# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses three major themes and their interrelationships: The role of community services in Local Government, the nature of community development, and the processes of economic rationalism or what is termed the "new managerialism". An analysis of the way these themes impact on each other may help to explain some of the current dilemmas of Local Government, and hopefully point the way to some useful strategies for the future management of community services within Local Government.

It is no co-incidence that there has been a recent surge of interest in these issues. Local Government is undergoing a major restructuring and review of its role, particularly in response to the new Local Government Act in NSW. Much of this restructuring occurs in a climate of economic rationalism and its associated practices. Yet at the same time Local Government is being urged to commit itself to a community development approach, and to identify that as a core function (NSW Dept of Local Government, 1988). Yet while Local Government is supposed to "do it", nobody is quite sure what "it" is, or what kind of "doing" is required. The confusion in many Councils about the nature of community development became obvious in a very interesting report released recently by Wollongong council (Pyett and Williams, 1992).

I suggest that one of the main reasons for this confusion lies in the fact that the concept of community development itself has been undergoing a reformation; the concept has been reworked, reshaped by the logic of the new managerialism. The point is that the logic of the new managerialism is essentially antithetical to the logic of community development. An exploration of the contradictions between the two approaches may be an important step towards finding a way forward.

The paper proceeds as follows:

* The early history of welfare in Australia (the charity model)
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## THE EARLY HISTORY OF WELFARE IN AUSTRALIA

From earliest colonial days in Australia, welfare was seen to be largely a matter for philanthropic organisations. For example, in NSW, the Sydney City Mission was formed in 1862 by a group of prominent citizens whose family names are still well known. The Benevolent Society of NSW was formed even earlier. The Salvation Army in Australia began operations in 1880. There were other organisations such as the "Ladies City Flower Mission" in Melbourne and "Mrs. Kings Orphanage" in NSW. These organisations received up to 70% of their funding from government. Nonetheless they were largely autonomous. They were generally controlled by well-to-do men, but operated by their wives. Charity was largely the business of middle class "ladies". They had a double responsibility, to discourage "overdemanders", the undeserving poor, from expecting handouts, while offering assistance to the "deserving poor" who were generally defined as the destitute aged, children, the sick and dying, deserted wives (Shaver, 1986, Kennedy, 1982).

However, from the early days of Federation, the Commonwealth and various State Governments began to accept a more direct responsibility for the welfare of its citizens. Public hospitals were established, and In 1909, the old age pension was introduced in Australia. In 1923, Queensland introduced a form of unemployment insurance; in 1927 the NSW Government introduced child endowment. These were the first steps toward the notion of a welfare state. The target was still the "deserving poor", but within these categories at least, "charity" was replaced by state provision as "citizen rights". The great depression of the 1930s had a profound effect on the attitude of many Australians. No longer was it possible to divide the poor into the deserving and the undeserving. Mass misery was clearly the result of a failure in the economic system. Poverty was a structural and not an individual matter. Following the second world war, governments moved to provide expanded forms of social security, public education, health and housing , and in doing so accepted the right of all citizens to a basic standard of living.

## THE 1960s AND THE COMMUNITY MOVEMENT

The 1960s saw a major cultural shift in Australia. It was a time of mass protest and demand for reform. The 1950s had been a period of economic stability and prosperity, of full employment. We were the "lucky country". Yet within that prosperity there remained deep economic contradictions. We were embroiled in a war that was full of moral contradictions. We believed that all people were equal in the sight of God, and yet the majority of the population were without fundamental freedoms. The 1960s and '70s became the time of "grassroots" action. There were the anti-war marches. The womens movement began its "second wave" of action. Aboriginal people were not even recognized as citizens; they demanded land rights. Migrant groups protested their treatment within the workforce. Within inner city areas, resident action groups protested the loss of their environment, as older housing was demolished to make way for freeways and high rise buildings. People everywhere began to question the notion of an economic progress that was oblivious to the rights and needs of ordinary people. They began to question a society that maintained structures of inequity and disadvantage in the midst of prosperity. They questioned the structures of the state itself. Decisions were made by bureaucrats and professionals, people far removed from the people on whose behalf they acted. The medical, legal, and social work professions were criticised for their paternalism and elitism, and for their failure to address the causes of social problems.

State services were criticised for their institutionalised, bureaucratised, paternalistic insensitivity to human needs and human dignity. People did not want the kind of charity handout that reinforced dependency and disadvantage; they demanded their rights as citizens and human beings to have access to resources and to decision making. People wanted greater control over their own lives.

What characterised this period more than anything else was a demand for "bottom up" decision making and action to replace the conventional "top down" approach. It was in this climate that community development flourished, and thousands of community organisations were formed. Community development as theory and practice, began to supersede charity and case work practice. It is important to recognise however, that these older forms of practice were never entirely replaced. The two approaches developed, and continue to operate as alternative streams within Australian communities.

## THE THEORY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

There are a number of key principles that underlay community development, as it was first developed. The key words are self help, empowerment, participation, networking, and equity.

SELF HELP implies a do-it-yourself focus. Self help starts with the individual. The individual is the person most able to identify his or her own needs, wants, dreams. The energy for achieving these must therefore come from the people themselves. However, few people can achieve a goal,or satisfy a need on their own. Collective action is required. People come together through common interest or common need to work together on a common cause. And that collective action must be mobilised, organised, managed. It usually takes considerable knowledge, skills, material resources, and labour time to achieve any social goal. The self help principle expresses a confidence that most of these requirements can also be found within the self help community. By coming together and pooling their time, energy, skills and wealth, the collective goal can be met. The goal should be achieved from the existing resources of the community. No dependency relationship has been established outside the community; the self help community is self-sufficient. Its sense of pride and competence is thus enhanced.

EMPOWERMENT is the taking on of power. McArdle (1989) defines empowerment as "the process whereby decisions are made by the people who have to wear the consequences of those decisions". People who have achieved their collective goals through the process of self help are also empowered. However McArdle's definition implies that it is not the achievement of goals itself so much as the process of deciding that is important. It is important that the decisions lead to effective action, but the action does not necessarily have to be done by the persons themselves, nor be completed within the resources of the self help group.

Empowerment is also about EQUITY. Equity refers to the principles of social justice, of ensuring that everyone has a "fair go". It is not the same as equality. Equity would mean equality, if everyone had the same opportunities to begin with. But they don't. The aim of equity measures is to create equality. But the equity measures themselves are unequal; they aim to redress previous injustice by giving more to those who have less.

Empowerment is about giving power to people who did not have it. That also implies that some people have more power than others, that there are structures of disadvantage. Those who have power have access to choices and to resources to meet their needs; those who do not, cannot meet their own needs. Empowerment has both an individual and a structural aspect. It is the individual who lacks power; it is through personal growth that she or he gains it. However, the source of the initial powerlessness derives from social structures of disadvantage and not from the individuals own inadequacies. Our society distributes power and resources unevenly; the rich have more than the poor, men have more than women, white have more than black, the able have more than the disabled, the middle aged have more than the very young or the very old.

Empowerment may therefore mean restructuring the order of things so that the disadvantaged have more EQUITABLE ACCESS to resources. The emphasis is then on social or structural change rather than, or as well as individual change (Ward, 1991).

PARTICIPATION is a vital component of self help and of the empowerment process. People must be involved in those decisions that affect their lives. By participating, people gain confidence and self-esteem. They are also likely to gain knowledge, and develop new skills. The process is cumulative; the more skills, the more the person is able to participate, and the more he or she can gain. However it is important to recognise that it is not participation per se that is important. Poorly structured or unstructured participation may very well have a negative, disempowering effect (Blakely, 1979). Participation must be of the sort that facilitates learning and action.

Participation is also important within the community self help process. People who have participated in the development of a project will have a sense of identification and ownership of that project. It is this sense of identification that will ensure its continued support, even through difficult times. It is much less likely that people will get excited about a project or be prepared to defend it, even a much needed one, when they have had no part in its conception.

Again there is both a personal and a structural dimension to participation. It is the individual that participates, and that gains the benefits from doing so. However, participation also implies a reversal of standard decision making processes. Normally decisions are made by the powerful; by those with the expertise and the authority to do so. Normally these also have the material resources to carry out the decisions. That means decisions made at the top- by bureaucrats and professionals, by directors and senior executives, by people considerably removed from the actual people in need. The decisions are normally carried out by others lower in the hierarchy, but still higher than the proposed recipients, and they carry out the decisions under the direction of those above them. The principle of participation reverses this hierarchy; decisions are made, at least partly at the bottom- by the proposed recipients.

NETWORKING is also related to participation. Through the process of participation, relationships and networks are established between people in the community. These networks break down the isolation of individuals and families, and potentially build a sense of common destiny and support. The networks, once established, can be mobilised around a number of issues. They thus serve to support and locate and empower the individual, and to integrate and strengthen the community itself. Some writers have argued that the notion of "community" itself does not necessarily refer to any ongoing or permanent structures, but rather to the potentiality for the mobilisation of action along established networks (Taksa, 1990; Beresford, 1991). These networks may not be operative at any one time, but they can be called on in times of personal and collective need. The local Bush fire brigade is probably an obvious example of this. According to this view, community development must be concerned with the development and support of these networks, not only for immediate action, but so that they may be in place for future potential needs.

