Redressing neighbourhood disadvantage: towards a sustainable partnership model driven by local government

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Abstract: The concentration of disadvantage in specific neighbourhoods is a widespread characteristic of many Australian cities. To redress these concentrations of disadvantage a broad range of policies and programs have been designed and implemented. It has become apparent that more integrative forms of governance involving all levels of government, the private sector and community are required to address localized disadvantage which support a bottom up approach rather than the traditional top down approach. Within the Australian context, in particular the NSW context, local governments have been identified amongst the most effective drivers for these integrative governance approaches. In driving these initiatives local governments are faced with the task of balancing their traditional role of local government with the provision of a framework for more integrative forms of governance. Utilizing a case study of the Penrith Neighbourhood Renewal Program local action planning process, this paper explores the recent attempts by Penrith City Council to develop a framework to redress neighbourhood disadvantage, firstly by developing an integrative governance framework for the program and secondly by transforming the Council's operational structure.

Introduction

Disadvantage, concentrated in specific localities has become a widespread characteristic of many modern western cities, including Australian cities. In the face of this emerging disadvantage, academics and policy makers alike have sought to understand the multidimensional nature of the problems facing the inhabitants of these disadvantaged urban localities. Concurrently, there has been a growing interest in not only understanding the factors which cause these disadvantaged areas to emerge, but also the extent to which policies and initiatives can help combat the problem (Randolph, 2004). The paper begins by outlining the emerging policy and practice context, providing insight into the developing understanding of the multiple underlying physical, economic, cultural and social processes that have triggered the decline of these urban neighbourhoods (O'Conner and Stimson, 1995; Fagan, 1997; Baum, 1997; Gleeson, 2006), and the cumulative impact these processes have on entrapping people in a cycle of related problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, and poverty. The outline also highlights the emergent understanding that more 'joined-up' approaches are required by all levels of government, the private sector *and* communities to redress the decline of these localities. Within the Australian context, particularly NSW, local governments have been amongst the most effective drivers for these 'joined-up' approaches aimed at remedying the multiple deprivation faced by residents of these disadvantaged localities. In driving these programs local governments in Australian cities are faced with the task of balancing their traditional role of local governance with the provision of a framework for more integrative forms of governance. Drawing on research from a recent evaluation process, the paper presents a case study of the Penrith Neighbourhood Renewal Program local action planning process. The case study provides insight into the emergence of the program's integrated governance framework, highlighting the way in which this framework led to the transformation of Council's operational structure. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of perceived challenges, limitations and benefits facing local councils and their partners in effectively addressing disadvantaged localities using a model driven by local government.

Redressing localized disadvantaged: The emerging policy and practice context

Australian cities have undergone significant social, economic and demographic change over the past few decades. In terms of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage these changes, often associated with globalisation, economic and technological restructuring, are not evenly distributed across cities. Recent studies have illustrated the social and spatial polarization in Australian cities and the growth of areas of significant disadvantage (Murphy and Watson, 1994; Babcock, 1997; Baum, 1999; Gleeson and Randolph, 2001; Murphy and Watson, 2004; Gleeson 2006). It is now widely accepted that Australian cities, more than ever before over the last few decades have become more socially and economically polarized at the neighbourhood level as a result of these restructuring processes (Randolph, 2003). Both areas associated with public housing and other areas outside the public sector are characterised by high levels of disadvantage. Whilst the emergence of localized disadvantage in Australian cities is often described as being less intense than in Europe or North

America, others note that it is moving rapidly towards the situation in "... cities in the US, where socio-economic differences are often highly localized, even street by street" (Gleeson, 2006, p. 46).

One group of policy responses, developed to address localized disadvantage, has been renewal programs (Wood, 2002; Dodson and Berry, 2002; Wood and Randolph, 2002; Randolph, 2004; Victoria Department of Human Services, 2002; NSW Department of Housing, 1999). Renewal as a loosely defined concept has taken on currency not only in Australia but internationally (Randolph, 2004; Katz, 2004; UK Government, 2000). The 'renewal program' policy response continuum over the past few decades has seen a shift from wholesale or substantial asset disposal including demolition and redevelopment predominately within areas of high public housing concentrations; asset or physical improvement strategies to government approaches involving 'place management' with a focus on integrated service delivery by agencies and the community; social and economic development strategies aimed at building community cohesion, social capital, employment and skills opportunities, and early intervention strategies. In the early 21st century in Australia renewal tends to be described in terms of both 'urban' and 'community' renewal, the former referring to activities such as the physical upgrading of properties and neighborhoods, the latter denoting social and economic community development activities (Wood, 2002; Wood and Randolph, 2002; Dodson and Berry, 2002; Randolph, 2004).

A traditional approach of physical planners has been that physical upgrading will eventually promote 'a nice living environment that fosters nice people,' based on a belief in environmental determinism. Physical renewal has emerged in planning activity in the decades since the mid 1950s through the mass physical renewal of public housing estates based around modernist inspired, formalist physical solutions to urban decay. More recent physical renewal has embraced *New urbanism*, an orientation resembling much of the earlier planning approach explicated by Ebenezer Howard, amongst others, in their aim to use spatial relations to create a close-knit social community that allows diverse elements to interact: a variety of building types, mixed uses, intermingling of housing for different income groups, and a strong privileging of the "public realm" (Howard, 1985).

