

INNER SYDNEY VOICE

The Journal of the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development ISSUE 113

**What will happen to this window
if the Metro comes to Rozelle?**

Inner Sydney
Regional Council



for Social
Development Inc.

PLUS:

- Can we really end chronic homelessness?
- What does the Council of Australian Governments do?
- WAYS has been dumped by the Federal Government ...why?"

Facts to think about

New industrial relations laws were passed by the Federal Parliament on 20 March 2009.

Sharan Burrows from the ACTU, who ran the Your Rights at Work campaign, said the new laws would deliver

- Genuine rights for workers to collectively bargain and be represented by a union
- Unfair dismissal protection for all workers – with workers in smaller businesses having a longer qualifying period

- A robust new safety net for awards for setting minimum wages
- An industrial umpire with the teeth to safeguard workers' rights.

The ACTU conducted a survey in relation to the proposed changes to industrial relations by the Australian Government. It is based on 1020 interviews conducted online from 17-22 February 2009. The sample was weighted in proportion to the age/gender/region profile of the Australian population aged 18+. The margin of error is 2-3%.

Do you agree a lot, agree a little, disagree a little or disagree a lot with each of the following proposed changes to industrial relations laws?

	Agree a lot	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot	Don't know
Restoring unfair dismissal protection for all workers	41%	36%	11%	4%	8%
Restoring collective bargaining rights for all workers	33%	41%	11%	3%	11%
Re-establishing a strong independent workplace umpire to resolve industrial disputes	39%	42%	7%	2%	11%
Restoring the independent umpire to set and ensure increases in the minimum wage	40%	40%	9%	2%	10%
Getting rid of laws that restrict workers accessing advice and information from unions in their workplace	40%	36%	9%	5%	10%
Creating a set of guaranteed minimum conditions of employment for all workers through national employment standards and modern awards	44%	39%	6%	2%	9%
Requiring that all parties – employers, employees and unions - negotiate in good faith to reach agreements	51%	36%	3%	1%	9%
Providing special help for low-paid workers to bargain with a group of employers to lift their wages and conditions	37%	43%	8%	2%	10%
Ensuring workers can be represented by the union of their choice, not a union selected by their employer.	44%	35%	7%	4%	10%

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Inner Sydney Voice is the journal of the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Inc.

Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development (Regional Council) is a not-for-profit organisation working in Inner Sydney and the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney to provide information, advocacy, support and community development to community agencies and groups in our region.

We are committed to the idea of information as a tool for empowerment and community development.

The region covered by Regional Council includes the local government areas of Botany, Leichhardt, Randwick, City of Sydney, Waverley and Woollahra.

Inner Sydney Voice is funded jointly by the Department of Community Services, Randwick and Sydney City Councils and by members and subscribers.

Regional Council maintains a research library for the use of community organizations and individuals, supports and advocates for organizations and groups in our region, and disseminates information through Inner Sydney Voice, brochures, and electronically via the website and e-newsletters.

Regional Council's services include the Inner Sydney Home and Community Care (HACC) Development Officer Program. This program, funded by the Department of Ageing, Disability & Home Care (DADHC), assists HACC funded services and service users in our region by providing information and resources, identifying training needs, representing the views of services and assisting with planning and co-ordination of service delivery. Regional Council also provides services to social housing tenants through the Central Sydney North Tenant Participation Resource Service (TPRS). This service is funded by Housing NSW to provide social housing tenants with information, advice and the opportunity to more actively participate in their community and in issues related to their housing. The service also provides a range of training to social housing tenants that focuses on improving life skills and social networking skills, opening up employment and further education possibilities. It deals with more than 1100 enquiries each year from tenants and tenant groups.

All articles and artwork are contributed on a voluntary and unpaid basis.

Editor: Pam Marsh

Deputy Editor: Greg Hawken

Contributors: Felicity Reynolds, Anna Hartree, Charmaine Jones & David Atkins

Photography: Greg Hawken, Charmaine Jones and other contributors

Design: Toby Andrews – lilypad.com.au

Subscription Co-ordinator: Edwina Tohi

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Publisher: Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Inc.
770 Elizabeth Street Waterloo NSW 2017

Ph: 9698 7461

Fax: 9318 0852

Email: admin@innersydneyrcsd.org.au

Website: www.innersydney.org.au

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I thought that this was a very good place to bring people up to date about all the changes happening at Regional Council. These include, sadly, that we have recently lost our very special HACC Development Officer, Chris Bath. We farewell her properly on page 3 so suffice for the moment to say how much we are already missing her.

Some months ago the Board and staff of Regional Council embarked on two very eventful journeys: one was an overall review of the systems and structure of the organisation and the way we were using our available resources and the second was to undertake some major strategic planning including a review of our Constitution.

These journeys in themselves have caused us to look long and hard at our aims and objectives, to assess our role in the sector and what is expected of us, and to clarify

what we want to achieve for our members and colleagues, and indeed for Regional Council itself. We worked to clearly identify the directions we would like the organisation to take in the future and how we would prefer it to develop.

The results from all this effort have so far been quite remarkable. While we are only at the beginning of the next step in the process – implementing identified improvements and changes – we have already refined and improved many of our internal systems and reporting methods and have commenced on a partial restructure of the organisation.

We agreed that we needed more direct information and input from the people involved in our programs and activities. To facilitate this we decided to hold a number of Key Stakeholder

Luncheons. We intend to keep these Luncheons fairly small and informal and to hold them at regular intervals, perhaps every six months. We would also like to use Inner Sydney Voice to hear what our members and subscribers have to say and so would encourage you to write letters/emails to us with your opinions and your ideas of what you would like included in the magazine.

As with all reviews and strategic plans this will be an ongoing process. Our directions and policies will no doubt change over time in order to meet the changing needs of the sector. Our aim is to ensure that Regional Council will be well placed to absorb any such changes, will continue to grow and be energized and will be able to properly meet the varying demands of our role in the sector.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We want to hear from you, our readers, so we are going to re-introduce "Letters to the Editor" as a regular part of Inner Sydney Voice.

Please write/email your comments on any of the articles in the magazine. We would love to hear from you. And if you have an issue you would like us to follow up or that you have written about yourself, that would be most welcome too.

Please send your letter or comments to:

The Editor,
Inner Sydney Voice
Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social
Development,
770 Elizabeth Street, Waterloo NSW 2017

OR fax to 02 9318 0852 or email to
admin@innersydneyrcsd.org.au



Regional Council not only provides information, it also has a large range of brochures about issues that effect inner Sydney. These brochures are available from Regional Council and from other organisations.

So, Inner Sydney Voice, the website (<http://www.innersydneyrcsd.org.au>) plus these brochures are all you need!

Goodbye Chris, & good luck!

Saying goodbye to Chris Bath was not at all on our agenda – she was so much part of the organization that it was hard to imagine the place without her.

Chris worked with Regional Council for 6½ years. The first 2 years as the Housing Communities Assistance Program (HCAP) Worker, the remaining 4½ years as the Eastern Sydney Home and Community Care (HACC) Development Officer. In that time she became well known as a fount of information which she expertly shared with as many people as possible, a truly inspired networker and, importantly, someone people could just talk to, not only in her particular area of Eastern Sydney but much further afield.

Chris carried much of the history of Regional Council in her head and had been a driving force behind many of the organisation's important milestones. She also had a remarkable knowledge of the groups and individuals that make up the community sector and was able to offer expertly targeted support and information wherever needed. In particular, Chris will be missed by the member organisations of the Eastern Sydney Area HACC Forum. Chris was committed to supporting and assisting workers and HACC services in the area and worked tirelessly to improve communication between government departments and service organisations. But after all that, it must be said that Chris has taken a well deserved step forward in her career and everyone at Regional Council congratulates her and wishes her well.



The front page photograph is of the magnificent stained glass window at Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre. This centre is now in limbo, if (or when) the metro goes ahead. There are shops next door to the centre which are expected to be demolished to provide the station entrances, and then the old church - with this window - will have an uncertain future.

Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre has been a vital part of the community for years....it mustn't be lost. See page 6 for more details and a photo of the inside of the centre.



inner West Transport

Let's have Roads and Rail in Harmony'

Both Victoria Road and Parramatta Roads are insufficient for traffic volumes at present, and neither has real links with rail stations. Rail and buses are running at capacity, and although there have been new bus routes the rail schedule has been slowed down. Sydney Inner City needs extra rail lines, wherever they come from. Now there is a new plan of an underground metro possibly from Parramatta to Rozelle.

Why shouldn't the plans for a rapid transit metro from Rozelle be factored in on the whole question of Victoria Road? If the metro works do we need a second Iron Cove Bridge and an extra lane from the Iron Cove Bridge to Anzac Bridge?

Perhaps we shouldn't be criticising the planning, but rather the lack of explanation for why these kinds of decisions are being made.

Light Rail, Metro or Heavy Rail... what does it all mean?

If you are confused by the new tales of wonderful railways through the centre of Sydney, then you are probably in the vast majority.

So let's start at the beginning.

Our NSW Government decided to replace the proposed heavy rail line to Rouse Hill with a metro all the way to the city via Epping, then deferred it last November to save money, suddenly coming up with a metro line from Rozelle to Central Station, and (it seemed as an add-on) the line from Central to Parramatta. Do we actually want these?

Lets deal with congestion first

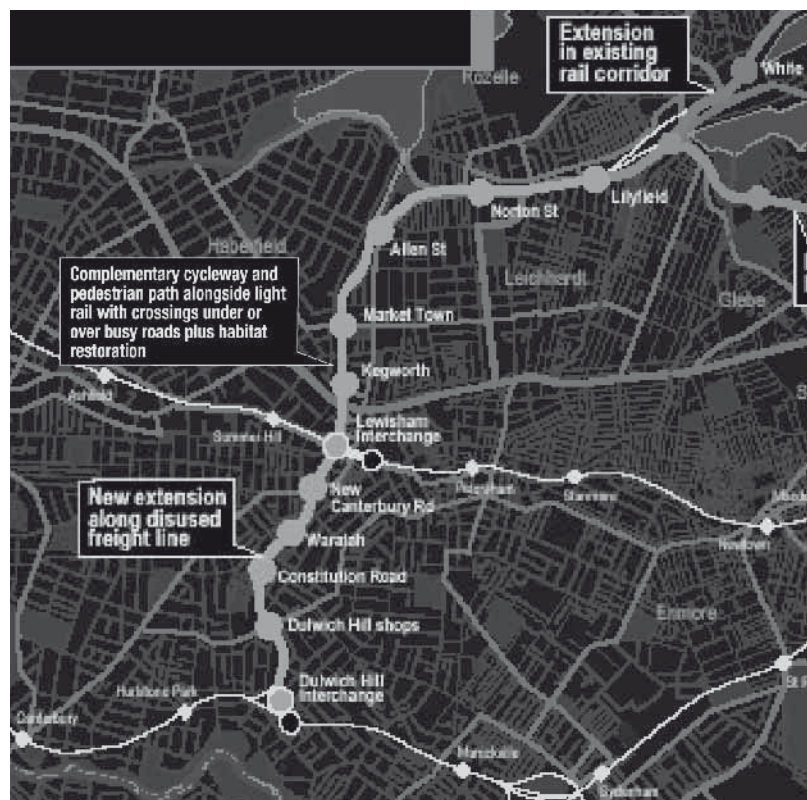
The most congested part of the heavy rail system is Penrith to Central station. Everyone knows (!) it has to be improved. Rail Corp is on the nose with the Government, and particularly the former Treasurer, as heavy rail is now seen as just too too expensive. You remember that there is this private company that wants to build a high speed line from Penrith to Central – the only problem is it wants to take at least one of the overcrowded lines that already exist...and therefore will probably not improve the transport volume on the western line.

Heavy rail is out of favour

If heavy rail is so badly run by Rail Corp (says the NSW Government) and it is the most expensive way to do rail then lets scrap any major changes to it, and replace it...with what? There are two options – light rail or metro. Light rail is on the surface, and has to use existing rail corridors, and has to travel on roads with other traffic, where there is no separate corridor, which is nearly everywhere. This is seen as a bad bet, and although we have the lovely light rail from Lilyfield to Central it doesn't look as though that method is going to get any more favours (bad news for those who want the light rail to go to Dulwich Hill) – unless other local politics intervene.

Metro, Metro, Metro

So metro is the new buzz transport method. It goes underground, so trains run on time. You just dig a huge station out underground, and poke up to the surface with a smallish footprint for the station entrances. So there are far fewer properties taken and almost invisible transport. It would actually be adding a new transport network rather than trying to squeeze extra capacity onto an already overcrowded system (Think London underground, or Paris metro).



Why Rozelle?

You need a transport engineer to explain all this to us mere mortals. But maybe there's still hope that it will extend further eventually and Rozelle could be the launch point? So let's go back to the Parramatta to Central bottleneck. We want a line that is new to take the overcrowding out of the system. It will have lots of stations, and zoom into Central. BUT most people want to get into the city for shopping, or even work, so it is planned to go down to Wynyard and then the Hungry Mile (what is now called Barangaroo). This of course is going to become the new office block part of the city on all the disused reclaimed land north of King Street wharf on the city side of Darling Harbour. The trains have to stop somewhere, and be turned round, stored, shunted, cleaned and repaired. Where can that be? Well, White Bay is the answer – flat bit of

State-owned land in Rozelle with no plans for offices or parks. At the moment it is only an emergency stopping point for cruise ships. So that is why the line will go to Rozelle. As well it will provide a quick and easy way for residents to get into town.

The new line

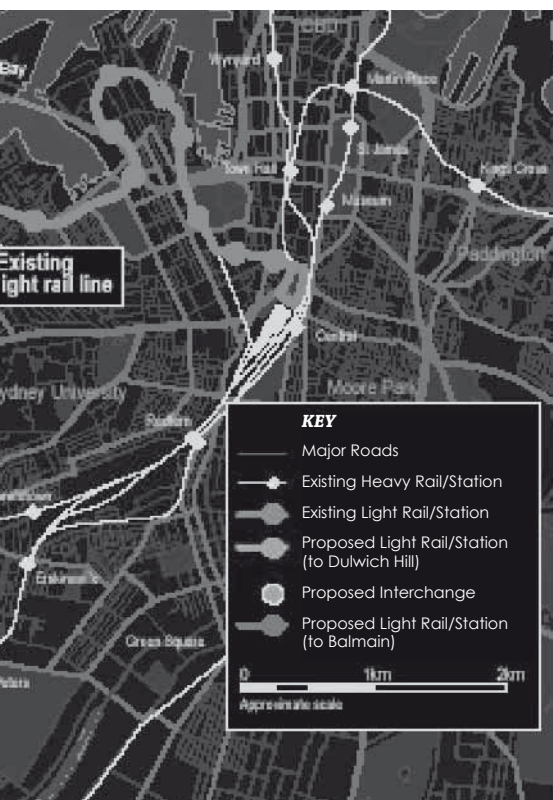
The NSW Government has the idea of a new line underground from Parramatta to Rozelle called Sydney Metro. To make this happen over 100 people now work for 'Sydney Metro' – a government agency with specific powers to build and run a metro system, and plan extensions. NSW budget has money (?) for the Central to Rozelle part, and the hope is the Federal Government's Building Australia Fund will help pay for the Central to Parramatta section. Once this is done the line can be extended anywhere, maybe to Penrith, and even from Rozelle to Epping – or further. There is

also the option of extension from Central to the southern coastal suburbs, like Malabar.

The recent federal budget has only earmarked \$91million for a feasibility study on the Parramatta to Central metro. So it looks as though the Central to Rozelle is, for now, the only realistic option.