There are a number of commonly used TOOLS of community development . An excellent recent documentation of these in the context of current Australian practice, is found in a booklet produced by a group of community workers in Victoria (Ward, 1991). Tools include information gathering, information dissemination, consciousness raising, advocacy, lobbying, networking, team work strategies, training. In general these are the tools of the community development worker who is trying to facilitate the community development process.

## A CRITIQUE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development became the preferred approach to the development of services for all levels of government at some stage, beginning in the early 1970s when the Whitlam Commonwealth Government introduced the Australian Assistance Plan (AAP). The NSW State Government Departments of Youth and Community Services, Housing, Health, and Environment and Planning, all adopted funding programs in the 1970s and early ' si that conformed to a community development philosophy. Local Government has been increasingly encouraged to embrace a community development approach up to the present day. By and large, community development has continued to be the preferred approach of the community sector.

However, no sooner had community development begun, than it began to attract considerable criticism as an approach. The criticism came from both the left and the right, from conservatives and radicals. The terms of the criticism however differed.

The major criticism from the left focussed on what was known as "the submission model". Government funding programs of the day attempted to respond to the demands of various grass roots organisations for access to resources. In accord with the principles of community development, the initiative came from the community. The community identified a need, organised to create a structure to meet that need, and made a submission to government for the necessary funds to establish the required service. As far as possible, governments responded. The problem was that inevitably, there were more submissions than there was money to meet the demand. Many submissions were poorly constructed. Governments had no ready criteria for deciding which submissions to fund; there were no clear priorities. In lieu of any other criteria, funding tended to be on the basis of the excellence of the submission itself. However, the best submissions were not

usually made by those most in need. Those most in need, almost by definition, had the least access to skills and other resources required to produce a polished submission. The submissions that were successful often lead to the creation of useful services, but they usually did not serve the most disadvantaged. Thus the submission model failed to address the issues of equity.

This critique was broadened by noting a direct contradiction between the principles of self help and equity. Those who were most in need, ie who were not already able to meet their own needs, were generally those with the least resources of knowledge, skill, or money. This point is discussed at some length by Kotze (1987) in relation to community development programs in third world countries; the observation is equally valid here. It was assumed that communities in poverty had the capacity to find their own resources once the opportunity arose. External assistance may be used occasionally , but this should always remain uncertain, lest the community become dependent on external support. Yet this approach failed to recognise the fact that no community can live and develop in isolation others. it failed to recognise that it was precisely this element of uncertainty that created an attitude of passivity, an accommodation to poverty in the first place. And most importantly, the self help approach failed to acknowledge, that in all likelihood, the community in question simply didn't have the necessary resources on its own.

A related criticism from the left, questioned the sincerity of government policy decisions made ostensibly in the interests of "self help", but in fact made in the interests of reducing resources, or "services on the cheap".

Within Australia, the move by Central (State and Commonwealth) Governments to shed financial responsibility for health or welfare services was invariably made within the rhetoric of an appeal to "localism", and "self help". The development and provision of services is better made at the local level where they are responsive to local needs. However, while responsibility for services was devolved to a local level, resources were not, or not in equal proportion. Funds were in fact diverted to other National projects (like industry assistance!). The appeal, of course was for development on the cheap. And if it didn't work, then one could always blame the community itself for not really wanting to change. What this meant in reality was that the rhetoric of community development (designed to redress social injustice and disadvantage) was very often accompanied by reduced, not increased funding.

Other criticisms from the left related to the rhetoric of "empowerment". The aim of empowerment, is the enhancement of power of the hitherto powerless. There were two problems with this. One was that you cannot give power; it must be taken. The other was that if power is successfully taken, it will in all likelihood be seen as a threat by those who currently hold power. The existing powerful are then likely to defend their own interests.

The role of the community worker was crucial in the community development process. It was the worker who was expected to resource the community, and by so doing, "empower" it. However in many ways the worker represented the interests of more powerful groups, or at least was drawn from the ranks of the educated and privileged. This person whether consciously or not, was likely to operate in a patronising way. He or she took on the role of the expert advisor who wished to educate and organise the community, but in so doing simply reinforced existing attitudes of powerlessness and

dependency. The only redistribution of power that occurred was in the worker's favour. Usually the power of the worker was left implicit; it was neither recognised or acknowledged. In this case, it became all the more insidious, and difficult to deal with honestly.

Of course this was not always so. Many workers were able to operate with rather than on the client community, perhaps using the philosophy and methods of Friere (1975). To the extent that these workers were successful (and that meant bringing in needed outside resources), then the community did indeed start to feel empowered. When that happened people started to make demands, and to make them very forcefully. This was social action at its best. But it also usually generated a lot of conflict. Other groups defended privileged positions. They did so by using one of a limited number of strategies. The community worker may have been labelled a trouble maker, and silenced. Community leaders or spokespeople were threatened and silenced. Or co-opted into the system, provided they silenced the community demand. The 'silent majority' may have been mobilised to devalue the offending group, and so restore the status quo. The point is that empowerment necessarily threatened the status quo, and so was deemed dangerous, particularly in a climate where consensus was deemed to be the desirable norm. Community development necessarily entailed, and generated, considerable conflict. Community development without conflict probably had little more than a cosmetic effect on the underlying structures of disadvantage. Yet the rhetoric of community development was one of co-operative "bringing the community together" in a spirit of peace and harmony. It was in this sense that community development was seen to become a tool of social control; a stage managed kind of "community" participation that served the interests of the state (Cockburn, 1977).

The other side of this coin reflects a criticism from the right. Where the community development process did appear to take hold, it generated social action. Social action usually meant noisy and politically embarrassing demands from unpopular minority groups. Far from bringing the community together, community development appeared to exacerbate community divisions. Quite frequently these divisions turned to overt conflict, even violence. In the interests of "law and order" such developments were to be discouraged.

A further criticism came from neither left nor right, but concerned the lack of organisational support for community development workers. It was argued that community development must operate outside all existing structures. If community workers were to work "with the people and for the people", then they must not have the divided loyalties that necessarily occurred if they were employed within an existing structure. Yet without such a pre-existing structure, there could be no employing body, and hence no community worker. Not only did the workers require basic administrative and legal support, they also needed access to established structures if they were going to succeed in effecting real change. The early experiments within the AAP sometimes located the community worker within the (new) Regional Councils of Social Development. Most community workers, left almost entirely to their own devices, floundered.

So the critique of community development came not only from the left. The conservative critique was equally strong. From this perspective, community development was seen as dangerous and divisive but also as messy, disorganised, uncontrolled, and often wasteful. Government funds were provided to people who clearly lacked the professional skills to

use them. The funded organisation often lacked the formal structure and accounting procedures to handle the tasks required. Many organisations lacked a legal identity. There were no clear lines of accountability, either within the organisation, or to the funding body. Sometimes, and this happened with NSW Aboriginal Land councils, the groups were given the required resources apparently without strings, but with no attempt to provide or ascertain the necessary financial management skills. So people who had never had the opportunity to complete even secondary school training were suddenly expected to meet complex accountability requirements for large sums of money. Like so many other community development initiatives, they were set up to fail. Even in those cases where there was no obvious misuse of money, there was rarely any clear measure of achievement or performance, either. Objectives were loose and vague, goals often intangible and long term. It was rarely possible, nor was any attempt made to establish cost-benefit returns for the money spent. Basically no one knew, or seemed to care what was achieved for the money expended. Even where there was a clear and undisputed need for some sort of action, that action tended to be very slow in coming. Community development, to all appearance was an extremely inefficient way of proceeding.

Community development was also seen as a very inefficient way of providing a service. What the consumer "really" wanted was a good, reliable service with the minimum expenditure of money and time. This critique came from both left and right, though the suggested solution was different. For the left the answer was the universal provision of services by the state; for the right the answer was deregulated private market forces. Both looked for services controlled and provided by professionals.

A related concern was that service provision was unstandardised. Community development is necessarily a local process. It involved the face to face interaction of small groups of people working in unique and idiosyncratic directions. Community development could not be introduced or managed (it cannot really be managed at all) at a State or Federal level. Thus there was no consistency from one area to another in the funding arrangements, the organisational structure, in outcome measures. There was no way of even knowing what was happening nationally, let alone controlling the direction of government policy.

There is a final and important critique, that was frequently voiced at the time. Community development was intended to redistribute resources so that those with least, had access to more. There are many types of resources, but in the last resort they all reduce to money. No development is sustainable in the long term without a reliable source of income. There would be no need for social programs for the disadvantaged if everyone had an adequate income. Therefore any serious development package must address the issue of income generation, or local employment initiatives. Economic development must be integrated within the concept of community development. However, community development, as practiced concerned itself almost exclusively with social programs - "bandaid solutions" that by their nature could not address the root cause of the disadvantage.

