



*"Building Blocks
for Change"*

FORUM
REPORT

RDA Logan & Redlands
Sustainable Housing Forum

***Building Blocks for Change* - RDA Logan & Redlands Sustainable Housing Forum**

20 – 21 September 2012

The “***Building Blocks for Change***” Sustainable Housing Forum, an initiative of RDA Logan & Redlands, brought together all levels of government, housing service providers, non-government agencies, property developers, social and urban planners and economic development practitioners to explore innovative, affordable and sustainable housing solutions for the Logan & Redlands region. It was held over two days on 20-21 September 2012, with a bus tour on the first day followed by the forum on the second day (agendas for both days are included at the back of this report).

The event was held in partnership with:

- The Australian and Queensland Governments
 - Horizon Housing
 - Logan City Council
 - Logan Chamber of Commerce
 - TransitCare
 - Redland City Council
 - PEET Limited
 - Griffith University
 - Mangrove Housing Association Inc.
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The opening address by Dr Bruce Flegg, the former State Housing Minister, provided a frank and open account of the Queensland public housing crisis and the difficulties of finding somewhere to live for people who can't afford to buy or rent on the open market.

A number of statistics were provided, some of which were very bleak:

- 71,000 public housing homes in Queensland of which 61,000 are owned by the Queensland Government.
 - Current housing fund has operated for many years with little change in the 5,000 public housing dwellings in Logan, some 50% of which are more than 20 years old.
 - These include more than 80% in which frail aged, single parents and others with considerable need levels are housed.
 - Costs include \$103 million pa paid in rates – income is \$320 million pa collected in rent.
 - Gross under-occupancy: 9,000 four bedroom homes have only one resident.
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- Number of government houses reduced by 200 in the last 12 months leaving from 8,500-10,500 homeless people on the waiting list.
- Federal funding has taken the edge off this situation but has not met the need.
- Now, we have reached the point where we cannot house people who have nowhere to live. Many people have been living illegally in four bedroom homes without paying rent or declaring their occupancy.

Dr Flegg emphasized that **NO ONE GETS PLACED NOW SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY ARE POOR.** Only those with very high needs can be placed in Government public housing.

- In the last year, Government placed 82 families in Government houses and 103 families in non-government houses – many of these clients have intellectual disabilities.
- Necessary to redevelop the inappropriate 20 year old portfolio – including 1,531 government properties and 438 community properties to meet the needs of 810 families on the waiting list.
- Traditionally, no one leaves public housing – the vacancy rate is around 4%pa – essentially composed of the elderly who die or enter nursing homes. All placements in public housing are based on high needs because few properties become available.
- Eligible people with moderate needs will NEVER be placed.
- In Logan the need for more public housing is HUGE – 2,100 are awaiting placement in 5,000 houses which are already occupied (including 240 people already in public housing who have high needs) and in Brisbane’s northern suburbs there are 5,000 homeless people.
- Government is aiming to give Logan a better community outcome with the **LOGAN RENEWAL PROJECT**: this will be the largest renewal in Australia, aiming to build several high density buildings in central areas – including several “high concentration” buildings.
- Government will try to accommodate people who come out of hospital with mental health issues, “wheelchair” injuries etc – people who currently have nowhere to go – and also will try to accommodate prisoners returning to the community.

National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS)

Dr Flegg also discussed the Australian Government NRAS initiative established in July 2008, delivered in partnership with the State and Territory Governments, to increase the supply of affordable rental housing by 50,000 dwellings across Australia by June 2014. The NRAS provides financial incentives for investors to purchase new affordable housing that must be rented at a minimum of 20% below market rent. In Queensland, eligible tenants must first be registered with the Department of Housing and Public Works (Housing Services). Applications for renting NRAS properties are made through approved NRAS tenancy managers, who select and manage tenancies and the properties built under the scheme.

The former Minister commented that we need to develop a much bigger program in affordable housing – and the dilemma we face in Queensland is the challenge of avoiding the creation of a concrete jungle by including green spaces and other community-oriented features while avoiding urban sprawl. The Government aims to get some building underway this financial year as a catalyst to further development. John Grant MP, Member for Springwood, stated Government had already built some strong partnerships in Logan.

