

## 4.9.1 Community Capacity Building



### **Preamble**

Women's Housing Company (WHC) is a community housing association as part of the social housing system in NSW. WHC provides long term housing for single women and medium term housing through support partnerships.

Women's Housing Company follows a social justice approach in all aspects of service delivery. The need to improve the lives of tenants by providing a range of strategies that encourage sustainable communities is recognised and pursued through actively increasing community capacity.

This commitment is expressed most clearly through the employment of a Community Development Worker dedicated to the implementation of such strategies.

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### **POLICY**

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Women's Housing Company commits to practical approaches in community capacity building by;

- Providing safe and secure housing environments to tenants who have experienced a range of negative life affecting issues exacerbated by a history of lack of affordable housing options.
- Providing a range of housing options that enable women the safety and affordability required to work on negative life affecting issues.
- Promoting friendly neighbourhoods and working towards establishing supportive environment that assist tenants to support each other.
- Networking with a range of support agencies to promote community activities and seek improvements for isolated and disadvantaged tenant groups within local communities.
- Promoting community housing and capacity building activities, new property openings, Office Open Days and special events such as International Women's Day to the wider community utilising all forms of media.
- Utilising tenants' existing social/community knowledge and involvement to increase and assist participation.

WHC will encourage tenants to develop and maintain relationships with other WHC tenants, other social housing tenants and the wider community. WHC encourages tenants to overcome social isolation and to become active participants in the building of sustained communities, these communities may be as small as a few tenants within a specific group of interest or as large as the whole social housing tenant community.

This will be facilitated within a framework of self determination, resourcing tenants to make connections on the basis of their interest and their desired level of engagement. A variety of capacity building opportunities will be made available to the tenants to ensure that different levels of needs, interest and abilities are met.

WHC will guarantee the relevant processes through a dedicated Community Development Worker, with a dedicated budget for activities and resources.

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**PROCEDURE**

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Women's Housing Company will contribute to the development of the community housing sector. This will include participation on a range of policy issues.

This will ensure any changes to policy will minimise negative impact on tenants and operating guidelines for the sector.

Opportunity for participation includes having a role in:

- Working with government at federal, state and local levels;
- Testing innovation and models of pilot/ new housing programs/projects;
- Seeking alternate sources of funding;
- Promoting Women's Housing Company;
- Attending relevant community events;
- Participating in a range of steering committees.

WHC community is diverse given our service is gender specific; we will;

- Actively promote the needs of our target group.
- Obtain research and topical reports that highlight their needs and state their disadvantage.
- Use primary and secondary data to demonstrate needs are overlooked.
- Incorporate data into our planning processes that will contribute to the growth of the organisation.

The CD worker pursues capacity building through the organisation of activities including;

- Garden projects at identified blocks of units;
- Local Government Area tenant meetings linking tenants into local services and with each other;
- Social outings, with educational, arts, recreational and/or cultural focus;
- Fire and personal safety workshops at identified blocks of units and/or for interested tenant groups;
- Electronic tenant group, linking tenants who have hindering issues preventing them from participating in block or other tenant meetings;
- Information sharing through the quarterly Newsletter;
- Short story and poetry competitions;
- Social activities based on specific interest including handicrafts, arts;

All community capacity building activities are **evaluated** by the participating tenants.

The feedback from the evaluation forms is collated and analysed by the CD worker, an analysis including any recommendations are reported to the Senior Housing Manager (SHM) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

An action plan is developed and monitored by the CD worker in conjunction with the SHM, the action plan is evaluated at regular supervision meetings and the six monthly policy & procedure workshops (see **4.8 Ongoing Evaluation**).

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**Date developed: 2000**

**Date/s policy was ratified and/or changed by Board: 31/1/05; 28/8/07**

**Note:** Procedures are designed to guide the implementation of a policy and will be updated on a regular basis as part of ongoing best practice service improvement.