## THE 1980S AND THE NEW MANAGERIALISM

Throughout the 1980s there has been a shift away from community development. The move probably began with the growing demand for "needs based planning". The submission model was clearly iniquitous. A more rational way to allocate funding would be on the basis of known needs. If it was possible to objectively identify those target groups who were in greatest need, then this information could be used as criteria in the assessment of submissions, or in the development of new proposals. Such objective information depended (of course) on a highly resourced professional centralised planning process. Clearly the funding bodies needed to reassert control over the funding process, if only in the interests of equity.

Once the principles of needs based funding were accepted, other moves followed fairly logically. It made good business sense to demand proper accountability for all money spent. That could only be achieved with regular, and detailed financial reporting by a legally responsible organisation, to the funding body. Regular evaluations should also be conducted to establish that the funds were expended in a more effective and efficient manner. Even better than a periodic evaluation, was the establishment of on-going monitoring of program performance by way of objectively (quantifiable) measurable performance indicators. And rather than have many, unstandardised idiosyncratic services, it made good managerial sense to combine all services of a given type and target group under the one standardised funding program. Hence the establishment of SAAP, HACC, and more recently, at the state level, the Community funding program of DOCS. Similarly it made better managerial sense to work with a few large organisations than with many small organisations. Large established organisations are more likely to achieve economies of scale, and to have effective accountability mechanisms in place. Hence new funding was usually offered to large established organisations, and small community managed organisations were "encouraged" to amalgamate.

Over the past five years, the new managerialist philosophy has come to dominate government thinking at both the Federal and the State levels, for both Labour and Liberal governments, and it has come to dominate nearly all funded programs. In simple terms, the new managerialism is about centralising control while decentralising responsibility. Much of the rhetoric is about privatisation, about shifting the locus of action from the state and onto private individuals and non-government "voluntary" organisations. This is done in the name of greater personal freedoms and local autonomy. In practice, however, it is only the onus of duty that is privatised; initiative for action, and managerial control is placed very firmly at the centre, with the government funding body (and cabinet). Virtually all planning, program design and funding allocations are done at the centre. The actual delivery of services is contracted out to community organisations, who have very little discretionary power to determine the shape of those services. The advantage of contracting services is that they are more easily targeted and standardised, and they are cheaper, largely because of a continued exploitation of voluntary workers (the use of volunteers is not necessarily exploitative when those workers have control over their work). Central control of the services is maintained through the adoption of detailed accountability and reporting requirements, and through the continuous monitoring of standardised performance indicators. Further cost cutting is achieved by means of the introduction of "cost-sharing" or user-pays formulae.

Recently governments of both persuasions have been experimenting with a brokerage model. This is an interesting approach because it rests on the rhetoric of greater personal choice. The broker (agent for the consumer) is provided with the resources (vouchers of some sort) to "buy" the services they need. This sounds like the ultimate consumer power. The reality however is likely to be quite different, and to create yet greater centralised control of services, and further cost cutting. The real effect is likely to be the reduction of reliable funding for the service providing organisation (their funding is no longer direct but indirect), and the decreased ability of either the service provider or the mediating organisation, to advocate on behalf of the consumer/client. The voice of the individualised client, now a single, if autonomous voice, is considerably weaker than a collective voice. What the individual client may gain in personal choice, they may lose in lobbying strength.

Part of the shift towards the new managerialism can be explained in terms of the recession. Governments have reduced resources to cope with a greater real need for services. It becomes essential then to maximise efficiency as well as effectiveness; to achieve the highest possible return on scarce resources. In terms of programs like HACC, it means diverting funds from a preventative, low to moderate need focus to high need, crisis intervention. Looked at from the centre, community development and local service provision looks untidy, time consuming, inconsistent, and inefficient. There is a perception that better planned and designed programs, ie those designed by professional experts, will necessarily reduce waste, and improve efficiency. There is usually no intention to remove, or even reduce local organisations, but rather to better harness local energy (to control the unruly masses) and so produce a more cost-effective service.

## A CRITIQUE OF THE NEW MANAGERIALISM

It is not yet fashionable to criticise the new managerialism. No one wishes to be seen to argue that we do NOT want efficient, effective and equitable services. No one can deny the seriousness of the recession, and the consequent diminished state funding resources. However the sector is very unhappy, in fact in turmoil. There are periodic attempts to organise some sort of protest action. Interestingly, these attempts at protest are becoming increasingly clandestine. Frankly, people are afraid of losing their funding. Centralised control has already become so well established, that any resistance or public debate is met by a swift funding threat. A more obvious example of that kind of threat was seen in 1990 when the then State Government minister for Family and Community Service sent a letter, perceived by most as a thinly veiled threat to all those organisations who signed a public advertisement protesting the closure of departmental offices.

The impact of the new managerialism is mixed. Most services, so far have been maintained. There has been no marked decline in the total amount of funding available for community services. However the shape of those organisations, and the form of the services has changed dramatically. Many organisations have been required to modify their target group and the type of services offered, if they wish to maintain or increase funding levels. This has generally meant a move away from generalist and preventative services for the community at large, and toward more intensive crisis intervention service for high need groups. The community development programs have largely gone. There have probably been some benefits of careful planning, where that has lead to the identification of serious service gaps, for previously unrecognised high need target groups.

There have been important effects on community organisation management in the direction of a rapid bureaucratisation of those organisations. Crisis service provision for high need groups generally require an increase in professional staff. The same applies to the management of those services. Local organisations are trying to cope with the increased demand for accountability and performance indicators. Many feel inadequate to the technical skill required. Many organisations are responding to the increased legal and financial demands by employing professional managers, and establishing line management structures. Many management committees, particularly those of small local organisations, are reeling under the weight of responsibility, and many people are resigning. Their place is taken by professionals. Their inability to cope is taken as a sign that the community management model (itself a product of a community development philosophy) is a failure. Very few voices dare to suggest that maybe the demands being made are unjust and unnecessary. Funding is too vulnerable to risk open critique.

The effect of the new managerialism on community development is disastrous. As the discourse of government shifts, so too does the definition of community development itself. Obviously it is a conservative, and not a radical definition that is used, one that emphasises self help and individual choice, but not the redistribution of resources or the empowering of disadvantaged groups. Indeed with a not so subtle reworking of the concept, community development becomes the new managerialism at work. One obvious effect is the dismantling of community development funding programs under the guise of leaving matters to the local community, and allowing greater individual freedom (community workers are seen to impose unnecessary outside control). Another , is the breakdown of community (as opposed to professional) management committees. However the more long term, but largely invisible effect is the systematic disempowering of the community. Individuals in crisis may be able to "choose" their service. The choice for severely disabled or frail people, or for those in crisis is always necessarily limited by the nature of their need as well as the availability of professional guidance. Those not in crisis (yet) are expected to fend for themselves, or do without. No one is encouraged to join together with others, to participate in planning or social action or the development of a collective service. One problem is that community development is not amenable to performance indicators; it is about quality of life, not quantity, about empowerment, and it is long term in its effects. Community development rarely produces instant remedial action (though that also can happen).

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN WORLD PERSPECTIVE

Community development has probably always existed. As a formal, and named process, it gained respectability in United States and England during the 1960s. As in Australia, this was a decade of great hope, an optimism that a just society was possible. There had been political stability and economic growth for some time. Yet in the midst of plenty, there remained injustice and poverty. Individuals in need of assistance were denied their sense of humanity and dignity, as they were forced to beg for charity, or to suffer the indignities of bureaucratic and institutionalised welfare. The disadvantaged of all complexions began to form into groups and demand a better deal. Their arguments were heeded by the comfortable elites, who discovered a social conscience. Whole cities took to the streets to demand an end to an unjust war.

In United States Community development was one of several approaches in the war on poverty. The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) operated from 1964 to around 1974. It was set up very much like the Australian Assistance plan, and had, by Australian standards, an enormous budget. In 1971 for instance, The OEO had a total budget of $890 million, of which $391 million went into Community Action Programs (Brokensha, 1974). However many programs ran into serious problems, at least partly because they were set up without reference to Local Government (this was also true of the AAP) and frequently aroused the opposition of "City Hall".

During the 1980s the big spending national programs were wound back, as the ideology of the right began to take hold. The big evaluations failed to demonstrate any major advance in the eradication of poverty. This failure was taken to mean that the provision of massive funds by government was a waste, and served to weaken the self reliance of the citizenry, and the spirit of voluntary action by the community. In the interests of individual freedom, self-help, and localism (not to mention the pockets of the rich), Reaganomics took hold, and community development was relegated to foreign aid (for the third world), and to the voluntary sector. Nonetheless, community development projects continued, mainly at the local level. One important success story can be found in the Eastside Community Investments, Inc., a private, not-for-profit, community based development corporation, established in 1976 to serve an extremely impoverished and neglected inner city area of Indianapolis. Of the Board of 24 Directors, 16 are neighbourhood residents. Nearly half of all staff live in the neighbourhood, including the chief executive officer. The corporation has explicitly adopted the community development approach developed for third world localities. The corporation has an annual turnover in excess of $3,000,000, with revenue gained from a combination of grants, contributions (from individuals and business), return on investment, and sale of fixed assets (1990-1991 annual report). Its accomplishments include the development of an industrial park, which by 1991 had brought 30 businesses and 1,000 jobs into the community, rehabilitation of 100 boarded and vacant units as low income rental housing, provision of self help assistance to over 800 families undertaking their own home rehabilitation, construction of a 50 unit building to house the elderly and handicapped , development of a transitional housing project for 10 families who had survived domestic violence, development of a co-operative family day care service, and two major urban reforestation projects. The corporation has had to overcome many problems. However its significance lies in its multi-functional character. Community development is seen to involve every aspect of the community needs, from housing to employment to childcare and tree-planting, and these are integrated within the development process.