At the same time, critics have questioned the appropriateness of outcome-oriented physical planning, generally arguing that whilst physical renewal programs address some of the physical symptoms of disadvantage, they do not address the underlying causes, such as the social and economic marginalisation of the residents in the disadvantaged areas. Such renewal schemes can improve the place, but often at a cost to the community. Consequently initiatives aimed at improving social and employment aspects of disadvantaged localities have become prominent within renewal programs.

The development of these social and economic initiatives has been supported through understanding emerging concepts such as economic, cultural and social capital, and social exclusion and inclusion. The concept of *capital* (Bourdieu, 1985; Bourdieu, 1986; Webb, 2002), part of a generalised theory of capital in individual and community command, involves economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. An individual needs access to economic capital to provide sustenance and self-esteem. The individual also needs *cultural (or informational) capital*, "instruments of appropriation of valued cultural products, which exist in the embodied, objectified and institutionalised form" (Waquant, 1998, p. 26, also see Throsby, 2006 and Gibson, 2006). Cultural capital is also connected to having 'roots': the feeling of belonging to 'the place I call home'. Social capital consists of totality of resources an individual or group has by virtue of being "enmeshed in networks of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition, or through membership in a group" (Waquant, 1998). All these forms of capital are intertwined with each other. The concept of *capital* in relation to disadvantaged communities has attracted much interest in Australia in recent years. Awareness of social capital has led to some interesting policy developments aimed to increase community self-help and build "capacity" and social networks. However, the concept of capital is only half the story and this is where the concepts of *social, cultural, economic and political exclusion* come in. Policy makers have adopted the term 'exclusion' to encapsulate the multidimensional nature of the problems facing inhabitants of disadvantaged urban areas. Power and Wilson summarise social exclusion as follows:

> "Social exclusion is about the inability of our society to keep all groups and individuals within reach of what we expect as a society" (2000, p. 1).

The concept of social exclusion is often used uncritically to encompass economic and cultural exclusion. The concept is related to poverty, but makes sense only in the broader perspective of citizenship and integration into the social context. Economic exclusion is traditionally related to concepts such as poverty, underclass and a lack of the economic resources normally secured through decent employment. Cultural exclusion can be defined as a marginalisation from shared symbols,

meaning, ritual and discourse. The final aspect of exclusion is political exclusion which relates to the lack of a stake in power or decision making. Political exclusion involves the lack of participation in day-to-day decision making (for instance in the local neighbourhood) to a much larger degree than simply voting and electing politicians to represent their interests. The advantage of exclusion as a framework for policy action is that it focuses on the interconnectedness of problems to create 'joined-up' policies that address the concentration of disadvantage within specific localities where people can become trapped in a cycle of related problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poverty, poor housing, cultural fragmentation, limited access to participatory mechanisms, bad health and family breakdown. The role localities play in forging patterns of disadvantage is implicitly recognised in the notion of exclusion. The greater the problems of disadvantage within specific localities, the stronger the cumulative impact, leading to the flight of those more able to go and gradual loss of control resulting from chronic instability and disempowerment. Policy responses framed in terms of exclusion therefore tend to stress the problems of places, rather than just those of individuals and families.

A key consequence of this emerging research and policy development, and the focus of the following case study, is a growing awareness of a need to shift away from sectorial to integrative governance of problems within disadvantaged areas in order to effectively deal with the diverse aspects of exclusion within them. These more integrative approaches are required to go beyond the sectorial solutions imposed by physical renewal and public intervention in the traditional sense (child support, social workers and so forth). Whilst important, these sectorial solutions are not effective in solving the multi-faceted deprivation within disadvantaged areas unless properly integrated. Another important aspect is that the 'top-down', expert-driven approach, which forms the foundation of the traditional sectorial solution of welfare governance, reduces residents within disadvantaged areas to clients: passive receivers of services. To build up self-esteem, an important prerequisite for social inclusion, residents must gain an obligation to take more responsibility and be given opportunities to be involved and empowered.

Reflecting on this new approach a series of policy and program interventions have emerged within Australian cities to develop 'joined-up' approaches to address issues in disadvantaged areas. The case study below provides a detailed insight into one of these emerging programs which have tended to be aimed at producing better 'whole of Government' approaches to service delivery and more effective ways of administering services in local disadvantaged areas. In NSW the Department of Housing and local councils have implemented and attempted to drive these more integrative approaches to addressing localised disadvantage, in many locations moving beyond 'whole of government' to 'whole of community', built on partnerships between government, the local business sector, and community in all its forms. Many of these existing initiatives face the problem of short-term funding, a clear barrier to effective longer-term solutions that are required to address the complex and multifaceted problems faced by residents in disadvantage localities. While this issue is widely recognised by most project stakeholders, no realistic solution has been developed to move beyond the short term funding approach to more sustainable models of funding. Long–term integrative governance approaches to localized disadvantage also need to be driven by strong and committed organisations. In NSW this has been taken on board by either local or state governments/agencies (e.g. NSW Department of Housing). The success of these organisations is based on their control over physical and social planning within local areas, their awareness of local community needs and strengths, and their ability to integrate these to create responses to local issues.

