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# **THE GENESIS OF AN INNOVATIVE PROGRAMME**

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## **CENTRE FOR AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS AND MANAGEMENT (CACOM)**

Community organisations are the product of group or community initiatives. They are formed to provide services to their members or to a wider public. Community organisations are particularly active in providing community services, health, housing, culture and recreation, education and training, finance, religion and in the organised representation of interests.

Community organisations are not run to make a profit for owners or shareholders and are not under the formal control of government. As a class they differ in important ways from both for-profit and government organisations. They differ in the ways they are governed, in the variety of their sources of income and in their frequent reliance on volunteers.

It is the mission of the Centre for Australian Community Organisations and Management (CACOM) to strengthen the Australian community sector and its management through research, management training and publication.

Among CACOM's objectives are:

- . to promote a better understanding of the Australian community sector by undertaking and publicising basic research on its size, its resources, its management practices, its history and its relations with government and other sectors of the economy; and,
- . to provide an information resource by collecting and disseminating research and other information vital to the community sector.

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Working papers are distributed to academics, researchers, community sector managers, public servants and others who are interested in better understanding the Australian community sector.

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## **Introduction**

Although the higher education sector is charged with preparing the most highly educated segments of our workforce, it hardly touches the community sector. Yet the community sector contains many organisations and tens of thousands of people who provide services enjoyed by millions of Australians.

The term community sector is most commonly applied to those community or private not-for-profit organisations which provide health, welfare services and closely related services such as child care, housing and training.

Although the community sector is only a part of the wider set of community or nonprofit organisations, it is a vitally important part, nonetheless. The community sector contains at least 12,000 organisations which employ people. Many other community sector organisations rely entirely on volunteers. Over the past two decades, governments have come to rely increasingly on the community sector to provide the services needed by increasing numbers of older people, people with disabilities and working parents with young children. In 1989/90, government grants to the community sector amounted to \$2 billion. Private donations added another \$1 billion in support.

Community organisations in general, and community sector organisations in particular differ from for-profit organisations and from government agencies in several important respects. Their governance is invariably more complex and many smaller community organisations rely on volunteers for much of their management. Their sources of finance are far more varied, including donations, grants, dues, fees and interest income. Most rely to varying degrees on volunteers to perform important tasks.

Yet despite its size, importance and its distinctiveness, the community sector is largely ignored by higher education. Many of the professionals working in the sector obtain their qualifications via tertiary level study, but little of that preparation prepares them for the unique mixture of expectations and aspirations, of organisational arrangements and practices that prevail in this sector.

There are few courses provided for the non professional workforce, even by the TAFE sector (although in one or two states, such as Victoria, this is slowly beginning to change). As a consequence, the majority of the sector's workforce is unskilled.

The reason for this indifference is not hard to discover. Higher education in Australia was established by colonial governments to educate a colonial elite. Despite a massive expansion, especially since the 1970s, it has not entirely shaken off its origins. Higher education authorities generally are most sensitive to the views of the most powerful groups in society: to the views of the established professions, and commerce. They must be, as their funding is provided almost entirely by governments and governments are themselves deeply sensitive to the views of those established interests. By contrast, the bulk of the community sector exists to help the poor and disadvantaged; its organisations are always under-resourced and its workers are mostly marginal. It has little influence with higher education authorities.

The following is an account of the one attempt to develop programmes in higher education appropriate to the community sector. It is provided as a record of activity in two sectors which have rarely been brought into contact. It is also provided in the hope that it may encourage others in the higher education sector to learn from our experiences and go further in developing links between higher education and the community sector. Recent moves to encourage the spread of competency based training across the work force will make any such developments timely. As a consequence of changes already occurring in higher education, Kuring-gai College which is the setting for this story, is now part of the University of Technology, Sydney. The course, whose development is chronicled here is still taught, but plans are being developed to have NSW TAFE incorporate a large part of it into an advanced certificate programme whilst the University develops a degree course which will articulate with that and other TAFE programmes taken by community sector workers.

The story proceeds through four stages. In the first, a vague aspiration on the part of senior management at Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education to develop courses in "community studies" was given a precise meaning in a number of course proposals and permission was sought from state government higher education authorities to move in a limited way. In the second stage, the general outline in the first stage is given

specific form in the one modest course development permitted by state government authorities; in the third phase, with support for development work unavailable within higher education, assistance was obtained, with difficulty from the Commonwealth Department of Community Services. This enabled the development of curricula for training programs which also provided the basis of teaching materials for the accredited course. In the fourth stage, the course was introduced and gradually modified in the light of experience and to ensure viability in the face of further erosion of funds.

### **Defining Community Studies**

Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education was established in 1974 . It was based on Balmain Teachers' College, which had recently moved to a new site in Lindfield on Sydney's north shore, 10 km north of the Harbour. The Teachers' College became a School of Teacher Education whilst new Schools of Financial and Administrative Studies and Library and Information Studies were begun in 1975 and 1976 respectively. The College of Law, which provided six months practical training to solicitors after graduation was added as a fourth school in 1976. Kuring-gai College grew rapidly in the late 1970s from a little over 1300 equivalent full time students (EFTS) in 1975 to almost 2000 EFTS in 1979.

By the mid 1970s, Colleges and Universities were exclusively funded by the Commonwealth Government, but Colleges received their funds via the state governments; in NSW from the Higher Education Board (HEB). The HEB was closely involved in the development of courses within the rapidly expanding college sector, largely by way of a three stage process of course approval. These stages involved an initial statement of intention (Stage 1), followed by a more detailed statement of need and demand for such a course (Stage 2), and finally a detailed curriculum (Stage 3). Stage 3 proposals were always reviewed by an external committee, appointed by the HEB from lists provided by the College proposing the course. Sometimes stages 2 and 3 were telescoped. From 1978, the HEB began collating all proposals into annual course development plans, indicating to all Colleges the state of development in the sector. This effectively introduced a prior stage into the course approval process. In their annual submissions to the HEB for inclusion in the course development plan, Colleges often indicated areas that they hoped to develop and the HEB would often include these before the Stage 1 proposal had been submitted.

In the mid 1970's approval meant extra funding and from the College sector proposals were submitted to the HEB with gusto. Frequently the HEB itself would request Colleges to develop courses in particular areas which its members or officials concluded were of need. By the end of the 1970's, as cuts in Commonwealth higher education expenditure began to bite, HEB approval became harder to obtain and was often qualified with the proviso, that funds would have to be obtained from within existing College resources; that is, by reducing student numbers (and staffing) in some existing areas. The general expectation was that the areas to be cut would mainly be in the teacher education area, as a reduced rate of growth in pupil numbers and far slower turn-over of teachers had all but eliminated employment opportunities in teaching. In response, Colleges began to look more closely at proposals before putting them forward.

At Kuring-gai College, Stage 1 proposals were initiated by Schools (which would be responsible for the direct oversight of any courses once they began operating), approved by the Academic Board and College Council and then submitted to the HEB for approval. If approval was forthcoming for a Stage 1 proposal, the procedure would be repeated for Stage 2 and again for Stage 3. By 1979, the Principals Advisory Committee (PAC) came to be more closely involved. Soon to be renamed the Resource Management Committee to indicate its primary focus and consisting of the Principal, the College Secretary and Heads of all Schools, the PAC came to scrutinize Stage 1 proposals emerging from Schools for their resource implications. The PAC also controlled the budgetary process and by the late 1970's was trying to redirect resources from the School of Teacher Education to other Schools to enable limited growth in areas of high student demand or areas identified for development. The area of recreation studies and community studies was the main area targeted for development.

