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Executive Summary

Introduction

This project was commissioned by a group of Brisbane-based community and neighbourhood centres to analyse the role of these centres responding to local needs and issues including Brisbane's flood crisis.

The participating centres¹ are:

- Acacia Ridge Community Support Inc
- Benarrawa Community Development Association
- Communify
- New Farm Neighbourhood Centre
- Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre
- West End Community House
- Yeronga Flood Recovery Centre.

The project methodology included the following:

- the development and administration of a structured interview² with key stakeholders from each participating centre
- the collection of case studies about the work of centres
- the compilation of a brief literature review about the role of community development and community centres with a focus on outcomes
- a workshop with participating agencies to consider and analyse the report findings and contribute to recommendations
- a final report and consultation report as a basis for communication with government and other key stakeholders.

This report analyses:

- the role and purpose of community and neighbourhood centres in Australia
- the range of activities and programs undertaken by community and neighbourhood centres
- the nature of the relationship between these centres and their constituencies
- themes and consistencies in the approach to working with people in local communities
- the role that community and neighbourhood centres played before, during and after the floods
- resource implications of neighbourhood/community level work generally and in the context of disaster response and recovery.

Community and neighbourhood centres operate in a localised way to respond to a range of issues and opportunities. They have capacity for flexibility and responsiveness and to shift priorities and resources as new needs emerge. They work in ways that engage local people in local solutions and as such play a critical role in community capacity building.

National and state level research into the role of community and neighbourhood centres demonstrates they provide wide ranging activities and programs targeting diverse stakeholder groups. In most instances, they also undertake community development work focussed on reducing isolation, increasing engagement and building social cohesion.

¹ These Centres are described more fully in section 3 and also in Appendix 2.

² The interview is available in Appendix 1

The centres participating in this study provide a range of services, activities and opportunities to local people. In the case of the recent flood crisis, the centres brought deep local knowledge, extensive networks, existing volunteer capacity and locally based infrastructure all of which played a role in the immediate and ongoing recovery period. All of these capacities continue to play a significant role in meeting the needs of flood affected households and businesses as the quest for full recovery continues.

Yet centres have struggled over time for sufficient levels of core funding, a struggle made more apparent as they strive to meet significant and continuing local needs. This report explores the wider role of community and neighbourhood centres, provides tangible examples of the role they are playing in flood recovery and considers their capacity to address a range of local needs, issues and opportunities into the future.

The findings raise the prospect that poor levels of core funding place at risk the full scope of what community and neighbourhood centres could be doing to prevent isolation, link people to services and resources, and build stronger places of belonging capable of rising to any challenge, including crisis situations like Queensland's floods. Community and neighbourhood centres emerge as a cost effective option for government, and operate within a positive paradigm focussed on people's strengths and their potential to help each other thus reducing dependency on other forms of service delivery.

About community and neighbourhood centres

This report highlights significant consistency in the activities and programs of the participating centres with wider available data about community centres throughout Australia.

In a national survey of community centres, the following key characteristics were observed:

'While varying in size and focus, a shared characteristic of centres across all states is that they subscribe to a community development focus by responding to grass roots demands (Australian Neighbourhood Centres and Houses Association (ANHCA), 2009). Most utilise a community management model, which means they are community owned and managed (through volunteer committees). In other words, people 'are involved in defining and taking action on the issues that affect them' (Tett, 2005:126)'.
Rooney, 2011:5

Another characteristic of centres is generally that their focus is spatially defined with a 'strong identification or embedding within a particular geographical area, region and/or community' (Rooney, 2011:5). Centres themselves are also a 'place', sometimes a house although the work of centres generally also happens in a wide range of different spaces and locations across a place.

Izmir *et al* (2009:iii) highlight the flexibility of these centres in responding to local need which is relevant to an analysis of their role in flood response and recovery:

'The research shows that neighbourhood centres form a key element of the social infrastructure of disadvantaged communities. The infrastructure provided by the centres can be quickly mobilised, expanded or readjusted to respond to local needs, emerging issues or opportunities.'

Centres were usually funded from a combination of sources including:

- federal government
- state government
- local government
- other grants
- philanthropic funds
- corporate sponsorship
- membership fees

- self-generated (including facilities hire).

Centres generally offered a mix of direct service delivery and community development programs and operated as a base for a range of local activities, information and referral services and as a meeting place or community hub.

The work of centres was highlighted in the literature as contributing to social capital and social inclusion and most centres have strong volunteer programs. Where service delivery and community development was undertaken side by side, centres were often linking people between the two. Some people come to the centre in crisis and emerge as participants in a range of positive opportunities as a resident, leader and volunteer.

Centres through their community development work achieve important outcomes including the reduction of social isolation and increases in social capital and cooperation. A number of positive changes can be measured and a significant body of work is emerging with an emphasis on community development outcomes measurement linked to government policy priorities.

Broader published surveys of centres, and the work of peak bodies in Australia highlights some long-standing viability and sustainability issues which are also documented by the centres participating in this study.

The role of centres in flexible local responses to needs, issues and opportunities

“We were able to access local resources and relationships. We could move quickly and get people involved. We helped to increase the total level of volunteering and donations. We played a breadth of roles and we were often repositioning our role in a responsive way. Responsive repositioning is what we did, depending on needs and opportunities, and it changed every day.”

An assessment of the role of community and neighbourhood centres responding to the flood crisis

This report illustrates a number of case studies relating to the scope of work that the participating centres do. These case studies illustrate the centres' role in the following areas:

- as hubs of services
- as facilitators of local participation in planning and redevelopment
- contributing to consortium arrangements with other partners that improve outcomes for disadvantaged people and engage the wider community in solutions
- active outreach and innovative approaches to reaching and engaging local people
- building community connections and relationships including through reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- improving the inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

These centres also played a significant role before, during and after the flood crisis. Many of the centres continue to respond to community needs emerging from the flood crisis on a daily basis.

- Even those agencies directly affected worked to be available to the community almost immediately.
- Centres actively outreached to affected houses and businesses. In some instances groups of volunteers including professionals were coordinated by the centres to visit every affected house and business. This was quite systematic in some communities and resulted in a fine grain plan of what was needed. Volunteers and other resources were then deployed.
- Through outreach, needs were assessed and incoming volunteers were appropriately directed to assist. Some centres continue with outreach activities although the capacity for this is seriously limited by staffing resources.

- Centres quickly became a conduit for a range of local contributions of time, money, equipment and materials. Many continue to be involved in coordinating the distribution of resources, materials, furniture and other items to affected households.
- Centres linked with other key stakeholders including businesses, government and non-government agencies to harness resources and broker in services.
- Centres helped to establish and/or participate in flood recovery committees (or the equivalent) involving local leaders and stakeholders who are driving local recovery efforts.
- Centres developed information kits for residents which pulled together all available entitlements and tried to simplify the steps that people needed to take to secure resources that were on offer
- Centres produce newsletters providing the local area with information and updates.
- Centres ensured food was available to local people and to volunteers (either through directing donations, or direct provision). In some cases, community meals continue as a significant point of contact with affected residents.
- Centres also checked with immediate neighbours to ensure they were alright and had the assistance they needed.
- In particular, outreach and pre-existing knowledge of the community continue to be used to assess vulnerability and to provide specific responses to vulnerable residents. Regular visits to vulnerable households were undertaken in some instances at the beginning and centres continue to provide vulnerable households with ongoing support. Centres have identified an ongoing need for detailed outreach to affected households to assess their continuing needs.
- Where specific needs are assessed, linkages and active referrals were made to a range of other services (existing and within the centres or out to other agencies).
- Centres act as a physical base that people come to that is local and familiar.
- Some centres continue to coordinate volunteering effort within the community since the immediate crisis. This has a focus on local people volunteering in their local community with associated benefits for building local relationships, reducing isolation and increasing the sense of place.
- Where centres had service delivery responsibilities, contact was initially made with clients to assess their needs and ensure that service provision continued. If clients were flood affected, they worked to assist those clients.
- The Yeronga Centre began as an evacuation centre in the two days before the floods came and was then a respite centre where people could come, charge their phones and have some food. The Yeronga Centre provided 10,000 meals over four weeks and continues to provide daily meals as a gathering point. Twenty-five volunteers are involved in a range of activities at the centre including the provision of meals.
- Centres continue to be 'light on their feet' and adapt their existing services and infrastructure to the needs of flood affected households and businesses. One Centre for example had some units of housing and a vacancy was used to prioritise a flood affected household.

There was generally a sense that locality based centres are an important complement to larger centralised government and non-government services. Their contribution is unique and continues in a fine-grain way which also results in significant benefits to community cohesion and social capital which can be further leveraged in response to a range of other local issues and opportunities into the future.

Centres have been an important base for services and activities, however there are many examples of the agencies moving beyond centre-based work to do extensive outreach. The centres continue to be contacted by a wide range of other services including government agencies to assist with recovery planning, and other direct assistance including through galvanising volunteers.

The future: opportunities and challenges

The activities of the centres before, during and after the floods are consistent with the documented outcomes emerging from a wider body of literature and research. These outcomes link strongly to important policy frameworks such as social inclusion, increasing volunteering as one of the Q2 Targets, prevention and early intervention, and addressing vulnerability through place-based responses.

This report demonstrates the benefits to community, and efficiencies and economies for government, of generalist and holistic responses to people *in place*. These types of place-based organisations and infrastructure act as an anchor in communities. They are flexible and can move lightly in response to emerging needs, issues and opportunities including crises like the recent floods. The centres in this study are responding to a range of concerns and opportunities including the need for facilities and infrastructure, strengthening reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups, the inclusion of migrants and refugees, addressing the needs of homeless people and conducting active outreach using innovative methods.

Significant cost-benefits are also realised by enabling people through peer and community supports to build their own networks and relationships which help to prevent isolation, and over-reliance on service delivery. The work of community and neighbourhood centres links to other policy frameworks such as addressing mental health needs, improving social inclusion and focusing on prevention and early intervention.

The role of the centres as locality-based and flexible infrastructure is challenged by ongoing funding limitations including little support for core functions such as administration, community development, information, referral and coordination. There is also potential for centres to now build on the social capital and community connections forged during and after the flood crisis. Realising this potential has long term, positive implications for prevention and early intervention approaches to a range of issues. Centres are also a base from which communities can take greater responsibility for local issues and challenges into the future and facilitate local participation which manifests in a great sense of belonging, stronger natural helping networks and more volunteering.

Recommendations

Policy and resource framework for community and neighbourhood centres in Queensland

1. **That a strategic policy framework supporting community and neighbourhood centres is developed by the Queensland Government in partnership with centres.** This framework needs to recognise the importance and complementary nature of local-level infrastructure capable of responding to many issues and opportunities including during a crisis event. This framework should also include specific links to existing government policies such as prevention and early intervention, targets to increase volunteering, and place-based approaches to reducing disadvantage and social exclusion.
2. That the State Government increase funding to community and neighbourhood centres in Queensland to ensure capacity for a coordination role, administration role, a community development role and improved information and referral services. A funding model is needed that ensures centres have at least three core positions that are full-time, shifting away from contribution funding.