Several studies have shown how the rigid organisational structures of modern government impede the innovative program delivery needed in disadvantaged localities. The development of more integrative approaches by local government has led to a cultural change in the way local governments organise the provision of services: more collaborative approaches to planning have emerged which integrate economic, land use and social planning, and embrace a 'bottom-up' approach in which the starting point is to understand the local community rather than impose the ideals of experts from the top down. The failure of planning during the heyday of massive physical urban renewal programs (carried out without community involvement) substantiates many of the objections made by opponents of the top-down, expert-driven form of physical outcomes oriented planning, and support a move to integrated, inclusive and communicative planning practices.

The Penrith Neighbourhood Renewal Program local action planning process

The remainder of this paper focuses on a case study of the Penrith Neighbourhood Renewal Program local action planning process (the program) that Penrith City Council (the Council) has been using to address growing disadvantage within a handful of neighbourhoods inside the Penrith Local

Government Area (LGA) since April 2001 (Penrith City Council, 2001). The case study provides an overview of some key findings from an evaluation of the program between 2004-2006. The case study discusses firstly the emergence of the program within Penrith City in the early 21st century. Secondly, it explores the emergence of a formal integrated governance framework for the program in 2004, developed through a series of collaborative workshops with program stakeholders and built on the informal arrangements that emerged during the early years of the program's operation. The final section explores the changes instigated by Council within its operational structure (management, departmental and staffing) to accommodate the integrated governance framework for the program. A broader cultural shift within Council supported a departure from the traditional rigid organisational structures of modern local government that were seen to be impeding innovative program delivery, towards cluster formations which allowed the dissolving of boundaries between traditional functional service areas – physical, economic and social planning – and the reconfiguration of the professional-client role. It should be stressed that the case study presented here is unlikely to be comprehensive in its description of the program as it is focused on particular aspects of the program's transformation and development. Similarly the case study does not explore the program's local level area-based initiatives and, given that the evaluation itself was program–wide rather than project specific, reference to area-based initiatives will only be made where they enhance the understanding of the case study.

Emergence of a program based on social justice: 2001-2004

The origin of the program lay in the last few strategic plans developed for Council. As part of the development of its 2000–2004 Strategic Plan, the Council identified the increasing disparity between infrastructure and services available to local communities in the older established suburbs of the Penrith LGA compared to those available in the areas developed since the 1980s. Those areas, as with many other areas developed before the 1980s, were facing aging infrastructure, development pressures, increased strain on existing services and facilities, and changing demographics. Unlike new release areas with access to Section 94 funding, these areas were dependent on Council intervention and resources, and possibly State agencies, for their regeneration. In response, the Council identified within its 2000–2004 Strategic Plan the longer term objective of achieving "equitable provision of services and facilities across the City, with special consideration to disadvantaged areas [within the city's established areas (those built prior to the 1980s)]" (Penrith City Council, 2000).

During the first few years of the program, neighbourhood action plans were developed for each place-based initiative in partnership with government agencies, residents, local community organisations and services. In the early years initiatives were commenced in Cranebrook, Werrington/Cambridge Park in 2001. The process was based on the principle that community members themselves, as well as Council and other service delivery partners, are essential participants in the process of determining priorities and approaches to the delivery of services, projects and maintenance of infrastructure within disadvantaged established neighbourhoods in line with Council's broader strategic goal of obtaining more equitable access to economic, cultural and social opportunities for all within the Penrith LGA. The strategic plan set out the longer-term direction of Council and the parameters within which Council operated. The local action plans that emerged from the program acted as the localised version of the Strategic Plan, functioning as a set of considerations that guided how Council worked with the community at the local level to develop policy, services and infrastructure as well as deliver vital services that were genuinely responsive to community needs and met the objectives of obtaining more equitable access to economic, cultural and social opportunities as set out in the Strategic Plan.

In 2002/2003 Council identified the need to accelerate the Penrith Community Safety and Neighbourhood Renewal Program (as the program was then called) funded by an additional rate increase of 4.8% for 10 years. A further initiative in North St Marys was added in 2002. During the early years of the program there was a shift from an initial focus on the repair and maintenance of physical infrastructure to working with communities to resolve issues of social, economic, political and cultural exclusion. This shift was viewed by many of the program's stakeholders during the later evaluation process as a positive move towards a more holistic approach to the strengthening of disadvantaged communities through addressing both physical and social aspects of disadvantage.