Transport corridors under the CBD

There seem to be two underground corridors under the CBD which are spare. This is where new buildings have been told they can't have basements (so the lines don't have to be down deep). One runs under Pitt Street, and the other is the West route under Sussex Street. The plan for this new metro is that it will follow the Pitt Street corridor, and then switch across to the Hungry Mile wharves before going to Rozelle. So it will use bits of the two corridors, but basically the Sussex Street one will still be



There are many groups, and councils, that are trying to get the light rail extended to Dulwich Hill station. This light rail goes from Central to Lilyfield, where the station is at the edge of the almost disused Rozelle goods line. The rest of this freight line is still there all the way to Dulwich Hill.

Rozelle is now a hub for a variety of transport options, and the metro may be coming as well. As the rail corridor is already there the cost would be far less than having to tunnel, or compulsorily purchase sites. The six kilometre extension could add 10 light rail stations to the present 13 stops. The light rail uses the old Glebe tunnel and line, and therefore could easily use the present freight line.

The arguments are that this light rail would provide a link between the Bankstown and Western heavy rail lines, and both Lewisham and Dulwich Hill would provide links to CBD services on these lines. It would also enable Inner West residents to access the west of Sydney far more easily.

The map shows the line. It looks like a long way to go when looking at the map, but the key is the interchanges that can be used.

Thanks to EcoTransit News for the map and information.

LATE NEWS

The Minister has said that the Light Rail will be evaluated if the 4 local councils will contribute to a feasibility study. So we just wait again...

LATE NEWS

Rozelle Metro station will be moved under Victoria Road, and a bus bay will be built outside the Balmain Leagues Club, with the construction site mostly on the Tigers site.

available to a new heavy rail tunnel if needed in the future. All the drama about this loss of rail corridors has come from RailCorp who are scared that they will lose their dreams.

So make a decision and stick to it

We all want a clear decision that is not going to be changed next year to some other scheme. The explanations above make some sense, and many of us like the idea of a rapid underground metro system throughout the whole of the Sydney Basin.

Rail policies have changed constantly under this present NSW Government. But it is not just heavy rail plans that are constantly changing, every other policy about transport – whether it is ferries or roads or buses and now light rail and metro - seems to be up for grabs and the whim of a new exciting dream. Rozelle is now stuck in the middle of arguments about widening Victoria Road, doubling the size of

the Iron Cove Bridge, where and how the M4 East is built, and finally a metro terminus. Local people are asking – what if? What if the metro comes, where do those who live further out park so they can use the metro to get into the CBD. We can say this because that is the question residents of Catherine and surrounding streets asked when the light rail was extended to Lilyfield.

Even if the Federal Government finances the line from Parramatta to Central (and with the recession here now there seems to be a lot less available in the infrastructure fund – see comment on the federal budget) it is fairly clear that City Rail won't be running it, and there will need to be a private operator. Who is going to run it, how much will it cost and what kind of subsidy will the operator get? These are all questions we need to be asking.

So please NSW Government – clarify and explain your plans, and then stick to them.



Rozelle Neighbourhood Centre is right next door to the proposed metro terminus. It is an old Presbyterian Church (and therefore listed) and not likely to be demolished. But what will the terminus right next door mean for the Centre. The Board and staff would like to be relocated, but where? The centre has to be on Darling Street close to shops, people and transport.

The Centre had just stripped off the old paint from the church, and was repainting. Now it has had to stop the contractor as the future of the Centre is in doubt. The photo shows the inside, with all the scaffolding still in place.

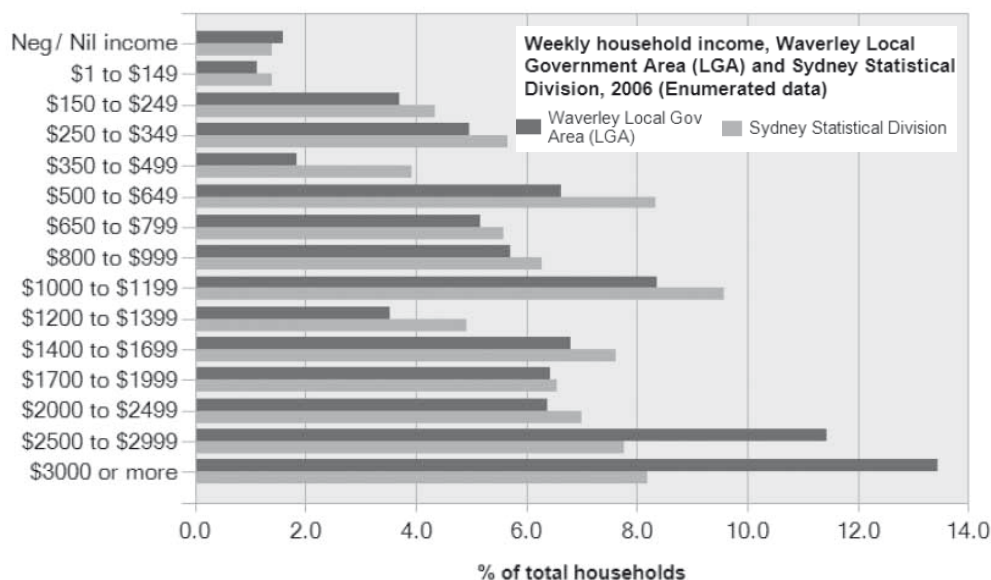
Waverley Profile

Statistics from the Waverley Profile from the 2006 Census

This is not a criticism of Waverley Local Government Area. It is just to show that there are significant numbers of people with large incomes, and also high status jobs.

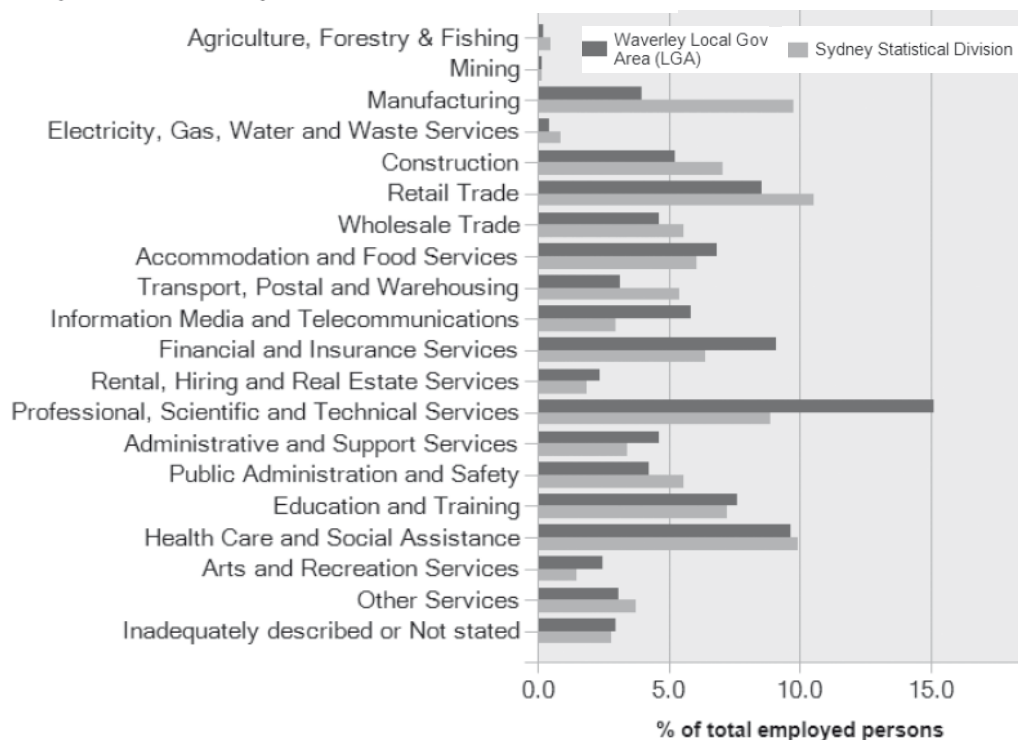
Weekly household income

Note the substantial number of households with income above \$2,500 per week compared with Sydney as a whole.