Strengthening the profile of community and neighbourhood centres

3. That Queensland community and neighbourhood centres join with national and state level peak bodies to advocate their ongoing role and contribution to all levels of government. In particular, that QCOS is engaged to develop a community centres policy to guide engagement with government.
4. That community and neighbourhood centres develop an awareness-raising strategy highlighting the full scope of their role, programs and activities as a way of engaging the wider community in

opportunities to participate. The purpose of this strategy is to strengthen the profile of centres as being places for everyone.

Disaster and recovery planning

5. That disaster plans and recovery plans at a National, State and Local Government level legitimise and describe a role for community and neighbourhood centres in front-line responses and recovery. Protocols should be included for triggering this response in a way that recognises this role as complementary to larger institutions and city/state-wide services. This role needs to be recognised with sufficient resources at the time of the crisis for more staff and capacity for activities, projects and material items needed by the community.

Partnerships in flood recovery

6. That protocols are developed between Brisbane City Council and other agencies funded for flood recovery work to ensure that community and neighbourhood centre can effectively and seamlessly broker those resources into their communities. Wherever possible, other specialist funded roles and positions should be based with local centres.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project scope and description

This project was commissioned by a group of Brisbane-based community and neighbourhood centres to analyse the role that these centres play including in flood responses and recovery. These centres³ include:

- Acacia Ridge Community Support Inc
- Benarrawa Community Development Association
- Community
- New Farm Neighbourhood Centre
- Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre
- West End Community House
- Yeronga Flood Recovery Centre.

All have long histories in their communities except for the Yeronga Flood Recovery Centre which has emerged in response to the continuing needs of the Yeronga (and district) community during the floods.

The centres involved in this project have played a significant role in responding to local needs, issues and opportunities. This foundation has been the basis for centres providing a significant response before, during and after Brisbane's January 2011 floods.

These centres bring various capacities and resources to wide-ranging community issues including:

- extensive, existing local relationships
- deep knowledge of the community including the demographic profile, location of infrastructure, agencies and other resources
- commitment to engaging local people in local solutions and to building the capacity of the communities in which they are active
- a capacity to create and support a number of volunteering roles
- understanding of the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable residents including where they are located enabling effective outreach during the immediate crisis
- an excellent understanding of local networks, resources, key stakeholders, leaders and organisations.

The extent of local needs has highlighted the resource issues experienced by these centres as they work to respond to ongoing community issues outside of an acute crisis such as the floods. The experience of responding to the floods emphasises the wider sustainability issues experienced by community and neighbourhood centres in Queensland. This report explores those issues by examining their role in recovery, and more generally.

In particular, this report analyses:

- the role and purpose of community and neighbourhood centres in Australia
- the range of activities and programs undertaken by community and neighbourhood centres more widely
- the nature of the relationship between these centres and their constituencies
- themes and consistencies in the approach to working with people in local communities
- the role that community and neighbourhood centres played before, during and after the floods

³ These Centres are described more fully in section 3 and also in appendix 2.

- the resource implications of neighbourhood/community level work.

1.2 Methodology

The project methodology included the following:

- the development and administration of a structured interview with key stakeholders from each participating centre
- the compilation of a brief literature review about the role of community development and community centres with a focus on outcomes
- The compilation of case studies relating to the centres
- a workshop with participating agencies to consider and analyse the report findings and contribute to recommendations
- a final report and summary paper as a basis for communication with government and other services.

2. Literature review: the role and purpose of community and neighbourhood centres

2.1 The history of community and neighbourhood centres in Australia

The concept of community and neighbourhood centres extends beyond Australia with the following examples recounted by Rooney (2011:2):

‘Neighbourhood centres, (and) organisations resembling them can be found globally. For instance, Finland’s network of Settlementti, Vancouver’s Neighbourhood Houses, Israel’s Community Centres, Germany’s Nachbarschaftshäuser, and Britain’s Settlements, are all examples of those found in Australia’.

A few centres existed in Australia in the 1960s but they more strongly emerged in the 1970s with some reflecting community development approaches in addition to other types of service delivery (Rooney, 2011:2; ANHCA, 2011:2).

2.2 The role and focus of community and neighbourhood centres

Rooney, in a paper that is part of a research project aimed at mapping community and neighbourhood centres, examined over 200 identify statements from centres all over Australia (2011:4). A sample of words used by the Centres and cited by Rooney are:

‘accomplish, address, advocate, care for, change, connect, coordinate, create, deliver, develop, facilitate.....strengthen, support....work in partnership’.

A critical characteristic of Centres found across all states in Australia is explained in the following quote:

‘While varying in size and focus, a shared characteristic of centres across all states is that they subscribe to a community development focus by responding to grass roots demands (ANHCA, 2009). Most utilise a community management model, which means they are community owned and managed (through volunteer committees). In other words, people ‘are involved in defining and taking action on the issues that affect them’ (Tett, 2005:126)’.

Rooney, 2011:5

Another characteristic of centres is generally that their focus is spatially defined with a ‘strong identification or embedding within a particular geographical area, region and/or community’ (Rooney, 2011:5). Centres themselves are also a ‘place’, sometimes a house although the work of centres generally also happens in a wide range of different spaces and locations across a place.

An extension of centres being places themselves and working within a place or area, is that centres are ‘peopled’ – people visit for many reasons and the house or centre itself becomes a place or belonging, a place where different paths intersect, where people can meet formally or informally (Rooney, 2011).

In May 2011, The Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association (ANHCA) published a report highlighting the diversity of community and neighbourhood centres in Australia. In this report, they describe centres in the following way:

‘Neighbourhood houses and centres are not-for-profit, community organisations, all of which share a community development and socially inclusive approach to the delivery and provision of services and activities for socially isolated and disadvantaged local communities.’

ANHCA, 2011:1

ANHCA further describes centres as follows:

‘They are typically small organisations situated in local community settings that operate at grassroots level. They strive to be accessible and welcoming. They are inclusive and supportive of people from diverse backgrounds and with varying abilities. While they are known for their diversity, they share some common features.....Centres are embedded in a range of networks and partnerships. They work together in local government and regional networks and the majority are members of their state and territory peak organisations.’

ANHCA, 2011:2

In an exploration of the potential role of community and neighbourhood centres in responding to the needs of families and children, Izmir *et al* (2009:iii) highlight the flexibility of these centres in responding to local need:

‘The research shows that neighbourhood centres form a key element of the social infrastructure of disadvantaged communities. The infrastructure provided by the centres can be quickly mobilised, expanded or readjusted to respond to local needs, emerging issues or opportunities.’

In an analysis of how centres improve outcomes for children and families, Izmir *et al* highlighted three main themes which are relevant to some of the identified outcomes for flood affected communities in this report:

- providing a range of direct services
- acting as a conduit to other services
- providing indirect benefits such as improving social networks and building social capital.

2.3 Characteristics, programs and activities

While a national body has emerged in Australia to represent community and neighbourhood centres (The Australian Neighbourhood Centres and Houses Association or ANHCA), the involvement of three levels of government across different states and territories has resulted in considerable diversity in role, programs, funding and focus (Rooney, 2011). Most centres are funded by state government agencies accounting in part for regional differences (Rooney, 2011:3):

‘...differences are reflected in local funding arrangements and this shapes the work of centres in subtle ways. Furthermore, while state departments may provide some core funding, almost all centres rely upon additional funding for specific purposes, from volunteer input, and/or from fundraising. In general, most receive multiple sources of funding..... (along with as many acquittal processes).’

Centres surveyed by ANHCA were found to have a number of characteristics:

- the provision of infrastructure including meeting space, activity space, space for visiting services and as shared space with other services
- centres represent a range of types of facilities and a number of organisations operated more than one facility
- some centres were purpose built and many are re-furbished buildings (mostly suburban houses)
- 78% of buildings were owned by state or local government and only 6% were owned by the organisation itself.
- centres in some regions in Australia have a part-focus on Adult and Community Education (such as Victoria) while others do not
- centres are run by the community for the community and provide a foundation for civic participation
- the vast majority were incorporated associations with volunteer committees or boards

- there was an average association membership (formal) of 86
- each committee spent around 34 hours per month on committee business
- the survey indicated there were 2.8 volunteers for every paid worker
- 52% of centres employed only part-time staff
- 58% of centres had income of less than \$250,000; 20% had a gross income of \$251,000-\$500,000 and 22% had income of over \$500,000.

ANHCA conducted a survey involving 534⁴ Australian based community and neighbourhood centres resulting in the following snapshot:

Table 1: A snapshot of data from a national survey of Australian neighbourhood houses and community centres

Characteristic of Centres	Number of participants
Number of people participating in activities per week.	320,000
Number of volunteers	21,300
Number of students, participants and volunteers assisted to transition to paid work or further education	67,300
Number of people serving on committees and boards of governance	8,500
Number of paid employees including full-time, part-time, tutors and casuals.	14,500

Source: ANHCA, 2011:1

Centres usually had multiple sources of funding including a combination of:

- federal government
- state government
- local government
- other grants
- philanthropic funds
- corporate sponsorship
- membership fees
- self-generated.

Izmir *et al* (2009:iii) highlights that centres provide services and responses in a cost effective way in part because they leverage ‘through the substantial amount of time and effort that volunteers contribute’.

The survey also illustrated that diverse demographic groups are engaged with community and neighbourhood centres including children, young people, men, women, people with a disability, people with a low income, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people at risk of social isolation and people in a housing crisis.

The survey illustrated that centres were engaged in providing a significant range of programs and activities⁵ as follows:

⁴ 443 organisations completed the survey and a further 91 partially completed it. A total of 401 surveys were completed by Centres from Victoria and New South Wales. 34 were from Queensland, 42 from South Australia, 26 from Tasmania and 30 from Western Australia. 1000 Centres were initially sent the survey.

⁵ An unpublished study by Griffith University surveyed six community Centres and collected data on the range of activities undertaken which is included in appendix 3.

Table 2: Programs and activities of community and neighbourhood centres

Program or activity	Percentage of Centres
Information and referral	91.9
Community development projects	82.1
Recreation and leisure	78.9
Art and craft	78.0
Health and wellbeing	73.0
Public computer / internet access	68.0
Self help groups	67.3
Placements (students)	65.1
Personal development courses	65.1
Volunteer community services	61.0
Play groups	55.3
Social eating groups, community lunches	51.9
Family support programs	48.4
Parenting courses	48.4
Pre-accredited adult education and learning	47.9
Tax help	43.8
Employment support programs and services	42.0
Literacy and numeracy	41.2
Youth programs	40.1
Community garden	36.2
Mutual obligation placements (including work for the dole)	36.2
Personal counselling programs	32.5
Emergency relief	31.2
Environmental sustainability projects	30.7
Accredited training / adult education	29.6
Vocational training courses	27.5
Childcare (licensed, occasional)	25.5
Men's shed / community shed	25.1
Financial counselling	20.9
Community enterprise	19.8
Food security projects	19.0
Childcare: back up, crèche, unlicensed	14.6
After school care	11.3
Toy libraries	9.2
Breakfast clubs	7.2

Source: ANHCA, 2011: 14

A survey undertaken by the Local Community Services Association (LCSA)⁶ in New South Wales produced the following similar overview of services and programs:

Table 3: Scope of community and neighbourhood centres' activities in New South Wales

Program or activity	Percentage of Centres
Information, referral and coordination of external services	93.6
Community development	83.2
Host external services on their premises	66.4
Undertake community events	65.6
Children services such as supported playgroups, breakfast clubs and	48.0

⁶ LCSA is the peak body for community and neighbourhood centres in New South Wales.

