

**FRAMEWORK FOR PRESENTATION TO NATIONAL LOCAL
GOVERNMENT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE 2001:
*The Commonwealth Stronger Families and Communities Strategy***

Overview of Strategy

- *Where has it come from?*
 - Government recognition that families and communities provide the best system of social and moral support
 - Acknowledgement of the importance of social capital/community capacity. Growing body of evidence showing that connection to social networks buffer families against many of the adverse effects of economic disadvantage and other social problems.

- *What is it?*
 - Announced by the Prime Minister in April 2000
 - \$240 million over 4 years
 - 9 inter-related initiatives aimed at supporting families through effective early intervention and prevention responses, and strategies to strengthen communities.
 - 5 of these initiatives form the basis for community driven projects under the Strategy:

Stronger Families Fund (\$40 million) to encourage communities to find new ways to strengthen families, with a focus on early childhood development and effective parenting.

Early Intervention, Parenting and Family Relationship Support (\$47.3 million) – to encourage communities to provide innovative services and activities such as parenting support and playgroups, marriage and relationship education and family counselling.

Potential Leaders in Local Communities (\$37.1 million) – to offer skills, development opportunities and support for potential community leaders (including those that may not traditionally have been seen in this role).

Local Solutions to Local Problems (\$15.4 million) to help communities to develop solutions to their own local problems and in the process build up their capacity.

“Can Do” Community (\$5.2 million)- to showcase real life examples where people have worked together to revitalise and strengthen their communities.

A New Approach by Government

(Why is the Strategy different from other programs?)

- Different approach to working with communities.
- Shift in focus towards the social networks of support that assist individuals, families and communities to prosper rather than focusing solely on specific problems like unemployment, homelessness and low income.
 - Asks the question: Why do some communities succeed in the face of social and economic challenges, where others fail? What can government do to influence these risk and protective factors?
 - If you help and support families and communities early on you can prevent problems becoming entrenched.
- Recognition that Government does not have all the solutions. Building capacity within families and communities relies upon the whole range of players working together – this includes *all tiers of government*, community leaders and organisations, individuals and business. Partnership reflected at all levels of the Strategy:
 - Stronger Families and Communities Partnership (national group)
 - Indigenous Round Table
 - State and Territory Advisory Groups
 - On the ground – focusing on the role of local government in facilitating local partnerships, bottom up approaches.
- Acknowledgement of the importance of responding flexibly to community needs rather than delivering pre-packaged program responses that don't meet the diverse range of family and community needs. The Strategy recognises that the real experts in solving problems are the people who make things work on the ground – including those working in local government. They know the local issues, and the solutions that are likely to be effective.

Current State of Play

- State and Territory Advisory Groups in place
- Outline of targeting plans
 - Purpose
 - Balancing need and opportunity in the identification of communities
- How do people apply for funding?
 - Community guide/expression of interest
 - Eligible funding recipients (including local government)
 - Role of FACS State/Territory Offices
 - Where to go for more information