In 2004 Council renewed its commitment to the program through the inclusion of a long term objective within the 2005–2009 Strategic Plan that identified the need to continue the implementation of a program of renewal, "renewal for selected [established] neighbourhoods that contribute to a sense of community identity and cohesiveness..." (Penrith City Council, 2005, p. 7). This objective comprises one of a group of objectives aimed at achieving the Council's vision of social justice:

"Seek[ing] to secure social well being by being alert when designing its programs to issues of *social justice* and by championing the city's case to others" (Penrith City Council, 2005, p. 6).

Underlying this vision for the city is the notion of a "just city" (Harvey, 1973; Harvey, 1992). In its more radical sense, the audience for 'just city' endeavours have been urban social movements. For these movements a just city results from mobilizing a public rather than prescribing a methodology to those in office. During the heyday of mass urban renewal and the cruelties of mass clearance carried out as part of these renewal programs, the mobilisation of social movement driven in opposition to top-down, expert-driven planning, and the business and political interests which constitute the power base, engendered the review of approaches to urban renewal. The lessons learnt have influenced a generation of planners and councillors who support programs that aim to empower those who have previously been excluded from power, through promoting an active citizenry, strengthening community wellbeing and reducing the causes of disadvantage and exclusion. This approach takes an explicitly normative position concerning the distribution of social benefits: social justice is about access to the same rights and services for all citizens. The program represents one policy framework and local action planning process through which Council strives to build a just and inclusive city.

Identification of a program framework: 2004-2005

As part of the evaluation of the program in 2004, Council brought together the program stakeholders – agencies, NGO's, community representatives and organisations from the program's existing place-based initiatives, and local enterprise – through workshops and working groups to develop a framework for the program.

During its first few years the program developed an important although informal framework for addressing the needs of residents in the selected established neighbourhoods. By 2004 apprehension arose about the program's apparent lack of an overall 'documented' framework and understanding of its sustainability (its capacity to be effectively resourced by all stakeholders and supported by Council's operational structure) and about how Council understood its position within the overall planning processes for the LGA. The lack of program identity among the stakeholders propagated a perception of the program as disconnected activities occurring across different parts of the Penrith LGA. To identify a formal framework for the program, the evaluation sought to build on two distinct sources: leading practice principles for addressing multi-deprivation within disadvantage neighbourhoods, and stakeholders' perceptions of the existing program and its future. The intent behind determining those perceptions was to unpack the assumed, although undocumented, knowledge held by the project's stakeholders about the program's framework.

As the program existed in 2004, it already represented some of what recent research exploring place-based initiatives recommended be implemented within the NSW context if place-based disadvantage was to be effectively tackled (Randolph, 2004, p. 8), including: the need for greater local coordination and integration of place-focused initiatives, a move towards a more coherent spatial targeting framework for the diverse patchwork of agencies and programs addressing localised disadvantage within the Penrith LGA, the identification of a local council to coordinate delivery of local renewal programs, and integration of land use and social planning (Randolph, 2004, pp. 8-11). The program was particularly valued by stakeholders for its ability to provide an environment which enhanced communication/information sharing and partnership formations between communities, agencies and Council leading to more effective responsiveness, continuity and co-ordination at the level of local delivery. Council was seen as providing a supportive context for the development of synergies and integration of the diverse patchwork of programs and agencies within particular place-based projects – Cranebrook, Werrington/Cambridge Park and North St Marys. The program was also valued for its ability to develop integrated *land use and social planning* responses to issues/concerns 'on the ground' (mentoring programs, public domain maintenance teams, establishment and support for Neighbourhood Advisory Boards).

Whilst key building blocks put in place over the first four years of the program were believed by many stakeholders to be alleviating disadvantage within particular neighbourhoods, they identified a series of key concerns that impacted on the program's ability to effectively address neighbourhood disadvantage, amongst them was the development of a lifecycle approach for the long term interventions that were needed to address multiple deprivation within disadvantaged localities. Current research suggests that addressing multiple-deprivation within disadvantaged localities requires long-term interventions of between fifteen to twenty years: a life cycle approach that was progressive in its outcomes, had an internal logic (e.g. clearly identified aims, clear objectives, priority needs and issues which are then translated into activities, outputs, impacts and outcomes), allowed incremental change

over time, had well articulated and agreed exit strategies triggered by an evaluation framework that could be used to measure progress against original aims and would augment aims in line with changes in resources and the community's needs that occurred over time. Given previous political intervention into the program, stakeholders also identified the need for clear selection criteria to identify place-based initiatives for inclusion in the program based on social, economic and cultural indicator frameworks (Social and Economic Index for Areas, ABS Wellbeing etc) as well as other local sources of data (Crime and personal safety reporting, Council data, non-government organisations data etc). The stakeholders also identified the need for the indicator data to be tested for validity through consultation with the residents in the identified localities.

Based on a review of leading practice principles and stakeholders' perceptions of the existing program, the stakeholders identified a series of 'building blocks' to guide the development of the program's future framework. In brief they include the need for (Prior, 2006):

- A conceptual framework and program logic
- Clear selection criteria for disadvantaged neighbourhoods
- The program to be expressed in an evaluation framework
- A shift from a needs-based (deficit) approach to a strength building approach
- Appropriate community involvement and ownership
- Appropriate partnerships to be established
- Council to be the program's driver
- The support of long term intervention
- Acknowledgement of finite resources
- An operational structure to support the program with integrated land use and social planning mechanisms.