Program or activity	Percentage of Centres
homework clubs	
Emergency relief services	41.6
Multicultural programs	39.2
Family support programs	39.2
Youth development programs	38.4
Prevocational education and adult learning programs	36.8
Living skills programs	34.4
Services for older people	29.6
Provision of services specifically for engaging Aboriginal communities	20.0

Source: Izmir *et al*, 2009:6

Izmir *et al* (2009:5) make the point that the diversity of services and programs is linked to the role of community and neighbourhood centres in 'responding to the specific needs, priorities and circumstances of the local community'.

These findings are quite consistent with an earlier study by Bullen and Onyx measuring social capital among people involved with and employed by community and neighbourhood centres in New South Wales (Bullen *et al*, 1999, 2005). Bullen *et al* (2005:45) found that the activities of centres depended on a number of factors including:

- 'each community's needs and characteristics
- community priorities at the time
- the availability of resources (money, people, facilities and equipment)
- the existence and work of other service providers
- previous work on the issue or concern.'

It is important to note that nearly all of the centres involved in the study are involved in direct service delivery as well as community development and most are in receipt of funding from multiple sources. The centres also varied in size. In the study which was done by Bullen *et al*, approximately 7,100 volunteers were involved across 300 centres and this was estimated as equating to approximately 660 full-time positions (Bullen *et al*, 1999, 2005:45). In 1996 in New South Wales, government contributed 45% of the funding for the work done by centres with the balance contributed by volunteers, unpaid staff time, in-kind support and other funds (Bullen *et al*, 1999, 2005:46).

In some ways, community and neighbourhood centres reflect the characteristics of 'anchor organisations' emerging from the United Kingdom. These organisations are identified as playing a key role in local capacity building:

"We are calling them 'community anchor organisations' because of the solid foundation they give to a wide variety of self help and capacity building activities in local communities and because of their roots within their communities."

Scottish Community Alliance Website, accessed 14 October 2011

2.4 Community and neighbourhood centres: social inclusion

The Australian Government has developed principles and resources to guide social inclusion policies and practices (Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2008:1). The approach to social inclusion at this level acknowledges that a number of strategies are important including the following which relate well to the role that centres play:

- building on individual and community strengths
- building partnerships with key stakeholders – governments, organisations and communities working together to get the best results for people in need

- giving a high priority to early intervention and prevention – heading off problems by understanding the root causes and intervening early
- building joined-up services and whole of government solutions
- using locational approaches – working in places where there is a lot of disadvantage, to get to people most in need and to understand how different problems are connected
- planning for sustainability – doing things that will help people and communities deal better with problems in the future, as well as solving the problems they face now.

Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2008:1

Izmir *et al* (2009) consider that community and neighbourhood centres ‘have a very important role’ in providing the social infrastructure that is needed to address many problems and issues. The government’s social inclusion agenda is partly focusing on particular locations, neighbourhoods and communities and Izmir *et al* propose that community and neighbourhood centres have a lot to contribute to addressing a range of priorities including:

- effective support to children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage
- addressing homelessness
- employment for people living with a disability or mental illness
- closing the gap for Indigenous Australians.

Izmir, 2009:1

The Australian Social Inclusion Board (2009) has developed a document outlining methods and approaches to building inclusive and resilient communities. Many of the methods and approaches outlined are core to the work of community and neighbourhood centres highlighting their role in the implementation of social inclusion programs and their contribution to measurably improving social inclusion across Australia. Some steps outlined by the Board include:

- understand the community in terms of its composition, strengths, vulnerabilities and attitudes
- work with and embrace diversity
- promote community leadership to set priorities and promote a sense of purpose
- build a strong and diverse local economy
- build strong networks and support
- promote learning and innovation
- recognise the role of the physical environment and infrastructure.

Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2009

2.5 Community and neighbourhood centres: social capital

Eva Cox defines social capital as follows:

‘Social capital refers to the processes between people which establish networks, norms, social trust and facilitate co-ordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. These processes are also known as social fabric or glue.’

Cox in Bullen *et al*, 1999, 2005:6

Social capital is defined across various categories as follows:

Category of social capital	Description
Bonding	"Relationships amongst members of a network who are similar".
Bridging	"Relationships amongst members of a network who are dissimilar in a demonstrable fashion such as age, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity and education".
Linking	"The extent to which individuals build relationships with institutions and individuals who have relative power over them".

Hawker and Maurer, 2009:1780-1787

Bullen *et al* undertook a study in 1998 examining and measuring social capital among the staff (796), volunteers (378) and participants (944) of community and neighbourhood centres (1999, 2005:12). These study participants scored quite high in various types of social capital. As the study was at one point in time, it is not possible to conclude whether the participants brought social capital to their roles or that the higher levels of social capital developed as a result of their role in community and neighbourhood centres. Social capital studies over time would be needed to determine whether social capital increases through participation in community and neighbourhood centres. The study did further analyse however that these stocks of social capital were useful in the work of centres.

Bullen *et al* also measured and compared social capital across five different communities in New South Wales. Some were rural and some urban. Where a lot of social capital is present, they identified the following likely characteristics:

- 'people will feel they are part of the community
- they will feel useful and be able to make a real contribution to the community
- they will participate in local community networks and organizations
- in floods and bushfires they will pull together for the common good
- people will mind each others children
- they will safe and at home in their neighbourhood
- strangers will be welcome
- no-one will do everything but everyone will help out with something
- there will be many networks of reciprocal relationships
- people will feel valued for who they are.'

Bullen *et al*, 1999, 2005:9

They highlight that there are several arenas in which social capital develops including neighbourhoods and communities. As many of the activities and programs of community and neighbourhood centres focus on bringing people together and facilitating people's own involvement in addressing local issues, there exists fertile ground for social capital to develop or be consolidated.

The Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres in Victoria identified a number of outcomes from this sector related to social capital:

- community building: people feel part of the local community and are empowered to be involved in and influence the local community activities
- life-long learning: learning opportunities are both formal and informal
- well-being and resilience: building self-worth, well-being and resilience
- social support and networking: providing the support structures that enable people to meet their own needs. This is the opportunity to link and form relationships

- prevention: reducing the need for intensive and expensive programs by relieving isolation, loneliness and boredom, and building the sense of trust, safety and belonging.
- sustainability: to enable sustainability of the local community's wellbeing through address a range of needs. 'Houses and centres facilitate diverse and timely responses that are cost effective'
- social justice: to address social justice issues through awareness raising, community education and social action
- infrastructure: 'to provide a local facility that is accessible, safe and welcoming for all community members'.

Langworthy, 2004:5-6

2.6 Community development and service delivery

As illustrated earlier, most centres undertake both direct service delivery and community development activities. It is important to understand the differences in these ways of working in order to fully understand the important and diverse roles that centres play. Many centres achieve significant synergy between these roles as well because there is an overarching commitment to connecting people with a range of relationships and opportunities. A report produced about community development in the context of Queensland's flood crises highlighted the following:

'It is important to differentiate service delivery from community development. While community organisations and community based entities are often also service providers, community development methods importantly bring particular approaches to engaging and involving the community itself in solutions. The provision of services is still obviously very important in the context of disaster recovery. Community development methods can make a difference to the extent that local people are able to identify and communicate with the services they need, and to shape the way that help is given. Local residents including official and unofficial leaders may then play a significant role in engaging with wider networks including government and business, to secure resources that are needed and influence the way in which those services are delivered. Community development reaches beyond something being done for people by others in a professional role, to people working together to make plans, secure resources and guide implementation.'

A Silver Lining, 2011:15

There are many definitions of community development. The following is cited because it highlights both the processes and likely outcomes of this way of working:

'Community development is a process, a way of doing things. It can:

- bring people together
- help people to identify the problems and needs which they share and respond to these
- help people to discover the resources that they already have
- promote knowledge, skills, confidence and the capacity to act together
- strengthen organisation and leadership within communities
- strengthen contacts between communities.

Once people are working together it can help them to:

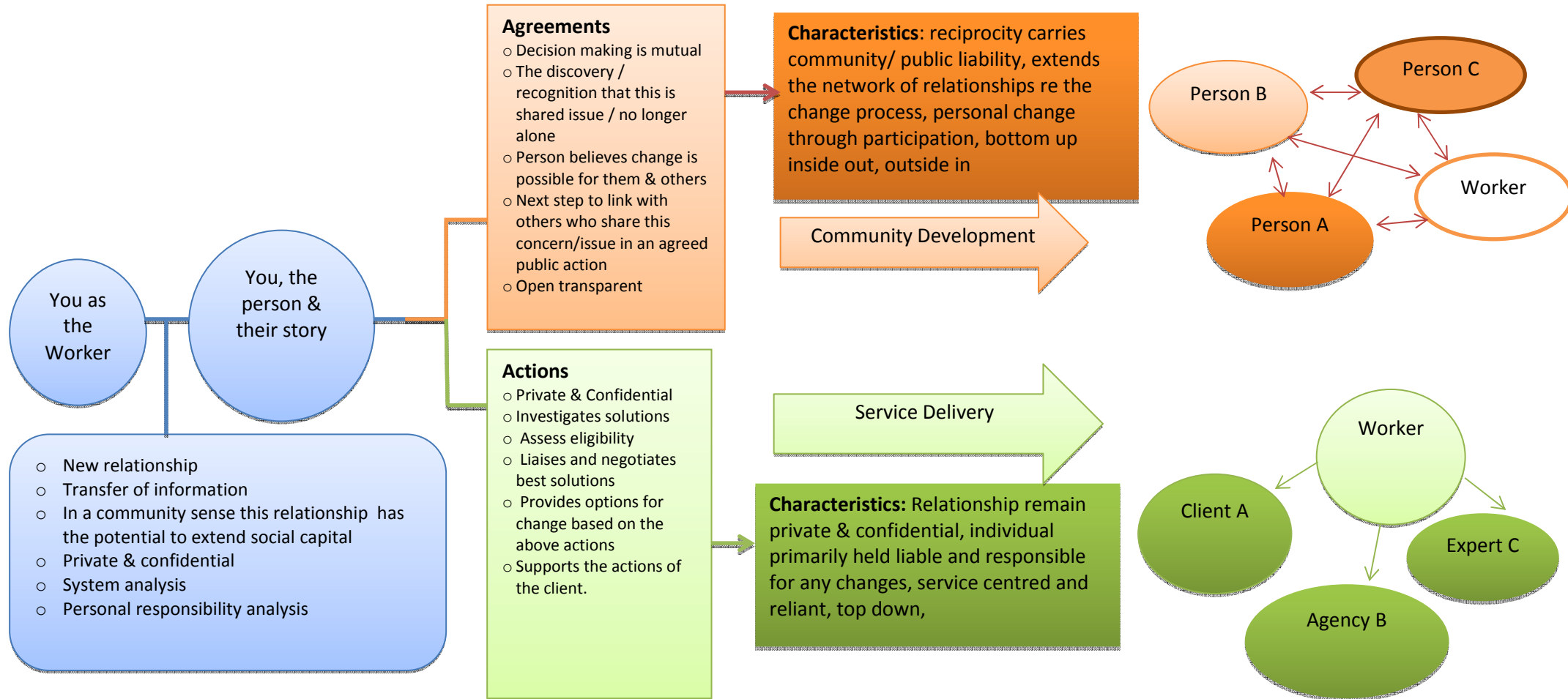
- take action to address inequalities in power and participation
- deal directly with issues they think are important
- change the relationships between communities and public or private organisations
- help public organisations to work in more open and inclusive ways
- promote increased local democracy, participation and involvement in public affairs.'