In England, community development was taken up enthusiastically by many Local Governments, particularly by those with Labour Governments, during the late 1960s and 1970s. They were supported in this by the national Labour governments of the period. However, by the late 1980s much of this activity had ceased, or continued away from Local Government control.

A study of community development approaches during the late '60s and early '70s analyses some of the dynamics of the time (Cockburn, 1977). Cockburn argues that the state, both Central government and Local, actively encouraged community development as an urban management tool. Indeed community management theory was developed essentially as a complement to the concurrently developed corporate management theory. Community development was designed to improve the communication channels between

Council and the community, to encourage greater participation and identification by local residents with their Council endeavours, and to recreate the human side of participatory democracy - all of which had largely been lost in the increasing professionalisation and corporatisation of Local Government management. In many areas resident participation took the form of neighbourhood councils. Cockburn studied the development and partial demise of these councils in the local urban area of Lambeth.

Cockburn argues that community work in England in general and in Lambeth in particular, followed a roughly sequential development through three approaches, each representing a progressive response to the concerns and constraints of the time. The first was the social pathology approach. This approach placed the community worker in the role of social diagnostician whose task it was to identify areas of disadvantage, or social failure. Dysfunctional families were encouraged to recognise their own failure, and to rectify these failings through the self help co-ordinated action of the communities in which they lived. The second approach was the social planning approach, which had a much more direct parallel to corporate planning. The task of the community worker was to identify areas of need within the community and to communicate this information to council, so that a planned intervention could best occur. The social planning approach depended very heavily on the statistical tools of social science, for example in the use of social indicators. The third approach to community work, and the one with greatest favour among community workers towards the end of the period, was the conflict method of community organisation leading to protest and political activism. This approach clearly removed the blame for social disadvantage from the personal victims, and placed responsibility squarely with the state to redress it. Cockburn identifies this as a high-risk, high-gain approach, both for Councils in their efforts to manage and contain potentially explosive conflict, and for the continued employment of the community workers themselves. Many of those councils who did encourage or permit a high level of participation and activism became increasingly uncomfortable with the effects of that activism and their ability to control the increasing militancy of the demands. Many councils moved to reduce their commitment to community development, and to disempower the neighbourhood councils.

More recently, a survey of community workers throughout the United Kingdom was undertaken in 1983 (Francis, Henderson, and Thomas, 1985). This survey was able to identify over 5000 community workers, ie those who were "paid staff whose primary responsibility is to develop groups in the community, whose members experience (and wish to tackle) needs, disadvantage or inequality". The researchers were surprised to discover that in England, 70% of community workers were employed within the community (voluntary) sector, and not by Local Government. They were generally young, inexperienced, poorly trained and paid (the majority being women and people of ethnic minorities) and operating with insecure funding. They found a different situation in Scotland, where the majority of community workers were employed by Local Government.

A separate study by Barr (1985) focussed on the profile of community workers within the largest Scottish Regional Council of Strathclyde. This region included Glasgow, and was by all indicators, the most disadvantaged region in the United Kingdom. For example adult male unemployment was 27%. This Local Government employed around 150 community workers, having adopted a deliberate policy of community development as part of an economic and social regeneration strategy. The Social Work Department

management pursued an active policy of community development; its consultative report states that "the basic distinguishing feature of community work is that its primary focus within the process of community development is on assisting communities to organise around locally defined needs and issues... community work involves a form of dialogue between the residents and workers who are also accountable to their employing agency for the content of their activities" (Barr, 1985). Nonetheless, the survey found that the majority of workers expressed a very high level of distrust towards the department management, and indeed toward the Council itself, and its elected members. There was a sense of the Social Work Department being conservative, and only concerned with "respectable groups". There appeared to be little attempt by community workers to educate council, or to establish a dialogue with elected members. Yet the actual work audit of these same workers, showed little evidence of a radical or "subversive" approach, or of any systematic analysis or attempt to establish networks beyond the neighbourhood level. The impression gained was rather of a collective uncertainty about their role. Indeed it appeared that the workers were operating in a less proactive manner than the senior management wished, particularly in the context of an extremely disadvantaged Labour Council in Scotland, that no doubt had little affection for the Central Government.

However, it is likely that Strathclyde is an exception in the United Kingdom. My own enquiries in Leeds in 1989, found very few community development workers in the Council's Department of Social Security or in Housing. Some community workers were funded under the Inner Urban Program, but these were mainly employed by community (voluntary) sector organisations under Councils influence. Others were employed by Adult Education Centres around Leeds, under the direct control of the Local Government Education Department. These workers were not called community workers necessarily, although they operated according to the same philosophy. When asked, senior management indicated that they no longer employed many community workers. The main reason seemed to be that councils felt that disadvantaged communities became too unruly in their demands for reform and improved services at a time when Local Government was itself struggling against reduced financial resources, and tighter Central Government control.

A recent review of community managed services in England has confirmed the same sort of new managerialist trends during the 1980s under Thatcher that has occurred in U.S. and Australia (Billis and Harris, 1991). They note for example "Looking at the decade as a whole, however, it seems that the general trend was....towards a fundamental shift in the nature, or balance of activities. Most often this was a shift away from self-help, community development or campaigning work, towards the management of funded "projects" or the direct provision of services. In many cases service-provision gradually "drove out" former activities". They go on to identify similar effects on the bureaucratisation of organisation structure, tighter accountability requirements, increased tensions and difficulties in issues of governance, staffing, and the recruitment of volunteers.

## THE HISTORY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY SERVICES WITHIN AUSTRALIA

Until very recently, Local Government has had little to do with either community development, or with community services. In 1986, the Local Government Ministers conference , with the Commonwealth Office of Local Government, established a task force to explore developments in Local Government. The task force report summarised the history of Local Government involvement in human services across Australia. It did so in terms of three time periods: pre 1969; 1969-1975; and post 1975.

The first period, particularly til the end of the second world war, was marked by sporadic, ad-hoc development, usually as a result of specific decisions by individual councils. During the 1920s and '30s, there were reviews of Local Government legislation in some states that reinforced a separation of functions between State and Local Government, such that most welfare services were clearly identified as the responsibility of the State, while Local Government was primarily to be concerned with the development of physical infrastructure. The important exception to this trend was Victoria. In 1917, Local Government was made responsible for Maternal and Infant Welfare, a responsibility it has maintained ever since. These services, from the beginning were regarded as generalist services, not specifically for the poor or disadvantaged (such specialist services were seen to be the concern of the State). This early decision is widely regarded as providing the impetus for the development of human services in Victoria, which has continued to develop and provide a number of generalist human services ever since. Today, Victoria continues to lead other states in terms of Local Government commitment to the development and provision of a range of human and community services, and is more likely to be the auspice body for the provision of services (eg HACC) funded under Commonwealth/State programs.

Immediately following World War II there was an impetus to Local Government involvement in the urban centres of Melbourne and Sydney, as a result of the growing number of poor and disadvantaged who were moving into the inner city, and later as a result of the emerging fringe development and "urban sprawl" of new estates beginning in the 1960s.

In NSW the provision of library services began in the 1940s (although Sydney City Council had a library service much earlier than that) as did Local Government involvement in the Provision of immunisation clinics, baby health centres and home-nursing services. During the 1950s Sydney City Council became involved in the direct provision of welfare services to disadvantaged sections of the community. Sydney City Council appointed its first Welfare Worker in 1956, leading to the establishment of Meals-on-Wheels and senior citizens services. Other councils followed suit, with Marrickville council appointing a social worker in 1958, Ku-ring-gai council in 1960, and Waverley and Willoughby in the mid 1960s (Davis, 1987). These were all direct initiatives of the councils themselves, and occurred in the absence of State or Commonwealth funding.

The second period of Local Government involvement in Human Services, was marked by a growing interest by the Commonwealth Government in Local Government, and a growing preparedness to subsidise local programs. In 1969 Local Government became eligible to receive subsidies under the States Grants (Home Care) Act, to employ welfare

officers for the aged, and to construct Senior Citizens Centres. This new funding tended to be absorbed by existing service providers. Thus in Victoria it was once again Local Government who took advantage of the funding to increase their service provision. In Queensland, Tasmania, and South Australia it was State Government Health Care Systems, while in NSW Home Care was still a Community-based organisation. However Local Governments in all states were more likely to feel comfortable about accepting funding for the construction of senior citizens centres.

