

HOUSING NSW
Community and Tenant Participation Unit

CONSULTATION PAPER
***Future Directions Tenant Participation
Program***

March 2008

1) PURPOSE OF PAPER

This consultation paper outlines a proposed new direction and implementation process for Housing NSW's Tenant Participation Program (TPP), and specifically the future funding of Tenant Participation Resource Services (TPRS), currently delivered by Regional Tenant Resource Services (RTRS) and Public Tenants Councils (PTC).

The proposal incorporates findings of the 2007 independent review of the TPP conducted by ARTD Consultants. It also draws on findings from the Public Housing Customer Council (PHCC) and Housing Communities Assistance Program (HCAP) reviews as well as other relevant Government reform processes related to grants programs.

Whilst the consultation paper outlines Housing NSW's current preferred directions, the proposal is for discussion purposes only at this stage. As such feedback and input is being sought from various stakeholder groups.

Key proposed directions outlined in this paper are to:

- Establish an Expression of Interest process for funding Tenant Participation Resource Services across NSW (linking RTRS and PTC roles);
- Increase the number of TPRS to nine (9) organisations across NSW;
- Fund successful TPRS for a two (2) year period in the first funding round (July 2009-June 2011), and a three (3) year period thereafter, subject to the submission and approval of Annual Service Plans;
- Implement a results-based accountability framework across the TPRS to create greater consistency and accountability between services. This will involve all services developing, in partnership with Divisional staff, annual service plans against five core activity areas;
- Encourage partnerships and innovative approaches to tenant participation and expand tenant capacity building;
- Align the funding of TPRS with current Government policies and practices, including in particular Housing NSW's corporate objectives, and accountability requirements in respect to grants administration;
- Maintain the Community Development Resourcing Grants (CDRG) and Housing Communities Assistance Program (HCAP), plus other smaller grants administered by the Community and Tenant Participation Unit (CTPU), as separate funding initiatives; however improve the timing and linkages with the TPRS EOI process.

Housing NSW is seeking feedback through divisional consultation workshops, as listed on page 10 of the paper. Written comments can also be sent by cob **Monday, 21 April 2008** to:

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2) BACKGROUND

2.1 *About the TP Program*

Tenant participation has been a feature of NSW Government public housing policy and practice for over 30 years.

Currently the Tenant Participation Program incorporates a range of internal and externally funded tenant initiatives including:

- Regional Tenant Resource Services (RTRS)
- Public Tenant Councils (PTC)
- Housing Communities Assistance Program (HCAP)
- Community Development Resourcing Grants (CDRG)
- Allocations to Housing Services Divisions to support Divisional and local area tenant participation
- State-wide tenant activities, including consultative structures and tenant participation forums, plus other smaller grants administered through the CTPU.

There are currently 7 RTRS and 7 PTC¹ funded under the TPP across NSW. In some Housing Divisions these services and activities are closely linked. In other Divisions the connections between the RTRS and PTC are underdeveloped.

Under the proposed new arrangements there will be 9 TPRS funded across NSW. Each TPRS will be funded to conduct a related set of roles and functions as currently performed by RTRS and PTC in the division. At the same time the proposal would require all TPRS to forge partnerships and linkages with other organisations or services in the Division in order to maintain or strengthen effective local and area based tenant participation activities.

2.2 *ARTD Review and TP Program Strengths*

As noted in the 2007 independent review of the TPP conducted by ARTD, RTRS and PTC have played key roles in terms of fostering tenant participation across the state. Collectively they were found to have demonstrated value through their roles in:

- Building linkages with tenants over many years;
- Demonstrating understanding and knowledge of local area issues;
- Keeping tenants informed about issues affecting their housing;
- Representing broader issues of tenants to housing providers including Housing NSW, and advocating on issues of concern;
- Providing information, referral and support services to social housing tenants;
- Supporting the development of tenant and community-based groups in their area;
- Promoting the involvement of tenants in tenant participation activities;
- Supporting and enhancing local networks to identify and resolve systemic client service issues;
- Working in partnership with social housing providers and other agencies to develop tenant consultation and participation structures appropriate to the local area or division;

¹ PTC funding administered by the Illawarra Forum is for the purpose of consulting with tenants and to establish PTC structures and to the Riverwood Community Centre to support four Area Tenant Councils.