For several years, the College had canvassed possibility of establishing a fifth School in the area of community studies. In June 1976, the Academic Board's Committee on Academic Policy, in a report which became a blueprint for College development, discussed the formation of a "fifth basic component" to the College's profile. It described this component "Community Welfare" and included in it courses in such fields as recreation, social work, counselling and community studies. It recommended a small committee be formed to look more closely at the viability of courses in these areas but this recommendation was not acted on.

Also during 1976, the HEB suggested to the College that it might like to develop proposals for courses in recreation and social work. The HEB suggestion was passed to the College's School of Financial and Administrative Studies for response. That response was to propose courses in Social Administration instead of Social Work, and, later, a course in Recreation Administration. Finally, an Associate Diploma in Recreation was proposed. All these courses were approved. As well, during 1976, the College approached the HEB proposing a undergraduate degree program in social administration. In its approach to the HEB, the College spoke of it's desire to develop a School of Community Welfare or Community Health and Welfare. The HEB's response was non-committal.

The proposal for a new School remained in abeyance until early 1979, when in its Course Development Plan for that year, the College proposed a number of courses grouped under a School of Recreation and Community studies.

In the second semester of 1979, the Associate Diploma in Recreation program enrolled its first students. Belatedly, the Academic Board established a Board of Studies in Recreation and Community Studies to oversee the program. This was seen as a preparatory step to establishing a full School in that area. In addition to overseeing the existing of Associate Diploma program, the new Board was given responsibly for developing the other course proposals in the area of Recreation and Community studies. The position of chair was offered to Dr Mark Lyons, a senior lecturer in politics who had been particularly active in establishing the Colleges Social Administration program. Included in the membership of the Board of Studies were the chairs of committees which had been established within other Schools to develop courses in areas nominated in the College's Course Development Plan as falling within the field of Recreation and Community Studies. Most of these came from the School of Teacher Education.

The Academic Board's adoption of the term community studies to tie together a range of course proposals was not unusual. In the same year, Canberra College of Advanced Education had grouped proposals for graduate diplomas in multicultural studies and community education under a generic community studies heading. The HEB's 1979 Course Development Plan revealed that several other Colleges in NSW were proposing community studies or similarly titled courses (Community Recreation, Community Service



Studies); by 1980 more Colleges had indicated similar intentions and the HEB decided to group those proposals with others for Liberal Studies, and place developments on hold pending an inquiry.

With assistance from the Principal's contingency fund, Kaye Schofield (now a senior manager in TAFE) was hired to work as a researcher with a small group of staff drawn from all Schools within the College, to be known as the Community Studies Research Committee.

The Committee first met late in November 1979 and gave itself five months to complete its work. This it saw broadly as determining whether community studies could be a field of study with an appropriate disciplinary component; identifying areas of employment and/or occupational practice that had community studies as their major focus and to sketch out the components of appropriate curricula for these.

The Committee quickly rejected the body of academic literature which went under the heading of "community studies", largely because of the ambiguity with which the term "community" was used within it. The great ambiguity of the term "community" in popular as well as academic discourse loomed as a major problem if "community" was to be an object of study or an organizing principal or an academic program. The solution to the problem was found in some recent writings on the topic of community by the British social philosopher, Raymond Plant. Plant argued that "community" was one of a particular class of words that were not used solely in a descriptive way, referring to an object, but in a way which combined descriptions with evaluation. This recognition led the Committee to analyse the variety of ways in which the word community was used in contemporary Australia. From this analysis several points emerged. "Community" was being applied to a wide range of organisations, positions and activities, and was being used in other ways as well. In most cases such applications seem to express both a criticism of existing patterns of social relations, particularly those associated with professional practice and bureaucratic forms of organisation, and an aspiration that they could be improved. The relevant weight of aspiration and critique ranged from usage to usage. As well, this extensive use of "community" was a relatively recent development.

What emerged from this analysis was a recognition that over the past decade increasing numbers of people had come to be engaged in endeavors that in one way or another took an idea of community as their inspiration.

People in, or wishing to enter, these endeavors were not currently being directly provided with tertiary education programs. At best, some professional programs (eg social work) provided one or two subject units in community development.

Members of the Committee pooled their knowledge of community endeavors, providing an extensive list of persons who were engaged in a variety of such endeavors or who might be thought of as experts in aspects of such endeavors. A roughly representative sample was contacted and interviewed. Those interviewed agreed with the Committee's analysis and provided it with considerable information about practices and aspirations in different types of community endeavors. Interviews confirmed that while there was a general interest in educational programs by those engaged in community endeavors, such programs would have to be provided in ways different to those which generally prevailed. The conventional organisation of higher education was itself frequently the object of criticism by many of those engaged in community endeavors. They described it as a remote, inaccessible, authoritarian and giving insufficient recognition to knowledge and skills acquired through practice.

In its deliberations, the Community Studies Research Committee came to conclude that:

- . there were many Australians engaged in what could be called community endeavours and that many of these endeavours were of considerable importance;
- . the higher education system which prepared people for employment had not recognised this;
- . and as consequence, community studies could and should be constituted as a broad field of study with appropriate specialisations, reflecting the different client groups (e.g. people with disabilities or from non-English speaking backgrounds) or forms of technical practice (e.g. health care, recreation) for which community endeavours had developed.

Reflecting pressure from within the College, the Committee agreed that the proposals for courses in Health Education, Recreation and Sports Studies, with modification, could be incorporated within the Community

Studies framework it had developed. Its consultations had persuaded it that the most pressing needs were for the post-graduate level programs for social researchers working within community settings and for teachers interested in developing links between schools and their local communities. Recognition was also given to the educational needs of adults with no post-secondary qualifications occupying management positions in community organisations such as neighborhood centres. It believed that many of these would welcome the opportunity to obtain formal training, but only if was offered in ways accessible to them and gave due recognition to the considerable experience many of them had already obtained.

The outcome of the Community Studies Research Committee's work was a report of some ninety pages defining the field of community studies and making recommendations about specialisations which might appropriately be developed by the College. The report was approved by the Academic Board and passed to the HEB along with Stage 1 proposals for courses in areas deemed to be of high priority or which were a point where considerable work had already been done by groups within the College. These included graduate courses in Social Research and Community/School Relations and degree programs in Health Studies, Recreation and Sport Studies. A proposal for an associate diploma level course in community organisations, designed for those involved in the management of community organisations was prepared and submitted a year later.

Further action was slow in coming. Despite a favourable response to the Community Studies Research Committee's report by Dr. Peter Martin, a full-time member of the HEB, who was responsible for academic course development, the HEB decided to establish a Working Party to review the diverse range of proposals it had received from various Colleges in that and related areas. The review was not given a high priority and progressed slowly. Late in 1981, a seminar on the topic of community studies was organised at the College by a member of the HEB and College staff were invited to outline their proposal. At that meeting, it became clear that the Kuring-gai approach would not be easily grasped by those who had fixed views that community was synonymous with locality or by those who wanted a tight, descriptive definition of the term.

Finally, at the end of August, 1982, the HEB decided to permit some initial development at the associate diploma or sub-professional level.

It invited the College to prepare a Stage 2/3 proposal for an Associate Diploma in Community Organisations. It indicated that it viewed Kuring-gai College as one of two lead Colleges in the field of community studies and that its experience would be taken as a guide for other Colleges. Thus began second stage of development.

### **Developing an Associate Diploma in Community Organisations**

By the time of the HEB's approval for an initial course in the community studies field had been received, Kuring-gai College's capacity to mount such a programme had diminished. Dr. Lyons, still the head of the Recreation and Community Studies program, estimated that it would be at least three years before sufficient resources could be obtained to commence the program. After some hesitation, he and some other staff who had been associated with the original proposal decided to press ahead with the development process, though at a slow pace. They hoped that an opportunity to mount the program might emerge and that they should be ready for it if it did. But against that hope they had to balance the realization that those in the community sector whose help they would need to develop the curricula, would not easily understand the resource constraints and the long time that would elapse between development work on the course and enrolling students.