Community Development Alliance of Scotland, 2008:3

The following diagram illustrates some of the key differences between community development work and service delivery. Importantly, this diagram highlights the role of the worker in community development to build relationships between people involved in collaborative processes with each other, and through those relationships people start to develop their own resources and capacities which contribute to wellbeing and resilience in the face of current and future challenges and opportunities (Shambrook, 2011).

Figure 1: Eco-system map contrasting service delivery and community development methods.

Eco System Map of a Worker adopting different models of response: service delivery / community development



2.7 Community development outcomes

Community development approaches are often described as a method or way of working. A fundamental feature of this work is to involve people themselves in processes of change. Much emphasis is placed on 'process' because many of the real benefits from this way of working emerge from people working together, and in doing so, building skills, confidence, individual and collective capacity to tackle new and emerging issues and opportunities.

There is a growing body of work focused on the measurement of outcomes from this way of working particularly in contexts such as the United Kingdom where significant programs have been funded and evaluated. A range of different statements of outcomes have been developed illustrating that tangible and measurable outcomes do emerge.

Some of the measurable outcomes of community development identified by the Community Development Foundation in the UK include:

- reduction of isolation and alienation
- increase in social capital and cooperation
- creation or improvement of bona-fide community groups.
- increase of opportunities for activity in the community.
- more effective community activity.
- increase in:
 - volunteering
 - mutual aid and autonomous services
 - learning between groups
- improvement in:
 - dialogue between community and authorities
 - coherence and effectiveness of public policies.
 - capacity of agencies, authorities and professions to engage with communities.
- improvement in delivery of public services
- increased resources.

Community Empowerment Division, Department of Communities and Local Government, 2006

The Community Development Foundation goes on to identify a number of benefits resulting from community development:

- residents were brought together around common concerns and created improvements in their neighbourhood
- dialogue is created between residents and authorities
- positive interaction is created between formerly isolated neighbours
- people learn new organising skills
- groups and organisations negotiate improvements for their members and other residents.

A recent report by NEF Consulting for the Community Development Foundation in the UK, published an evidence base for why community development is important and what it achieves (NEF Consulting, 2011). A combination of workshops and a survey administered to 451 research participants in 2010 was used to identify outcomes and impacts within a social return on investment framework. The outcomes included:

- positive changes in a place

- greater community wellbeing
- volunteers are more involved
- supportive relationships between people including volunteers are improved and increased
- feelings of trust and belonging among volunteers and other participants and the wider community are increased
- feelings of competence, engagement and living life with meaning and purpose increase
- personal resilience, optimism and self esteem increase.

NEF Consulting, 2010:4-5

A participant in this study was quoted as saying there was:

“a need for social and organisational structures in a locality which allow for residents to engage with one another, trust and respect each other, and effectively influence the provision of services, facilities and activities to their community”.

NEF Consulting, 2010:5

Results and outcomes emerging from community and neighbourhood centres have included:

- skills development, networking, playgroups and other services to families
- information and referral services improve the interface between the wider service system and clients
- service systems are improved and deliver better results to disadvantaged constituents
- the impact of volunteering for the wider community, the economy and for the health and wellbeing of individuals.

Izmir *et al*, 2009

2.8 Representation and viability

There are peak bodies and associations representing community and neighbourhood centres throughout Australia including a national body called the Australian Neighbourhood Centres and Houses Association (ANHCA). In addition to these peak bodies, many community and neighbourhood centres are members of Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOS), the statewide peak body for the community services industry.

ANHCA represents over 1000 community and neighbourhood centres throughout Australia and works closely with State peak bodies including:

- Association of Neighbourhood Houses & Learning Centres (ANHLC Victoria)
www.anhlc.asn.au
- Community Centres SA (South Australia)
www.communityCentressa.asn.au
- Community Centres & Family Support Network Association (CC&FSNA Queensland)
ccfsnaq.org
- Linkwest (Western Australia)
www.linkwest.asn.au
- Local Community Services Association (LCSA New South Wales)
www.lcsa.org.au
- Tasmanian Assoc of Community Houses (TACH Tasmania)
www.tach.asn.au
- Tuggeranong Link (Australian Capital Territory)
www.tugglink.org.au

A number of peak bodies have worked on strategies to improve the sustainability of community and neighbourhood associations including:

- conducting surveys and mapping the sector
- developing position papers linking centres to wider policy frameworks including the Australian Government's social inclusion agenda
- research into the benefits of centres to various target groups
- advocacy activities with the aim of strengthening centres and their funding base
- advocacy activities related to wider policies and programs such as social inclusion.

Community and neighbourhood centres worked with QCOSS in 2006 to identify community development outputs as a basis for highlighting the benefits of this way of working. The outputs identified in that report included:

- to develop accessible, affordable and safe public or community space
- to strengthen individual or group identities
- community engagement or acceptance
- flexible responses to individuals, groups or communities with specified interests or needs
- new, enhanced, sustained or maintained social/community infrastructure
- established or enhanced collective analysis and voice
- viable, sustainable and healthy organisations.

Black, 2006:4

This work was followed up by a research project by Griffith University⁷ to collect case studies from six community centres to explore these outcomes by examining the range of activities undertaken. The process of collecting case studies revealed viability issues and concerns as follows:

'Community centres had much to say about the issue of organisational viability. In conventional terms, many thought that it is probably not possible to really achieve viability. Resources are invariably stretched, and this includes volunteer hours. Co-ordinators particularly felt that they took their positions because of their love of community and they spend 60 hours a week in a job which pays for 30 of them. Managing multiple funding sources, the absence of core funding, the non recognition of co-ordinator roles, were just some of the viability issues. Others include the difficulties of recruiting skilled staff, the non availability of high quality education and training for community development roles and the need for organisations to invest significant resources in training people, providing professional support, mentoring leaders, and fostering volunteer commitment.'

Ingamells and Furneaux, 2007

This analysis was consistent with the ANHCA campaign which states:

'Raising awareness of the value of the sector has been a priority for a number of years, especially the role in which centres and houses play in social inclusion, prevention and early intervention. The community development work of the sector continues to go largely unrecognised for the significant contribution it makes to the wellbeing of individuals, families, communities and ultimately the State.'

ANHCA, 2011

⁷ This paper followed on from an earlier project by QCOSS examining community development outputs. The study cited here by Griffith University is an unpublished paper.

3. Case studies: the role of community and neighbourhood centres in strengthening people and places

The following information was collected through interviews⁸ and case studies involving each participating organisation. The interviews focussed on crisis responses before, during and after Brisbane's January floods. More general case studies are also presented to illustrate the range of roles played by the centres.

3.1 The profile of centres

The participating centres answered a number of questions regarding their role and function in the community. A summary sheet for each agency is included in Appendix 2. The following information records some key themes and characteristics. Overall, there was a high level of consistency between the profile of the participating agencies, and surveys of community and neighbourhood centres cited in section 2 of this report.

3.1.1 Funding

The centres highlighted that funding arrangements are usually composite arrangements. Funding sources included:

- funding from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
- Department of Communities funding (Community Support Program, formerly the Community and Individual Support Program). Some centres were also funded to deliver family support through the former Family and Individual Support Program.
- Department of Communities – Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service Queensland (TAASQ)
- Home and Community Care funding
- other non-recurrent grants from Brisbane City Council, Multicultural Affairs Queensland, Arts Queensland
- philanthropic donations / corporate support
- facilities and office space hire/lease
- fundraising – such as trivia nights and art shows
- in one instance, a local church fundraises for the Centre.

This is consistent with other surveys cited in section 2 indicating that community and neighbourhood centres generally have multiple funding sources including:

- recurrent and non-recurrent government funding
- philanthropic donations / corporate support
- fund-raising through activities
- facilities and office space hire/lease.

3.1.2 History

In all instances except for the Yeronga Flood Recovery Centre, the centres had been in existence for a long period of time. Some centres operated initially under the auspices of another agency and became incorporated separately at a later time. Benarrawa for example has been operational for almost 30 years. New Farm Neighbourhood Centre has been incorporated since 1986 but was operational for several years prior to that under the auspices of Lifeline Queensland. West End Community House has existed in its current form since 1986 and had its beginnings in the 1950's based at the Uniting Church hall. In 1983, the Centre began working to formalise in response to specific community needs for activities and services.

⁸ A copy of the interview questions is included in Appendix 1.

Several of the centres were initially supported through local churches or the service arms of churches such as the Uniting Church. Centres may have emerged and evolved with little or no funding before program funding was achieved as evidenced in the following quote from the Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre website:

‘Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre was founded by the community in 1979 running from a small shop in Sherwood Road where people came together for coffee and to share craft ideas and parenting skills. In 1989 the Department of Communities realised there was a need for a larger community meeting place and 38 Thallon Street was purchased. In 1994 funding was obtained through the Department of Communities for a Crisis Accommodation Programme and four months later the Community Support Programme was funded.’

Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre Website, 2011.

3.1.3 Responsiveness to local needs and issues

Another consistent theme is the centres’ responsiveness to local needs and issues. West End Community House for example worked with the local community during Expo ’88 responding to evictions and housing supply/affordability issues. It secured funds through the former Housing Resource Service Program (later TAASQ) in response to significant local housing needs at this time. Other issues included local planning issues, gentrification, and the need for groups and activities responding to local needs.

Similarly, New Farm Neighbourhood Centre was started by a group of local residents who were concerned about a number of issues including the lack of local groups and activities for isolated people, housing affordability issues, the need for English language support for migrants and the need for community space to support activities such as playgroups.

Across the history of the centres there were many examples of work emerging from local needs and issues, as well as strengths and opportunities. While themes are consistent, the activities and programs reflect a range of factors including significant influences driven by the characteristics of each local area. Community and neighbourhood centres are a flexible and responsive form of infrastructure capable of facilitating community development strategies and the delivery of direct services to a range of stakeholder and target groups.

Community development capacity within local communities allows new responses to emerge to a range of issues both chronic/ongoing and acute such as the flood crisis. Because the emphasis is on bringing people together to participate in identifying issues and achieving the solutions, the question about ‘what do centres do?’ is very open ended: Centres may respond to any existing or emerging problem or opportunity, depending on local history, capacity and need.