- Implementing projects and initiatives that cater to local tenant needs;
- Providing training and development opportunities to up-skill tenants;
- Assisting tenant volunteers to coordinate local services and initiatives;
- Exercising flexibility in program design and delivery to address local tenant needs;
- Promoting consultative groups and tenant councils, including to residents not otherwise involved in tenant participation; and
- Encouraging and supporting community projects.

Each of the above roles and strengths has informed the shape of the new Tenant Participation Resource Service proposal and draft implementation process described below.

2.3 Policy Context for Reform

In addition to the 2007 ARTD review of the TPP, the foundations for the new TPRS proposal is based on a number of recent Government reform processes including:

- NSW State Plan, and specifically its goal of *Building Harmonious Communities* through increasing participation and integration in community activities (R4), and the commitment to increased customer satisfaction with Government services (S8).
- 2007- 2010 Housing NSW Corporate Plan, and specifically its commitments to quality customer service and the integration of social housing in communities.
- NSW Grants Administration Guidelines and specifically its recommendations that government grants be administered using a transparent, open and accountable application and funding process.
- The *Working Together for NSW Agreement (2006)* signed between the NSW Government and the NSW Council of Social Services on strengthening and clarifying the relationships between the government and non-government sector.
- The broader NSW Government agenda to deliver programs that are outcome-orientated and consistent with a results-based accountability framework (as promoted by US policy reform advocate Mark Friedman).

This requires funded services to have strong governance arrangements and structures. It also required services to develop and implement clear plans and actions that purposively contribute to meeting each of the agreed TPRS core activities and outcomes.

3) PROPOSED NEW FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

3.1 Aims

Consistent with Housing NSW's Corporate Plan (Major Outcome 3), the aim of the proposed Tenant Participation Resource Services (TPRS) would be to link the current roles and functions of RTRS and PTC in order to:

- 1) Provide social housing tenants with:
 - a) Information, tools and opportunities to participate in decision making processes that affect their physical, social and economic circumstances,
 - b) Opportunities to become more engaged in community activities.

- 2) Assist Housing NSW to better understand and respond to the needs of social housing tenants and to changes within their communities.
- 3) Inform and improve the quality of Housing NSW decisions and processes, and assist in ensuring their implementation is responsive to community impacts at a Divisional and local area level.

3.2 Key Elements

The proposed restructured funding of RTRS and PTC through the Tenant Participation Resource Services sets out to provide greater consistency, accountability and transparency across Housing Services Divisions, whilst at the same time builds in sufficient flexibility to cater for Divisional or local area differences.

Following a transitional phase to assist currently funded organisations adapt (see Section 4.1), the proposed new arrangements would comprise:

- 1) The establishment of a single Tenant Participation Resource Service Expression of Interest process (encompassing both the current RTRS and PTC resources and functions).

The EOIs for all Divisions would be based on a common set of:

- Eligibility Requirements
- Core Activity Areas
- Application timelines and funding periods
- Reporting Requirements.

Note: *What each of these issues are, and how to apply for TPRS funding, would be documented in TPRS Guidelines to be released in approximately September 2008. (See outline included at Attachment B).*

- 2) The funding of nine (9) Tenant Participation Resource Services across NSW.

These would comprise:

- 2 TPRS in Greater Western Sydney Division
- 2 TPRS in Central Sydney Division
- 2 TPRS in Northern NSW Division
- 3 TPRS in Southern and Western Division (including new services in the Riverina and western areas of NSW).

- 3) An increase of funding to the TPRS program (core and innovative streams) plus a 3% indexation increase per annum over the funding cycle.

The TPRS program growth over four (3) years would be approximately \$1.8 million.

- 4) An enhanced role for Divisional staff in the EOI process through:

- Specifying minimum requirements to be addressed in specific TPRS applications;
- Being part of the review panel for EOIs within their Division;

- Participating in finalising Annual Service Plans with relevant TPRS as part of the contract negotiations; and
- Reviewing progress of relevant TPRS plans and in other ways participating in the overall TPRS monitoring process.

5) A direct linking of the roles currently performed by RTRS and PTC through funding a single TPRS in each nominated geographic area.