Affordable Housing – Stronger Partnerships

Dr Flegg believes this is Queensland's biggest need - probably 100,000+ people in Brisbane need more affordable housing. He then quoted the Western Australian housing model: available land + unemployed buildings but no bank finance so the WA Government arranged funding to build 800 houses with a shared equity scheme so people could buy 80% of the house and Government would buy 20% of the house. Government made enough money to fund this 20% AND made a profit and returned it to the Treasury.

The forum keynote speaker, Mr Tim Horton, South Australian Commissioner for Integrated Design, provided an informative account of research being conducted by Harvard University and other centres on "design thinking" and outlined achievements of the SA Government using design to meet the challenge of affordable housing and homelessness.

Mr Horton made the following key points:

- Better models are needed if the levels of government are to work more seamlessly to identify targeted solutions, and for the strategic pipeline of infrastructure in Logan & Redlands to inform the progressive delivery over the next decade.
- That a clear roadmap with rules of engagement is needed. A commitment has been made for Logan's renewal by establishing the Logan Renewal Board. So now a vision statement and objectives are needed for the many actors in the region to pull together. This should be developed jointly.

Benchmarks could include:

- The Integrated Design Strategy for Inner Adelaide (Consultation Draft)
<http://5000plus.net.au/asset/afOd/1650>
- Philadelphia 2035 Plan <http://www.sustainable.org/creating-community/building-partnerships/1313-philadelphia-2035-plan>
- PlaNYC
http://nytelecom.vo.llnwd.net/o15/agencies/planyc2030/pdf/planyc_2011_planyc_full_report.pdf

It is critical that renewal involves partnership with the local housing industry, Griffith University, local NGOs, Councils and the people in Logan & Redlands themselves. This will allow resources to be pooled and risk to be spread, improving the chance of reward and resulting in savings based on 'business as usual' models. A formal renewal program and a compelling formal organisational vehicle to attract common interest might be needed, auspiced by the Logan Renewal Board.

Benchmarks could include:

- 5000plus, a collaborative partnership involving three spheres of government, universities, NGOs, professional expertise and policy specialists, and communities themselves.
http://5000plus.net.au/assets/af35982b0a535ded3751eeb9f26cd6ac2b15d6a6/5000plus_module_online.pdf
- The Vancouver Agreement shows mechanisms for implementing partnership outcomes.
<http://www.vancouveragreement.ca/the-agreement/>

Activating the community itself in the renewal process might involve support structures such as: micro finance initiatives for small industry to entrepreneurship; models that build 'shared equity' in to programs to re-stitch community; and models that fuse finance with social enterprise. This might include leveraging Logan's multicultural richness (185 nationalities are represented) and intergenerational skills transfer (home-based cooking, repair and reuse to reduce household costs).

Benchmarks could include:

- Renew Australia, a not-for-profit specialising in connecting people with under-utilised facilities to promote community and grass roots participation in economic life.
<http://www.renewaustralia.org/>
- Food and food skills events can stimulate skills-sharing networks such as
<http://regionalfavours.com.au>
- Repair can offset the cost of new purchase and prolong the life of goods. But often old skills to repair and maintain older products have been lost. A range of creative programs from around the world can be found here: http://patterns.ideo.com/issue/care_and_repair/

A vision for Logan's housing future needs to be soundly based, drawing from state agencies, local council and regional datasets, data housed in Griffith University's schools and from industry. This will produce an evidence base to determine the areas for a more targeted spend.

Logan's renewal should be an investment in innovation, including construction innovation, social innovation, pilot finance and more co-operative governance as a lead demonstrator for a 'new way' in regional development.

Benchmarks could include:

- Queensland-based Sustainable Built Environment National Research Centre (incorporating the CRC for Construction Innovation) <http://www.sbenrc.com.au/>
- Griffith University School of Environment, Planning & Architecture
<http://www.griffith.edu.au/environment-planning-architecture>

Logan's renewal should not just be about making cheaper housing available, but in making Logan more desirable.

Cr Karen Williams, Mayor of Redland City outlined her policy of working together as a community to find solutions. The Mayor shared the belief that we all have a moral obligation to find solutions to homelessness and affordable housing. Mayor Williams is a huge advocate of partnerships and launched a new study on Youth Homelessness and Young People's Experience of Domestic Violence by the Redland Youth Change Driver Group, funded by Redland City Council.

