the estate

Introductory brainstrorm – words and phrases you associate with (*name*) estate.

How would you describe life on the (*name*) estate?

What would you say was good about it?

What would you say is not so good?

Neighbourhood Renewal

What sort of things, would you say, have been done to improve life on the (*name*) estate (specify period of renewal activity)?

What was involved in the renewal of the estate/neighbourhood?

Physical renewal – modernisation, landscaping, de-radburnisation, sale of stock etc.

Community renewal – community development, employment, training, etc.

Resident Participation

Were tenants involved at any stage in deciding what should be done?

Were any of you involved – if so why?

If no – why?
- time commitments/work commitments etc?
- felt excluded?
- practical barriers - timing/access

If yes
- What were your reasons for getting involved
- Had you been involved in this sort of thing before?
- History of community activism?
- Local involvement in social and cultural activities

How did you find the experience of being involved in that way?

Actual examples – describe experience

How much influence do you think you had on the decisions that were made about renewal?

What kind of involvement of resident's worked best?

What kind of involvement of residents did not work?

What, if anything, hindered your involvement?
- felt excluded?
- practical barriers - timing/access
- language barriers

Did anyone in particular help you to be more involved?
- community leaders
- social entrepreneurs
- NGOs

What would have made it easier for you to be involved?

How involved are you now

What do you think will happen to the level of resident participation in the future?

Explore why

Do you think local people should be involved – why?

How involved do you think people want to be – why?

Experience of Renewal

What have been the effects of renewal?
- Physical
- Community

Do you approve/disapprove of the changes?

Has it made a difference to you personally – how?

How long do you think these changes (if any) will last?

What do you think the future holds for the area?

Do they want to continue living there?

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