The College responded to the HEB's request for need and demand data in early 1983. The HEB had requested full Stage 3 documentation by January 1983 if the College wished to start the program in 1984. The College replied that it hoped to commence in 1985 and would submit a Stage 3 proposal by December 1983. Even that estimate proved to be optimistic by at least a year as difficulties in finding resources to develop and then run the course pushed back its eventual start up date.

Late in 1983, Dr. Lyons reconvened a meeting of those members of the original Community Studies Research Committee who were still available. Several had by then left the College, or lost interest in the project, but a core of interested staff remained. Several had extended their knowledge of the field. Dr. Lyons had examined at relationships between governments and voluntary organisations in Great Britain and the United States during Professional Experience Program leave during the first half of 1981; another member had completed a Masters degree in Community Development at Harvard; a third, Dr. Jenny Noesjirwan (now Jenny Onyx), had left the

College and worked as a consultant in the community sector. One of her projects had been the evaluation of the West Sydney Area Assistance Scheme (WSAAS), a state government program that encouraged the growth of community organisations in Sydney's western suburbs. Dr Noesjirwan attended the first meeting of the reconvened committee. At the reconvened Committee's first two meetings, in October 1983, its members were able to draw on experience with community organisations and educational curricula development acquired over the previous three years to outline proposals that subsequently formed the basis of the Associate Diploma Programme.

They believed they faced two major difficulties. The first was a lack of resources. With Commonwealth Government expenditure restraints, the HEB would not earmark resources for a new program. If the course was to be mounted it would have to be with the small additional resources that the College was able to make available to the Recreation and Community Studies Programme, resources obtained by the slow attrition of teacher education staff and programs and by small increases in funding received via the HEB from Canberra. Dr. Lyons, Head of the Recreation and Community Studies Programme believed that for the next few years the bulk of the extra resources obtained by the Programme needed to go to the recreation and leisure studies area. He considered that any new program area needed a minimum number of specialist staff if it was to be viable, both to provide sufficient diversity of subject units and to enable further academic development of specialist staff via interaction with others in their fields. The recreation/leisure studies area already had one course in operation and two others due to start. It had to be given priority. The development of new course proposals required up to a year of academic time free of other duties, a luxury no longer available within the college sector. This lack of resources was to spur the Committee to think harder than they might otherwise about alternative curricula.

The other difficulty was the recognition that a conventional course would not be acceptable to most of those for whom the course was to be designed. Conventionally, an associate diploma course ran for two years full-time (requiring 12-18 hours per week in class time for two fourteen week semesters), or four years part-time (6-9 hours per week). This was one year shorter than a degree course and whilst subjects in an associate diploma course did not have to be of the same degree of difficulty as those required by degree, in practice many shared subject units with degree courses. In that way, certain economies of scale could be

obtained. Conventionally students attended College and made use of resources at the College, such as library, computers and the like. College regulations, enrolment procedures and the like were all based on this assumption. Further, although several Kuring-gai College courses enrolled older (or mature aged) students, the basic assumption was that higher education was undertaken within a year or two of completing secondary education. The members of the reconvened Research Committee believe that all of these assumptions would have to be tested and modified in some way.

The first meeting of the reconvened Committee reviewed the difficulties they faced and gave serious thought to the option of abandoning the project. Several canvassed the possibility that the TAFE sector was a better location for the program and two raised the point that any growth of credentials in the community sector would only attract men into it thus disadvantaging those women who were already in responsible positions but possessed no formal credentials. It was agreed that the project should be pursued at least until the views of those in the field were thoroughly canvassed.

For the rest of that and a subsequent meeting, a number of features of a possible associate diploma were sketched out for further exploration with people working in the field. Students for whom the course was designed were to be adults, working in management positions in community organisations (as co-ordinators, administrators or perhaps on boards of management). They would have had no post-secondary education and may not have completed High School. A majority of them would be women. A rough outline of a curriculum was agreed. It mixed practical administrative skills and some theoretical analysis of the community sector with opportunities for personal development and the pursuit of knowledge and skills in specialist areas. The last was in recognition that all students would be working with particular client groups (eg, with children, with migrant groups, with people with disabilities etc) or in specialised areas of practice (e.g. community development, community information, community arts), and as well as formal management skills, might wish to acquire more specialised knowledge appropriate to those areas.

A two stage course was tentatively adopted as the most sensible design. In the first stage, knowledge and skills generally agreed to be required by those who wished to effectively manage community organisations would be

conveyed to all students whilst a second stage would allow students to range widely in their study, to do project work and/or to gain recognition for their experience or for previous study (such as short courses or subjects studied at TAFE). These proposals were systematized and Dr. Noesjirwan employed as a consultant to visit a wide range of community organisations and canvass the views of people working in the field.

It was agreed that Dr. Noesjirwan would proceed by arranging small group meetings and seeking the views of those present about the educational needs of people working in management positions in community organisations. Only after the unprompted views of discussants had been elicited and explored, would the assumptions of the College staff be presented to obtain further response. After each meeting, a report of the meeting was circulated to those present to ensure it accurately reflected their views and to obtain any further thoughts. Meetings were held in ten centres, mostly in the west of Sydney, but including one in the inner city and one on the northern beaches. To set up most of these meetings, Dr. Noesjirwan relied on contacts made during her consultancy work. Groups were chosen partly because of the geographic location and partly to ensure a wide coverage of specialist groups such as community arts, neighbourhood centres and youth refugees. A meeting was also held with staff teaching in the Graduate Diploma in Social Communication at Hawkesbury College of Advanced Education, based at Richmond on the north western outskirts of Sydney. Although aimed at graduates, the Hawkesbury program had developed a number of innovative approaches and was spoken of highly by several in the community sector.

Dr. Noesjirwan conducted her interviews during November 1983 and submitted a complete report of her findings in early December. Members of the Community Studies Research Committee had met on several occasions during November and December to further develop their thinking. By and large, the interviews confirmed their original assumptions about course structure, although those in the field place greater emphasis upon practical skills than the College staff, who felt that a component which expanded students knowledge and understanding of the field of community studies was also necessary. The interviews also confirmed that there was a good deal of suspicion within the community sector of higher education institutions and that a course organised along conventional lines would not be popular. The lack of time available to prospective students was emphasized. Many already balanced work (often part-time) with family

responsibilities and did not possess a car. Classes would have to be organised at times and places convenient to them. Interviews also revealed that doubts about needs for the course originally voiced on the Research Committee were not well founded. Interviewees were keen to obtain any sort of management training and many express doubts about TAFE's ability to provide it, doubts based on TAFE's notoriously slow response to proposals for new courses.

By December 1983, the Committee had sketched out the purpose and shape of the proposed course. The broad aim of the proposed Associate Diploma in Community Organisations would be to provide people working in mostly management positions in community organisations with knowledge and skills which would enable them to work more effectively and efficiently at the task they currently perform and to extend their ability to develop and manage other community projects or endeavors. A set of twenty six more specific objectives for the course were then developed (Appendix A).

The structure for the proposed course contained a number of innovations. It would consist of two phases.

The first phase would contain fourteen subject units covering the full range of skills identified in discussions amongst the committee and by workers in the field as being required by community sector managers. These included a mixture of units; some concentrated on providing skills while other sought to extend students's understanding of their practice and the context in which community organisations work. The practical subjects included the obtaining of funds, the management of money, legal and other matters associated with the setting up of community organisation, the management of staff, running meetings, undertaking small research projects and submission writing. Other subjects dealt with social inequalities, government processes and community development practices (A full list of subjects is in Appendix B).