The Whitlam Labor Government of 1972 introduced a new era in Commonwealth/Local Government relations, and in the development of human services in Local Government. Bowman (1985) has identified an increase in Commonwealth Government specific purpose grants (other than road grants) to Local Government from $2.2 million in 1972 to $109.4 million in 1975/76. These funds went to recreation, urban development, childrens' services, employment schemes, and others. Again it was in Victoria that Local Government took greatest advantage of these opportunities.

The Australian Assistance Plan (AAP) also had an important effect on Local Government. This was a Commonwealth initiative that was targeted toward the development of community services in the local area. It specifically adopted a community development philosophy which "begins with any strategy to reduce social isolation, apathy, alienation,and ignorance and ends with groups of people taking action to meet their own needs; a greater sense of social responsibility and will to act" (Raysmith and Einfeld ,1975). In most cases the work of the AAP was done through Regional Councils for Social Development (RCSD) who employed community workers and in some cases had the power to allocate funds. The AAP tended to set up a local power base that was independent of Local Government, and at times hostile to it. Nonetheless the AAP had positive effects on Local Government "causing many to realise the potential of Local Government in the planning, co-ordination and delivery of human services at the local level " (p 26, Task Force report, 1986).

In NSW, the effects of the AAP was uneven. However many councils supported the concept of assisting local organisations to plan and provide Community Services. Some councils were represented on RCSDs and some took the opportunity to assess local needs (Davis, 1987).

During the same period, ie from 1973/74, the NSW Department of Youth and Community Services (YACS) introduced a salary subsidy for the employment of Community Workers in Local Government, and for the employment of Youth workers. This marked the first formal recognition by the NSW State Government of Local Governments' role in Community Services.

Following the end of the Whitlam era, many special purpose grants were cut, or absorbed into the new general Commonwealth revenue sharing arrangements. Under those arrangements, which continue til now, Local Government has greater discretion to use the funds for a range of services, which may, but need not include an expansion of community services. In NSW support for an expanded role for Local Government now came largely from the Wran State Government. In 1979, the State Government established the Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme (WSAAS) and provided subsidies for the employment of Community Profile Workers across the state. In the same

year, the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act was introduced. Section 94 in particular encouraged councils to assess the social impact of development in their area, and .to charge developers for a contribution towards the development of social infrastructure.

The development of the Area Assistance Schemes has been particularly significant in NSW. The first Scheme was introduced as a pilot scheme in Western Sydney with $1 million per year to redress the special needs of this rapidly developing area. Like the AAP, the Scheme specifically adopted a community development philosophy. Unlike the AAP, it specifically included Local Government as key players. Indeed the scheme was partly initiated as a response to an intensive lobbying campaign from the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WESROC) as well as existing community organisations in the region.

There were a number of broad goals and objectives that the area assistance scheme was designed to achieve. These were summarised in the 1982 evaluation of WSAAS (Noesjirwan, 1982) as:

a) Service provision-getting more community services on the ground.
b) As a means of highlighting and dealing with regional issues (youth, transport, childcare, etc)
c) As a means of encouraging greater Local Government involvement in the planning and provision of community services.
d) As a means of fostering community development - so that the community can take a more active role in the discussion of local issues and in the initiation and management of new services.
e) As a means of developing a better base for the planning of social services in Western Sydney, including the co-ordination of effort between government departments and other agencies

WSAAS was built on a tripartite model encompassing community, Local Government and State Government interests. Key to the success of the scheme was the process by which funding decisions were carried out. The process, while time consuming, ensured that all relevant stakeholders had a real input into the decision making process. The submitting organisation initiated the process, often with the assistance of the Local Government employed Community Projects Officer (CPO). Local Government considered all projects within their area and determined their priority for funding. Funding recommendations for the region was made by the Regional Priority Rating and Review Committee (RPRRC); This committee was made up of equal representatives from Local Government, State Government and Community Organisations. The committee was serviced by the co-ordinator and staff within the State Department of Environment and Planning. The final approval for funding recommendations was the prerogative of the State Minister. He altered the recommended list at his peril and only once was a serious attempt made to do this (Fulop, Noesjirwan, and Smith, 1988).

The decision making process itself combined the best features of both the submission and needs based models of funding. Rational planning was made possible by the development of a sound data base drawing on local knowledge. The community project officer in each council prepared a written local government area profile outlining demographic statistics and social needs indicators and identifying existing gaps in services.

The introduction of WSAAS had a major impact on the development of community services in Local Government in Western Sydney. Prior to the establishment of WSAAS six of the ten Local Government Councils had already appointed at least one community services worker, usually under a Community arts or youth worker subsidy from the State Government. Nonetheless WSAAS "played a crucial and dynamic role in facilitating, expanding, and systematising the community services function of council in those areas that were willing to become involved " (Noesjirwan, 1982). By 1982 all but two of the ten councils employed a community projects officer (the remaining two did so by 1985). Six councils employed youth workers, four employed community arts officers, four employed childrens services officers, and two employed aged services workers. Other specialist positions were added. All had a community development/co-ordination role rather than direct service provision. Several councils employed as many as eight community services staff; in six councils these formed a distinct structural unit, usually within an existing department. Five councils had formed community services committees of council.

WSAAS was originally regarded as a short term pilot project with a limited expected life span of three years. In 1985, the Premier announced the continuation of WSAAS, and the extension of the Area Assistance Scheme to four other areas: MacArthur, Illawarra, Hunter, and Central Coast. Following intensive lobbying, the scheme was extended to cover the North Coast in 1991. The strength of local community and Local Government support for the scheme became evident in 1991 when the State Government attempted to abandon the scheme. A massive popular lobby campaign was successful in having that decision reversed (though the fate of the "pick ups" remains uncertain).

Local Government commitment to community services in general and community development processes in particular has continued to grow in NSW throughout the 1980s. This commitment is indicated by a series of studies and reports produced by the Local Government and Shires Associations, beginning with the publication of the Community Services Manual in 1983. Three reports were produced in 1987: the Community Services Review (Davis, 1987), the Review of Aged Services (Antrum, 1987), and the Review of Youth Services (Monro, 1987). In the following year the Associations commissioned a major study into Aboriginal Community Development and Local Government in NSW (Noesjirwan, Morrissey, and Pope, 1988). The gist of all these reports was to encourage Local Government to take a stronger role in community services. That role was however usually seen to be one of planning, co-ordination, and community development, rather than direct service delivery.

Community services staff have continued to expand in Local Government since 1988. However much of this new growth has been away from social planning/ community development and towards direct service delivery. The main impetus to this growth has been the National Child Care Strategy, and to a lesser extent, HACC services. Under the National Child care Strategy, Joint Commonwealth and State Government funding is made available for child care centres and services (eg family day care) which are to be auspiced by Local Councils. Child care staff then become employees of Council.

The other recent development has been in the area of employment creation. In 1985 the National Advisory Group on Local Employment Initiatives (NAGLEI) was established by the minister for Employment and Industrial Relations "to provide advice on the potential of local employment initiatives as a viable option for permanent job creation" (NAGLEI,

1987). The advisory group comprised Commonwealth, State, and Local Government members, as well as community and union representatives. The group researched existing local employment initiatives both overseas and in Australia, and made a number of recommendations. Key among these was the need for a network of local intermediary organisations whose function it would be to assist with support, advise and training for new local initiatives, backed by a specialised finance trust whose function it would be to market, collect, and distribute funds and necessary financial services. The NAGLEI report emphasised the importance of targeting local employment initiatives to all segments of the population including disadvantaged groups, and of involving local community organisations in the planning and development of new initiatives.

The recommendations of the NAGLEI were rejected by the Commonwealth Government, and no further action has occurred at that level. However action has continued at the State and Local Government level in NSW. The Self Employment Development Program under the NSW State Department of Industrial Relations Employment Education and Further Training was established in 1989; the program funds local enterprise centres and managed workspaces as community and Local Government auspiced centres that adopt a community development, local initiative orientation to employment generation. The 1992 evaluation judged the program to be demonstrably successful in facilitating job creation and retention, though somewhat restricted by the difficulty of accessing venture capital (Efraemson and Fitzgerald, 1992). The evaluation encourages the future targeting of various disadvantaged groups, (particularly Aboriginal communities, Non English Speaking, and Persons With a Disability). Business in the Community Ltd. (BCL) is active in NSW where it has over 40 affiliated local Enterprise Centres. BCL was formed in 1985 by the Rotory club of Sydney. Its object is "to act as the focus and catalyst for the greater involvement of industry and commerce in the communities in which they operate. Through the formation of local partnerships, representing private and public sectors, the trade union movement and voluntary organisations, it aims to stimulate enterprise development and employment generation, with particular emphasis on the growth of small business" (BCL Newsletter, 1992). Local Councils and Regional Organisations of Council have in many cases been very active supporters of Local Enterprise Centres. Unfortunately, most of these developments have occurred without reference to the Community Service sections of Council. The pursuit of economic development has largely occurred in isolation from social and community development programs for the disadvantaged.