Just as the centres have responded to the flood crisis, they have also responded to a range of other local issues that are perhaps less visible, more deeply entrenched and might even be described as chronic (such as homelessness, housing stress, racism, and isolation). As they strive to address these types of issues, they often do so by engaging local people in sharing responsibility for the solutions and in the process, build capacity, citizenship, leadership and skills. People engaged in this way invariably also emerge more connected, less isolated and with a sense of belonging to a place, all of which are consistent with wider policy directions such as social inclusion at a national level, prevention and early intervention, and targets to increasing volunteering at a State level.

Centres described that some usual services and activities were delayed in commencing (in one instance until March). This was linked to shifting all available resources to flood response and recovery and the immediate needs of residents. Existing funding for community centres as generalist agencies proved to be a foundation for being responsive and delivering much needed assistance

during a crisis. Centres reflected that locally based infrastructure including funding arrangements that had the scope to be flexible depending on local needs are an important resource.

3.1.4 Purpose and vision

The centres' statements of purpose and vision are highly consistent with the wider surveys of centres cited in section 2. Examples of vision or purpose statements include:

Benarrawa Community Development Association Inc is people working together towards a just, welcoming, inclusive and enduring community on a healthy planet.

Acacia Ridge Community Support Inc will respond effectively to community need and increase community members' opportunities for participation in life. Other statements include:

- A welcoming and safe environment
- Celebrating diversity
- Increasing choices and participation in community life.

A unified, supportive community with a mission to strengthen the community's capacity by responding to the diverse needs and interests of all its members. (Communify).

The House is an organisation providing a space that facilitates community empowerment, social justice, improved human relationships and quality of life. (West End Community House).

Enhancing quality of life for all in our community especially those disadvantaged, by providing support and opportunities for personal and community growth. (Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre).

Working with the community towards social justice, diversity and inclusion in Brisbane's inner City. (New Farm Neighbourhood Centre).

A number of key words and themes emerged more than once across the statements:

- centres work to be welcoming places and spaces
- centres are concerned with community diversity and work to preserve and enhance it
- centres work to increase participation, involvement and empowerment
- centres work to respond to needs and issues
- centres work with everyone and also try to be responsive to the needs of disadvantaged residents.

3.1.5 Programs and activities

The centres reported providing a number of programs and activities including the following:

- volunteer programs
- social enterprise programs
- facilities programs (including the management of multiple bases/outreach points) and the development of new social and community infrastructure responding to local needs
- community development programs
- emergency relief
- education and learning programs (such as Community Literacy and Numeracy Programs)
- visiting services (such as podiatry, Centrelink, QPILCH)
- support groups
- housing programs
- homelessness programs
- structured activities including meals

- outreach
- aged care
- programs responding to the needs of refugees and migrants
- programs responding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples including reconciliation programs
- community gardens
- information and referral
- provision of legal auspice for new, emerging and smaller groups
- responses to racism
- low interest/no interest loans
- social and recreational opportunities.

Again, the range of activities reflects the diverse activities and programs identified in the surveys of community and neighbourhood centres cited in section 2. This is also a reflection of the unique features and needs of the various localities served by the agencies involved in this project.

The interviews also highlighted that centres adopt new activities and programs in response to community needs as they change over time. Some things might end and others begin, reflecting the dynamic nature of communities, local interests and needs. In this sense, centres were able to offer a succession of activities and programs which links to the extent that they are flexible and responsive, a point which is discussed in section 3.1.3. Programs and activities can and do shift as communities change and evolve.

3.2 Case studies

3.2.1 Contributing to cultural diversity and social inclusion

Acacia Ridge Community Support Inc (ARCSI) values the importance of building the capacity of individuals and communities to achieve full participation. One way that ARCSI achieves this is through working directly with migrants and refugees. A critical part of this process involves engagement with key stakeholders about programs and projects that will help to make a difference.

The centre has worked with African communities for over five years now with the following results:

- better education outcomes for migrant and refugee children
- the establishment of an African Women's Group providing one-on-one support
- English support for citizenship classes
- numerous education and information sessions on topics as varied as breast health and Australian law
- the establishment of various groups in their own right
- the provision of homework and study clubs
- employment of bi-lingual workers
- activities, education and access to technology through working with young people.

The centre has been successful in establishing partnerships with other service providers so that these community groups have greater access to early childhood assistance, information and access to health services, employment pathways and processes for self advocacy.

3.2.2 Building capacity for homelessness responses: New Farm Neighbourhood Centre

New Farm Neighbourhood Centre (NFNC) has currently and historically had a strong focus on addressing homelessness and public space rights in the inner city. The ongoing impacts of gentrification on low cost housing and social inclusion remain acute, and the resultant social inequity forms the core of the Centre's work.

As a small organisation with a community development focus the Centre believes in whole-of-community responses. This necessitates partnering with other groups, organisations, business and residents to ensure affordable housing, support services and wider community support are available.

New Farm Neighbourhood Centre is part of the Under 1 Roof (U1R) consortium of services working together to integrate service delivery to homeless people. Under the leadership of the Rotary Club of Fortitude Valley, these agencies have been working together since 2006 to build a strong, community-focused network supported by local businesses to achieve greater sustainability in their efforts to end homelessness Brisbane's inner city. U1R is a strong, active partnership group that works on the multiple levels of systemic advocacy, workforce and practice development and the provision of practical client support resulting in tangible and sustainable outcomes.

U1R aims to:

- provide comprehensive support for households to maintain their tenancies and participate fully in the community
- connect homeless people to services and housing choices that best meet their needs
- contribute to the supply of social and affordable housing dwellings to meet the needs of individuals and families
- involve the whole community in ending homelessness.

The current membership of U1R consists of:

- 139 Club
- Brisbane Youth Service
- CityCare Brisbane
- Footprints (formerly New Farm Community Options)
- Mission Australia
- Communify
- New Farm Neighbourhood Centre
- QuIHN
- The Rotary Club of Fortitude Valley
- Brisbane Housing Company
- Bric Housing Company

Across these agencies the following responses to homelessness are provided:

- street outreach and multiple access points
- client centred, wrap around support
- safe sleeping options
- transitional as well as long term, secure housing choices
- formal relationships with the private rental system creating additional housing options
- drug and alcohol rehabilitation services
- health services
- employment and training opportunities
- information and referral
- meals
- participation and engagement in the wider community, including volunteering opportunities
- recreational and social activities promoting wellbeing and social inclusion
- social enterprise
- tenant advocacy and advice
- peer leadership programs
- visiting services covering health, legal and income related issues

- financial help
- activities that engage the broader community in ending homelessness.

U1R seeks to synergise these responses through collaborative processes, flexibility and continual improvement. NFNC has committed considerable resources to the U1R initiative particularly over the last two years. This has included participation by the Manager on the Interim Board of U1R and attendance by managers at Managers' Meetings. Staff across all program areas also participate in fortnightly case coordination meetings.

The benefits back to the organisation have been cumulative and range from:

- increased relationship and presence in the inner city
- the ability to provide increased housing and support options to people experiencing homelessness
- workforce development opportunities and outcomes
- increased staff satisfaction through achieving positive client outcomes
- increased staff retention through peer support and the sense of belonging to something bigger.

U1R is a great example of relationships creating leverage and of the possibilities for large and small organisations to complement each other. It is an illustration of what can be achieved through shared values, passion and commitment. U1R also demonstrates the value of creating structural arrangements that engage agencies in service integration activities. In particular, the engagement of front line service providers across the consortium in fortnightly case coordination meetings has resulted in housing and support for more clients.

3.2.3 Reconciliation in action: Benarrawa

Since the early 1990's Benarrawa Community Development Association has played an educative role by encouraging and promoting reconciliation and learning. Benarrawa works to build relationships across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander local communities.

The Benarrawa Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Information and Solidarity Group began in 1993 when local people came together for Reconciliation Study Circles. The group includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members who have come together to work in partnership. It seeks to inform its members and the wider community about issues affecting the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and promote justice and understanding between all peoples.

The BenATSI Solidarity Group is involved in and organises public activities and ceremonies locally, such as Solidarity with Invasion Day, National Sorry Day, Mabo Day and National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Celebration (NAIDOC) Week to name a few. The Solidarity Group also organises and facilitates an Annual Elders Lunch, the Biennial Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Show and Cultural Festival, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Awareness Workshops. BenATSI Solidarity Group also maintains the "Back to Country" fund which supports people to return to their communities. In 2008 BenATSI was a finalist in the Reconciliation Awards for Business which raises the profile of reconciliation activities at the local level.

3.2.4 Community and neighbourhood centres as local hubs

Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre is seen as a Hub for the community. It is involved in supporting and supplying a range of opportunities depending on community need. The Centre only employs 1.25 staff and from this leverages the participation of 42 volunteers who are involved in providing the following:

- extra programs
- driving the bus

- teaching computer skills
- running a pottery studio
- running a thrift shop

The value of community and neighbourhood centres rests in the fact that they take a holistic view of local needs and opportunities, offering flexible and responsive approaches to the needs of local people. The Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre offers a range of opportunities and activities with a focus on alleviating social isolation. These opportunities enable people to form friendships and build personal and collective capacity to address future needs and issues. The Centre offers referrals to specialist services, crisis accommodation, advocacy, emergency relief, case management, employment opportunities and education for individuals and groups.

This ongoing approach was extended to working with the local community through the flood disaster. A flood support group has been established enhancing opportunities for people who have been similarly affected to meet, form friendships and support each other. This group is now self-managed by residents.

A range of visiting services are also offered including Centrelink every Wednesday morning. A Justice of the Peace was also in demand during the floods and is now a regular service on a Tuesday morning at the Centre. The Brisbane South Division of General Practice has located a clinical and consultant psychologist at the Centre on a Tuesday.

These activities and services are more accessible because they are offered locally by a local centre acting as a hub. This draws wider resources into Sherwood and creates opportunities for people to meet a range of needs. People also get to know local services better and meet other local people in the process. This locality focus contributes to stronger social cohesion and less isolation which equips people with more resources and relationships as they face future or emerging issues. All of these opportunities based at Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre means it is continually improving and expanding as a HUB for the community.

3.2.5 Active and responsive outreach: the story of the Kiosk

Located at 155a Boundary Street, the Kurilpa Kiosk is a unique community outreach service in the heart of West End. Providing community information, referral and education services, the Kiosk provides an outdoor community service accessible to a broad range of local residents.

The Kiosk regularly hosts community celebrations and marks important dates for the community through information and awareness campaigns. Through the Kiosk, Community House actively cares for the community park located adjacent to the Kiosk and supports safe use of public space. With community service partners, the Kiosk offers clinical services for homeless people in West End and surrounds.

The Kiosk is also a base for the Homeless Persons' Legal Clinic run by the Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House, weekly on Friday between 12.30pm-1.30pm. This provides homeless people with accessible and free legal advice. Spiritus nursing also offers health checks for homeless and socially disadvantaged people on a weekly basis. This includes basic nursing advice and support as well as referral to appropriate medical support.