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census of Population and Housing (Enumerated)

Employment by industry, Waverley Local Government Area (LGA) and Sydney Statistical Division, 2006 (Enumerated data)



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census of Population and Housing (Enumerated)

Employment

The three most popular industry sectors for those living in Waverley LGA and employed in 2006 were:

- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (15.1%)
- Health Care and Social Assistance (9.6%)
- Financial and Insurance Services (9.1%)

10,039 people (33.9%) had jobs in these three sectors compared to 25.2% in the Sydney Statistical Division.

Are not-for-profit organisations going to be dealt with as though they are corporations?

This Act recently brought down by the NSW Government will directly affect all not-for-profit charities and incorporated organisations and register them all with the Department of Commerce.

NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS), and other peak bodies, have expressed their concern about this Act which is due to come into force later this year. The Commissioner for Fair Trading or the Director General of the Department of Commerce will have far greater powers over organisations than before. The Bill intends to create Tier 1 and Tier 2 organisations, with those in Tier 1 (with significant income and assets) being liable for greater financial oversight and higher penalties for dishonesty and undisclosed pecuniary interests.

Large parts of The Associations Incorporation Act 2009 (the Act) are written in obtuse legalese making it largely inaccessible to the majority of groups currently incorporated or wishing to incorporate under the Act. The 82 pages will take a lawyer quite some time to work out.

Specific Concerns of NCOSS

1. Associations or Corporations Act?

A number of the new provisions in the Act now 'generally follow sections of the Corporations Act of 2001'. This appears to be a very derivative approach to the setting of a regulatory framework, particularly as the needs of small not-for-profit (NFP) groups are often different from companies covered by the Corporations Act 2001.

The vast majority of the 37,000 (approx) registered associations in NSW are small sporting associations. The sector that NCOSS represents is comprised of about 6,400 small to medium sized non-government NFP organisations that receive government funding to deliver social services to their communities. These groups are incorporated as associations because the Corporations Act 2001 is not considered appropriate for small-medium sized not-for-profit non government organisations. There is an additional concern that under this Act, the Australian Securities and Investment Commission Act (2001) will also regulate investments of registered associations.

2. New Offenses and Penalties

A number of offences have been created in the Act along with associated penalty notices and fees. NCOSS regards a number of these as excessive and believes they are likely to have a pronounced negative impact on the capacity of the sector to recruit and retain Management Committee /Board Members.

For example: Division 4 – 'Offences relating to incurring of debts or fraudulent conduct' include maximum penalties of between 50 – 100 penalty units (to be determined in the regulations) or imprisonment for 1 -2 years or both. There are similar penalties for 'dishonest use of information and position'.

Likewise: 'Offences by Committee Members', detailed in Division 2

of the Bill, appears to have serious implications for the liability of individual members of voluntary Boards: "If an association contravenes, whether by act or omission, any provision of this Act or the regulations, each committee member of the association is taken to have contravened the same provision if he or she knowingly authorised or permitted the contravention'.

As recommended in the NCOSS submission to the Exposure draft, it will be critically important that Committee Members receive adequate training and resourcing to enable them to understand the implications of the new Act and their responsibilities. A less punitive approach, and one based on education and resourcing is required, not stiff penalties.

3. Financial Reporting and Consistency with NSW Funding Agencies.

Tier 1 and Tier 2 associations have replaced small or medium, but until the regulations are available, it is still unclear how these categories will be determined. For example what constitutes 'significant income or assets?' A current guide employed by the NSW Office of Fair Trading indicates that the amount of \$500,000 (including assets, income or expenditure) is used to determine whether a group is appropriate to be an incorporated association or whether it should be covered by the Corporations Act 2001.

Linking our problems

This issue of Inner Sydney Voice is concentrating on concerns about tendering, fatigue with reporting requirements for funding agencies (all different) and the sudden



Annie Parkinson, Vivienne Pusey, Barbara Kelly and Pam Marsh at Regional Council AGM 2008

dumping of successful agencies in a new plan for employment services. Unfortunately this new Act must be added to that list.

With the recession beginning to bite, small and medium community organisations relying on funding from the NSW or Federal Governments will need to be alert to the need to lobby and explain their concerns to anyone interested. Forcing inexperienced officers and board or management committee members to move to a higher standard of behaviour than the Federal and State politicians have to abide by is alarming. This new standard has already been imposed on NSW Local Government with distressing results of councillors, mayors and general managers accusing each other of not disclosing interests (or acting inappropriately) in matters that affect the council's decision making.

Will voluntary committee members give up?

No one would want community organisations to work irresponsibly. NCOSS is correct in that there will need to be increased training and education for all committee members. An element of the problem will be that many valuable members of local

communities will maybe decide that it is not worth the hassle to be on a committee. This is a voluntary, and sometimes onerous, task which already can consume large amounts of time and energy.

Below are extracts from what the Combined Community Legal Centres Group had to say on the first draft in 2008:

"All Community Legal Centres (CLCs) operate solely to serve the community and specifically those in the community who are most disadvantaged. Consequently, the proposed amendments relating to the statutory duties on management committees contained in the Bill are of concern to the community legal sector.

It is proposed to expand the liability of an association's management committee to reflect the liabilities imposed on directors of other types of organisations in order to promote ethical standards.

Each CLC relies on the active participation of its local community in order to appropriately cater for its needs. The proposed penalties are likely to deter members of the community from becoming involved.

There is no funding available to pay members of CLC management committees and as a result the committees are comprised of volunteers. These volunteers have limited access to resources for governance training and support.

The proposed amendments will impose onerous sanctions on the members of managements committees implying that a member has acted in bad faith when they may simply be unaware of their obligations.

This could have a devastating effect on the provision of community legal services where they are needed the most. It is our recommendation that the punitive provisions of the Bill be reconsidered in light of these potential consequences."

Postal voting

While many organisations have voted at the AGM, with only those present being able to vote, this Act will encourage postal voting. This will lead to increased problems with membership lists, and particularly of ensuring that members pay their membership fees. Other stresses include the question of proxy voting that will tax any voluntary committee, or increase the workload of hard working staff.

The future

Each organisation will have to prepare itself for the onslaught of the recession, new regulations imposed through this new act and the possibility of funding being reduced or withdrawn. Regional Council is aware of these problems, and hopes to be able to provide information and support to organisations that need help.

Waverley Action for Youth Services (WAYS) has been dumped by the Federal Government

Inner Sydney Voice had written a profile of WAYS, a very successful youth organisation based in Bondi, with 5 offices from which a wide range of services were provided. On 16 March they were told that their employment services for the Federal Government were to be terminated, and although their contract is until the end of June they are unlikely to get any new referrals from Centrelink. Therefore their major sources of funding will dry up almost immediately.

A substantial number of not-for-profit charities have been dumped.

WAYS put out a press release immediately describing the impact of the Government's decision. The impact in simple terms means:

- 827 young people who had chosen WAYS will now have to go to a range of providers to get their complex needs met
- 25 staff will be made redundant at a cost of \$105,000 to the organisation
- Two offices will close at a cost of \$26,000
- Good will and community profile will be reduced due to these office closures

Other WAYS programs will cease or be significantly reduced:

- Outreach services to 2000 young people has stopped
- **Reduction to the staffing of the WAYS alternative school** which is only **50%** funded by the Federal Government
- **1500 contacts made annually** with 'young people at risk' who participate in a range of diversionary activities reduced by **50%**
- Reduced counselling services to young people and their families

Jobs Australia, the peak body for not-for-profit organisations, estimates that 2-2,500 people will lose their jobs. This is a nasty outcome at a time of rapidly rising unemployment. Particularly as in 2003 the then Labour opposition criticized the Howard Government for acting in a very similar manner.