In developing the program's framework, stakeholders stressed the importance of utilising a 'bottom up' approach to attain a truly integrated governance framework for each place-based intervention which enabled the collaboration with, and empowerment of, the local community, and was grounded and informed by community involvement during planning, design, implementation and review. It was agreed that disadvantage within specific geographical locations was most effectively alleviated by building on existing strengths within those localities. One of the main aims in developing this underpinning for the program was a shift away from a needs-based (deficit) approach to a strength building approach, building on existing social, cultural and economic capital within a neighbourhood and that the program's implementation should be designed to enhance those strengths.

Using the above building blocks the program's stakeholders identified a framework for the program structured around a hierarchy of outcomes approach involving three steps in a causal chain leading from immediate outcomes, through to intermediate and ultimate outcomes (see figure 1). The key outputs and resources required to achieve the identified program outcomes were agreed on by stakeholders. The hierarchy starts with 'needs' at the base, continues up to 'outputs/resources' (developed in response to 'needs'), building up to 'immediate outcomes' and 'intermediate outcomes', and finally to 'ultimate outcomes.' (see figure 1) The priority need identified was the strengthening of "established neighbourhoods within the Penrith LGA that face significant disadvantage/inequity compared to other parts of the Penrith LGA." (Prior, 2006, p.2) The key outputs and resources identified included:

> "Delivery plans being established for each ... place-based initiative which indicated methods of implementation, review, evaluation, and planned exit strategy and the establishment of a partnership structure including community, agencies etc to adequately resource each initiative." (Prior, 2006, p. 35)

Building on the priority needs and resources, the program hierarchy identified by stakeholders worked through a hierarchy of outcomes that started with the establishment of positive partnership structure for each place-based initiative to support a bottom up approach, through to strengthened communities within the locality the program was operating within, with the ultimate goal of developing structurally enduring community processes and mechanisms within the locality that could be supplemented by the Council's broader suite of planning programs, without requiring the higher-level resourcing of the program. The following goal for the program emerged from an understanding of the identified framework:

"A program of renewal that targets particular established neighbourhoods, develops positive partnerships, and builds on existing community strengths to redress disadvantage leading to a more sustainable [Penrith City Council] LGA." (Prior, 2006, p.19)

A further step in the development of a formal program logic and framework involved the incorporation of that hierarchy of outcomes approach into an evaluation framework (Prior, 2006). The stakeholders saw evaluation as essential given the need to establish mechanisms that could: measure the program's progress; identify the need to shift the program's focus as communities changed, and secure ongoing funding. They identified no official evaluation program or data collection measures for the existing program, and the only currently existing review process involved qualitative reporting prepared by steering groups set up for each of the program's place-based initiatives.

Some common themes to emerge during the evaluation framework development process were the need for evaluation to: commence from the outset; be locally relevant, objective and independent; be adequately resourced; have clearly articulated and measurable objectives and recognisable spatial scales; have good baseline data, measure both short and long-term outcomes, and to be able to take into account external influences as well as the impact of particular local initiatives. Given the complex nature of the program and its diverse objectives, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were seen to be favourable. Whilst it was agreed that the evaluation model would rely in part on performance indicators measured against benchmarks established by baseline surveys and administrative data of both Council and other agency partners, these approaches needed to be augmented by those that emphasised the importance of qualitative techniques to obtain more fine grained data on the program's progress, process, and to identify the program's winners and losers. This mixed approach stressed the complexity of the task of assessing renewal outcomes at a hierarchy of levels to capture evidence of shifts not reducible to simple performance measures. The stakeholders identified a need for the evaluation framework to focus on how and why programs worked as much as measuring outcomes: to focus on outcomes alone does not tell us much about how the policy or program actually delivered the outcome, how well, or who actually benefited from it. Against this criteria for a mixed evaluation methodology the stakeholders identified the program draft evaluation framework presented in abbreviated form in Appendix 1. It was agreed that this draft framework would be developed through its application to individual renewal projects within the Penrith LGA, but also provided a context for comparative evaluation between several place–based projects.

A supportive operational structure: 2006-present

In developing a supportive environment for the program, the development of the formal program framework identified in the previous section of this paper only represented half the equation for Council. The second half was to ensure the framework could be supported within the Council's operational structure, given that the Council was to function as the program's driver or steward.

The inability to create a supportive operational environment for the program was identified as a key stumbling block within the early years of the program. The rigid organisational structures of Council were seen to be impeding the innovative program delivery required to address disadvantaged neighbourhoods within established areas of the city. The program had been the responsibility of one of Council's functional areas, 'City Operations'. The fulfilment of the program goals was the responsibility of the director of city operations in the first instance, and the day-to-day operation of the program was the responsibility of a series of council officers who were responsible for a variety of other tasks. Two key issues impeded the program's success: there was no direct allocation of officers who could pay adequate attention to the program, and, the program was placed within one functional area of Council while such functions as social planning were in another, undermining the program's effective operation and limiting its ability to provide 'joined-up' solutions.