PEET Operations Manager for Queensland, Mr Paul Engeman provided forum participants with a private industry development perspective on sustainable residential housing and outlined the complex interplay of demand and supply issues, namely: new legislation and regulation; time delays and finance costs; developer charges; household incomes; new banking policies in light of liquidity crisis; and changing household composition and needs. Mr Engeman spoke to the challenges for government in getting land to market faster, streamlining and developing flexibility in

approvals, simplifying planning codes and processes, and more efficient infrastructure charging. Mr Engeman reinforced the importance of partnerships which emerged as the most consistent message throughout the forum.

Photo Credit: Enrico Photography

Key Forum Discussion Points

- PUBLIC HOUSING ACROSS AUSTRALIA IS IN CRISIS – and in Queensland the situation is particularly grim.
- THE SA GOVERNMENT HAS ESTABLISHED PARTNERSHIPS with Federal and Local Government, investors, developers and builders to build affordable housing – at a profit.
- ADAPT - The way forward has to be based on redevelopment of large, older dwellings currently only occupied by one person – to accommodate more people in individual units under the one roof.
- DESIGN - Government has to find ways to develop new, well designed and purpose built public housing...success will depend on building strong partnerships between Federal, State and Local Governments and banks, investors, developers, builders and service providers.
- GREENSPACE – new designs must include greenspace – some new multistory public housing projects even include green areas on every second floor and sometimes on the roof, to allow residents to find relief from “four walls”. This is quite different to some of the older style public housing as often seen on British TV and evident for instance in Sydney.
- PARTNERSHIP – should include communities working together with the three levels of Government and with service providers who can provide information on needs and challenges during the design process.
- THE NEED WON'T GO AWAY – we must meet the challenge of providing affordable housing to accommodate the growing numbers of homeless people...including frail aged, those with intellectual or physical disability, young people (numbers are often hard to establish because of “couch surfing” and similar habits), ex-prisoners returning to the community and asylum seekers and immigrants.
- IT CAN BE DONE – but only through vision and partnership.
- SUPPORT FOR OUR RDA – to coordinate and drive a partnership between State/Local governments and stakeholders as described above – several representatives from NGOs and other service providers expressed interest in our RDA pursuing this matter to take a case to Federal Minister.



- TIM HORTON EXPRESSED HIS WILLINGNESS TO RETURN TO LOGAN/REDLANDS AFTER THE PARTNERSHIPS WERE BROKERED LOCALLY, TO PRESENT OUR CASE TO THE FEDERAL MINISTER IN CANBERRA.

Key Themes & Recommendations

Vision: produce and publish a renewal plan with principles, objectives and timeframes (possible duration 12-18 months depending on desired outcomes). Consider Logan's Renewal an exemplar for regional development in Australia.

Partnership: RDA Logan & Redlands could formally convene a collaborative partnership to draw together community, industry, university research sector and government as a special purpose vehicle (overseen by the Logan Renewal Board) to drive design-based innovation in the planning and delivery of demonstration projects and to prepare a high level framework plan for renewal in the region.

Engagement: publish progress against the plan as an exemplar of transparency and to actively seek a new benchmark for open public engagement in the design of the renewal program and projects.

Implementation: consider innovative implementation agreements at the outset to promote non-government organisations to participate in delivery of the renewal program.



Photo Credit: Enrico Photography

General Observations on Bus Tour Sites:

Horizon Housing Property, Pacific Pines - Relatively new 4 B/R ensuited communal living which will house four persons with disabilities along with a carer's office and bathroom. Premises are intended to be operated as a 'household' with a communal kitchen and small entertainment area and yard. Each of the rooms contained a small kitchenette, en-suite, data connections and access to a small private garden, however there was little break out space. It was commented that a drawback of this property was its isolation in regard to major shopping centres. However, Horizon do provide a regular bus service to residents. Each studio room is rented at 25% of the client's income plus rent assistance. Some small design features (steps) would be difficult for wheelchair access.

Horizon Properties at Nerang and Cleveland - The Nerang multi complex with NRAS had spacious single and double rooms – great location, opposite park on one side, train station on other side. The building had breakout space and open green space on ground level, however there was no cover or seating for communal integration.

The Cleveland site boasts stunning views over Moreton Bay made up of 40 units consisting of 5 x studio, 25 x one bedroom and 10 x two bedroom units with 20 space car park built underneath. The comments by the group were that these units were thoughtfully furnished and designed. The tenants were sourced from the Department of Housing's One Social Housing waitlist and are mainly seniors and/or those with disabilities.