In May 2008 a discussion paper explained the planned reforms to employment services as follows:

"The Job Network has been in place for a decade. Designed when unemployment was 7.7%, it is no longer suited to a labour market characterised by low unemployment, widespread skills shortages and a growing proportion of job seekers highly disadvantaged and long-term unemployed."

The Federal Government claims it is a system designed for every economic climate, but one wonders. If unemployed continues to rise then providers will not be able to find jobs for school leavers and the long term unemployed, and therefore will be forced to look for (or cherry pick) the most likely to be placed in a job, and therefore allow the organisation to claim its outcomes payments.

WAYS, like other charities, sees its mission to assist the most marginalized and disadvantaged members of our community – they have the skills and more importantly the staff who have the heart and commitment to these people.

"This is a sad and tragic day for the community, the young people, and our organisation" says Russell King, the CEO of WAYS. Despite putting 1000's of

'The BEDS ARE BURNING PETER' rally

WAYS has been funded to find young people jobs since 1992 and for the last 3 years we have been the number one service for putting people in jobs across Eastern Sydney. All at a time when youth unemployment in Australia has increased from 20% to 24% in the last 12 months.

As part of the campaign to reverse the defunding by the Commonwealth Government we asked members of the community for support a peaceful and non disruptive rally outside of the office of Mr Peter Garrett the Member for Kingsford Smith which incorporates the Maroubra area. We sought his support to help us keep the service. Alas Mr Garrett blatantly refused to help us and supported in writing the government's decision to defund us.

A successful rally was held on 8 May 2009.



young people in jobs and education over the years WAYS is not considered good enough to continue this work and will be replaced by two overseas 'welfare for profit' organisations (A4e and Max Employment) and a Marrickville based organisation called MTC Work Solutions. WAYS will lose about \$1.8 million in federal funding. This will halve its budget and cripple its ability to assist young people at risk. They will be closing offices at Redfern and Maroubra as a result.

The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) is concerned that job seekers could face chaos and confusion as they seek work in the changeover to the new employment services system.

Peak bodies ACOSS and Jobs Australia are working with their members in the employment services sector to monitor the changeover to Job Services Australia and report transition issues to Government. Rising unemployment will only increase the pressure on the employment services sector.

"ACOSS is concerned many of the 650,000 Australians who are now out of work will be adversely affected by the transition to the new employment services system."

People seeking the help of job services providers, particularly the long term unemployed, could face major disruption and frustration in their search for work. "

"Our members are concerned that staff at services that have lost contracts will move to new providers well before the new system starts on 1 July 2009. This would create a staffing vacuum with providers struggling to deliver services to job seekers. We are asking the Government to ensure there is a smooth transition to the new system."

"ACOSS is also urging the Government to make sure there is continued geographic coverage of services and unemployed people in regional and remote areas receive the support they need."

Other concerns included why high performing services had failed to win contracts, how tender results were communicated to providers and whether non-profit providers had lost contracts to the for-profit providers.

What WAYS did before it lost its employment funding

Before 16 March 2009

WAYS (Waverley Area Youth Service) is a successful organisation that has grown over the last 30 years to provide services to up to 1000 young people a week in five centres across the inner city and eastern suburbs. It provided a one-stop shop for young people from 15-25, but the core of its work was in employment support, with all the ancillary services needed to help young people to live healthy fulfilling lives.

Russell King, the Chief Executive Officer, started as a volunteer in 1988, and then became administrator the next year. "The service was run by five youth workers, and they needed someone to coordinate in the office – and that person just happened to be me." The organisation had grown to 45 full time and part time staff, with 20 casual staff and more than 30 volunteers.

The project started in 1979 with a Waverley Council Youth Worker and volunteers. One of its major early projects was surf camps to Garie Beach in the Royal National Park. From this developed street work with

WAYS is continuing to challenge the government's decision and has lodged an appeal.

kids, and increasingly with homeless youth in the 1980/90's. Their council owned building was to be demolished, so they moved to their present purpose built headquarters in 1992. This centre at 63a Wairoa Road, Bondi has a drop-in centre concentrating on the unemployed, but also dealing with those who are homeless, or have issues with accommodation, often tied to alcohol and other drugs.

How their employment work started

It all began with the Sydney Morning Herald Job Day, getting young people into work. Their first Federal funding was under the Keating 'Working Nation', but unfortunately this funding ceased with the Howard government in 1996. In 2006 WAYS became one of the providers of the Job Network.

There WERE three centres that dealt mainly with employment. The centres are one-stop shops for any issues young people might have. Each week 900-1000 young people came through the doors and others are contacted through outreach and school visits.

How one of the centres did work

Let's use Bondi Junction as an example. There are seven staff who deal with youth who are referred by Centrelink, or turn up through word of mouth. Here they have an employment interview, and are then asked what other assistance they might need. So some will use the computers to write a resume, others are referred directly to the doctor attached to the Centre, others will be told about the camps available, helped with accommodation, or suggested to an employer. The employment work was paid for by the Federal Government on a fee-for-service basis.

Where does the money come from?

"We've been defunded before"

The Jobs Network WAS the major funder (on a fee-for-service basis) but other sources are various. Trust funds help with particular projects, NSW Health funds casework and counselling, DoCS through the Community Service Grants Program (CSGP) funds some of the youth centre work, and Juvenile Justice supports the Drug Court. They list 30 major sponsors, partners and supporters; however the list in the Annual Report is much longer.

WAYS is a registered charity, a not-for-profit association run by a Board.

WAYS also does its own fundraising – perhaps the highest profile is the yearly Art Auction. The ups and downs of an organisation like this is perhaps best illustrated by the operating deficit of \$367,312 in the 2007 financial year was turned around with an operating surplus last financial year of \$6,033.

So the phrase "we've been defunded before" means that WAYS is prepared to fight for continued employment funding, but it can still continue to provide a variety of services.

Youth health services

The Double Bay office specialises in mental health work, run in collaboration with the Prince of Wales Hospital close by. There is also a free and confidential sexual health clinic to address the rising incidence of sexual health issues, and throughout the summer months there are peer education programs to educate young people about sexual health and drug and alcohol issues to promote reduction in risk-taking behaviours. At Double Bay there is the Urban Arts Base, a creative program for young people recovering from mental illness.

Employment, education and training programs – linking youth to their future.

Their education program POEM has provisional registration as a non-government school to deliver a full Year 9 curriculum to young people 13-19 who have become disconnected from the mainstream education system. The aim is to develop numeracy, literacy and personal development skills to enable successful transitions into mainstream education and vocational training.

"I am at WAYS because I used to misbehave in school but WAYS has given me a new view on school. I enjoy WAYS because they do fun things during school which makes you notice that school is actually fun. I hope after POEM I can keep on going with my educational studies.

Keaton, aged 15

WAYS has decided to extend this work, and is in the process of becoming an registered training organisation (RTO) to be able to offer a range of courses:

- Certificate 2 in retail and in business administration
- Certificate in Customer Service (under the auspice of Academy)
- Numeracy, literacy and job skills training
- Courses on bullying, career options, alcohol and other drugs, self esteem and body image and sex, sexuality and relationships.

The reason to become an RTO is due to their experience of sending young people off to courses elsewhere and the training not being developmentally appropriate resulting in retention issues and a huge amount of support needed by our staff to keep the young person attending. Our decision to offer training is to maximize flexible delivery in an environment where the young people are known and feel supported and assisted.

WAYS can be contacted at www.ways.org.au, or by visiting any of their centres as detailed on the website. Head Office phone: 9365 2500

Have your say!

Human rights are about all Australians being treated fairly and equally – a ‘fair go for all’. It’s about ensuring that everyone is treated with dignity and respect. In Australia values such as freedom, respect, fairness, justice, democracy and equality, stem from a commitment to human rights. For example, the right to vote, freedom of religion and freedom to join trade unions are some of the human rights that Australians value. If human rights aren’t formally protected, they are at risk of being eroded. In recent years we have seen how human rights are vulnerable to being undermined by government policies, such as mandatory detention of asylum seekers and anti-terror laws.