In order to do this TPRS applicants would need to forge partnerships and linkages with existing tenant groups and bodies within the Division in order to maintain momentum and achieve continuity with the roles and functions previously performed by RTRSs and/or PTCs.

6) Splitting TPRS funding into two (2) streams:

- a) Core Activities stream common to all TPRS (see Section 3.3).
- b) Innovation Stream (similar to the current Special Projects funding), to support activities that are either:
 - i) Enhancements of core activities but cannot be funded through the core funding stream;
 - ii) Trials of new approaches or innovative engagement initiatives, that if successful could become part of a core activity in the future;
 - iii) One-off projects that respond to specific issues or activities occurring in the Division or area in that year; and/or
 - iv) Partnership initiatives where the funded TPRS works in collaboration with another NGO or group to undertake a specific tenant engagement project.

Initially it is proposed that TPRS applicants would be able to apply for Core and Innovation Funding at the same time (end December 2008). Thereafter, Innovation Funding applications would be sought from current TPRS on an annual basis, in a similar manner to the current Special Projects funding.

7) Maintenance of HCAP, CRDG and other smaller grants programs administered by CTPU would remain as separate initiatives. Over time however the application processes and timelines would be better aligned.

3.3 Core TPRS Activities

The proposal assumes that all organisations funded through the Tenant Participation Resource Service EOI process would undertake specific activities, and demonstrate measurable outcomes in each of the following activity areas.

Whilst all Resource Services would need to demonstrate they were undertaking initiatives under all Core activities, it is anticipated that there would be variations in the extent and nature of these activities from one TPRS to the next.

Each Housing Services Division would assist in clarifying these variations by providing potential applicants with:

- a) minimum requirements expected of the TPRS;
- b) specific activities or partnerships expected to be undertaken by the TPRS; plus

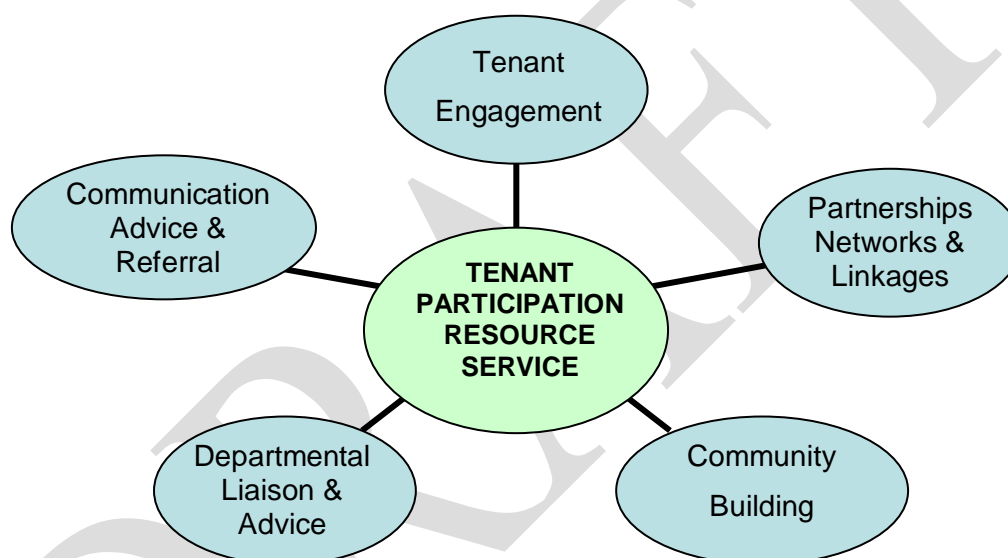
- c) preferred weighting to be given to each Core Activity Area as part of the EOI review process.

There are five (5) proposed Core TPRS activities as summarised in the Diagram below.

Each TPRS EOI applicant would be required to submit a Service Plan (similar to the template included at Attachment A) demonstrating how they propose to action and measure each core activity area.

Note: *It is proposed that some of the core activities would be delivered directly by the TPRS, whilst others would be delivered through partner organisations in the Division (for example, through an existing Public Tenant Council).*

As would be explained in the EOI TPRS Guidelines (to be released in September 2008), TPRS applicants would need to describe how and who would be responsible for performing which activity or sub-activity. Ultimately however the successful TP Resource Service would be accountable for delivering all agreed TPRS core activities.