Brisbane Housing Company Property 'Century' at Woolloongabba - Property is a mixed tenure venture of 73 apartments, opened in March this year and all apartments are sold out. The 9-story development has delivered a diversified and balanced environment for all tenants. The apartments feature open plan living and dining areas, well-appointed integrated kitchen and a generously-sized balcony. The development was a collaborative effort between BHC and the Queensland Cricketers Club, who retain seven apartments. The communal areas are spacious and there is a rooftop entertainment area available to unit owners only. Owner occupiers and NRAS units have access to a 5th floor open common area for BBQ's and socialising. General consensus was that this was a good blend of living for 3 differing sectors, close to bus transport and ideal for cricket and AFL fans.

Micha's Common Ground, South Brisbane - This new affordable housing complex opened in June this year and is based on a socially inclusive overseas model combining residential, retail/commercial and community spaces. The 146 unit building is a housing solution for people who have experienced chronic homelessness and for low income earners. The project was delivered through a pioneering government-business-community partnership. The building includes training rooms, a conference room, break-out rooms and a shared large common area for each two floors. The rooftop area has a community garden and is available to all residents. The internal walkways are wide and the units are compact but well appointed. The building has 24hr security and a concierge service. While other support services such as doctors etc are not on site, the Micha worker will arrange the required services for any of the tenants. The complex has three vacant commercial premises and excellent meeting facilities for rent and hope to attract a 7/11, medical centre and a café.

Overall, the sites visited emphasized to participants the importance of good design aimed at the needs of client groups, with bus tour participants complimenting the work undertaken by Horizon, BHC and Common Ground.



Building Blocks for Change

A Sustainable Housing Forum for the Logan & Redlands Region

Forum Agenda – Friday 21 Sept 2012 at Sirromet Winery

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| 9.00am | Registration Tea & Coffee |
| 9.30am | Welcome, Acknowledgements and Forum Opening Gail Ker, Acting Chair RDA Logan & Redlands |
| 9.45am | Queensland State Government Housing Session Mr John Grant MP, Member for Springwood The Hon Dr Bruce Flegg MP, Minister for Housing and Public Works – Housing Priorities Address Includes Q & A Session |
| 11.00am | Keynote Address – Housing Innovation and the Supply Chain Mr Tim Horton, South Australian Commissioner for Integrated Design Includes Q & A Session |
| 12.00pm | Launch – Redlands Youth Change Driver Group Report on Youth Homelessness Cr Karen Williams, Mayor, Redland City Council Includes discussion on Redlands social housing experience |
| 12.20pm | LUNCH |
| 1.00pm | "New Thinking for a New Market" Paul Engeman, State Operations Manager (Qld), PEET Limited Includes Q & A Session |
| 1.35pm | Three SEQ Case Studies – Horizon Housing; Mangrove Housing; Youth & Family Services Includes Q & A Session |
| 2.35pm | Project Funding – Community Sector Banking |
| 2.45pm | Roundtable Workshop Discussion – Overcoming barriers to provision of affordable housing – Social housing stock redevelopment (Greenfield and Brownfield) |
| 3.45pm | Roundtable Analysis & Summary Mr Tim Horton |
| 4.00pm | Closing Comments RDA Logan & Redlands and Mr John Grant MP, Member for Springwood |
| 4.15pm | Drinks and networking |
| 5.00pm | Close |



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A Sustainable Housing Forum for the Logan & Redlands Region

Schedule for Bus Tour – Thursday 20 Sept 2012

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| 8.45am | Meet at Logan Entertainment Centre (LEC) forecourt 150 Wembley Road, Logan Central |
| 9.00am | Depart LEC |
| 9.50am | View Horizon Housing Properties 31 Bellinger Key, Pacific Pines and 1 Bowden Court, Nerang |
| 11.00am | Depart Gold Coast |
| 11.45am | Arrive at Tudor Park PCYC Clarks Road, Loganholme LIGHT LUNCH SERVED |
| 12.15pm | Depart Logan City |
| 1.00pm | View Horizon Housing Properties (Redland City) 80-90 Queen Street, Cleveland and 22 Passage Street, Cleveland |
| 2.00pm | Depart Redland City |
| 2.30pm | View Brisbane Housing Company Property 456-464 Vulture Street, Woolloongabba |
| 3.00pm | Depart Woolloongabba |
| 3.15pm | View Common Ground Property 15 Hope Street, South Brisbane |
| 3.45pm | Depart South Brisbane |
| 4.30pm | Arrive at LEC – Bus Tour ends (Traffic permitting) |