

## **INTEGRATION OF HOUSING STRATEGIES WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT CORE BUSINESS.**

### *What was it that first got your Council involved in affordable housing issues?*

In 1985 the Local Government and Community Housing Program was established. In Roma at that time Council had employed a social worker/community development worker and this was seen as a project which could help answer a community need.

As described in that first application:

‘ Shortage of housing has been a chronic difficulty in Roma throughout the last few years. The situation has been severely exacerbated by a number of demographic changes occurring in Roma recently, for example;-

- a significant increase in population – 1000 extra over the last 12 months.
- the re-opening of the meatworks, which has brought many new itinerant families into the town.
- Many new developments in the town and district, eg:

A Civic Centre  
A Shopping Complex  
Three new housing Estates  
Significant expansion on all oil and gas companies  
The opening of a new School  
The expansion of Industrial Estates  
Existing Government Departments and Authorities have been enlarged and some Departments have opened offices within the District eg, Department of Children’s Services, Sunmap and Y.E.S.S.

Roma is fast becoming more than a country town- it is developing into a Regional Centre for the West. All these factors have contributed to produce a critical housing shortage, particularly for low-income families, and other disadvantaged groups.

There is a critical shortage of rental accommodation in the Roma area, and there are many, many families living in very unsatisfactory housing conditions.

A survey of the local Real Estate agents revealed how difficult it is to obtain rental accommodation in Roma at any cost. All agents agree that people are desperate, and demand is so high that virtually any price can be asked, even up to \$180.00 per week.’

It needs to be remembered that this is pretty high rent for a small country town back in 1985.

The Roma Town Council were and still are, the auspicing body for the Roma and District Community Support Association. This has been the case since 1980.

At that time there were no other social or community based organisations in town except for the traditional church based services.

***Was there resistance in Council to getting involved? On what was this based? How was it overcome?***

There was some initial concern but because Council had already taken on the auspice of the Association and thus they were prepared to accept that they could play a role.

The main concern related to whether it is a role for Council to play with the provision of housing?

Additionally Council were worried that this could be an example of State/Federal Government removing their responsibilities onto local government.

The Program was however targeting Low Income families and given the data of housing need in Roma they were accepting of the proposal. Supply for Community Housing now stands at 11 dwellings housing both families and aged people.

Council also did all the administrative work needed for the titles etc. Additionally they have never charged rates on any of those properties.

***What are the main strategies your Council has adopted?***

Since the early start in Community Housing provision there has been a continual involvement in providing more housing. The following chart shows the various applications over the years.

## **Roma Community Housing**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Application</u>	<u>Submission Amount</u>
1985	Funding application for the construction of 5 x 3 bedroom houses. Roma Town Council –donation of land, and wavering of rates.	\$225 000.00
<b>9/1985</b>	<b>Roma’s Community Housing Program received a grant for the construction of 2 x 3 bedroom houses. Roma Town Council provided the land.</b> <b>7 Elmer Street &amp; 107 Miscamble Street.</b>	<b>\$90 000.00</b>
7/1988	Funding application to construct 3 x 3 bedroom houses. Roma Town Council will provide the land and waver rates charges.	\$157 500.00
7/1989	Funding Submission for the construction of 6 x 2 bedroom units. Roma Town Council will provide the land and waiver rate charges.	\$330 750.00
8/1990	Funding submission to construct 2 x 2 bedroom units. Roma Town Council will provide the land and waiver rate charges. This submission offered and alternative to construction was offered – to purchase 2 x 2 bedroom units available for \$70 000.00 through a local Real Estate.	\$116 550.00
<b>1/1991</b>	<b>Roma’s Community Housing Program received a grant for the construction of 2 x 2 bedroom units.</b> <b>7 &amp; 7a Whip Street.</b>	<b>\$117 000.00</b>
9/1991	Funding application for the construction of 5 x 2 bedroom units. Roma Town Council will provide the land and waiver rate charges.	
4/1992	Funding application for the construction of 5 x 2 bedroom units (aged/disability) Roma Town Council will provide the land and waiver rate charges.	\$350 000.00
9/1992	Joint funding application between ROMA TOWN COUNCIL, BUNGIL SHIRE COUNCIL & BOORINGA SHIRE COUNCIL FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF 6 X 3 BEDROOM HOUSES. Roma- 2 x 3 bedroom houses Injune- 2 x 3 bedroom houses	\$179 800.00 \$170 000.00