The Kiosk is an example of active and assertive outreach based on a rigorous assessment of local community needs combined with openness to creative ways of delivering services. West End Community House was connected enough in the community to identify this opportunity and bring the Kiosk to life through a combination of staff and volunteer roles. A significant number of local people connect with the Kiosk each week and it has a high profile locally. It provides West End Community House with a continuous source of information about what is happening locally through

direct engagement with local constituents and through the capacity for observation generated by the prime location of the Kiosk. Information and observations are then turned back into strategic and operational planning for the future. While the Kiosk delivers needed services, it also helps to generate a sense of place and belonging. People staffing the Kiosk engage in many conversations and exchange ‘hellos’ with many passers-by. This contributes to a positive and engaging presence on a vibrant and iconic main street.

3.2.6 Community participation in local planning

Communify Qld are very proud of their ongoing working relationship with Stadiums Queensland and Ogden in representing the needs and issues of the local community regarding the redevelopment and ongoing management of the Suncorp Stadium facility. Communify first became involved in the Stadium Advisory Group in 1999 during the master planning phase of the redevelopment. Communify’s role has been to ensure there are opportunities for the community to be consulted and engaged on the design and building program.

Communify has supported local participation in:

- traffic and parking management plans
- redevelopment of the Milton Train Station
- access to and development of the Barracks
- management of the adjacent entertainment precinct
- noise and crowd control
- the provision of community spaces
- improvements to local amenity.

Ten years on we are still a key contributor to the Stadium Advisory Committee providing opportunities for the community to have a voice around impacts and opportunities. Communify’s local knowledge, connections to other local organisations and agencies, and advocacy role addressing the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups in the community, is well recognised. Stadiums Queensland are able to access the wider community through this role. There is acknowledgement that this involvement has been a key contributor to the success of the design, management and ongoing operations of this facility.

3.2.7 Community and neighbourhood centres: front line responses to disaster recovery

“We were able to access local resources and relationships. We could move quickly and get people involved. We helped to increase the total level of volunteering and donations. We played a breadth of roles and we were often repositioning our role in a responsive way. Responsive repositioning is what we did, depending on needs and opportunities, and it changed every day.”

The centres came together initially to share practice and the challenges of continuing to work in flood affected communities towards recovery. This project included an in-depth interview about the scope of what the centres do generally as well as the scope of their role in relation to flood responses and recovery. The following section summarises the extent of their role, the challenges and the outcomes experienced within communities. A separate volume outlines a consultation report of this component of the project.

Overall, the centres provided a range of resources, supports and services before, during and immediately after the flood. Many of the centres continue to respond to community needs emerging from the floods on a daily basis.

It was reflected that centres were aware of people’s need to prepare for the floods and that the available time was very short. Some centres faced flooding themselves and had to prepare. There

was concern about isolated households who perhaps did not have the social networks to assist them before the actual floods. The work of centres more generally contributes to social cohesion and social ties and there was a sense that more deliberate work to engage people in reciprocal helping networks at the street and neighbourhood level is valuable in addressing a range of needs and issues including:

- social isolation
- vulnerability
- feelings of not being safe
- responding to community issues and crisis
- rallying around a household experiencing a crisis
- households having strong enough social networks in their neighbourhood that they feel they can ask for help.

The centres responses are summarised below:

- even those agencies directly affected by the floods worked to be available to the community almost immediately.
- centres actively outreached to affected houses and businesses. In some instances groups of volunteers including professionals were coordinated by the centres to visit every affected house and business. This was quite systematic in some communities and resulted in a fine grain plan of what was needed. Volunteers and other resources were then deployed. Some centres were able to do some follow up outreach for weeks and in one instance, three months after the initial crisis.
- through outreach, needs were assessed and incoming volunteers were appropriately directed to assist.
- centres quickly became a conduit for a range of local contributions of time, money, equipment and materials. Many continue to be involved in coordinating the distribution of resources, materials, furniture and other items to affected households.
- centres linked with other key stakeholders including businesses, government and non-government agencies to harness resources and broker in services.
- centres helped to establish and/or participate in flood recovery committees (or the equivalent) involving local leaders and stakeholders who are driving very localised recovery efforts.
- centres developed information kits for residents which pulled together all available entitlements and tried to simplify the steps that people needed to take to secure resources that were on offer
- centres produce newsletters providing the local area with information and updates.
- centres ensured food was available to local people and to volunteers (either through directing donations, or direct provision).
- centres also checked with immediate neighbours to ensure they were alright and had the assistance they needed.
- in particular, outreach and pre-existing knowledge of the community were used to assess vulnerability and to provide specific responses to vulnerable residents. Regular visits to vulnerable households were undertaken in some instances at the beginning and centres continue to provide vulnerable households with ongoing support. Centres have identified an ongoing need for detailed outreach to affected households to assess their continuing needs.
- where specific needs are assessed, linkages and active referrals were made to a range of other services (existing and within the centres or out to other agencies).
- centres act as a physical base that people come to that is local and familiar.
- some centres continue to coordinate volunteering effort within the community since the immediate crisis. This has a focus on local people volunteering in their local community with

associated benefits for building local relationships, reducing isolation and increasing the sense of place.

- where centres had service delivery responsibilities, contact was initially made with clients to assess their needs and ensure that service provision continued. If clients were flood affected, they worked to assist those clients.
- the Yeronga Centre began as an evacuation centre in the two days before the floods came and was then a respite centre where people could come, charge their phones and have some food.
- the Yeronga Centre provided 10,000 meals over four weeks.
- centres continue to be 'light on their feet' and adapt their existing services and infrastructure to the needs of flood affected households and businesses. One Centre for example had some units of housing and a vacancy was used to prioritise a flood affected household.
- centres have brokered other services such as visiting counsellors (at no cost), specialised mental health services and other external support and service providers (including business).
- one centre focussed on direct service delivery to existing clients to assess and respond to needs. All available staff then registered with Red Cross and were allocated a role in doing a housing audit to identify housing stock that could assist affected households.

Centres have been an important base, however there are many examples of the agencies moving beyond centre-based work to do extensive outreach. The centres were and continue to be contacted by a wide range of other services including government agencies to assist with recovery planning, and direct responses.

West End Community Centre described how there was

“an active series of discussions involving the local councillor, chairperson and the coordinator about what we could do, what would be useful. The strength of these existing relationships was essential”.

Even with planning, a lot of work emerged in an organic way as needs emerged and as the understanding of what the community needed deepened.

The centres were aware of local people wanting to make donations, and give time and effort to other local people which has embedded community development opportunities and future positive implications for cohesion, friendliness and reduced social isolation. The centres all worked to link local people with opportunities to help locally and in some instances, also played a role in directing incoming volunteers to help in specific locations where they had assessed there was a high or unmet need. In that sense, the centres contributed to more effective use of incoming volunteers which augmented the efforts of larger organisations such as Volunteering Queensland, The Red Cross and Brisbane City Council in coordinating volunteers more broadly.

One centre reflected that while they were able to link a range of volunteers with opportunities to help, they were also struggling to effectively deal with all offers of help and this was directly linked to available staff resources.

There were consistent reports from centres that all available staff and other resources were deployed to flood recovery work evidenced in statements such as:

“In the first three weeks we didn't stop. One staff member worked 17 days straight.”

Other centres reported staff doing very long days in the first few weeks.

Some centres highlighted that immediate linkages with other key stakeholders such as elected members of government, other agencies, businesses and key local leaders were important to having the capacity to operate and also the legitimacy needed for receiving donations and being a focal point for flood recovery efforts at the local level. In one instance, elected members of government convened a flood recovery committee very quickly and at this meeting the local community centre was decided as the focal point for coordinating flood responses in that area.

During this period, need was high and some centres highlighted resourcing issues as limiting the extent of the work they wanted to do. Centres identified an ongoing need for active outreach to affected businesses and households to assess emerging and changing needs. Although centres tried to sustain outreach work, resource limitations prevented this from continuing past the initial stages in most cases however some centres continue to do what they can to assess local needs. Centres in badly affected areas highlight that even now there is a significant need for outreach to assess progress and identify vulnerability. Nonetheless, one Centre continued outreach activities for five weeks at an intensive level and then fortnightly and monthly for as long as they could manage. Another Centre conducted a widespread survey of households in April (400 households) involving volunteers to assess needs and plan a response.

Overall, centres identified that the immediate recovery period engaged a lot of people including agencies and businesses, and that they played a role in coordinating these inputs and resources. Their existing roles and relationships in the area were important to the levels of trust that existed and translated into cash donations and other practical contributions from diverse groups across the community. Some centres were also a place where more isolated people could go to offer their help. Where people were not sure about what they could contribute or were under-confident, their pre-existing relationship with a local community centre was the bridge to volunteering and making a difference. The following story illustrates this point:

“I met a local boarding house resident on the Saturday after the flood, at the local shop. He was walking around, looking for a way to help. I invited him to come to the Centre the next day and he answered the phones for six hours. Some socially isolated people are not as linked in to ways of becoming a helper.”

Some centres also highlighted the extent that existing social networks functioned to link people together and to local services.

“The bush telegraph worked, it was amazing among more marginalised people. In general, people were talking more than ever before.”

The level of commitment to the flood crisis by centres at that time meant that other programs and some services were slow in starting for the year. Overall, there was concern that more outreach wasn't possible. Greater capacity and resources would have also helped centres to capitalise on the many community connections that emerged at this time. For some, this was seen as a significant and lost opportunity to build a stronger community, with more connections and reciprocity, as a basis for addressing continuing and future community needs related to the flood crisis and to other ongoing community problems. In summing up, one worker described: “We were light on our feet”.

Offering hospitality in a warm and welcoming place seemed to function as an important proxy for the homes that people had lost. Some of the centres became 'everyone's home' and provided many of things that home usually functions to provide such as meals, conversation, rest, showers and access to helpful, supportive relationships.

"One Centre described a couple who had lost their whole house and will have to rebuild. They visit regularly at mealtimes, only it was noticed that the man had never actually eaten anything. When asked about that his wife responded by saying that he had never needed charity and didn't want to take it now. This prompted an exchange with a volunteer preparing meals who said that for her it was a great privilege to help and when people came for meals, it was important to her. Since then, he has had meals at the Centre."

At one centre an older person on a low income visited. She had lost power and couldn't get news reports about whether she had to evacuate. She also got to know her neighbours better. Centres bring a capacity and appreciation for this kind of local level contact. They work through community development approaches to strengthening localities as places of belonging where someone like this woman has better access to neighbour/locality relationships and is better able to prepare and recover.

There is a continued need for gatherings and ways for the community to come together. In Yeronga, daily community meals are a gathering point where affected households (including those that have moved away while repairs take place) are proving invaluable to the healing process.

"People who have moved away arrange to meet their neighbours here or they stop here after they drop children off at school. They come while they are on a visit to see how their house is going. These meals take place every day."

Yeronga has also developed a local playgroup for flood affected households and continues to be a conduit for local donations and contributions. This Centre has 25 volunteers involved in daily activities that continue to build social cohesion and enable local people including people who have had to move away, to gather and build or strengthen their relationships with each other. At Acacia Ridge, a support group of local affected residents has been developed and is now run by local people themselves.