1) Tenant Engagement

This core activity focuses on gathering information and consulting with tenants in an innovative, structured and effective way, using a range of techniques, including new technologies, where appropriate.

The primary aim of this activity would be to identify issues and preferred options regarding their social housing environment, as well as other aspects of their physical, social and economic circumstances.

This core activity would include coordinating and resourcing tenant consultative bodies as specified by the relevant Housing Services Division (such as Tenant Councils or Tenant Advisory Boards).

Options might include:

- *Convening and providing regular support or secretariat type roles to specific Councils or Boards*
- *Working with other providers to facilitate local tenant engagement processes*
- *Hosting a one-off or annual tenant engagement event*
- *Establishing and maintaining online tenant forums.*

2) Departmental Liaison and Advice

This core activity focuses on regularly liaising, and providing structured feedback to Housing NSW on tenant views regarding their social housing situation, as well as other aspects of their physical, social and economic circumstances.

Options might include:

- *Regular meetings with Client Service Team staff*
- *Providing verbal and written feedback on Departmental proposals*
- *Attending organised forums*
- *Participation in special meetings or forum to discuss specific initiatives.*

3) Communication, Advice and Referrals

This core activity focuses on providing information and communication to tenants on issues or decisions that may affect their social housing situation, as well as other relevant physical, social and economic issues.

Options might include:

- *Tenant Newsletters*
- *Telephone Advice and Referral Service*
- *Notice Boards and Websites*

Note: *It is proposed that client case management and ongoing individual advocacy is not included as part of Tenant Participation Resource Service funding. However, consistent with the Working Together Agreement principles, these supplementary roles could be performed utilising other funding sources, subject to there being no conflicts of interest with core TPRS roles and activities.*

4) Community Building

This core activity focuses on assisting tenants, those who work with tenants and communities as a whole to undertake community development activities and to build stronger communities. This would involve initiatives that encourage residents to become more active in community life and enable them to more fully engage in the physical, social and economic opportunities available.

This would also involve promoting social cohesion by encouraging social inclusion type activities and provide participation opportunities to residents, regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, cultural, linguistic or religious backgrounds.

Options might include:

- *Mentoring and community leadership programs*

- *Provide training in meeting processes or submission writing*
- *Supporting community events focused on bring tenants together and building community harmony.*

5) Partnerships, Linkages and Networks

This core activity focuses on establishing or maintaining networks, linkages and partnerships with other tenant groups, related non-government organisations, and community development groups. Each of these networks would be focused on strengthening divisional, area and/or local tenant participation capacities and outcomes.

Options might include:

- *Partnerships with relevant PTC to deliver specific activities at area or local levels*
- *Linkages with neighbourhood centres to run specific programs*
- *Collaboration with other TPRS or other relevant bodies to support and strengthen Divisional TPRS activities and initiatives.*

As would be explained in the proposed TPRS EOI Guidelines [September 2008], all non-government organisations or tenant groups wishing to become the TP Resource Service would be expected to document, using a Service Specification Template (see **Attachment A**), how they propose to deliver these core activities across the two (2) years of funding.

If successful the TPRS would be expected to prepare, in collaboration with Housing NSW staff, an Annual Service Plan based on the Service Specification document submitted. This would form part of the funding agreement negotiated and signed with Housing NSW, with reports against progress proposed at six (6) monthly and annually.

4) IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 Transition Phase

Housing NSW is proposing to assist current RTRS and PTC adjust to the new arrangements, with a transition phase. This phase would commence from end of May 2008. During this time the following steps are proposed:

- All current RTRS and PTC contracts would be extended by twelve (12) months (or up until 30 June 2009).
- As previously, 2008-09 RTRS and PTC funding would be based on the submission of an annual service plan. However, all plans would be required to address the core activity areas described in Section 3.3 and be presented in a format similar to the EOI Service Plan included at Attachment A.
- To assist RTRS and PTC understand the 2008-09 funding arrangements, a set of TP Funding Transition Guidelines would be prepared and distributed. (See Attachment B as a guide to its content).
- As a complement to the release of the 2008-09 TP Funding Guidelines, CTPU within Housing NSW would host a series of workshops to explain the Guidelines.
- All 2008-09 TP funding applications (incorporating the new format Core Activity Annual Service Plan) would need to be submitted to Housing NSW by end of June 2008.

