

**Submission
No 21**

**INQUIRY INTO SERVICE COORDINATION IN
COMMUNITIES WITH HIGH SOCIAL NEEDS**

Organisation: Greater Taree City Council

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16 August 2015

The Director
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Ref: S612
Enquiries: S Wilkinson

Dear Hon Bronnie Taylor MLC

Please see below our submission to the Legislative Council Committee for Social Change – Inquiry into service coordination in communities with high social needs, on behalf of Greater Taree City Council.

Key issues

- The community service sector in a broad sense has experienced a significant amount of change in recent times. Changing of funding contracts for Non Government Organisations, the lack of certainty in whether funding will be available year to year and short term contracts has limited the level of collaborative approach within the sector.
- Worker time and resources to work collaboratively has been limited due to this uncertainty, as workers have had to focus more on their core functions and deliverables.
- Collaborative approach is essential for regional communities to address gaps and create efficiencies, because it provides an opportunity to share resources, reduce duplication of services and maximise outcomes for clients.
- Additional to this, collaborative approach is important because access to resources in regional areas can be limited. Organisations in metropolitan areas are able to use economies of scale to provide additional resources to collaborative projects. Community services within regional areas do not have access to the same opportunities and often collaborative projects are limited to a core group of organisations who have the capacity to support additional projects.
- In locations with high disadvantage, of which our local government area of Greater Taree is, adopting a holistic approach to addressing needs and issues is essential. Holistic approach involves collaboration of community development, social support and intensive case management to achieve the greatest outcomes.
- Recent changes to funding arrangements for housing services locally saw a swap in providers between the local youth and women refuges. There was no explanation from government, as to the reasoning behind this change and the affect on the sector and clients was significant. Some of the impacts included the loss of staff knowledge, client's awareness of new services and need to re build trust, and the sector needing to reorientate itself to new providers and referral pathways.

- Emerging services are well placed to maximise collaboration, but these services are often in the weakest position to win funding grants, due to scale and risk. There needs to be greater ability for new innovative projects to access recurrent funding

Evidence

- Locally the Manning Valley Neighbourhood Centre has facilitated a project in a local housing estate that has significant levels of disadvantage. The model they have implemented has been a social enterprise based around a community café. The model has utilised a collaborative approach to encourage other local services to co-locate in the shopping precinct and deliver joint projects to the local community. This model is a good example of utilisation of a holistic approach to addressing community need.

Recommendations

- Measures for collaboration be reported on as a part of funding agreements.
- Funding agreements are locked in for a minimum of two years, so that collaborative initiatives can be established and future direction and opportunities can be identified.
- Collaboration needs to be encouraged at the funding body level
- Funding bodies need to acknowledge that collaboration is an organic process and is often dependant on individual value placed on collaboration by workers and organisations. Policy needs to reflect this and encourage a bottom up approach to collaboration rather than top down.
- Policy needs to be better informed by community need and collaborative outcomes to create more innovative funding models.

If you require any further information on the recommendations above, please contact me on the details below.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Wilkinson
Community Engagement Officer

On behalf of the General Manager – Ron Posselt