



LOCAL GOVERNMENT
COMMUNITY SERVICES
ASSOCIATION
OF AUSTRALIA INC.

STRATEGIC PLAN

2001 - 2003

VISION

To use our combined experience, expertise and wisdom to achieve the development of better communities.

To develop strong relationships nationally to promote and achieve understanding of wellbeing frameworks and good practice.

Principles

The Local Government Community Services Association of Australia will adopt a local government focus in its development of policy.

Policies and activities of the National Association must recognise the diversity that exists across local government in Australia.

In all its activities, the Association will provide opportunities for input by all States and Territories Associations of Local Government Communities Services/Development.

The Association will recognise the breadth and capacities of its membership and will encourage participation in Association activities.

The Association will support initiatives aimed at achieving better integration and cooperation between all local government professions and allied peak bodies.

The Association will promote processes that achieve integrated planning.

The Association supports change in local government to achieve best practice, innovation and better quality services based on social justice.

POLICY

To effectively formulate and influence Local Government's response on issues of social policy.

Strategies

- To determine priority policy and advocate areas based on discussion with member states and other stakeholders.
- Develop key policy principles and a process for policy development including resources required - see better Communities and Wellbeing document (see website www.lgcsaa.org.au and in attachment).

- To undertake to share policy frameworks developed in each state via website, state newsletters and other forms of communication.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT

To influence the priorities and culture of local government in Australia so that it effectively represents the vision, needs and priorities of communities.

Strategies

- Establish a co-operative partnership with state and national peak bodies, Non-Government Organisations, tertiary institutions and other stakeholders.
- Co-operate with the national Office of Local Government in the national promotion of the achievements of local government.
- Establish strategic alliances with other professional associations to encourage an integrated approach to local government's planning responsibilities and service delivery outcomes.
- Promote and encourage best practice.
- Promote a culture and workforce that provides an opportunity for the professional development of community services, social planning and community development staff.
- Advocate for integrated social, economic, environmental and cultural planning in local government in order to build vital and viable communities.

MANAGEMENT

Establish and maintain a national management structure that supports the decision-making, information and policy needs of the Association.

Strategies

- Maintain a national website to resource the operation of the Association.
- To allocate resources for advocacy work in key policy areas.
- Conduct executive meetings with clear purpose.

- Identify and obtain funding to operate the Association.
- Maintain a written communication system to the state and territory associations on issues relevant to the membership.
- Organise a biennial conference to promote and showcase policy and practice in community development and stimulate policy debate and innovation.

REPRESENTATION

Establish and maintain an Association charter to facilitate national access and representation with other national organisations and government forums.

Strategies

- Advocate within established forums for appropriate policy direction to further the interests of community services and community development in local government.
- Promote opportunities for involving various members in representation on appropriate organisations and government committees.

PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATIONS

Facilitate opportunities for promotion of the local government community services professional forums and networks.

Strategies

- Publicise best practice initiatives through the website.
- Develop integrated communication systems and processes.

Definitions of Terms for Local Government Community Development

Community Well-being

A mix of social, cultural, economic and environmental factors impact upon community wellbeing outcomes which are described in terms of livability, conviviality, equity, adequate prosperity, sustainability, viability¹ and vitality². Such outcomes are also dependent upon a commitment to core cultural values of community wellbeing, a holistic and integrated approach to community development and participatory democracy at the local level³.

Community Services

Community services may be defined as system for providing support to sustain the functioning of individuals, families and groups, children and young people, to maximise their potential for development and to enhance community well being.

Community services are often not only directed towards target groups such as families, low income earners, women, unemployed groups, people with disabilities, aged people, children, youth, people from non English speaking backgrounds, Aboriginal and Islander peoples and victims of violence and abuse.

Community services are often provided in areas such as housing, shelters and refuges, employment and training, family support, public and community transport, child care, income support, finance and emergency assistance, health, education, community centres, community information, legal and consumer advocacy, community safety and counselling/emotional support.

Tools in community services incorporate counselling; information provision and referral; provision of practical assistance; skill development; advocacy and negotiation; management, research and administration.

Community Development

Community development may be defined as both an outcome and an approach resulting in local communities and communities of interest growing and advancing. In relation to local government, a community development approach generally involves working closely with the community to define their needs and issues of concern and to develop strategies for action.

Community Planning

Community planning is an integrated, participatory approach to planning for a range of services across the council area. Its core feature is that other agencies are involved in negotiating a common approach, with the Council having a leadership role."

¹ Hancock 1994; Labonte, Hancock and Edwards 1999

² Landry 1994

³ Just, Vibrant and Sustainable Communities 2001

Social Planning

Social planning is an organised process for investigating and responding to the needs and aspirations of people who live or work in a community. It integrates the participatory processes and values of community development with the technical activities of planning."

Best Practice

Is an evolving response aimed at improving our social environment through an integrated strategic plan, undertaken in partnership with government, local communities and the private sector. Best practice in community development seeks to highlight the importance of a shared direction on:

- The respect of the unique dignity of the human person and customs;
- The development of community through consultation and participation, and networking with other communities;
- A critical understanding of the important relationship between social, cultural, physical and economic environments;
- An appreciation that organisational systems are needed to support the growth of communities and have continuous improvement; and
- The need for organisational systems to be accountable to the community and to have outcomes measured for efficiency and effectiveness.

Social justice

Social justice is based on the intrinsic value of every person and acknowledges individual rights and entitlements. Social justice in terms of equal access to power and resources, equality of opportunity and outcomes can be promoted through social participation, community empowerment and by addressing particular imbalances and disadvantages faced by groups and individuals.

Social capital

Social capital differs from other forms of capital - natural, physical, financial and human - in that it originates from social relationships. Social capital is underpinned by trust in relationships with other individuals, groups, organisations and institutions, which creates the potential for reciprocity between people, connections within communities and community empowerment. Local governments can facilitate social capital growth through good governance, accountable and transparent management, strengthening social networks and encouraging active citizenship.

Governance

Governance is concerned with the overall vision setting, policy direction and major decision making of governments and organisations. Democratic governance differs from other forms of governance in that there is accountability to an electorate of citizens who have equal rights and a responsibility to see that the community's assets are managed in the public interest for current and future generations.

Citizenship

Citizenship is increasingly seen as participation beyond voting rights. Active citizenship in democratic societies is grounded in universal rights and responsibilities. It involves participation in decision making that effects social, cultural, economic and environmental conditions of daily life. Councils can help build active citizenship by devolving and sharing power with citizens and encouraging citizens to act with others in promoting the common good and quality of life for all people in local communities.

Sustainability

Sustainability aims to maintain and develop the natural, built and social environments so that they are able to meet quality of life requirements without compromising ecological processes or the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Sustainable development at the local level involves acknowledging indigenous prior occupation, cultural heritage and respecting Aboriginal spiritual connection with the land and sea.