For many years, Councils were able to claim that they were not empowered to undertake community services, or economic development programs within the very narrow constraints of the Local Government Act. In 1983 the NSW State Government amended the Act, partly to clarify the legal position of Local Government in providing community services. In 1988, the NSW Department of Local Government published the " Draft Position Statement on Local Government and Community Services". This document specified core and discretionary responsibilities of Local Government. Core responsibilities include:

* Social planning and community development, to ensure that at any particular time, Council has an identified position on and plans for the future development of its local community in order to meet the community's needs.

* Promotion and marketing of all Council activities in the community services area.
* Training and development of community services staff.
* Maintenance of community facilities which are under the care, control and management of Council.

Council may in addition, but need not, engage in direct service provision, financial assistance, research, etc.

The NSW Government intends to introduce a new Local Government Bill in 1992. This amounts to a major reform of Local Government in NSW and has the support of both sides of parliament, and the Associations. Chapter five of the new bill outlines Council's service functions. Part I specifies these as :

> *37. (1) A council may provide goods services and facilities and carry out activities, appropriate to the current and future needs within its local community and of the wider public, subject to this Act and any other law.*
>
> *(2) A council may do all such things as may be necessary or convenient for the exercise of these functions.*

Top of the list of potential areas of concern for Council, is "community services and facilities". Included in the same list are functions as diverse as cultural, educational and information services, environmental conservation, public transport, fire prevention, housing, and industry development and assistance. The intention of the NSW State Government is to free the legal constraints of Council, and to replace these with a system of open government and more effective local accountability mechanisms. The new legislation is generally seen as enabling for councils wishing to have a greater involvement in community services, and indeed to remove any sense of separation or distinction between one kind of service and another, or any sense of community services being an exception, or somehow beyond the bounds of Council's responsibility.

## INTERGOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Relations between the three tiers of government in Australia have probably always been marked by tension. From Local Governments point of view, the difficulties of being the third (bottom) tier, are exacerbated by the fact that Local Government is not mentioned in the Constitution. Local Government is a creature of the States, and its existence and powers limited to those the States are prepared to confer within a Local Government Act. Nonetheless, as an elected body, and by virtue of its location "closest to the people", Local Government has considerable potential (and real) power. To a certain extent, relations between Local and State Government in NSW have been a matter of bluff and counter bluff.

The Commonwealth Government became interested in Local Government from 1969, and this interest substantially altered the balance of power between the three tiers. The Commonwealth Government to some extent was able to bypass the State Governments by providing specific purpose and general assistance grants direct to Local Councils.

Generally, however, it has worked with and through the State Governments in developing Local Government services. The establishment of the Task force of the Joint Officers' Committee from the Local Government Ministers conference in 1986 under the auspices of the Commonwealth Office of Local Government, the publication of the report of that task force "Community Development, Human Services and Local Government", and the subsequent national conferences on Local Government and Community Development in 1986 and 1987, all contributed significantly to the development of community services in Local Government within a community development philosophy, and served to bring the three levels of government into active dialogue over these issues. Note however, that the task force adopted a conservative definition of community development, one that emphasised self reliance, and not the redistribution of resources, or the endorsement of social action demanding such a redistribution.

A recent report published by the Australian Local Government Association (1990) establishes the Local Government agenda for intergovernmental reform. Two key issues are raised for attention:

* *the urgent need to clarify respective roles and responsibilities of each sphere of government because of:*

  - *duplication and overlap of existing intergovernment arrangements in national and local programs; and*
  - *complex administrative arrangements that often have no relevance to the composite needs of local communities and the availability of local resources; and*

* *the need for the other spheres of government to respect the rights of Local Government as a sphere of government in the Australian federal system and recognise that Local Government:*

  - *is locally elected and accountable*
  - *is area based and multifunctional; and*
  - *can reflect the priorities of local communities.*

## COMMUNITY SERVICES IN THE 1990S: A WAY FORWARD

I see two positive developments happening. First there is the beginning, albeit tentative critique of the new managerialism. Second, there is a growing commitment by Local Government to the development of community services. This commitment is accompanied by a thoughtful reflection, and reassessment of the theory of community development. Out of that process we are likely to witness a rejuvenation of community development principles, and a much more proactive role by Local Government.

However, I do not think it is possible, or wise, simply to return to the community development of the 1960s and 1970s. The political and economic context is now a very different one. The community development of the '90s will look very different. If it is to succeed, it must respond to the critique of the '70s approach. At the same time it must

respond to the critique of the new managerialism. In other words we are looking for a way forward, an approach that combines the strength of the old community development and of the new managerialism. From the old community development we need to retrieve the sense of local energy and initiative, and empowerment. We need to keep issues of equity high on the agenda, while recognising the complexities involved in doing so. From the new managerialism we need to retain some useful management tools, and recognise a role for the central funding bodies, while rejecting the oppressive nature of centralist control. We are looking for "the new community development".

The new community development will need to focus on a few key additional principles. We need a much more sophisticated analysis of community development. This must begin with a much more honest analysis of community development as a political process. Community development is about increasing the power of some segments of the community, and it is about a redistribution of power. Community workers are necessarily power brokers, and should be recognised as such. That is not necessarily a bad thing provided that everyone, including the workers themselves, are clear about that. If community development is seen as a political process then certain logical consequences follow, and certain practical steps become clearer. Some of these are:

* Community development does not necessarily involve mobilising a community action group from nothing; it may be much more effective, and relavent to broaden existing decision making forums, to make existing decision making forums more accessible, and to open up a wider community dialogue.

* Any redistribution of power, whether it be concerning decision making, or the distribution of resources, will almost inevitably trigger a defensive reaction by those who see their own power base threatened. This process is not necessarily a bad thing; on the contrary some (moderate) social conflict is a necessary stimulus to reflection and change. However it needs to be recognised and dealt with constructively. That means setting in place mechanisms for debate, negotiations, and mediation. It means channelling dialogue in constructive ways, advocating for the disadvantaged, but recognising the fears of existing groups.

* The community worker needs institutional support and researching. However the community worker is potentially in a position of enormous power, as resourcer, power broker, and negotiator. There needs to be some structure of accountability for the worker, and some mechanism for checks and balances to ensure against potential abuse of power.

* The political process extends far beyond the local community, and includes Local Government, State and Commonwealth Government departments and parliaments. Community development decisions at the local level should be made within the context of the larger political arena. It may often be the case that a natural coalition of interests includes local community sector organisations and Local Government Council. There is a tension between local interests on the one hand and centralist control on the other. By advocating on behalf of local community organisations, Council may restore the balance of power between the two.

* It is necessary, and possible, to integrate community development and planning. The submission model does not necessarily negate social planning. Needs based planning does not necessarily require centralist funding control. The two approaches have been set up in unnecessary contradiction. Social planning can be an intregal part of community development, provided that there is free access to good information, and provided that there is real consultation and open decision making. Local Government is ideally placed to bring these two processes together. State and Commonwealth Government Departments are not.

* It is necessary, and possible, to break the nexus between researching and control. This is more difficult, but still possible. It requires a careful delineation of the roles of the central (state and commonwealth) funding bodies, and the local organisations, (including Council) along the lines of the 1990 Australian Local Government Association report. This report recognises the right of National and State Governments to set broad funding program guidelines, and to require basic accountability measures. Beyond that however, detailed program planning, development, and service provision should be left to the local level. The same argument applies to Council vis a vis its own community. Council researching should not be at the expense of organisational autonomy. Again we are talking about a delicate balancing of power.

* It is necessary, and possible to integrate all aspects of human endeavour within the total concept of community development. Community development should address, not only the social and health needs of the community, but also employment generation, and the care of the natural environment. The many and diverse needs of human beings living in a community need to be addressed in a holistic way.

## ISSUES FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

While there are undoubtedly many reasons for Local Government to continue a commitment to the new community development approach to community services, there remain important and complex issues that need to be resolved, if Council's role is to be effective. There is indeed considerable concern and confusion over Council's most effective role in community services, as highlighted in the recent survey by Wollongong Council (Pyett and Williams, 1992). The issues centre around a number of key questions.

WHO INITIATES: There is some debate about who should take the initiating role in any community action, whether it should be council or the community itself, or some other agency. Community development is essentially a bottom up process. The principles of empowerment and participation stress the importance of people taking part in decisions that effect their lives. The principle of self help emphasises that people must take action for themselves, on their own behalf. In this view, people within the community must be the initiators. Occasionally this happens, usually at times of extreme crisis and collective anger. However as argued in this paper, those with the greatest needs are also least able to initiate action on their own behalf, either because they lack the skills and resources to act, or because they lack the self confidence to do so, or because they are too busy just

trying to survive. It is precisely because they are unable to initiate action on their own behalf that the needs of the disadvantaged remain unmet. So very often action must be initiated by someone else, someone who is close enough to the situation to recognise the need, but far enough removed not to be disempowered by it. That does not necessarily require Council initiation. It is possible that someone else within the community may initiate action, a formal or informal leader of the community in question such as a church leader, or local businessman, or a local organisation. However there are serious dangers with this approach. Community leaders are likely to have their own version of the community needs. They are likely to provide assistance in a manner that maintains or increases the dependency relations of the people in question, thus disempowering, rather than empowering them. And the interests the initiator is serving may be those of the people in question, or they may be their own. The initiation of action requires in the first place that the needs of the people in question be noticed, and a decision made that some action should be taken, that it is deserved. People whose needs are invisible to the wider community, or who are considered "undeserving" are unlikely to have action taken on their behalf.