Australia is the only democratic country that does not have a national bill or charter of rights!

Many people believe that the Australian Constitution contains human rights protections. However, in reality our Constitution protects very few rights. It does not protect fundamental rights and freedoms such as the right to life, freedom from torture, the right to equality before the law, or the right to liberty and security of

the person. It does not protect freedom from discrimination on the basis of race or sex.

For example, we assume our right to free speech is protected by law, but only our right to political speech is protected, nothing else. This means parliament can pass laws that censor what we can say – such as the sedition laws passed as some of the ‘anti-terror’ laws. There is also the potential for free speech on the internet to be censored without legal protection of our right to free speech.

The Federal Government has announced a consultation on how best to protect human rights in Australia. An independent Committee has been appointed comprising Mary Kostakidis, Mick Palmer and Tammy Williams, chaired by Father Frank Brennan to implement an Australia-wide community consultation. A range of community views will be sought on the following:

- Which human rights (and responsibilities) should be protected and promoted?
- Are human rights currently sufficiently protected and promoted?
- How could Australia better protect and promote human rights?

The Committee will also consider whether Australia should have a

statutory Human Rights Act.

Submissions to the Committee are due 15 June 2009.

Human rights affect everyone, and everyone should have their say.

For more information and to have your say online visit www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au

The following websites provide further information to assist participation in this important consultation:

- *National Human Rights Consultation:* www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au
- *Australian Human Rights Group:* www.humanrightsact.com.au
- *Australian Human Rights Commission:* www.humanrights.gov.au/human_rights
- *Human Rights Law Resource Centre:* www.hrlrc.org.au
- *Amnesty International:* www.amnesty.org.au/yourhumanrights/consultation
- *Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission (for the difference the Victorian Charter has made):* www.equalopportunitycommission.vic.gov.au

Anna Hartree, Co-ordinator and Denise Wasely, Administrator, Kingsford Legal Centre

The kinds of cases being addressed under the UK Human Rights Act:

- A man detained in a mental health hospital repeatedly soiled himself. Staff refused to clean him up, claiming that he would simply make a mess again. He argued that this breached his right not to be treated in an inhuman or degrading way, and his right to respect for private life, and the hospital changed their practice.
- A couple had been married for 65 years. He was unable to walk unassisted, relying on his wife for mobility. She was blind, relying on her husband as her eyes. The husband fell ill and was moved into a residential care facility. The wife’s request to move with him was denied because she did not meet the facility’s entry criteria. She successfully argued for admission on the basis of the right to family life.

About The Council of Australian Governments

At the first Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting following the election of the new Commonwealth Government in 2007, members recognised that there was a 'unique opportunity for Commonwealth-State cooperation to end the blame game and buck passing, and to take major steps forward for the Australian community.'¹ COAG agreed on the urgency of progressing reform to increase the productive capacity of the economy, address emerging inflationary pressures, and to deliver a higher quality of service to the Australian community.

Background

COAG is the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia. Membership comprises the Prime Minister, State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). COAG was established in May 1992 by then Prime Minister, Paul Keating and first met in Perth in December 1992. COAG is chaired by the Prime Minister with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet providing the Secretariat.

COAG meets face to face on an as needed basis but also often settles issues out of session by correspondence.

The role of COAG is to initiate, develop and monitor the implementation of policy reforms of national significance and which require co-operative action by all levels of government. This includes, for example, such issues as the National Competition Policy, the use of human embryos in medical research, counter-terrorism arrangements, etc. Issues on the COAG Agenda arise from such areas as Ministerial Councils, international treaties affecting States and Territories, or major initiatives of one government (particularly the Commonwealth Government) which impact on other governments or require the co-operation of other governments.

Outcomes of COAG meetings are contained in communiqués released at the end of each meeting. Formal agreements are likely to be included in Intergovernmental Agreements. COAG communiqués are often lengthy and formal, often challenging to understand and interpret. Fortunately, NCOSS has undertaken to assist the community sector in NSW with an analysis and commentary on each communiqué issued. These may be found on the NCOSS web site..

Ministerial Councils

Over 40 Commonwealth-State Ministerial Councils and forums facilitate consultation between the Federal, State and Territory governments in specific policy areas. Ministerial Councils develop policy reforms for consideration by COAG, and oversee the implementation of policy reforms agreed by COAG.

Responsible government ministers participate in the councils. New Zealand Ministers have full membership of councils when matters affecting New Zealand are being considered. Ministerial Councils meet face to face only once or twice a year, however issues are regularly settled out of session by correspondence.

COAG and the Social Inclusion Agenda

In its pre-election policies, the Government Stated that it's interest in reforming Commonwealth-State relations came from 'a hard-nosed, real world concern for delivering better services to citizens' and that it intended to work within the principles of cooperative Federalism to achieve this.

This concern has been reflected across many of the Government's policies, including the Social Inclusion Agenda. The Government intends the Social Inclusion Agenda to be underpinned by 'an investment in human capital which will be implemented through a cooperative Federal-State framework based around investment in people and communities' characterised by 'partnerships with State and local governments, the not for profit and private sectors to deliver targeted and tailored interventions to address localised systemic disadvantage.' The development of a Compact between the Commonwealth Government and the non-profit sector is expected to be a key part of this partnership approach.

COAG and the National Reform Agenda

This agenda, and the current political configuration at the Commonwealth and State levels, provides a unique opportunity for Australian governments to implement lasting beneficial reforms to Australia's federal arrangements in the interests of the whole community, particularly to people on low incomes or who are otherwise disadvantaged. It is an agenda in which the community

sector has a deep interest and a major stake in terms of:

- Ensuring the best outcomes for low income and disadvantaged people from the reform process. This sector of the community is particularly affected by current federal dysfunction because they rely more heavily than others on the services and supports which are tangled in confused governmental roles and responsibilities.
- Ensuring that services delivered under a reformed system are effective and
- sustainable - the community sector delivers many of these services and understands what improvements need to be made to service systems.

Of immediate interest to the community sector are the Government's proposals to rationalise and simplify Specific Purpose Payments (SPPs). SPPs are grants made by the Commonwealth to the States, usually with conditions stating in what areas the money may be spent, such as health or education, etc which the States administer. They include the Australian Health Care Agreements, the Home and Community Care Agreements, the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program Agreements, the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement and the Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement, and payments 'through' the States and Territories to non-government schools.

There are a few very large SPPs, mainly in health and education, and hundreds of small SPPs. In contrast, general purpose ('untied') grants are not subject to any conditions and mainly

comprise revenue from the Goods and Services Tax.

This is a potentially significant feature of the new federal agenda and one that can be expected to affect the delivery of health and community services – including health care, home and community care, supported accommodation services, disability services and services for children.

Members of COAG intend to use the principles of cooperative federalism to achieve their reform agenda. This signals that the starting point for thinking about the problems of Commonwealth/State relations is the current form and practice of federalism, rather than with federalism as a system of government itself. It also signals that the solutions to these problems will need to be embedded in Australia's existing federal framework. and the National Reform Agenda.

At the broadest level, there are three inter-related problems in the current federal divisions across the health, housing and community services systems:

- The first problem is the lack of policy cohesion and rational priority setting in the planning, funding and delivery of human services at a national level. Historical political divisions between the Commonwealth and the States have made it difficult to achieve the sustained integration that is the hallmark of high-quality human service provision internationally.
- The second problem concerns the way that Commonwealth funding is dispensed to the States and the overlaps and tensions between federal and

State programs (including those run through the States). This inevitably leads to jurisdictions blaming each other for system failures. Typically, the States will blame the Commonwealth for providing insufficient money to fund services properly while the Commonwealth will blame the States for inefficient use of the money. At times, the Commonwealth may intervene unilaterally, often creating greater system complexity for both services users and providers.