Teaching material for these fourteen units would be prepared in detail by people experienced in running community organisations. Each person would be particularly knowledgeable about the specific skills to be covered in a unit. Preparation would include collecting readings, developing case studies on "typical problems" to be worked through by students, and devising ways for testing a students mastery of material covered in the unit. It was envisaged that there would be no lectures or examinations;



unit. It was envisaged that there would be no lectures or examinations; content material would be developed through a workshop/discussion format that explicitly drew on the experience and practical knowledge of participating students. The pre-packaging would mean that subject units could be taught by a person with knowledge of running community organisations and some teaching experience, but without detailed knowledge of every particular subject. In this way, the same College staff member, called a tutor or facilitator, could work with the same group of students to cover the full range of subjects in phase one. This particular approach was inspired by what the Research Committee understood to be the practice in tutorials developed by the new Medical School at Newcastle University, where staff expert in different disciplines would prepare material for tutorial classes but a particular class would work with the same tutor through the full range of disciplines.

The approach helped solve two important problems. In particular, it meant that groups of students could meet at locations convenient to their place of work or residence and not be required to attend classes at Kuring-gai College (although it was recognised that some groups may choose it as the most convenient location). The College would send its resources to the students, rather than require students to come to it. As it would be difficult to expect College staff with significant conventional teaching responsibilities to visit different locations around the city, it was necessary to ensure that specialist staff would be engaged to work full-time in the Associate Diploma programme. This had two further advantages. It meant that students could meet regularly as a group and develop close links with their tutor/facilitator. It meant that students need not be confined to the College's fourteen week semester system. Finally, it meant that student groups could work their way through subjects one at a time, rather than tackling three at once as in the conventional part-time course. That in turn meant that one meeting time per week (of four hours) could be arranged for each group, again facilitating student access and staff time-tabling.

Although packaged differently, the course had to be equivalent to a conventionally designed and taught associate diploma program. Because materials were pre-packaged, students could be expected to read and acquire information outside the classroom setting thus eliminating the need for formal lectures. As well, because experience working in community organisations was a pre-requisite for entry into the course, the

need for practical experience or field work, which comprised a significant part of conventional associate diploma programs aimed at school leavers, was eliminated. In this way, subject units could be designed on the assumption that eight four hour meetings would enable the same amount of material to be covered as in subjects taught in the conventional manner. A student group would meet and work their way through four to five such units per year, completing the first phase of the course in about two and half years.

To begin the course students would be required to take an introductory unit designed to equip them with skills in handling study and to develop their self confidence. To build maximum flexibility into this first phase of the course, once this introductory unit was completed, no other pre-requisites were required. That meant that once teaching packages had been prepared for the other thirteen subject units, each group of students would be free to work their way through units in which ever order they chose.

Based on a good deal of evidence about the best size of groups for the optimal facilitation of learning, it was considered that student groups should contain seven or eight students. A larger group would discourage full participation by everybody in the group. However, it was recognised that for a variety of reasons some students would drop out of the group, particularly in its early stages, so an initial intake of twelve to fourteen was aimed at. At the then prevailing rates of Commonwealth funding, mediated via the College budgetary process to the Recreation and Community Studies Programme, groups which averaged about eight during the first phase would enable the Associate Diploma program to remain financially viable.

The second phase of the course was designed to enable students to consolidate their skills and to develop their expertise in particular areas of their choosing. It aimed to do this by allowing students:

- . to work through one or more additional teaching packages offering more advanced study in topics studied in the first stage;
- . to enrol in units taught in other programs at Kuring-gai or other Colleges;

- to undertake individual or small group learning projects of their own choosing.

Under the later possibility, the Research Committee envisaged one or two students undertaking supervised research or consultancy projects within their own organisation. In doing this, they would be assisted by a College staff member or another person with appropriate qualifications and expertise appointed by the College as adjunct staff. Effectively, the staff member would work with the student as a consultant on a particular organisational/management problem their organisation might be confronting.

The second phase was to consist of nine subjects units or their equivalent and was to be more flexibly organised than the first. It assumed that students who had completed the first part of the course had obtained sufficient knowledge and confidence to be able to plan their own curriculum, with the guidance of one the lecturing staff, probably the tutor/facilitator of the group the student belonged to for the first phase of the course. It was envisaged that the student and staff member would work out a particular program for the student which would be formalised with a learning contract for each unit of study. Where this contract required them to undertake study at another tertiary institution, approval would have to be obtained from the Board of Studies in Recreation Community Studies.

The course design envisaged the possibility of students gaining recognition for prior study or extensive work experience for up to one-third of the course. Where a student wished to claim credit or "advanced standing" on the basis of work experience, it was envisaged that they would present written material prepared in the course of that work, such as reports, or would write a paper of several thousand words reflecting on that experience.

The difficulty of obtaining resources to run a new Associate Diploma course haunted the Community Studies Research Committee. The method chosen to organise the course meant that at least two staff would have to be supported full-time by the program from the start. As well as their salaries, the program would also have to carry heavy travel costs (borne by students individually in conventional courses) and costs of hiring facilities for ex-campus classes (something of a plus at Kuring-gai which was chronically short of teaching space at the time). This meant a

minimum enrolment of sixty students (or five groups). Most importantly, the costs of developing the teaching materials for the pre-packaged subjects would have to be found. Unfortunately, unlike the mid-1970's when Colleges were funded to employ staff to develop courses before teaching began, by the 1980's, only students enrolled in courses would attract Commonwealth funds. In this regard, the unusual design of the course provided a possibility as well as its major problem.

The possibility envisaged by the Research Committee turned on the additional uses to which pre-packaged subjects developed for use in phase one of the Associate Diploma course could be put. The Committee believed that such packages would constitute a invaluable resource for training within the community sector. They hoped they could convince some organisation, perhaps a government department, to fund the development of training packages which would serve as basis of subject units in phase one of the proposed course.

Early in 1984, Dr. Lyons prepared a paper embodying these various points. After further discussions within the Committee, a modified version of the paper was circulated to all those who had been consulted by Dr. Noesjirwan in November of the previous year. They were invited to one of two meetings which were arranged in late May, one at Kuring-gai College and one in Fairfield Council Chambers at Cabramatta, in Sydney's west. Those unable to attend were invited to write or phone comments and some were directly contacted. The great majority of comments were favourable. Only one or two were doubtful, suggesting that TAFE might be a better location for such a course.

Between May and September 1984, the more detailed work required of the Stage 3 proposal proceeded. Largely, this consisted of preparing detailed statements of objectives and content for each of the new subject units that would comprise the Associate Diploma. Some units were developed by College staff with experience of working in community organisations and some by external consultants working in the sector. The first section of the proposal, the characteristics and educational needs of the field and the structure of the course were taken with little change from the paper discussed in May that year. Projections of student and staff numbers were set at an initial intake of seven groups of twelve in 1986, reducing to four in 1987, and to three in subsequent years. The initial enrolment was to enable three staff to be employed initially. The expectation, spelt

out in the document, was that funds would have to be obtained to enable at least some teaching packages to be prepared in the six months before teaching began.

If funds could be obtained, it was envisaged that there would be an intensive period of six months when a number of teaching packages would be developed. This would require at least three College staff as well as the use of consultants. The large initial student involvement was proposed to enable those three staff the opportunity to transfer to the College's payroll once teaching commenced. It was thought that there would still be some development work to be undertaken during the first six to twelve months of teaching. Even during the twelve months spent developing the Stage III proposal levels of funding had been marginally reduced. It was estimated that by 1985 approximately 14.4 EFTS (or just under 29 part-time students) were needed to employ one academic staff member. If academic staff were not to teach more than their colleagues in conventional courses, they could take no more than three groups per week, and less initially, to enable them to complete the development of the teaching packages. It was estimated that the student groups would need to retain 9 or 10 members to be viable. To allow for drop outs, an initial enrolment of 12-16 was sought. All these figures were shown later to be optimistic.