	Mitchell- 2 x 3 bedroom houses Each local council will donate the land for these houses.	\$174 300.00
<b>11/1992</b>	<b>Roma Community Housing program was successful in receiving funding to construct 5 x 2 bedroom unit (aged/disability)</b> <b>3-5 Beitz Street.</b>	<b>\$315 000.00</b>
<b>9/1993</b>	<b>Roma, Bungil &amp; Booringa Councils were successful with their joint application for 6 x 3 bedroom houses.</b> <b>Roma- 7 Beitz Street.</b> <b>9 Beitz Street.</b>	<b>\$84 800.00</b> <b>\$94 500.00</b>
1/1999	Funding application for the installation of 6 evaporative air-cooling systems and the installation of security screens in 11 Community Housing facilities.	
<b>9/2000</b>	<b>Roma community Housing successful in receiving reimbursement for the installation of security screens. This funding is to be used for Community housing upgrades.</b>	<b>\$34 000.00</b>

Council have now run out of land that they could provide and the program has not grown with any new facilities since 1993.

Council continue to support the Association with sponsorship and involvement on the Management Committee. The deputy Mayor and one other councillor are on that Committee.

Workers are involved in other housing areas such as Crisis Housing and Crisis and Transitional Housing. All up we manage 26 facilities.

***How has the issue of the need for affordable housing influenced other parts of Council business eg, town planning, health regulations, community development, rates and charges?***

I can still recall the council plumber (a local who was actively involved in developing his own rental properties) arguing to me that if we keep building these houses he will never be able to make a profit. It's interesting that now he has left the council, and is a private contractor who does plumbing for our community housing. It just goes to show one should never burn bridges particularly in small country towns.

I have already mentioned how Council have waved rates and because we are such a small Council we do not have the town planning issues that other council's may have.

I believe from a community development perspective concepts of needs analysis, better decision making, increased community confidence and relationships, networking, development of community profiles, resource development, community service delivery, policy development, access and equity, leadership, community identity capacity building and participation have all been enhanced in some way.

**OHP NO 1** shows for your interest some aerials of two smaller towns in South West Queensland of Bedourie and Birdsville between the years of 1995-1998.

***Who are your main partners in the community and in other levels of Government? What means (if any) do you have for involving tenants/people in housing need in your decisions?***

Workers have played an active role with being on the Management Committee for the Queensland Community Housing Coalition and I was on the Community Housing Grants Board for two years.

We also participate on the Maranoa Balonne Housing Group and the South West Queensland Regional Steering Committee, which consists of the sub-regions of Maranoa/Balonne and Elsewhere housing groups. **OHP NO 2**  
From the very beginning of the involvement Tenant Participation has been espoused as being not only valuable but also necessary as part of the program.

I recall in the early days that the concept of tenant involvement was quite new and unheard of from Council. Council were somewhat unsure of this initially and even had some comments to make about the selection of who should be housed in the facilities. I must say they never vetoed any selection or process but did ask questions at times.

Close association with the Regional Department of Housing exists.

A Tenant for our Community Housing sits on the Management Committee of the Roma and District Community Support Association. This is to ensure tenant input into management decisions eg, rent reviews, maintenance, upgrades, tenant selection etc.

***Are there any “no-go” areas in terms of your Council’s involvement in affordable housing-things your Council definitely will not get involved in or responses you won’t consider? What are they and why?***

Council has always been very open to new need areas including youth housing but we have never been able to attract specific funding for this project.

***What would be your assessment of the impact you have had on housing need in your community?***

In a word Positive.

There have been issues over the years but Council have always been prepared to look and learn and be involved in an area of community service provision, which is not traditional for local government.

The social benefits to towns include:

- Suitable housing allows and encourages families to live in the town
- Towns have a better social mix with the provision of suitable housing for families and seniors
- The stability of communities is improved
- The benefits carry into the other parts of the community
- Seniors citizens are retained in their local community
- Contributes to a local economy that is self-sustainable. (J. Siggs)

Not only have we developed housing in Roma we have also enhanced those other aspects of “community”.

We could develop more community housing but do not at this stage have the resources or land to do so.

***Where do you see Council going with this issue in the future?***

Council will expand the program if and when resources become available.

***If you had one piece of advice for Councils just starting to address housing need, what would it be?***

I would think it's really important to look at your long-term outlook rather than just the here and now. Additionally you must link with others who have done it before and the resource workers and networks that exist around the state.