- The third problem is the unnecessary complexity and discontinuity at the service level. There are multiple, often closely related health and community service programs delivered by different levels of government, without clear lines of responsibility for system performance in terms of consistency, equity, quality and efficiency. The result is that service users are often left to negotiate these complex systems at their own peril.

¹ **COAG Communiqué, 20/12/2007**

Recognising these core problems and acknowledging the Commonwealth Government's commitment to tackling them, the community sector awaits with keen interest the outcomes of COAG's determinations regarding the Social Inclusion Agenda and the National Reform Agenda. They will after all, greatly affect the way our sector operates and how services are provided to the community.

With thanks to ACOSS Discussion Paper, August 2008

Ending Chronic Homelessness

About the Mercy Foundation

The Mercy Foundation is a philanthropic Foundation established by the North Sydney Sisters of Mercy in 1990. It was established to focus on social justice and ensure the ongoing mission of the Sisters to work with the most disadvantaged in our community.

Since early 2008, the Foundation has re-focussed its current mission on homelessness, most specifically on ending homelessness. The Mercy Foundation has a special interest in women who are homeless. We advocate, educate, develop new projects through partnerships and we make grants. We are not a direct service provider.

Ending homelessness

There are reasons why we decided to focus on the notion of ending chronic homelessness. Firstly, it has become clear from initiatives done elsewhere (such as the USA and UK) that it is possible to plan to end chronic homelessness. It has become clear that certain types of responses reduce chronic homelessness including: increased and affordable permanent supportive housing and assertive outreach which link people to housing and any ongoing support services they may need.

It is important to note that people experiencing chronic homelessness represent about 10 – 20% of the homeless population on any one night. People who experience chronic and repeated episodes of homelessness are likely to have mental illnesses, addictions; cognitive impairment, other health problems or physical disability.

- Permanent supportive housing
- High quality housing and close to services
- Safe for vulnerable people
- Connected to community
- Landlord is not the support provider



It is also important to note that as a civil and wealthy society we need not accept a permanent population of chronically homeless people. There may always be individuals and families experiencing brief crisis episodes of homelessness, however it is essential that responses are rapid and reduce the period of homelessness.

The notion of 'ending' homelessness rather than 'endlessly servicing' the problem has gained greater acceptance as the results of housing and ongoing support programs have been measured.

Common Ground

Common Ground Sydney is a good example of a partnership project in which the Mercy Foundation is involved together with the City of Sydney, Housing NSW, BCS – Lifecare, KPMG and Perception Partners. The building company

Grocon have made a commitment to build 'at cost' while, the project management company, Gallagher Jeffs, are providing pro bono assistance to review possible building sites.

At the launch of Common Ground Sydney in September last year, Premier Nathan Rees and Housing Minister, David Borger made commitments to support the project.

'Common Ground' is, put simply, a form of permanent supportive housing for a mix of tenants. Whilst Common Ground buildings target assisting those who have experienced chronic homelessness and provides them the support to sustain those tenancies, they also have tenants without a history of homelessness and who also need low cost housing. Common Ground buildings encourage community inclusion, through common areas and activities in the building. Whilst everyone has their own studio or one bedroom apartment with relevant tenancy rights, people are encouraged to connect with others who also live in the building.

"Although chronic homelessness represents a small share of the overall homeless population, chronically homeless people use up more than 50 percent of the services (for single homeless adults). The most successful model for housing people who experience chronic homelessness is permanent supportive housing using a Housing First approach." (National Alliance to End Homelessness).



Felicity Reynolds

Why we should end chronic homelessness?

However, as noted above, permanent supportive housing (whatever the model used) will not end homelessness by itself. There needs to be a vision and an understanding that it can be done. It is also useful to understand why it should be done.

The most obvious reason (to me) is the social justice and moral argument. A wealthy nation such as Australia must be able to do much better for its most vulnerable citizens. The other important argument is the 'results' one. Instead of offering crisis help, we now have good evidence that housing with support ends homelessness for many people who have become "stuck".

Both arguments are key but the most important one, the one that has encouraged improved responses elsewhere in the world to chronic homelessness is the 'costs' argument.

It seems almost counter-intuitive: the idea that people who sleep in our streets and parks may actually be costing us large amounts of money. It doesn't look like they do. However, some academic studies (see the work of Professor Denis Culhane) and many cost-benefit analyses done in other parts of the world have shown this result. The

ongoing and repeated use of crisis services, emergency health care, ambulances, police intervention, prisons, acute mental health care, detoxes etc are very costly and if the person's homelessness is not ended then these costs become recurrent. It makes economic sense to end chronic homelessness.

Housing First

One of the other practices that is showing a good evidence base for success is the notion of 'Housing First'. This is the idea that people move straight from homelessness into permanent housing and are provided with the ongoing support to sustain their tenancies. This is a bit different to the approach that has been used. The one that involves entering a crisis care environment and then moving through crisis, medium or transitional forms of care until the individual is able to access longer term accommodation or housing. It seems that housing, itself, performs a stabilising role for people and the ongoing support helps to sustain that.

Sam Tsemberis, the founder of Pathways to Housing in New York has published widely on this subject and the evidence base for the effectiveness of 'Housing First' is clear.

Plans to end homelessness

In the late 1990s Britain introduced a 'Rough Sleepers' strategy, to reduce chronic homelessness. This vision and plan resulted in a significant reduction by 2002. Over the past 8 years communities in the USA and Canada have also developed local plans to end homelessness which appear to be effective. The US Government recently reported a 30% reduction in chronic homelessness.

Other initiatives include:

- The use of enumeration methodologies (counts) in order to measure success.
- Increased research and evidence based interventions (eg. clear evidence that the same outcomes are achieved for families going straight to permanent rather than transitional housing first.
- Consumer focus – what do people want? (not, what can we provide?)
- Focus on most vulnerable and complex (chronically homeless). We can't do everything at once – help the hardest first and the rest may look a bit easier to assist.
- Also ensure all other parts of system working (eg. Prevention; help for families etc).

We are fortunate in Australia, in that the Federal Government has identified reducing homelessness as a key goal. Their first White Paper specifically addresses homelessness (See 'The Road Home' 2008). We need to work together with the Federal and State governments, and within our local communities to address, reduce and end the disgrace of homelessness.

*Felicity Reynolds,
CEO, Mercy Foundation*

11 key elements of success

Housing & Urban Development (USA) notes 11 key elements to successfully reduce chronic homelessness. The first five of these are considered essential elements for success. They are:

- ☐ Paradigm shift
- ☐ Clear goal set

- ☐ Community wide approach
- ☐ Organisational structure and leadership specifically for reducing chronic street homelessness
- ☐ Mainstream agency involvement
- ☐ Trigger event
- ☐ Private sector involvement
- ☐ Local elected official commitment
- ☐ Progress tracking mechanism
- ☐ New approaches to services
- ☐ Strategy to combat NIMBY (Not in my back yard)

Compliance Fatigue

So Much Accountability

Accountability is an essential part of all community organisations. It is both justifiable and participatory. It's also onerous and invasive. The current compliance trend is responsive to funding bodies and governments not to people and communities. Community organisations, particularly neighbourhood and community centres that are multifunctional centres (more than one stream or type of funding/program), are obviously held accountable to more than one department or level of government and this is the core of the problem.

"Multiple sources of funding from several levels of government adds to the complexity of accountability requirements, which has resulted in wide spread dissatisfaction from Community Service Organisations (CSOs) regarding the burden this creates, with increased compliance costs and fewer resources for service provision."

*Just Policy. December 2008.
Carolyn Wallace & Sarah Pollock. Community Service Organisations Accountability Mechanisms: Reflections of Identity and Mission*

Organisations already respond to accountability through funding agreements, acquittals, financial audit reports, annual reports, annual general meetings, regular board meetings, program reports, statistics, policies, procedures and other diverse forms of

accountability measurements. On top of this, funding bodies and government departments are inventing their own methods and systems of accountability.