There are good reasons for Council to take on the role of initiator. Indeed the Dept of Local Government Draft Position Statement specifically mentions "Initiation/catalyst/responder" within Council's discretionary responsibilities. Council and its community workers, are in an ideal position to identify real needs of those who have no voice, whose needs would remain invisible. It can be argued that council members are the elected local community leaders, who have a brief to meet the interests of the community as a whole, and not only the interests of the powerful.

However, while councils may either "initiate" or "respond", they should avoid the temptation to "control". Initiation that provides the community in question maximum opportunity to participate in decision making and in the development and management of services lies well within the scope of community development. Many councils are able to develop an effective arrangement with local community organisations, so that council may suggest, inform , advise, resource, and support, but leaves the overt action, and the management of services to the community based organisation.

WHO PLANS: Community development is often associated with the submission based model of funding. The community in question identifies its own needs, and submits for funding to meet these needs. There is no overall planning for the provision of needs. The result of such an approach is a hit and miss, and often iniquitous distribution of resources. The alternative model is needs-based funding. Needs based funding is based on an assessment of need that use highly centralised aggregated data sets, and allocation decisions made far from the community in need. There are many stories of inappropriate local services and facilities built to suit national funding guidelines and assessment of need, that are totally inappropriate to local conditions.

There is a very strong argument for Local Government to play a key role in the planning process. Local Government is in the ideal position to be able to draw on local knowledge and self-identification of need, as well as drawing on aggregated statistical demographic and need indicator data, ie to draw on the strengths of both the submission and needs-based model.

The NSW Dept. of Local Government Draft Position Statement identifies social planning within the core responsibilities of Council. The Australian Local Government Rationalisation report (1990) specifically addresses the potential for co-operative needs based planning. The report identifies the following planning roles for the Commonwealth and/or State Government:

* *specify program goals;*
* *establish the broad indicators of need on which to base the distribution of resources;*
* *develop the program design and broad strategies for the provision of services and facilities;*
* *identify the general principles and policies;*
* *develop broad service and quality standards;*
* *make broad resource allocation decisions;*

The report goes on to identify the following planning roles for Local Government:

* *specify goals of the Local Council and the community;*
* *identify and assess specific local needs, circumstances and requirements;*
* *identify local priorities, gaps, and overlaps in service arrangements;*
* *undertake consultation with service users, community groups and service providers; and*
* *provide local knowledge into the development of national/State program design.*

Planning done in this co-operative way does not violate the community development process. Planning becomes a key role for council.

WHO PAYS: It is important to break the nexus between funding and control of services. As it stands, whoever pays for the service also controls it. Or put the other way, whoever wishes to control the service, is also expected to pay for it. This provides a problem for the community development process and for Council. On the one hand the principle of self reliance suggests that the community should be reliant on its own resources ie should pay for its own development. This is a variant of the user-pays approach to development . The problem, as I have argued, is that disadvantaged users, those most in need of new services, simply haven't got the resources to pay. In most cases, neither does council, at least not under current funding arrangements with State and Commonwealth Governments.

This leaves most funding in the hands of national or state funding programs. However the growing importance of national or State funding programs has increased the demand by those bodies for more control, both over the allocation of funds, through a needs-based planning process, and through detailed and rigorous accountability controls, not only over financial expenditure, but also over service methods, outcomes, and performance standards. As argued in this paper, the effect of these developments has been to shift the control of services away from the community and into the hands of State and Federal bureaucrats. This is so despite the fact that the local community and Council provides

considerable resources of their own in the form of volunteer labour, facilities and knowledge. The net effect of this process is to reverse community development. Decision making is top-down; the people in need of services may receive them, but under conditions of increased dependency and disempowerment.

Council can play a very important role in two respects. One is to take on the discretionary responsibility of advocacy, particularly in negotiating the terms of the funding arrangement with other levels of government. The other is to make a careful commitment to genuine participatory consultation and management for those activities and services under the control of council. It is important to break the nexus between funding and control.

WHOSE VOICE IS HEARD: According to community development principles, every person, no matter how disadvantaged, has a right to be heard, to act, to participate, to have their needs met.

The political reality in most communities is quite different. The wealthy and the powerful are heard. The poor and powerless are not. The wealthy and powerful maintain their position of advantage at least partly through political dominance. This is as true at the local level as at the national. Very often the local elite is able to control, or influence Council decisions. To the extent that community development succeeds in truly empowering disadvantaged people, then these groups within the community may be seen as a threat to the existing elites. People of disadvantage may very well be prevented from improving their position simply because they are perceived to be dangerous, or undesirable in the eyes of the elite, or in the eyes of the "silent majority". In a democracy, the majority wins. Within this system, disadvantaged minorities lose out, are further disempowered. The targets of most community development work in Local Government areas are likely to be these "undesirable" minority groups: Aboriginal people, unemployed youth, the intellectually disabled, non-English speaking migrants.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY WORKER IN COUNCIL: Council has the big advantage of being area based and multi-functional. One of the strengths but also difficulties of the community workers' role is that they are expected to work within a local area, but across all functional areas of human need, and (for generalist workers) with all age groups. Very often this means that the worker must cross disciplinary boundaries, and the often sharp boundaries of functional departments service categories. This often brings the worker in potential conflict with other agents who feel that their territory has been invaded. A community worker of Council is not immune from these disputes, but at least has the legitimation of Council's multi-functional brief. On the other hand, most council community workers now receive state subsidy for a specialist worker, such as aged services, or childrens services. This has the effect of once again reducing the functional scope of the community work, and once again returning to an artificially narrow concept of human and community need. It is essential that councils continue to employ generalist community workers, and that specialist workers work as part of a general community development (corporate) team.

The workers role is always difficult. Community workers are necessarily power brokers. That makes them powerful in their own right, with the potential for abuse of power. Yet they are expected to advocate on behalf of the powerless, the unpopular, the disadvantaged. The task is made more difficult for the Council community worker, by

their divided loyalties. Community workers are employees of Council. If they are to be effective, it is essential that they are accepted as such by Council, and that they see themselves as such. There are many stories about "the sand shoe brigade" being relegated to an isolated outbuilding of Council, and finding the greatest barrier to effective action was Councils derisive attitude to the community services team. Yet community workers also represent the interests of the community within council. Sometimes this means representing the interests of unpopular minority groups to a hostile majority. If workers fail at this task, they are not addressing the principles of equity and community development.

Successful community workers in Council have developed useful strategies for negotiating these contradictions. Workers may take the role of providing information- informing council of the extent and nature of community needs - informing community groups of available resources. Political action, particularly of an unpopular kind, is best left to community organisations outside council to initiate, though the worker may take on a mediating or negotiating role in a neutral capacity on behalf of Council. Very often, the most useful thing a worker can achieve is to broaden the constituency of existing decision making forums, to make existing decision making forums more accessible, and to open up a wider community dialogue. This is not radical action, but ensures that Council operates as intended, with real and open participatory democracy for all its citizens. Council can thus provide the necessary infrastructure for local community action.

Not all community development work entails unpopular groups. It is important therefore, for Council workers to be active, and to be seen to be active on behalf of all groups, including the more "acceptable " disadvantaged groups such as the elderly (senior citizens week), or residents in new estates. Their needs are as important, and if served well, provide a favourable image for council and for the community development process.

The same is true of cost. Not all community development requires massive outside funding. Small, inexpensive but effective programs can create a positive climate of opinion for the extension of community development to less popular causes. Many Councils are also impressed by the ability of community workers to bring additional money into the area in the process of developing new services. A new service, even for a hitherto unpopular group, if it succeeds in increasing local resources, is likely to be seen in a more favourable light. Having said all this however, it is important that the worker not yield to the temptation, or the pressure to only serve the interests of the elite, or the majority, or the popular and "deserving" community.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICE PROVISION: There are those who argue that the two processes are mutually exclusive. Service provision by council, is essentially a top-down process, that maintains a dependency relationship and disempowers the client. In fact, of course community development can lead to service provision as one outcome of the process, though not the only, or necessarily the best outcome. Nonetheless, for many, the provision of services and facilities is the main justification for a community development approach.

It is also possible to argue that service provision can be the springboard for community development. The service provides an existing focus for community action. People meet there, and can be put in contact with others. An existing service may provide a model of

what can be done, a recognition that peoples needs are important, a receiving point for the identification and documentation of further need. An existing service can provide the necessary critical mass for knowledge and the transmission of skills, and for the mobilisation of peoples energy for community action.

Direct service provision can equally serve to suppress people's energy, to maintain dependency relations and to disempower. Whether it does so or not depends, not so much on the type of service, but on how it is managed. Everything depends on the process of sharing information, sharing skills, sharing decision making.