The process of course development required a element of political activity as well. Many in the community sector had become enthusiastic supporters of the proposed course and were keen to write to the College Principal and to the HEB expressing hope that the proposed Associate Diploma course would be permitted to proceed. College staff associated with the proposal did not discourage them.

The Stage III proposal was submitted to the HEB in November 1984. Assessment of the proposal by a small committee of people with knowledge of the field and standing within it, including two academics, was held in March 1985. The Assessment Committee approved the course subject to clarification of its admission requirements. The Committee also suggested two modifications, both of which would have pushed the course back towards a more traditional format. It thought the proposal to draw the membership of each student group from a limited locality restrictive and queried permitting each group to determine the order that they would work through the packages in Phase I of the course. In reply, College staff noted that despite their regional location, classes would still draw

students from a wide area and that this mode of operating would be evaluated in the first year or two of the program. They noted that the availability of only a limited number of teaching packages would force the first cohort of students to work through the subjects in set order.

The HEB was itself experiencing resource constraints and its letter indicating the views of the Assessment Committee was not received by the College until October 1985. The Board had approved the course conditional upon the formal statement of admission requirements, observing that in accord with the expectations of the Australian Commission of Awards on Advanced Education, entry to such a course would normally be restricted to people with full secondary qualifications. They noted, however that the Commission allowed exceptions for mature age students. The College replied that students would be expected to have completed the HSC or would be admitted if their work experience indicated a capacity to handle an associate diploma level program. Almost all intake students were expected to be mature age.

These formalities took several months, but were no more than that, and the College could have commenced the course in early 1986. As it was, resource constraints and the timing and quantum of the outside funding needed to kick-start the program dictated a commencement in July 1986.

#### **Developing Training Packages for Managing Community Organisations**

The final six months of the course approval process in 1984/85 overlapped with negotiations to obtain funds to enable the development of teaching packages for subject units which comprised the first section of the proposed course. If this hunt had not been successful, the course could not have been taught. By the time of the Stage 3 assessment, it seemed likely that funds would be forthcoming, and they finally began to flow in July that year.

The use of funds from outside the higher education sector to develop course materials for use within that sector was unique and was only possible because the teaching packages could be used in two ways. Together they could be used for teaching in an approved course, but on their own they could be used for specific training purposes. That was the nub of the argument used to obtain the outside funding, though in the course of the negotiations, and even in the course of preparing the

training packages, Kuring-gai staff had to modify some of their assumptions. These modifications improved the training packages, and, on balance, made them more effective when they were used as the basis for teaching in the Associate Diploma.

The source of funds was the Subsidies Division of the Commonwealth Department of Social Security, which in December 1984 became part of a new Department of Community Services.

After some preliminary discussions with a senior officer in the Department who was an old friend, Dr. Lyons wrote formally to the head of the Subsidies Division in November 1984. He noted that the Division heavily relied on non-government organisations to deliver services and that the management of those organisations was often not as effective as it might be. He attached a copy of the Stage 3 proposal and commented that it was the first Australian course aimed at improving management skills in the community sector. Once established, its staff and its teaching packages would be widely drawn on by community organisations and by government departments. However, approximately \$85,000 was needed in advance for the initial development of twelve of the teaching packages. If the Department was able to fund this development phase, the College would within another twelve months be able to provide them eighteen fully developed and trailed teaching packages and make them available at cost to interested organisations.

The Department, in its reply expressed interest and a meeting was organised for February 1985. At that meeting, the Commonwealth officials, now belonging to the new Department of Community Services, made it clear that they could not appear to be providing financial support for course development work which was properly the responsibility of the higher education sector. They would however be interested in purchasing training packages. At that meeting, a possible six packages were mentioned. The department was particularly interested in those skills that may enhance efficient and accountable service. It was less than interested in the development of other skills that had been identified by community organisations themselves, such as lobbying, and marketing. However, later, after one of the officials had listed the skills that they wanted to see covered, it became clear that rather more packages would be needed, covering many of the areas envisaged in the College's course proposal. Finally, after further lengthy discussion about content, methods of

presentation, evaluation and what would happen if the Associate Diploma course did not go ahead, a contract was signed in June 1985 whereby the Department would pay the College \$85,000 over the next twelve months to prepare thirteen training packages (Appendix C).

Funds were to come from the Management Support Fund, created within the new Department mainly for the purpose of bailing out government subsidised organisations which ran into trouble. It was administered by the Corporate Services Division. This was an appropriate source, as the packages were designed to be available to any of the wide range of organisations subsidised by the different client focussed divisions of the Department (Children's Services, Disability Services, Aged Care etc.) Many of these client focused divisions already funded some peak bodies within their sectors to provide some management training assistance, but invariably with a narrower perspective than envisaged by the Kuring-gai proposal. Kuring-gai College then employed three staff to work on the Project. One was Dr. Noesjirwan; the other two were recruited directly from management positions in community organisations to "job-share" what was a second full-time position. A work schedule was developed and a number of senior people from different parts of the community sector were invited to form an Advisory Committee for the project and for the Associate Diploma course which would start in July 1986.

The work schedule envisaged the Advisory Committee being involved in the development of training packages at two points. They would see outline plans for each package and then they would see a draft of all teaching material in the package. Packages would consist basically of a trainers manual, together with separate materials prepared for users, including readings, case studies and model exercises. Most were to be prepared by Project staff, some by other College staff, and others by people with appropriate skills and experience, working under contract. By way of preparation, Project and other College staff associated with the project visited a number of organisations subsidised by the Department with which they were not familiar, such as hostels and organisations providing services for people with disabilities. It was agreed with the Department that a Steering Committee of senior departmental staff and College staff would oversight the project, generally meeting the day before the bi-monthly Advisory Committee meetings.



Because staff could not be sought until a contract had been signed, the starting date for the project was put back from July until September 1985. It was to run for one year. During that hiatus, staff changes within the Department of Community Services replaced those staff that the College had been negotiating with by three others. Two were recent recruits to the Department with some experience in industry training. They indicated that they would have preferred the project had not been funded until a good deal more work had been done by the Department to survey the training needs of organisations that the Department subsidised and that they preferred stand-alone or self teaching packages, preferably in a video format. Informally they indicated that in their view the project was grossly under funded and therefore likely to produce a less than optimal product. However, since contracts had been signed, they would try and shape the project to meet their priorities. Essentially, these were some six of the thirteen packages dealing with financial, legal and personnel matters. They indicated that the development of these packages should be given priority. Later they revealed that they wanted the packages trailed as well and modified if necessary before completion. Trailing had been an essential component of the College's original proposal, but had been removed from the contract at the insistence of original Departmental negotiators. College staff were happy to see it included but pointed out that it had not been contracted for and that more funds would be required. After some resistance, the Department made available an additional \$10,000.

Changes in the Department's agenda was not the only difficulty which the project experienced. After six months, tensions which had been developing within the project team led to the resignation of one of the part-time staff. In part the tensions resulted from personality differences, but underlying them were important differences in perception. The person resigning had come to feel that working in a higher education institution located in one of Sydney's wealthier areas isolated her from the community sector. She and another College staff member argued that the Project was remote from the concerns of the sector. They had both worked in community organisations in the inner city, and their criticisms were not shared by other project staff or by Advisory Committee members who had worked in or with groups in other parts of Sydney. Nonetheless the resignation led to a review of the Project and to a decision not to fill the vacant position but to contract out as much as possible of the remaining package development work to people working in or with community organisations.