- On 1 July 2008 one quarter (1/4) funding would be released to all services based on submission of plan.
- From July – September 2008 Divisional and CTPU staff would provide feedback to Services and divisional staff would then negotiate and agree on final plans.
- By 30 September 2008 final three quarter (3/4) funding would be released to services based on negotiated plans with Housing Services Divisions.

4.2 TPRS EOI Phase

If approved, the proposed TPRS EOI phase would commence at the beginning of the next financial year (2008/09). The following steps are proposed:

- In September 2008 TPRS EOI Guidelines would be released with invitations to submit applications distributed to stakeholders. (See Attachment B as a guide to what might be included)
- The EOI process would close in December 2008, with Information Workshops being held around NSW prior to the close date to explain and promote:
 - a) The aims of Tenant Participation Resource Services
 - b) EOI process and timeframes
 - c) How to develop a Service Plan based on the Core Activity Areas (see Attachment A)
 - d) The importance of forging strong partnerships, networks and linkages, and what might be expected on a Division-by-Division basis.
- The outcome of the EOI would be announced by the end March 2009 with organisations funded from July 2009 to June 2011.

5) NEXT STEPS

To discuss these proposed new directions, and provide an opportunity to ask questions, provide feedback or seek clarification, Housing NSW will be hosting a series of workshops for current RTRS and PTC committee members and staff.

The dates and locations of the Consultation Workshops are as follows:

WORKSHOP A: 9:00- 12:00, Wednesday 26 March
Businesslink
Level 6, Training Room 3
23-31 Moore Street, LIVERPOOL

WORKSHOP B: 2:00- 5:00, Wednesday 26 March
Central Sydney Housing
Level 11, Conference Room
234 Sussex Street, SYDNEY CITY

WORKSHOP C: 10:30- 1:30, Wednesday 2 April
NSW Housing Admin Office, Newcastle
2-6 Dick Street, NEWCASTLE

6) FURTHER INFORMATION

For any queries regarding this paper or the upcoming Consultation Workshops and to submit any feedback or comments on this proposal please contact:

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Please submit any feedback or comments by **COB Monday 21 April 2008**

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ATTACHMENT A: PROPOSED TPRS CORE ACTIVITIES SERVICE PLAN TEMPLATE

CORE ACTIVITY	MAJOR INITIATIVES (relevant to Divisional priorities and issues [to be provided])	KEY OUTPUTS/ DELIVERABLES (Where relevant/ known)
1) Tenant Engagement	1.1	
	1.2	
	1.3	
2) Departmental Liaison & Advice	2.1	
	2.2	
	2.3	
3) Communication, Advice & Referral	3.1	
	3.2	
	3.3	
4) Community Building	4.1	
	4.2	
	4.3	
5) Partnerships, Linkages & Networks	5.1	
	5.2	
	5.3	

ATTACHMENT B: PROPOSED TPRS EOI GUIDELINES - OUTLINE

To further explain the proposed Tenant Participation Resource Service arrangements, and to specifically assist organisations to prepare for the Expression of Interest (EOI) process, it is proposed that a set of TPRS Guidelines be prepared and released in September 2008.

The proposed content of the Guidelines would include:

1. About the Tenant Participation Program Resource Service
2. About the Expression of Interest Process (Core Funding)
 - Eligible Organisations
 - Selection Criteria
3. Geographic Coverage of TP Resource Services
4. Division Specific Expectations for inclusion in the TPRS Service Plans
5. Application Requirements
6. About the Service Specifications and Annual Service Plans (see Attachment A)
 - How to Prepare (based on Divisional Priorities and Issues)
 - How to define Outputs and Outcomes
7. TPRS Monitoring and Reporting Requirements
8. Management Issues
 - Role of Housing Services Divisional Staff
 - Role of CTPU
9. About the Innovation Funding Stream and Process
10. Timeframes
11. Further Information

Note: If approved and as part of the transition arrangements, an early version of these Guidelines would be prepared to assist current RTRS and PTC prepare their 2008-09 Service Plans.

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EJD: TPRS Proposal- Version 19-03
20-Mar-08