For example over the last two years the South East Neighbourhood Centre [SENC] has undergone the following compliance inquisitions:

- Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care – HACC Integrated Monitoring Framework for Social Support, Other Food Services, Day Care;
- Ministry of Transport – HACC Integrated Monitoring Framework for Community Transport;
- Department of Health and Ageing – Quality Reporting for Respite Care; and
- National Child Care Accreditation Council – Quality Assurance for Out Of School Hours Care.

Over all SENC has endured six accountability processes, four government departments interrogations, seven examiners, eight days of intensive onsite visits, one surprise compliance visit, six extensive written submissions, client / staff / board interviews, surveys, statistics, comprehensive evidence provision, cross examination and hundreds of hours of preparation work to meet the requirements. It should be noted that SENC passed all these compliance processes.

Furthermore it is my understanding that the, "Department of Community Services is utilising a version of Results Accountability through the CSGP program that funds many neighbourhood and community centres".

This is absurd. It is profoundly ridiculous. There needs to be one system.

If this accountability process is introduced it will mean another four compliance processes bringing the total to ten for our Centre.

The current situation is untenable and becomes even more intolerable when departments refuse to recognise each other's methods of quality assurance and insist that theirs be recognised over any other. Not one Department will give prior recognition of compliance audits already completed for another program and this intense over regulation raises many questions that require immediate answers.

For instance how many processes do we need? Do they actually increase quality of service? Do they work? How much do they cost? What is there purpose? Do they have any value?

I have spoken to many other community organisations and workers who are equally distressed and concerned about this issue. I have raised the issue with the Local Community Services Association and the NSW Council of Social Services and urged them to take a stand on this issue, to raise the issue with the funding bodies and government departments; politicians and ministers; and lobby to have one community based compliance system implemented. There needs to be one centralised accountability system. Not one for every funding stream and department.

I do not object to accountability. I support and welcome it. However I do object to gruellingly officious and bureaucratically overbearing examinations that achieve nothing. Simply generating yet another compliance system is not leadership, it is punishment. The departments should be working towards making organisational compliance and management simpler and easier not harder and more complex.

The major problem of excessive compliance and over regulation is that it is counter-productive and generates negative efficiency. With more and more money and resources being directed towards achieving regulatory compliance; money and resources are being directed away from service delivery and client provision. Compliance is not making organisations more efficient and effective it is making them more inefficient and ineffective.

The process is having the exact opposite of what it is suppose to be achieving.

Our peak bodies must lead the way and show us some rectitude and fortitude and support its membership. They must support community organisation against these draconian impositions. This is a major issue that needs a resolution. There must be change.

David Atkins

*Manager,
South East Neighbourhood Centre*



Training for Social Housing Tenants

Not everyone retires and sits at home watching Oprah. Not everyone enters tertiary study through the traditional pathway of secondary schooling. In fact many of the clients of Regional Council's Tenant Participation Resource Service (TPRS) are over the age of 60 and many have not experienced any formal education beyond primary school level. Some have tertiary qualifications from their country of origin not recognised in Australia, and some have Australian tertiary qualifications that, for whatever reason, they have been unable to use.

The Australian Government's Social Inclusion Policy cites reducing disadvantage as one of its main principles. Helping people to obtain the support and skills needed to connect with their communities, to enable them to increase their social, economic and civic participation. This is where TPRS steps in.

The main focus of the TPRS is to resource and support Social Housing Tenant Groups and to enable tenants to look within, rather than outside, their communities for answers. Due to the nature of Social Housing, many tenants are disadvantaged and socially excluded. The work of TPRS includes offering free training sessions aimed at helping tenants to connect with their communities, become better informed, better prepared and more productive.

TPRS recognises the value and contribution of older social housing tenants and of mobilising

the wisdom accrued from years of experience however also recognising there may be mobility and transport issues aim to bring the training to the tenants, rather than the other way round. Educating tenants about their rights and responsibilities and understanding Housing NSW, the department and its processes makes for easier relations between landlord and tenant.

Recent Training Courses

Recent courses have included a range of topics including Committee Skills, Anti-Discrimination, Presentation Skills and Creative Writing and Drama workshops. The TPRS endeavours to make the sessions informal and relaxed but informative. Many social housing tenants view any person they perceive as an authority figure with distrust, so TPRS training is about creating an environment where everyone feels welcome - where everyone knows what they have to offer is of value. It is about seeing the assets, not the deficits in social housing communities.

There are immeasurable gains from training and education programs that have little to do with the actual curriculum. The self-confidence and esteem gained from participating in and completing a training course is an invaluable asset, especially for someone looking to break a generational welfare cycle. Networks and contacts are made. The circle of contacts for an unemployed tenant is ever-diminishing: the longer someone is unemployed, the fewer contacts they have. Recruitment experts

will tell you that the old adage 'It's not what you know, but who you know' certainly applies when searching for work. Only 10% of jobs are filled through newspaper and internet advertisements. The majority of jobs are filled from within an organisation or from a personal recommendation. The pathways created by this level of training are vital in helping tenants achieve progress.

"The individual achievements of TPRS training participants are incredible" says the Regional Tenant Worker, David White, "Tenants tap in to unrealised potential through our training, which leads to bigger and better things. TPRS training participants have gone on to do modules at TAFE and University, one tenant is completing a BA in

Communications at UTS and another is now a local councillor."

The opportunity to meet people from across the region interested in Tenant Participation and their communities is another added benefit. Catherine, a community housing tenant commented "I have made links with a very generous and supportive group of people from community housing and public housing. The training gave me the skills, support and encouragement to continue our small tenant group and expand work with other tenants."

Rick O'Meara, 73, has been involved in various training activities since becoming involved in Tenant Participation 20 years ago. His efforts in his local community were recognised by

the Federal Government in 2001, awarding Rick the Centenary Medal and by his Local Federal Member who named him Senior of the Year 1999. Rick states that without his participation in training and leadership programs, he would not be the effective Community Organiser he is today.

For information about the TPRS training schedule please contact the Regional Tenant Worker on (02)9698 6558 or 0439 986 558 or email

char.jones@innersydneyrcsd.org.au.

Charmaine Jones

Charmaine is the Regional Training Worker with the Central Sydney North Tenant Participation Resource Service

Charmaine Jones with a Community Housing Tenant Network



From The Archives

History repeats itself. The State Government is yet again thinking of cutting the Area Assistance Scheme...surprise, surprise.

Harvard University

Established 1988



**Greiner-Murray
School of Mismanagement**

Master of Business Administration

Presented to:

**for exceptional and outstanding
mismanagement in suspending the
Area Assistance Scheme**

**Free with the purchase of every ticket for
Eastern Creek Raceway**

Well it is a long time since we had a NSW Coalition Government. This Government in 1988 was led by Greiner for the Liberals and Murray for the National Party.

This Certificate satires two issues of mismanagement of resources:

The first was the attempt to scrap the Area Assistance Scheme, which provided social infrastructure support for growth areas of the State (mainly the coast and Western Sydney). This program, then run by the Department of Planning, developed profiles of the social disadvantage in each Local Government Area, and encouraged local groups to apply for project monies.

The other was the Eastern Creek Raceway which was intended to seize the Motorbike Grand Prix from Phillip Island in Victoria, and also provide a home for the V8 Supercars. The motorbike grand prix never came, and now every year the Olympic/Homebush site is to be modified to suit the V8s, because Eastern Creek just can't attract the same sized crowds.

This all seems similar to the questions raised in this issue about new infrastructure projects dreamt up by our present NSW Government.

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Individual Subscription \$11
Concession \$5.50

All membership applications must be approved by the Board of Management. Membership fees are due on 1 July each year.

Please contact the office for information about Regional Council and for an Application for Membership

Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Inc.
770 Elizabeth Street, WATERLOO NSW 2017

Telephone: (02) 9698 7690

Fax : (02) 9318 0852

Email: admin@innersydneyrcsd.org.au

**Inner Sydney
Regional Council**



**for Social
Development Inc.**