The remaining project staff were to spend more time working co-operatively with contract staff with a view to combining recent community sector experience and educational practice in the most effective way possible.

Two further issues which shaped the development of the packages and their final use were raised by Departmental officers in initial discussions with College staff. The Department initially argued that a training course built around Kuring-gai's proposed packages needed to be far shorter than the 60-70 hours (in and out of class) envisaged in the Associate Diploma Stage III document. Kuring-gai staff conceded, reducing the work required by each package initially to 40 hours and then after pressure from the Department and from the Project's Advisory Committee to 20-30 hours.

The second point was a more contentious one which College staff were not prepared to concede. Departmental staff wanted the packages to "stand alone", that is, to be available in a self-instruction format. In reply, College staff noted that there were already a variety of short booklets on aspects of the management of community organisations, and whilst these were of some value, their use was limited. They pointed to overseas and local research that showed that learning was far more effective when conducted in small groups with a trainer or facilitator. Although this mode of learning was more expensive (for staff, for their organisation and for the government which subsidised them), it was a good deal more effective and that effectiveness made the additional expense worthwhile. The argument did not convince the Department, but they did not force their "stand alone" requirement and the argument soon became entangled in a wider debate about what was to be done to the packages when they were completed and about government support for community sector training generally.

The question of how the packages might be made available for use had occupied a lot of the initial negotiations in the first half of 1985. Departmental staff had agreed in principle that they would fund the College to arrange for the various packages to be trailed with a number of organisations during 1986/87. This would take place only after the packages had been completed as per the initial contract. College staff had prepared a draft proposal and a budget to this effect. The Departmental staff who replaced them on the Steering Committee in the second half of 1986 were not enamored of the proposal, believing that government subsidies for training would prove far too costly. The view of

College staff was supported by the Project's Advisory Committee. Some of its members tried to use it as an opportunity to prompt the Department to take what they believed were its responsibilities for community sector training more seriously.

Late in 1986 when almost all the packages had been prepared, the Department appointed a junior officer for a short period to look at how the packages might be utilised. In the end, the Department did little. It announced that the packages were available and some staff in their state and territory offices drew them to the attention of community organisations. Initially, the Department claimed full ownership of the packages and assumed responsibility for their distribution. Later they conceded the right of the College to distribute the packages at cost. However the issue of ownership was never fully resolved.

The College itself was more successful in publicising the training packages' availability. A full set of packages was presented to the NSW Council of Social Service and the Western Sydney Community Forum. College staff were contracted by several community organisations and by one NSW government department to run training courses using the packages or to advise trainers from other organisations in their use. Their existence was publicised by newsletters and word of mouth. By the end of 1986 community organisations from around Australia, and a number of TAFE Colleges and other adult education bodies from all states and territories had sought copies of various packages. The packages continued to be sought without any further marketing attempt by the College. By the end of 1990 over 600 packages had been sold at cost.

Original hopes that contact might be retained with some of the users of the packages with a view to modifying them in the light of experience proved optimistic. An attempt to develop a loose network of community management trainers also proved too difficult. One reason for this was that no one had sufficient time to devote to that task. By mid-1986 the two College staff employed in the community organisations project were engaged in teaching the first intake of the Associate Diploma program.

#### **The Associate Diploma's Early Years**

Dr. Noesjirwan was appointed as full-time course co-ordinator and Janie Pocklington was appointed as a second full-time staff member.

The first students were enrolled in mid 1986. Of some 76 initial enquiries, offers were made to 65 applicants and 44 students enrolled in July 1986. One large group of 18 students was established in St. Marys using meeting space in a local library. Two smaller groups were established in local community centres in Narrabeen and in the inner city.

In February of the following year, two further centres were established, one at Riverwood community centre (near Bankstown) and one at The Australian Quadraplegic Association's centre in Little Bay. Both centres had taken the initiative in approaching the college to establish groups at their centre. Of some 84 applications for the 1987 intake, 62 offers were made and 29 students were subsequently enrolled in the two centres.

The course itself proved very popular with the students. The course structure and teaching methods appeared to be appropriate to the needs of the students. Within a very short time the course was having an immediate and often dramatic impact on the lives and careers of the students, on the management of their organisations, and the community sector itself. There was a continuous stream of enquiries concerning the course, and very strong support from senior community sector managers and peak bodies.

Nonetheless the course faced very serious problems during the first two years of operation; difficulties so serious that by mid 1988, the situation had deteriorated to the point where the then Head of School, Bob Robertson, signalled his intention to have no new enrollments for the following year, thus effectively killing the new program. The problems were double edged. On the one hand the relentless squeeze on higher education funding required increasingly large class sizes to support minimum staffing levels, although no additional student quota levels were permitted. On the other hand, attrition rates were higher than initially expected and these were aggravated by the unexpected imposition of student fees. It became impossible to maintain viable class sizes within the existing course structure.

Several issues combined to reduce the course's retention rate. Many students experienced difficulty in making a four year commitment to the course. Most were employed under very poor working conditions, with low salaries, long hours, (many of them unpaid) and uncertain tenure because of their employer's dependence only on short term government grants. Most students had heavy family commitments. Students were originally assured

that they could complete the course in stages, taking one unit at a time, and dropping in and out of the program as their circumstances required. However, this became more difficult to maintain as a policy as government funding cuts in the community sector led to job losses, and group sizes declined.

Fees were a special problem. When the course was first introduced, no students paid fees, and there was no suggestion that they would ever be required to. However, by the beginning of 1987, all students were required to pay a \$250 administration charge. By 1989, all students were required to pay a course fee amounting to \$900 per year, provided they had an income of more than \$23,000 per year. Both fees had an immediate and devastating effect on enrolment figures. No students were exempt from the administration charge, and only about 20% of students were exempt from the course fees, and that exemption was only temporary, as the charge would remain as a tax liability against their estate.

Students were unwilling to create a tax liability debt for themselves, particularly if they were also carrying the cost of their childrens education. A number of organisations had been willing to cover the cost of the administration charge, but were not willing to cover the cost of the course fees. For example, a group of eight Home Care branch managers were enrolled in the course under the sponsorship of their organisation. When full course fees were introduced the organisation withdrew its financial support, and all eight students reluctantly withdrew from the course, thus rendering that group unviable.

A further difficulty arose from inappropriate College administrative procedures. While some difficulties were encountered in the original 1986 mid year intake, these were largely overcome with the co-operation of the College administration staff. For administration purposes, the course was treated as a post graduate course, special correspondence was designed, and enrolment took place off campus. However, for the 1987 intake, the course was listed as an undergraduate course and required to conform to statewide University and College Admission Centre (UCAC) standard procedures. These procedures were designed for post secondary, pre-employment, on-campus, mainstream courses and as such were totally inappropriate for ADCO applicants. Particularly inappropriate was the requirement that applications for the February course be complete by October of the previous year; few community sector workers had sufficient

job security to make such an early commitment. Many applicants expressed confusion over the college correspondence. Of the 84 applicants, only 25 actually enrolled (a further four were accepted as late applicants).

In the meantime, the funding formula imposed by the Federal Government on Colleges of Advanced Education, had changed, further eroding the new student funding base. A minimum of 16-18 equivalent full time students were required to support one full time staff. The College imposed a minimum class size of fifteen. This was a far cry from the original expectation of an average nine or ten per class group.