Beyond the need for better resourcing for the program (made possible through the provision of a dedicated program coordinator, consultation expert and enterprise worker) it was clear that the creation of a supportive operational environment for the program required the dissolving of boundaries between functional service areas within the existing operational structure. The division of services into separate departments reinforced professional boundaries and impeded the implementation of 'joined-up' solutions to delivering services to specific localities which was the core task of the program. The dissolving of these boundaries was seen as essential to providing 'joined-up' approaches through an integration of land use, economic and social planning. At the time Council turned its attention to creating a more support operational environment, it was undergoing an internal reorganisation of its entire operational structure. This reorganization was conducive to creating a supportive environment for the program as Council was exploring an approach to governance based on the notion of clusters,

within which the program was linked to the Social Equity and Established areas cluster that was focused on creating 'joined-up' solutions to the management of established areas within the city (see figure 1).
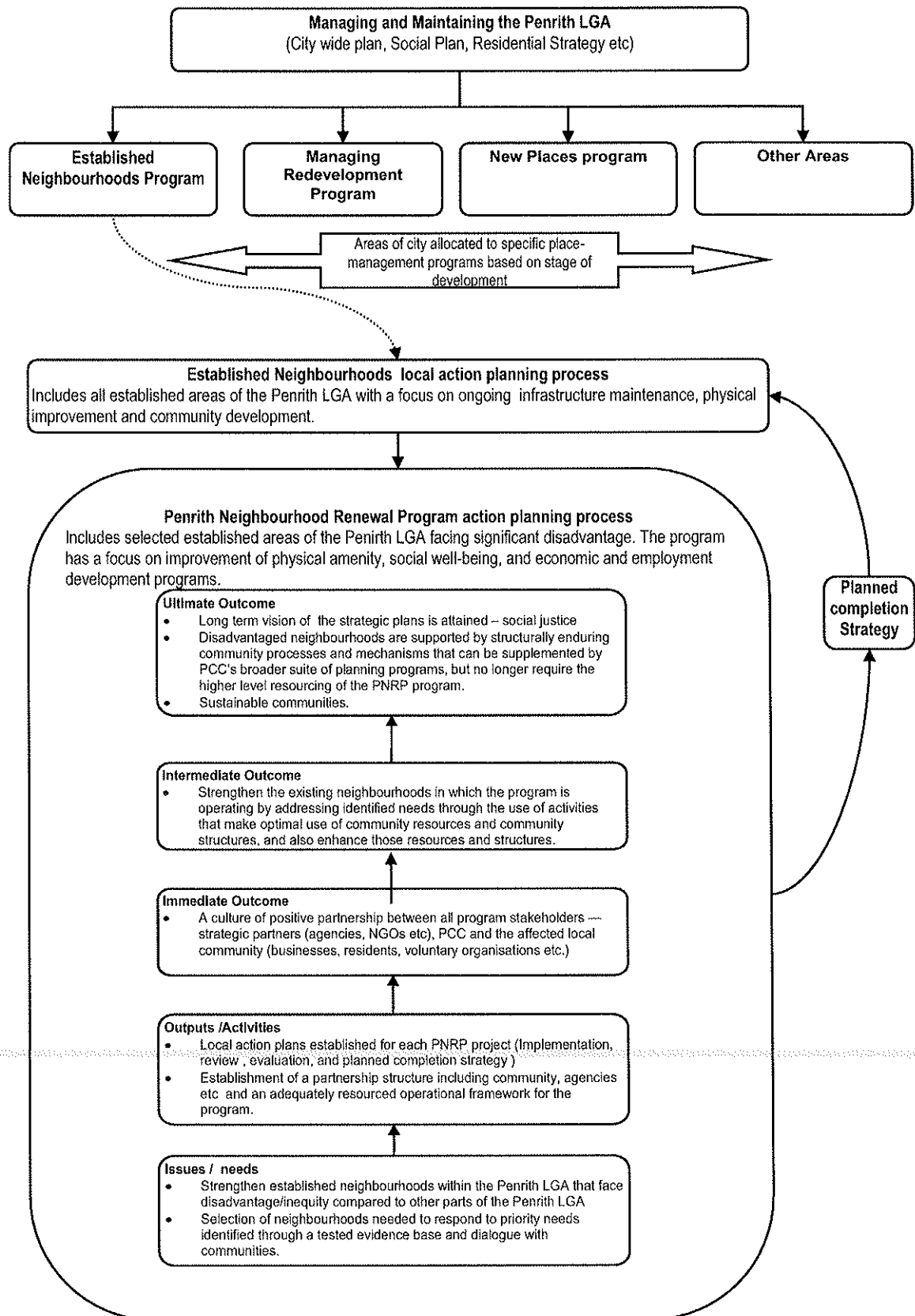