WHO MANAGES: If Council does become involved in direct service provision, who should manage that service, and how? There is no single best answer to this question. Very often a new service will be established as a direct and planned outcome of a community development process. The embryonic service probably needs considerable managerial support during the establishment stages. Many new services have failed simply because the organisation lacked the skills and knowledge, and the necessary support structures to establish it properly. The obvious immediate solution is to operate the new service under a committee of council (527, 530A). State and Commonwealth funding programs may insist on some form of incorporated structure for the new service, and a committee of council suffices. Under these terms, Council is the employing body of any paid staff, and the new service is accountable through the committee to Council itself.

The danger to Council of this approach, is that Council could be left to deal with a politically embarrassing and difficult situation, should anything go wrong (which it is sure to). The danger to the organisation is that the empowering process becomes reversed. After the months or years of struggle to obtain the service, control of the service is taken away from the community members themselves, and given to (a not necessarily sympathetic) council. This need not happen provided the committee is largely made up of community members, and provided Council continues to adopt an enabling, supportive position with respect to the new service.

The alternative is to launch any new service under its own legally autonomous structure, controlled by a management committee that is directly elected from the membership/ local residents. Provided the organisation is adequately resourced, and has access to the necessary skills and knowledge, then this management form comes the closest to maintaining the community development philosophy.

The difficulty for any new organisation is that it usually does not have the structures, procedures, and resources to operate fully independently. These things take time to develop. A very common and useful approach is to place the embryonic organisation under the aegis of either a large local umbrella community organisation, or under Council itself. The new organisation remains under this "host" structure until such time as it is able to develop the required structures and resources to incorporate itself independently of the parent or host body. This process appears to work well, except where the parent body has difficulty letting go control.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: The question of how community development is related to economic development has far reaching implications. The tradition of community development in third world nations has been quite explicitly aimed at economic development at the local

level. On the other hand, community development in advanced capitalist countries has largely been concerned with redressing social rather than economic disadvantage. However, inevitably the two forms of disadvantage are entwined; social disadvantage is unlikely to be permanently resolved without economic development. This is coming to be recognised, in the British Inner Urban Program, in some U.S. experiments, and in the Australian Local Employment Initiative.

There are dangers, however in allowing local economic development to become separated from the larger social development agenda. Local employment initiatives should be part of the larger goal of redistributing resources so that disadvantaged sections of the community have improved access to income. They should not be about assisting the already advantaged to accrue even greater wealth at the community's expense. Unfortunately, a deregulated market economy combined with an individualistic ethos and financial incentives, has exactly this regressive effect. Council has a very useful role to play, not only in encouraging local employment initiatives, but in integrating and co-ordinating economic and social planning, and in involving all segments of the community, including the disadvantaged, and where necessary advocating on behalf of disadvantaged groups in the establishment of local employment initiatives to benefit them.

## CONCLUSIONS: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE LARGER POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Over the past two decades, governments at various levels have adopted a community development philosophy for a time. The Commonwealth Government of Whitlam introduced the Australian Assistance Plan, which explicitly espoused and promulgated community development methods.

Various NSW Government departments have employed community workers and have funded community development programs including the former Departments of Health, Family and Community services, Housing, and Environment and Planning. Nearly all of these programs were dismantled by subsequent Liberal governments. As far as I am aware, the only community development program currently being funded by the NSW government is the Area Assistance Scheme. And that is under continuing threat. That is not to say that community development will necessarily only survive under a Labour government. Certainly the issues of equity and the redistribution of resources are more likely to fit a Labour agenda. But the issues of self reliance and independence are more likely to fit a Liberal/ conservative agenda. Interestingly, the community development process needs both emphases to be effective.

The question then of course is where does that leave Local Government? At one level it must feel like Local Government has been left behind as the new managerialism sweeps all in its path. Local Government itself is struggling with issues of restructuring in line with the economic rationalist agenda. And Local Government is chaffing from the increasing often arbitrary demands of centralist planning, from the often unreasonable demands for local researching but centralist reporting, accountability and performance monitoring.

In my view, the present conditions also make "windows of opportunity" for Local Government. Community development will only survive as a philosophy if Local Government nurtures it. Community development really only works well at the local level any way. But Local Government is sufficiently powerful in its own right to make a real difference. As argued in this paper, Local Government is in the ideal position to know its community needs, to access and distribute crucial information, to mobilise local energies, to organise and co-ordinate community action, to advocate and lobby on behalf of the disadvantaged, to speak out and be heard. Local Government, particularly when it adopts a community development approach, is the best possible antidote to increased centralised state control of local services. It has the only real potential for mobilising local material and political resources. And not incidentally, local action and self help is the only real possibility when the economy is in disarray and all else fails.

People power still works. That has been proved over and over again, often dramatically throughout the world. On the local scene we only have to look at the effectiveness of the AAS campaign in 1991. That would not have been effective without the combined, co-operative and concerted action of community groups and Local Government. Provided that Local Government works with and not against its local communities, it can achieve almost anything.

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## APPENDIX: SOME DEFINITIONS

There is no one accepted definition of Community Development. Indeed the definition itself is hotly contested. One could argue that a definition reflects, implicitly or explicitly, an incipient theory of community development, and a specific philosophical or political orientation. Therefore the definitions that are specifically cited or adopted, particularly those in official documents, may provide interesting insights into the position adopted by those agencies.

The standard United Nations definition is often used as a starting point for other definitions. That states that community development is "A process of social action in which people of a community organise themselves for planning and action; define their common and individual needs and solve their problems; execute their plans with a maximum reliance upon community resources, and when necessary with services and materials from Governmental and non-Governmental agencies outside of the community".

As an example of a non-government definition, McArdle defines community development as "the development and utilisation of a set of ongoing structures which allow the community to meet its own needs" (1989). Many writers simply assume a common understanding of the term, or proceed to identify what they regard as key principles of community development.

In 1986, the Office of Local Government of the Commonwealth Government together with the State Local Government Ministers established a joint officers task force to examine "Community Development, Human Services, and Local Government". The task force produced several reports, a national consultation process, and two national conferences. The 1986 report defined community development as follows:

> *Community development is the process by which residents and /or organisations in localities can be involved in the planning of, mobilisation of local resources for, and provision of , services and facilities for the enrichment and betterment of the residents and other persons using the locality.*

The 1986 report identified a number of key characteristics of community development, as expressed in this definition. They are:

- a concern with the affairs of communities located in discrete areas.
- a close involvement by community members in the activities and decisions of the community.
- the encouragement of community self-reliance through the mobilisation of local resources.
- the achievement of objectives locally set or assented to.

The report goes on to observe

> *Further to this, the objectives of community development can be expressed in terms of specific services or facilities, (that is where the process of community development is viewed as a technique which is employed to*

*achieve other objectives) or in terms of the process of enhancing communities' capacities to determine their own needs and priorities (that is where the process of community development is viewed as a goal in itself).*

Not everyone agreed with this definition of community development. For example, in the conference proceedings of the Second National Conference on Local Government and Community Development, the group designated to respond to this aspect of the task force report specifically commented that "there was a need to emphasise empowerment and equity in the definition of community development" (p29).

The Community Services Manual produced by the NSW Local Government and Shires Association in 1983, defines community development in the following terms:

*Community development can be considered to be a process of social action in which people of a community organise themselves for planning and action; define their common and individual needs and solve their problems; execute their plans with a maximum reliance upon community resources. The process generally concentrates on self-help initiated by the community itself. Community development itself comprises two different kinds of approach:*

- *Locality development, based on the active participation and fullest possible reliance on the community's initiative;*
- *Social action, based on action taken by disadvantaged segments of the population in order to demand and obtain a more equitable distribution of resources within the wider community.*

The NSW Community Services Review prepared by Lionel Davis in 1987, in defining community development, specifically quotes from both the 1986 Task force definition, and the NSW Community Services Manual definition, in order to highlight the two approaches.

In 1988 the NSW Department of Local Government issued a "Draft Position Statement on Local Government and Community Services" which specifically urges Local Government to undertake community development as a core responsibility of Council. That paper defines community development in terms of the four characteristics listed by the national task force 1986 report cited above. However it then adds a fifth characteristic, being "a concern with the equitable provision of services and opportunities to and within a community". This definition again seeks to include both approaches.

It is probably fair to say that the first of these two approaches represents a politically conservative approach and the second a relatively more radical one. Governments in general are most likely to endorse the first but not the second; community workers are more likely to insist on both, with emphasis on the second approach.

Of interest here is the role of direct service delivery within community development. The taskforce definition specifically includes the provision of services and facilities within the

scope of community development. Most community workers would probably contest this, arguing that community development is about the process by which these and other outcomes (such as voting rights) are achieved, not about the service itself.

A survey carried out by Wollongong City Council in 1991 sought the views of other Local Government Councils in NSW on the nature of community development. They found that roughly one third of councils defined community development in terms of Councils making decisions and directly providing services for the community. About the same number emphasised working with the community. Less that 15% emphasised action by the community itself. (Pyett and Williams, 1992).

The other point of contention between definitions is about the source of the resources referred to. The conservative position emphasises maximum, or sole reliance on the community's own resources. The more radical approach emphasises issues of equity, which normally requires considerable external researching. Similarly, more radical definitions state, or imply the need for structural change to redistribute resources in the interests of greater equity.