Several steps were taken to try and remedy these problems. When fees were introduced appeals were made to the College, and through the College to the federal government for special consideration. While the College agreed to make loans available to those students experiencing difficulty, no relief was obtained for the fees themselves. The Federal government was not willing to remove the fee requirements. Neither State nor Federal governments were prepared to increase their grants to organisations to cover the new fees for training, despite expressed concern at the low level of training and management skills in the community sector generally. Nor did students qualify for support such as Austudy, as the program was necessarily a part time one.

In order to avoid the inappropriate College undergraduate administrative procedure, special admission procedure were introduced at different times during the year. Two groups were established in Western Sydney during October 1987. These were formed initially under a short course format with the intention of formalising enrolment in February 1988.

In April 1988, a similar group was formed in Parramatta, for formal enrolment in July of that year. These experiments were not successful. It proved very difficult and time consuming to institute effective marketing procedures to target specific geographic areas for specific and nonconventional starting dates. The October start attracted some 25 students, of whom only about 12 enrolled in February 1988. The Parramatta group was formed in April 1988 with some 18 students, of whom about 13 subsequently enrolled in July. While this established a group outside the conventional enrolment procedure, newly formed groups were not included in official College statistics reported to the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) in Canberra, and hence could not

be included in formal costing arrangements. This meant that, as far as the College was concerned, the course continued to be under enrolled (there were not enough numbers to justify the staffing level), while as far as the staff were concerned, a great deal of extra work was required in marketing, administration, and teaching, tasks which were not recognised in distributing staff workloads. In the meantime, groups already formed around the Metropolitan area continued to dwindle in size. Two of the original groups, Narrabeen and Inner city were amalgamated to form a combined group at Kuring-gai College. Other groups would also have to dissolve or amalgamate. One of the assumptions underlying the original course design namely that each group of students would and could remain as a group for Part 1 of the course, was no longer tenable.

The problems lead to a crisis point in mid 1988. However, following a round of internal College negotiations, a reprieve was obtained and another solution was found for 1989. This necessitated a series of compromises. Most important was the realisation that it was not possible to retain a single group in its initial form for the two and a half years required to complete Stage One of the course. If groups were to remain viable, it would be necessary to augment their numbers each year. This meant adding new students to an ongoing group. This was possible, provided that the new students first completed unit one, and provided that the combined group could then continue with other new units. While the addition of new students threatened the cohesion of the original group, this potential disadvantage was balanced by the introduction of a new range of perspectives and experience. More difficult to deal with was the disruption to the sense of continuous growth. The facilitator could no longer build on the common knowledge of previous completed units; each unit had to be treated as a self contained block.

The decision to add to existing groups made other decisions easy. It was possible to identify 5 ongoing groups around the metropolitan area; it no longer became necessary to establish new groups. Marketing and recruitment could cover the whole metropolitan area once a year. The College agreed to treat the course as a special case for enrolment purposes, and not to include it within the UCAC procedures. This meant the ADCO team were then able to set their own closing dates and direct their own correspondence. New students could formally enrol at the conventional time and be included within the college statistics.

This strategy appeared to work reasonably well. In January, 1989, some 40 students were enrolled from 65 offers. Three special Unit One classes were run at different locations. Following that unit, new students were amalgamated into one of the 5 ongoing groups for the rest of the year, ensuring the ongoing viability of those groups. The same procedure was repeated successfully in 1990 and 1991, with roughly 30 new enrollments each year.

For the 1990 intake, two special Unit One classes were held, one at Riverwood and one at Kuring-gai, bringing the numbers of both groups close to 20. The original Penrith (St. Marys) groups were dissolved as all those remaining in the original groups completed Part I. As other students completed Part 1 units they also left the Kuring-gai, Parramatta, Riverwood and Eastern Suburbs groups and were replaced by new students. The 1991 intake of 34 was handled in one large Unit One class held in the inner city. The subsequent dispersion brought the class sizes to over 20 in Riverwood and Kuring-gai and up to 17 in Parramatta. A new small city group was established. Only the Eastern Suburbs group continued to struggle with class size fluctuating around 12. That group had moved premises several times as circumstances and availability of premises changed.

Overall retention rates also improved as students accepted the imposition of fees (those who could not afford fees no longer applied) and as earlier dropouts returned to complete the course. The estimated retention rate from 1990 intake was 82 % re-enrolled in 1991.

Rate of completion of Part II of the course was variable. Many students have attracted some form of advanced standing for previous studies completed; others enrolled in other courses (either at Kuring-gai or other TAFE or University courses) and have had that study subsequently accorded advanced standing for Part II.

Others have completed special learning contracts, research projects, or reflections on major management initiatives at their workplace. One group of students initiated a learning group to explore issues of communication and counselling within the community sector; this was facilitated by a staff member but designed and run by the students themselves.



Other students attended and documented a series of short courses run by TAFE or by industry based training bodies such as ACWA (Association of Child Welfare Agencies). All outside course work was monitored and accredited according to a formula of work load hours developed by College staff. This roughly follows a basic 35 hours face to face, 100 hours total workload per unit.

All students are required to complete a final Unit, which is an individual reflection project that attempts to integrate principles (theory) and practice of community management with respect to one topic or issue area. The project report is retained by the College as resource material for use by other students.

The first graduation occurred in 1990, for those 10 students from the first two intakes who were able to complete the course in three or three and a half years, that is in less than the expected minimum time of four years. The second graduation occurred in 1991, with nine graduands, again taken from the first two intakes. It is anticipated that the next (1992) and following graduations will stabilize at between 15 and 20 per year, with graduands roughly divided between those completing in less than minimum time (three years), in expected time (four years) and in more than minimum time (usually five years).

One ongoing problem for the course arose out of the need to maintain sufficient staffing levels. The total student quota allocation was never sufficient to cover more than 2.2 staff. Yet it was apparent from the beginning that a minimum "critical mass" of three specialist staff were necessary to maintain academic and administrative integrity of the course. When Janie Pocklington left on maternity leave, she was replaced by two part-time staff taking a load of .8 each, thus providing a total of three staff members using 2.6 positions. The difference in funding was made up by the staff themselves, all of whom contributed towards earning their own salaries through consultancy research and short course training programs. This practice continued to the end of 1990 and lead to the formation of the Centre for Australian Community Organisations and Management (CACOM). While the practice of requiring academic staff to earn their own salaries in addition to carrying a normal teaching/administrative load is exploitative, it had the effect of giving the work of the team a very high profile within the industry and ensured the ongoing viability of the program through the difficult early years.

## **Discussion**

Despite the goodwill of the College, and the commitment and skills of many people over several years, the course remains marginal. This is despite its obvious success in the field as indicated by the large number of requests for information, advice and access to the course from across Sydney Metropolitan area, from throughout NSW and indeed Australia. There seem to be several underlying reasons for the course's continued marginality.

Initially at least there was an important issue of the course's credibility in the community sector itself. There was a fairly strong anti-professional ideology in some sections of the community sector. Those who shaped this ideology argued that training should be managed and provided by the sector; it should be oriented toward the organisation and not to individual accreditation; it should be concerned with hands on skills, with current issues, with the 'real world'. They believed that traditional academic departments in higher education institutions were totally inappropriate settings for such training. Such a view was largely confirmed by the existing social work and social welfare courses that were available in the early 1980's. It took a great deal of hard work, and some years to convince the sector that relevant, appropriate training could be provided within or by the tertiary sector, provided that such training was designed in consultation with the sector. The sector by and large is now convinced of the worth of the program. However, it continues to maintain that the costs of such training should not be borne by the individual worker, and should only be borne by the organisation if sufficient training funding is made available for it to do so. At present this is not the case, and a great many prospective students who wish to do the course are either unable or unwilling to bear the escalating costs themselves. This is particularly so at the relatively impoverished end of the Community sector. Those that need the course most - those with least skills and experience working under the poorest working conditions in small, struggling organisations with insecure funding - are also least able to afford it. Yet it was the needs of these workers that the course was designed to meet.