Figure 1 — Penrith Neighbourhood Renewal Program local action planning process and place management framework

In determining the placement of the program within the Council's operational framework considerable discussions were raised within Council regarding the linkages between the particular focus of the program and the established areas within the Penrith LGA and the broader embellishment of the Penrith LGA given the Council's formal charter of responsibility to all residents. Whilst it was generally agreed that the intense level of co-ordination and focus that the program brought to severely disadvantaged neighbourhood was not required in all of the established areas in the Penrith LGA it was agreed that there was a need to develop another related local action planning process, with a less intense focus than that of the Penrith Neighbourhood Renewal Program local action planning process, for established neighbourhoods that did not need the same level of intensive intervention. It was agreed that many of the public domain, infrastructure maintenance and community development issues identified in established areas could be addressed through the development of this new 'Established Neighbourhoods local action planning process'. This proposed local action planning process was intended to respond primarily to infrastructure, amenity issues and everyday community development with the Penrith Neighbourhood Renewal Program local action planning process complementing this other process by bringing an additional level of more intensive co-ordination including social and economic/employment development programs to selected established areas which were identified as having the greatest need for such services. The relationship between these two programs is represented in figure one above.

Both programs signal a movement towards place management of the Penrith LGA, a management system that encouraged Council to engage more fully with local communities, identifying local issues and solutions in conjunction with the community, and then co-ordinate and drive improvements to benefit the community and the Penrith LGA. The implementation of both programs also required Council to assess their current level of servicing to established areas to ensure equity of access and delivery across these areas. Many of the principles adopted within the policy framework for the program, such as community engagement was seen as transferable to the Established Neighbourhoods local action planning process. Both programs should also be understood as one key element of the broader cluster place management framework which Council is currently developing to manage and maintain Penrith LGA (see figure 1).

Conclusion

Australian cities can be understood as systems for allocating opportunities amongst populations. Locations within cities are both an expression of and a contributor to life chances. For those living in locations within Australian cities with a scarcity of resources, life opportunities can be severely curtailed. With the failing of traditional forms of government (top-down sectorial welfare etc.) to address the problems faced by populations within emerging pockets of localised disadvantage within Australian cities over the last few decades, this paper has provided insight into the appearance of integrative forms of governance that are beginning to provide 'joined-up' solutions to the cumulative and interrelated economic, social, cultural, environmental and political disadvantage faced by the populations within them. In particular, this paper has highlighted the driving role of local governments such as Penrith City Council in the development of these integrative governance frameworks which are aimed at redressing the way populations in these localities are being excluded from life opportunities that are taken for granted by the broader urban population.

The case study of the Penrith Neighbourhood Renewal Program local action planning process, provided insight into the way in which one local Council based on social goals about 'equality of opportunity' is actively driving the development of an integrative governance framework to address problems faced by populations in disadvantaged localities, such as, restricted access to good education, good health, a clean environment, safe neighbourhoods, good jobs, good transport and supportive social infrastructure, a framework driven by local government but grounded within affected communities. In exploring the program the case study highlighted the way in which the Council's internal operational structure was being augmented to accommodate the flexible and integrated approach to service delivery that is required within these disadvantaged locations. Local governments like Penrith City Council should be commended for their commitment to the development of these programs concerned with redressing the spread of landscapes of exclusion that mark the emerging face of Australian cities and the way they curtail the life opportunities of the populations within them.

In developing these programs local governments and their partners face a considerable range of challenges. In concluding I will consider some of the structural (e.g. about separation of governing powers), bureaucratic, political and also internal challenges and barriers identified by stakeholders during the evaluation of the Penrith Neighbourhood Renewal Program local action planning process.

Structural constraints are those that are not easily changed such as the funding arrangements, and legal foundation on which local governments are based and how these impact on the stability of longer term renewal initiatives. At the local government level these structural constraints include funding arrangements and separation of government powers. Stakeholders identified funding constraints as one of the most immediate challenges facing renewal programs. Whilst there is a growing understanding within government that the multiple deprivation facing populations within disadvantaged localities may take decades to tackle, renewal programs continue *for the most part* to be based on visioning and funding structures that run for between 1 and 4 years. Stakeholders generally saw Penrith Council's commitment to a 10-year rate level as an exception to the norm. Another structural issue identified by stakeholders concerned the dormant power of state governments over the existence of local governments. Whilst local councils are currently undoubtedly the most appropriate locations from which to drive renewal within the Australian context given their close linkages to the planning and development of local communities, in terms of power, they have relatively minor political roles and remain subject to the whims of state ministers who may remove or reduce their powers and responsibilities and change their boundaries. Such interventions of power - removal of particular services that have been integrated by local governments to provide more 'joined-up' solutions, and the movement of LGA boundaries could have profound impacts on attempts by councils like Penrith City Council to implement a long term renewal program.