The centres are aware of continuing and unmet needs. Some areas such as Rocklea, Milton/Rosalie and West End would benefit from localised economic development work. In some areas, the centres continue to experience demand from residents and are working to sustain community relationships as a way of people building their natural support networks. They are also an important conduit to wider resources and services including services funded to provide specialist support and case management.

4. Conclusions

The types of broader activities and programs operated by the centres are consistent with wider surveys of community and neighbourhood centres from around Australia. The scope and range of what centres do reflect community diversity as well as the funding context and opportunities both in other states and among the centres involved in this project. Overall, the centres involved in this project do a combination of service delivery and community development work. There is evidence too that these approaches are not mutually exclusive – that the centres are always working to synergise these two approaches or at least ensure that when people come needing a service, they have the opportunity to transition into other opportunities such as joining an activity, offering a skill or being a volunteer.

Australia wide and in some states, there is work being undertaken to advocate the importance of centres to government and to link them to major policy directions such as social inclusion, prevention and early interventions, and volunteering. The question of wider recognition for community and neighbourhood centres has emerged from various locations across Australia and is reflected in the struggle of the participating centres to fund some core functions such as administration, coordination, information and referral and community development.

The case studies illustrate a range of roles that the centres play including:

- as hubs of services
- as facilitators of local participation in planning and redevelopment
- contributing to consortium arrangements with other partners that improve outcomes for disadvantaged people and engage the wider community in solutions
- active outreach and innovative approaches to reaching and engaging local people
- building community connections and relationships including through reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- improving the inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

The centres demonstrate their considerable capacity to be flexible and innovative, and to leverage resources through substantial existing relationships across government, business and the community. They are a magnet for people looking for ways to respond locally to local need. In response to the flood crisis, they were trusted with local donations of funds and their role was legitimised by local elected representatives who engaged them to assist with practical flood recovery work and at governance levels to participate in recovery planning and advocacy. They continue to be called upon by government to have input to disaster planning processes and recovery planning.

Several centres continue to be engaged in recovery work every day. They are working to manage demand through creative approaches such as supporting a contingent of volunteers and developing support groups for flood affected people. The example of facilitating a support group highlights a developmental approach where people are supported to take on the leadership and running of the group themselves as workers slowly and gently reduce their involvement once greater community capacity exists among the participants themselves.

There was considerable evidence that local centres play a significant role in sustaining a local approach to supporting affected people in ways that retained their local connections and helped them to meet other local people. There is evidence of new community relationships forming and existing ones being strengthened. Centres consider they are all poised to better capitalise on the many relationships and considerable social capital to emerge from the crisis but they are hampered by serious limitations to core resources.

At one level centres play an important role in increasing the level of volunteering in the community. Most centres were supporting the participation of local residents and businesses in many ways including as volunteers. Volunteers are involved at many levels and are often local people themselves which builds and strengthens the local social fabric. People are there as neighbours, and the likelihood of reciprocal relationships is stronger than if the relationships remains one of doing something 'for' someone. This fits within prevention and early intervention approaches which build the resources and capacities of people individually and together to address many local needs.

In relation to the flood crisis, the centres described that lifelong friendships had formed through the crisis and that they continue to play a role in bringing people together. One worker described flood affected people starting to talk about planning other social occasions together which is a sign that the relationships will continue outside of the immediate crisis.

The main challenge is to strengthen the policy framework around community and neighbourhood centres in a way that links to other policy agendas and also as a foundation for better program design and funding. Community and neighbourhood centres throughout Queensland provide a textured response and have the capacity to complement larger institutional and organisational responses to issues, needs and opportunities. They need recognition in policies, programs and funding to address the core viability and sustainability issues that have been identified at a national level and were evidenced in the information collected in this project.

5. Recommendations

Policy and resource framework for community and neighbourhood centres in Queensland

1. That a strategic policy framework supporting community and neighbourhood centres is developed by the Queensland Government in partnership with centres. This framework needs to recognise the importance and complementary nature of local-level infrastructure capable of responding to many issues and opportunities including during a crisis event. This framework should also include specific links to existing government policies such as prevention and early intervention, targets to increase volunteering, and place-based approaches to reducing disadvantage and social exclusion.
2. That the State Government increase funding to community and neighbourhood centres in Queensland to ensure capacity for a coordination role, administration role, a community development role and improved information and referral services. A funding model is needed that ensures centres have at least three core positions that are full-time, shifting away from contribution funding.

Strengthening the profile of community and neighbourhood centres

3. That Queensland community and neighbourhood centres join with national and state level peak bodies to advocate their ongoing role and contribution to all levels of government. In particular, that QCOSS is engaged to develop a community centres policy to guide engagement with government.
4. That community and neighbourhood centres develop an awareness-raising strategy highlighting the full scope of their role, programs and activities as a way of engaging the wider community in opportunities to participate. The purpose of this strategy is to strengthen the profile of centres as being places for everyone.

Disaster and recovery planning

5. That disaster plans and recovery plans at a National, State and Local Government level legitimise and describe a role for community and neighbourhood centres in front-line responses. Protocols should be included for triggering this response in a way that recognises this role as complementary to larger institutions and city/state-wide services. This role needs to be recognised with sufficient resources at the time of the crisis for more staff and capacity for activities, projects and material items needed by the community.

Partnerships in flood recovery

6. That protocols are developed between Brisbane City Council and other agencies funded for flood recovery work to ensure that community and neighbourhood centre can effectively and seamlessly broker those resources into their communities. Wherever possible, other funded roles and positions should be based with local centres.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

DRAFT Questionnaire
Neighbourhood Centre Network
The role of neighbourhood Centres in flood recovery

Organisation Name	
Contact Person	
Phone Number	
Position	

About the agency

1. How is your agency funded?
2. How long has your agency been in existence?
3. What are the aims and objectives of your agency?
 - Documentation – strategic plan
4. What programs operate from your agency?
 - Documentation – brochures
 - Calendars
 - Web-sites
 - Other?
5. What is the organisational structure? What are the staffing levels?
 - Documentation – organisational chart
6. What activities operate from your agency?
 - Documentation: brochures
 - Calendars
 - Web-sites
 - Other

About the role of the agency during the flood crisis

7. What work did each neighbourhood/community centre undertake before, during and after the floods?
8. What worked?
9. What didn't work?
10. What did you need at every stage to do this work?
11. What did the community need from you before, during and after?

12. What methods did the centres use to reach local people in need of assistance?
13. How did this work come about?
14. What other partners, stakeholders and agencies worked with you? (A question to probe about roles of other stakeholders such as councillors and other agencies, to capture collaboration).
15. What methods did the centres use to harness resources and relationships to assist local people in need of assistance?
16. What happened as a result? Please include any stories you would like to tell.
17. What did the community get out of your centre's role in the flood crisis?

About the future of Neighbourhood and Community Centres.

18. What current and future work needs to be done by centres in local recovery work? What are the demands and what solutions are needed?
19. What resources are needed to achieve this?
20. What is the broader role of community / neighbourhood centres? What is the purpose of these types of agencies?
21. What resources are needed to support this work?
22. Has the work of the centre been evaluated and is an evaluation report available?

Appendix 2: Summary information about each participating agency.

Key element	Description
Name	Acacia Ridge and District Community Centre
Purpose/Mission	Acacia Ridge Community Support will respond effectively to community need and increase community members' opportunities for participation in life. Other statements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A welcoming and safe environment ○ Celebrating diversity ○ Increasing choices and participation in community life.
Programs	TAASQ Community Development Volunteers
Activities	African Women's Group Tax Help, Coffee and Chat, Mums and Bubs Community Literacy and Numeracy Program Food Cooperative Emergency relief Facilitation of local interagency No Interest Loans Craft Group Homework club Community Garden NAIDOC Celebration Party in the Park Remembrance Day Computer room (ten computers with internet)
Funding base	Department of Communities, TAASQ funding,
Staffing arrangements	Funded for TAAS workers and 1 community development worker
Key features of flood response	Flood recovery: street parties in Rocklea (2-3 streets at a time) Continue to follow up 100 families post flood (support, referrals, linkages) Referrals, Information Support Emergency Relief TAASQ Distributed water, tea, coffee (several times a day for four days). People really needed and wanted water. Connected with Lions and local councilor, started running the community tent in Rocklea every day for three hours to give people a point of contact Daily evening BBQ Coordinated volunteers into the area After the floods, weekly BBQs Weekly community tent Red Cross Neighbours Helping Neighbours Workshop Furniture give away (links with businesses from the Sunshine Coast) Surveyed residents: 400 homes in April. Assessed current needs through volunteers. Street parties – rolling implementation with 2-3 streets at a time Support for individuals
Other information	Concerns that emphasis is on case management when psychosocial support is also very valuable.

Key element	Description
Name	Benarrawa Community Development Association
Purpose/Mission	Benarrawa works in collaboration with local people and other organisations for a just, welcoming, inclusive and enduring community.
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bringing people together 2. Sharing dreams, concerns and issues 3. Finding practical ways to support one another 4. Building a sense of community.
Programs	<p>Referral, advocacy and support for individuals and families</p> <p>Community education</p> <p>Community Development</p> <p>Global-Local work</p>
Activities	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Solidarity Group</p> <p>Biennial Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Show and Cultural Festival</p> <p>Carers Network</p> <p>Refugee Solidarity Network</p> <p>Language Sharing</p> <p>Community Garden</p> <p>Auspice of small community groups</p> <p>Community lunches and morning teas</p>
Funding base	<p>Department of Communities Contribution</p> <p>Occasional project funds (BCC, Multicultural Affairs Queensland)</p> <p>Facility hire</p> <p>Donations & Fundraising</p>
Staffing arrangements	<p>Two part-time community development workers.</p> <p>.4 Finance administration</p> <p>.2 Administration</p>
Key features of flood response	<p>The Centre was directly flood affected – water came two-thirds of the way up the top floor of the house and approximately 90% of the contents were lost</p> <p>Conducted its own ‘flood recovery’ - clean up of premises, restoration of operations</p> <p>Secured temporary accommodation with the Multicultural Development Association, and then St David’s Anglican Church in Chelmer</p> <p>Checked in with other affected households in the local area</p> <p>Linked in with Graceville State School, St David’s and other local groups</p> <p>Established a local Flood Recovery Network</p> <p>Linked with other services such as Red Cross to get services into the area.</p> <p>Held Neighbours Helping Neighbours workshops</p> <p>Continue to support Graceville State School, St David’s and others still involved in flood recovery</p> <p>Celebrated Neighbours’ Day in March</p> <p>Neighbours morning teas and lunches to bring people together</p> <p>One to one support for households in complex situations</p> <p>Information and referral</p> <p>Linking with other services such as Micah for case management.</p>
Other information	As the centre was badly affected, resources are needed to assist with their direct recovery (such as records, dealing with insurance, the clean-up), as well long term community recovery .