In order to meet the needs of the community sector in a genuinely collaborative way, the College was challenged to be innovative and responsive in new ways. This was not simply a matter of developing appropriate subject matter, but of rethinking course structures, teaching

methods, recruitment strategies, and administrative procedures. Existing college practices and policies had been designed to be appropriate for young, largely full time school leavers who attended College to obtain a professional qualification. While the college expressed a willingness to extend its resources to this disadvantaged group, it was reluctant to substantially modify existing established practice. Yet the established practice had the effect if not the intent of discouraging potential students from the community sector. This effect became particularly clear during the 1987 intake. Applicants were presented with a series of administrative hurdles to complete before even beginning the course. Without the specific advocacy support of course staff members, few applicants were able to successfully negotiate the entry maze. The same was true of established marketing practices which attracted those with existing advantage but did not reach the target population intended for the new course. Success for the new course depended on a fundamental rethinking of basic assumptions and the establishment of new practices, not only by the staff directly responsible for teaching the course but for the college as a whole. It is understandable that the College's culture should be resistant to such profound changes.

Further challenges are emerging as the former Colleges of Education merge into the new University structure. The new University of Technology, Sydney now incorporates the old Kuring-gai College. The demands and constraints of the new structure are likely to be profound. The "economies of scale" demanded of the new institution are unlikely to be sympathetic to the specialist administrative and academic needs of a small and "difficult" program. The new universities are seeking to transfer resources away from sub-professional (Associate Diploma) programs and into degree and post-graduate programs, but this is the beginning of a new story ...

Further understanding of those forces that keep the Associate Diploma in Community Organisations marginal must be sought in the larger political and macroeconomic context of tertiary education in Australia today. The higher education sector is as much as any other, subject to the new economic rationalism, and to economic constraints. As well, the Commonwealth government is increasingly prepared to direct resource allocation decisions which might once have been left to individual institutions. So, for example, growth in the higher education sector is sought, but preference is accorded those areas that it is believed will

stimulate economic growth, namely the business, accounting, computer, engineering and tourism fields. The government expressly encourages institutions to facilitate access to students of disadvantaged backgrounds, and provides some funds to assist, but this assistance goes only to employ people who wish to follow the conventional path of full-time study in one of the main stream professional courses. Although the community and services industry has seen significant employment growth, the education of its workforce has not attracted government encouragement. While Commonwealth departments such as Community Services and Health are concerned to improve the managerial skills of community sector organisations, this message has not been translated to Department of Education, Employment and Training which determines educational policy and funding. In the present climate of economic rationalism, resources for an innovative course aimed at the most disadvantaged labour market, which itself offers social services to the most economically disadvantaged and economically unproductive sections of our society, are simply not forthcoming.

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## APPENDIX A

### Broad Objectives of the Course

Those seeking entry to the Associate Diploma in Community Organizations course will be persons working in community organizations. They will probably be working as coordinators or have some management/administrative responsibilities. They might, to varying degrees, also be involved in service delivery or community development tasks. They will all be adults, the majority of them women. They might already have some tertiary level qualifications, including degrees. But while these qualifications may be relevant to service delivery tasks, they will have little relevance to co-ordination. They might work full- or part-time or voluntarily. The organizations in which they work provide a wide range of services, but it might be anticipated that organizations primarily concerned with children, youth, the handicapped and the aged, and with providing care, recreation, work skills and experience, information and what might loosely be called community development activities, will be particularly well represented.

The broad aim of the proposed Associate Diploma in Community Organizations is to provide these people with knowledge and skills which will enable them to work more effectively and more efficiently at tasks they currently perform and extend their ability to develop and manage other community projects or endeavours.

The proposed course will do this by providing its students with:

- (a) opportunities to reflect and build upon their experience in community organizations;
- (b) an understanding of the morphology and dynamics of community organizations and other community endeavours;
- (c) an introduction to the social, political, economic, legal and organizational environment in which community organizations operate and an ability to analyse developments within this environment;
- (d) an understanding of the dynamics of local regional political and economic systems (e.g. of local or regional authorities, of local offices of state and federal government departments, of local labour markets etc.);
- (e) a knowledge of decision processes within state and federal bureaucracies and how to influence these;
- (f) a knowledge of the characteristics of their locality;
- (g) an ability to conduct simple social research, inter alia with a view to discovering areas of need within their locality;
- (h) an understanding of the structure and dynamics of inequality in Australian society;
- (i) a knowledge of community development techniques;
- (j) a knowledge of the impact of the professions particularly the helping professions, upon society, and of current attempts to transform these;
- (k) a deeper awareness of their own personal characteristics and development needs and opportunity to meet these;

- (l) an ability to communicate clearly, orally and in writing, to convene and chair meetings, and to conduct interviews;
- (m) an understanding of group dynamics;
- (n) an understanding of the management of organizations generally and of community organizations in particular;
- (o) a capacity to perform a range of administrative techniques and practices appropriate to community organizations, including:
  - (i) office management, (ii) record keeping, (iii) the development of simple management information systems, (iv) work scheduling, (v) planning, priority setting;
- (p) an understanding of volunteering and a capacity to recruit, train and manage volunteers;
- (q) an understanding of financial management (e.g. accounting, costing, budgeting, financial decision techniques, inventory control, auditing);
- (r) an appreciation of the use of micro-processors in community organizations and a capacity to use them;
- (s) a knowledge of personnel and industrial relations practices (task analysis, job specification, job interviewing, job termination, industrial awards, working with unions);
- (t) an understanding of legal matters affecting the operation of community organizations;
- (u) an understanding of the many sources of funds available to community organizations and methods of accessing these, including public collections, industry drives, and submission writing;
- (v) a knowledge of various forms of media and how to access them;
- (w) an ability to develop simple advertising/promotion campaigns;
- (x) an opportunity to extend their knowledge of any of the above areas via further study or supervised project work within their own organization;
- (y) an opportunity to acquire some basic grounding in the theories and practices involved in a range of service delivery tasks: e.g. recreation, education, health and information; and
- (z) an opportunity to acquire some basic understanding of the characteristics of particular segments of the population whose needs are often the concern of community organizations (e.g. young children, youth, migrants, the disabled, the aged).

APPENDIX B

**SUBJECT UNIT OUTLINES**

Part I

Personal Development

Community Practice and Practitioners

Community Research

Funding

Government and Political Processes I

Government and Political Processes II\*

Group Processes

Local Processes

Money Management\*

Personnel Practices

Promotion for Community Organisations

Setting up a Community Organisation

Social Inequalities

Structures and Processes in Community Organisations

Part 2

Community Research II

Media Production

Money Management II

Social Construction of Social Problems

Community Skills 1 - VI

\* subsequently Government and Political Processes II was replaced  
by Money Management II.

APPENDIX C

It is proposed to complete teaching packages in stages during a twelve month period from 1st July, 1985 to 30th June, 1986. A proposed schedule for completion is as follows:

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Mid-January, 1986 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Forming a Community Organisation</li><li>o Governments and Subsidies</li><li>o Research for Community Organisations</li></ul>          |
| Mid-March, 1986   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Basic Cash Accounting</li><li>o Seeking and Obtaining Funds</li><li>o Organising the Office</li></ul>                                  |
| Mid-May, 1986     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Community Organisation</li><li>o Community Practice and Practitioners</li><li>o Personnel Practices</li><li>o Managing Funds</li></ul> |
| End-June, 1986    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Handling Groups</li><li>o Recruiting and Managing Volunteers</li><li>o Structures of Inequality</li></ul>                              |