While structural barriers are evident, stakeholders also saw bureaucratic barriers as a potential stumbling block for renewal programs and a range of such potential bureaucratic stumbling blocks exist. The first includes the ability for local councils to effectively transform their internal operational structures by dismantling financial silos, and the territoriality resulting from a long cultural history of sectorial services provision. Another concern with bureaucracy raised by stakeholders was the ability to allocate responsibilities for the delivery of integrated services. One mechanism that Penrith City Council has been exploring links accountability of program and service delivery integration outcomes to personal management performance arrangements.

In addition to structural and bureaucratic constraints stakeholders also identified a range of internal barriers and constraints internal to renewal programs driven by local government that hampered their success. In concluding I will only mention a few of these. For government concerns revolved around differing expectations and understanding of priorities, financial and resourcing constraints, and ability to carry through on commitments in the longer term due to funding constraints and timeframes. A key concern identified by local government stakeholders included 'coordination burn out' due to stress of bringing together complex, varied and overarching sets of stakeholders including all levels of the bureaucracy, politicians, and residents. For community and community stakeholders, concerns were raised over the barriers caused by cynicism in the community for the success of such programs given their length, and conversely, high and sometimes unreal community expectations.

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Appendix 1 – Summary of Penrith Neighbourhood Renewal Program local action planning process evaluation framework

Outcomes Hierarchy	Measures	
	Evaluation questions	**Indicators/Judgement method.**
Ultimate Outcomes Sustainable Communities Priority neighbourhoods are revitalised and people have pride in the community in which they live.	• Have essential needs been met within a priority neighbourhood? • Are community resources and structures within a priority neighbourhood able to sustain and support that neighbourhood into the future without special support — can support for the priority neighbourhood be shifted from the PNRP to council's broader suite of planning programs?	• All targets set for essential needs within a priority neighbourhood are met, triggering the implementation of an exit strategy for that priority neighbourhood. • The priority neighbourhoods are being support by structurally enduring community processes and mechanisms that can be supplemented by council's broader suite of planning programs to address ongoing needs.
Intermediate Outcomes Strengthening Communities This is about how communities build their strengths on an ongoing basis to improve their wellbeing, education and employment opportunities and so on.	• Is there evidence that activities (economic development, physical repair, community building etc), being implemented as part of the agreed delivery plan are addressing identified needs (e.g. is access to services improving and peoples' knowledge of how to access services improving)? • Are these activities building on and developing resources and community structures within a priority neighbourhood that can be used to address the identified needs?	• Needs are being addressed within priority neighbourhoods through the use of activities (economic development, physical repair, community building etc) that make optimal use of resources and community structures within neighbourhood to address identified needs and allow higher order outcomes to be achieved.
Immediate Outcomes Developing Positive Partnerships Council, strategic partners, and community are committed to the delivery plan and each play an agreed role in its impelmentation.	• Have appropriate agreements, structures or processes been put in place to allow council, strategic partners and community to effectively participate in, influence, and provide input throughout the life of the renewal process?	• A culture of partnership between strategic partners (agencies, NGOs etc), council and the affected local community (businesses, residents, voluntary organisations etc) has been developed and implemented for a particular priority neighbourhood that allows the effective implement of the delivery plan and allows higher order outcomes to be achieved. • That within this partnership council plays a driving role at the outset of the development of the delivery plan and were appropriate devolves delivery responsibility of plan to strategic partner organisations and/or local community as they develop capacity.
Outputs/Activities A program of renewal is developed and implemented for priority established neighbourhoods that contributes to the sense of community identity and cohesiveness.	• Has a delivery plan been created for each priority neighbourhood that addresses identified needs, builds on existing community strengths, has an agreed evaluation framework and exit strategy, and is appropriately resourced.	• A delivery plan is developed and implemented for each priority neighbourhood that utilizes an approach that builds on strengths within the local community that were identified through consultation with that community (e.g. a respected local newsletters can be used to relay information about the plans progress, existing community groups can form key roles in the process, local residents who play key roles within specific neighbourhoods can become 'champions' for the plan). • That each delivery plan clearly identifies those needs from the 10 selection criteria within a neighbourhood that it is essential to address/those that are desirable to address. • The delivery plans are informed by a project specific evaluation framework that provides ongoing assessment of: capacity of communities, council and strategic partners to support delivery of each plan; changing needs and how priority needs are being addressed. • Exit strategies are developed and implemented for each project so that neighbourhoods can be transitioned out of the program as soon as 'essential' needs are addressed.works are determined in advance for each project.
Needs The priority focus of this program is to target and strengthen particular established neighbourhoods within the Penrith LGA that face disadvantage/inequality due to a combination of prioritised factors.	• What established neighbourhoods are priorities for the program? • What are the needs that the program needs to address within those neighbourhoods?	• Use agreed indicators to select priority neighbourhoods The selection criteria developed to assist in decision making for further program areas in order of priority were: • Poor access to key services and resources. • SEIFA data. • Crime and personal safety issues. • Limited local training opportunities to support further employment opportunities. • Poorer health indicators. • Limited local employment and enterprise opportunities. • Poor physical environment and public domain. • Lower levels of car ownership and poor access to public transport. • Indicators of social capital. • Negative perceptions of the area — from both internal and external sources.