Key element	Description
Name	Communify
Purpose/Mission	A unified, supportive community with a mission to strengthen the community's capacity by responding to the diverse needs and interests of all its members.
Objectives	<p>Communify Qld is an established community organisation that acts as a unifying hub, providing services and activities that enhance the quality of life for families and individuals.</p> <p>We work with local people to promote a socially just and diverse community, and to build community capacity.</p> <p>Our major focus is the welfare and well-being of those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable, either socially, physically, intellectually, or emotionally.</p>
Programs	<p>Aged and Disability Services</p> <p>Childcare</p> <p>Community development</p> <p>Community education</p> <p>Domestic and Transport Services</p> <p>Emergency Relief</p> <p>The Exchange at Kelvin Grove</p> <p>Family and Individual Support Program</p> <p>Home Assist Secure</p> <p>Mental health services</p> <p>No Interest Loans Scheme</p> <p>The Paddington Centre</p> <p>Recreational programs</p> <p>Refugees</p> <p>Volunteers</p>
Activities	Program of activities available at: http://www.communify.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Discover-April-June.pdf
Funding base	Department of Communities (CSS) BCC, FAHCSIA, Qld Health, DFACS, QPAAST, DEEWR, Fees, Facilities hire, HACC.
Staffing arrangements	A service manage and approximately 60 staff across all programs.
Key features of flood response	<p>Primary concern was older clients</p> <p>3500 clients in home assist – did mapping of affected streets</p> <p>Doorknocked all of those clients</p> <p>Housing – isolated some of our funding to assist</p> <p>ER – have seen a number of people who are struggling</p> <p>Food relief</p> <p>Family support – a number of clients are coming with other issues impacted by the stress of being flood affected.</p> <p>Our work has been more around aged clients.</p> <p>Door knocking – active outreach, checked on people, worked out where people were. We had extensive information on where people were and made contact.</p> <p>Targeted a particular vulnerable population we already had a relationship</p> <p>Coordinated with local councillor and state member to receive referrals and be a point of access.</p> <p>Registered with Red Cross</p> <p>Most of staff were at one of the evacuation Centres</p> <p>A group of us on request of Red Cross did a housing audit</p> <p>Local people wanted to cook we distributed that food out to volunteers.</p>

Key element	Description
Name	New Farm Neighbourhood Centre
Purpose/Mission	Working with the community towards social justice, diversity and inclusion in Brisbane's inner City. (New Farm Neighbourhood Centre).
Objectives	<p>To develop and maintain a well-managed organisation with high standards of governance and administration, achieving excellence in program delivery. Activities include finance budgets, reporting, purchasing, repairs and maintenance systems policies procedures.</p> <p>To link people, resources and structures to facilitate positive change. To maintain a space and culture that is welcoming and inclusive of all people. Activities include open house, community office, volunteers, annual calendar, CAN-LINC, twilight training, Politics in the Pub, BBQ's and groups.</p> <p>To work with the community, public and private sectors to create avenues for increased financial autonomy. Activities include tennis, welcome project, funding sustainability, sponsorship and room hire.</p> <p>To support people to access and maintain housing that is affordable, sustainable and appropriate to their needs. Activities include Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service (TAASQ).</p> <p>To achieve positive and sustainable changes for homeless and disadvantaged people. Activities include Homelessness Assessment and Referral Team (HART 4000).</p>
Programs	<p>Coordination, Administration and Governance</p> <p>Community Engagement</p> <p>Community Enterprise</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Homelessness</p>
Activities	<p>Open house</p> <p>Computers and internet</p> <p>Community meals</p> <p>Information and referral</p> <p>Volunteers</p> <p>Tennis</p> <p>Playgroups</p> <p>Recreation opportunities</p>
Funding base	<p>Department of Communities (CSS, TAASQ and HART4000)</p> <p>Room and tennis court hire</p> <p>Project management</p> <p>Non-recurrent funds (occasionally), Donations</p>
Staffing arrangements	<p>Service Manager, Community Development Worker, TAASQ and HART4000 teams.</p> <p>Administration officer, finance administrator and one self-funded community development trainee.</p>
Key features of flood response	<p>Immediate link with local flood recovery advisory group and councilor</p> <p>Declared the hub for recovery services</p> <p>Organised volunteers to go out to all affected premises and do an assessment</p> <p>Then focused on 40 households assessed as very vulnerable</p> <p>Received and distributed funds donated locally</p> <p>Organised recovery festival</p>
Other information	Would have liked more capacity for more follow up and outreach.

Key element	Description
Name	Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre
Purpose/Mission	Enhancing quality of life for all in our community especially those disadvantaged, by providing support and opportunities for personal and community growth.
Objectives	To alleviate social isolation Carry out the promotion, establishment, support and assistance of social welfare programs To assist in the direct relief of poverty, homelessness, illness, disability and isolation
Programs	Facilities Community support Housing support Emergency relief South West Interagency Gold Program
Activities	Social and recreational (dancing, fitness, craft) University of third age Centrelink come onsite on Wednesday morning - entitlements ER on Wednesday relief Clinical and consultant psychologist from brisbane south divisions of GPs – 2 free sessions and 5-6 if they go their gp NILS through communify JP service Tuesday Counselling and mediation service – private provider that comes in (has medicare rebate) Volunteers Convene south west interagency Community support, groups and classes provided CSS Centre run activities – self organising Privately run activities – hall constantly being used Flood support group – run by part-time case manager – people affected by floods getting together – meeting fortnightly and have established their own email group Seniors enjoying active lifestyles Grumpy old men Time to play - playgroup ER – funding now for a part-time case management worker because needs have become more complex
Funding base	Department of Communities
Staffing arrangements	Centre manager, administration worker, two part-time housing workers, NILS project worker, part-time case management support worker attached to ER.
Key features of flood response	Support group emerged in April Housing Sp many people turning up and looking for some assistance – mainly giving immediate assistance in food , ER, referral Different agencies made contact on the first day to say what they could offer. Local alderman Nicole Johnstone – relationship with local councillor has helped a lot. Beyond Blue – coming to do a workshop for staff, help staff with techniques, what to look for and how to act.

Key element	Description
Name	West End Community House
Purpose/Mission	The House is an organisation providing a space that facilitates community empowerment, social justice, improved human relationships and quality of life.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developing Community House as a hub for sustaining the tenancies of low income groups with the aim of increasing our impact on the rising levels of housing stress. ○ Ensuring Community House remains an accessible, loved community centre ○ West End Community House is a great place to work ○ Community House is one of West End's favourite charities. ○ Community House is a strong player in a functioning alliance of West End community based organizations ○ A robust organisation with a diverse funding base for our services and our strategic project.
Programs	TAASQ Community Development The Kiosk Facilities
Activities	QPILCH visiting service Health clinic visiting to assist homeless people Playgroup Story telling Art group Mental health support group Pedestrian Advocacy Group Inner South Interagency Network
Funding base	Department of Communities Corporate donations Facilities hire
Staffing arrangements	Coordinator, community development worker, tenant advice workers and administration worker
Key features of flood response	Centre lost power and was based elsewhere initially (through donated space) Established community tent with local Councillor Coordinated intensive outreach and door-knocking, assessed needs and deployed volunteers and other helpers Food Deployed local and incoming volunteers to where they were needed Received donations from local people wanting to give locally Some focus on very vulnerable households and providing services More tenant advice calls from affected dwellings including large unit blocks Worked with local school Collected 380 contact numbers from people wanting to volunteer Held gatherings and events to bring people back together Assessed needs of businesses – significant closures Auspicing Yeronga Centre Existing networks were extensive and facilitated to help

Key element	Description
Name	Yeronga Flood Recovery Centre (commenced two days prior to January floods and in early stage of organizational development. Currently auspiced by West End Community House).
Funding base	Recently secured funds from Department of Communities. Prior to June run entirely by volunteers and through donations Capital funding also in the last state budget to improve the facilities
Staffing arrangements	Two part-time community based workers (a total of seven days)
Key features of flood response	Initially an evacuation place (prior to flood) then a respite centre Distributed 10,000 meals in first four weeks Home visits People visiting Daily meals Information and referral Gathering place Visiting psychologist Continue to coordinate 25 volunteers Support groups Playgroup Linking people with donations, storing donations Craft group Hub for visiting services such as Micah, TAASQ Working with local schools Continue outreach and contact with vulnerable households

Appendix 3: Survey of activities

The following information was collected by Griffith University in 2007 in a survey with six community Centres in Queensland (Ingamells and Furneaux, 2007). It illustrates the extent of activities undertaken by community and neighbourhood centres:

Alphabetical Compilation of Community Centre Activities

Accommodation – long term	Cultural diversity group	Mental health carers support group	Savings & Loans Group
Accommodation – short term	Dance	Mental Health Forum	School holiday programs
Action Groups for development	Diabetics Dance for Fitness group	Mental health support group	Senior's Week
Action Groups for environmental issues	Disability support	Mental Health Week	Skate bowl Competition
Adult Education	Domestic Violence refuge	Mentoring other organisations	Small business workshops & peer
Adult Learner's Week	Domestic Violence Week	Mission Australia	Social Ventures
After school care	Early Literacy Program	Mobile services	Smith Family
Anger management	Education and Training	Money workshop	Staff development
Animations Workshop for Youth	Emergency Relief	Multi cultural music night	Strategy planning day
Annual Community Festival	Employment programs	Multicultural Festival	Stress management
Art classes	Environmental	Multicultural Week	Submissions for funding
Auspice	Family Fun Day	Multicultural women's group	Suicide Prevention Network
Baby care	Family Law workshop	Mutual Support groups	Supervised access visits
Blue Light Disco	Family Support services	Neighbourhood Watch Networks	Supervision of Work for the Dole Projects
Boat Club	First Aid Course	New Community service workers peer support group	TAFE Accredited courses
Budgeting	Food Co-op	Nursery	Tai Chi Classes
Carer Respite	Fundraising	Older women's network	Tax Help
Catering	Gardening Club	Orchestra	Volunteer administration
Child Care - respite	Gardening Workshops	Outreach	Volunteer Day
Child Protection Day	German speaking playgroup	Organic Gardening	Volunteering Register
Child Safety programs	Guinness Book of Records World Record attempt (paper chain making)	Parenting courses	Volunteer Training for administrative assistants
Church groups	Healthy Lifestyle Expo	Parents with ADHD children	Volunteer Training for childcare
Cleaning	Hire of facilities	Partnerships	Walking group
Collaboration	Home visits	People with disabilities	Websites
Community Café	Homicide victims support		Weight Loss Group
Community Christmas Lunch	Housing Forum and tenancy workshops and		Welcome and greeting

Community Development training	sustaining tenancies with Real Estates	music group	Worm Farming
Community Jobs Plan Project	Indoor bowls	Personal development courses	Writer's club
Community Newspaper	Information, Advice and Referral	Playgroups for parents of young children	Yoga
Community Profiling	Inter-agency referral system	Pregnancy Awareness	Youth Concerts
Computer Club	Maintenance of buildings	Course in High schools	Youth Film Festival
Counselling – short term	Management Committee	Reporting	Youth Justice
Craft	meetings	Research	Conferencing
Crisis Counselling		Resource Centre	Youth Week
Cross-cultural training			