



Looking forward to community living

“My own life, my own home, in
communities where we all belong”



A booklet on community living for people
with disabilities in Western Australia





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Introduction

This booklet provides an introduction to, and overview of, the Community Living Plan for people with disabilities and their families, carers, friends, and people who work in the disability sector or community organisations. The booklet outlines the building blocks to establishing successful community living, provides practical examples of models of community living support, and contains information on the new Framework for Community Living, the Community Living Support Funding Strategy and useful resource materials.

This booklet aims to provide guidance on planning and developing community living options for people with disabilities. While this booklet can be used by people on their own or within their own networks, it is also an important resource that people can use with the support of a Local Area Coordinator (LAC), and/or other support staff.

What is the Community Living Plan?

The Community Living Plan is a new Disability Services Commission (Commission) initiative which seeks to increase the range of community living options for adults with disabilities in Western Australia with an emphasis on growing innovative and personalised support arrangements in local communities as alternatives to group home accommodation. The Plan, through a range of policy and practice initiatives, aims to create an environment that facilitates the development of community living options for people with a disability who prefer this style of accommodation support.

A community living option (also referred to as a community living opportunity or a community living arrangement) is an arrangement of individually tailored supports that are carefully planned and put in place to support a person with a disability to have their own home in the community and live a good life. The supports (which may be funded) complement and supplement the assistance and support provided by family/carers, friends and social and community networks.

These community living options are 'person centred' and emphasise key elements of a 'home' in the community and 'a good life' such as valued relationships, choice, contribution, security for the future and opportunities for growth.

The person centred approach puts the person with a disability at the centre of planning and decision making. It gives the person with a disability choices about how they would like to see their lives unfold.

Community living options can vary greatly from one to another as they are tailored to each person and their individual preferences and situation. The options can also change over time as people's lives and circumstances change. Examples of a range of possible support arrangements are described in the section on Models of Community Living in this booklet.



Where did the Community Living Plan idea come from?

The Community Living Plan is an initiative arising from the Western Australian Sector Health Check on Disability Services (2007). The Plan was identified as an avenue for exploring and developing new and innovative community support options.

“People have trouble imagining better as they often rely on what has gone before or have become conditioned over time to think only certain models of support are possible”¹

The Sector Health Check Report contains three specific recommendations related to planning for community living:

- **Recommendation 21.** That the Commission, in collaboration with the sector, develops a comprehensive community living plan to broaden the range of community living options available to people with disabilities;
- **Recommendation 22.** That in line with the above, the Commission explores and reports on innovative models that have demonstrated success in other jurisdictions, within 12 months; and
- **Recommendation 23.** That the Commission works with the sector to build a second layer of expertise, specifically in community living support, to complement the existing expertise in group homes, and like services, and to develop and deliver innovative community living options.

More about the Community Living Plan

There are a number of elements to the Community Living Plan. These include:

- The **Framework for Community Living** – a concept plan which has a vision statement, principles, strategies and includes broad measures of change;
- An **Information Resource** that provides easy access to information on community living and examples of community living from Western Australia, Australia and overseas. The aim of the Information Resource is to connect people to a range of information that can provide guidance and/or inspiration on how they might create and sustain a richer range of possibilities and options for community living;
- The **Community Living Support Funding Strategy** through which individuals and families can apply for funding and/or support to put in place a community living option. It is important to note that community living options can also be funded through the Combined Application Process (CAP) and through self funded arrangements. See the “Community living options development and funding” section of this booklet for further detail; and
- A number of longer term strategies aimed at building capacity of the disability sector, strengthening families and family leadership, developing new partnerships, improving community infrastructure and changing systems to create improved community living options.

1. Deb Rouget at http://www.disabilitynews.infoxchange.net.au/news/dol/results.chtml?filename_num=27256.



Participants at the writing workshop on the Framework for Community Living.
(Photo courtesy of Ron Olsen).

The Framework for Community Living, the Information Resource and the Community Living Support Funding Strategy are outlined in later sections of this booklet. Appendix 2 contains a list of resources/ documents that have been produced through the Community Living Plan.

The longer term Community Living Plan strategies will be detailed in the Community Living Implementation Plan

which will be publicly available in early 2009. The major strategies contained in the Community Living Implementation Plan were developed by the Community Living Plan writing workshop participants comprising individuals and family representatives of people with disabilities, representatives from service providers, community based organisations, peak bodies and Disability Services Commission.



Building blocks to community living

Research from Australia and overseas on sustainable and successful community living arrangements identifies a number of key elements that need to be carefully considered and included in each community living arrangement. Extensive consultations with individuals, families, service providers, community organisations and Commission staff also identified the importance of these factors in the development of quality community living arrangements. Further details of the research, consultations and an analysis of the pathways and partnerships to community living can be found in the Community Living

Concept Plan – Stage 1 Report which is located on the Commission’s website: www.disability.wa.gov.au

The building blocks to community living illustrated in the figure below, are the foundations of a successful community living arrangement. Captured within the building blocks are the key elements identified through the research and consultations.

Each building block plays a key part in creating a quality life and home for a person with a disability. It is paramount that each person for whom the community living option is being developed is seen as unique and that the building blocks are considered on a person by person basis.

Figure 1: Building blocks to community living





What do the building blocks mean?

The starting point for building a life and a home in the community is the first building block – **My dreams and visions for “my own life, my own home in communities where we all belong.”**

To identify the dreams and visions of the person for whom the community living option is being developed means creating a trusting environment where the person is able to discover and communicate their dreams, and truly listening to what is most important for the person. What is their vision for a positive future? What are their hopes? What do they really want? How do they want to live? What makes them happy? Where will they be? What will they be doing? And who will be around them? Sometimes the person may require support from people close to them to be able to communicate their thoughts, wants and dreams.



“I dreamt of a day when I would live in a home of my own choosing, fill that home with my own personal touches, do what I wanted to do when I wanted to, live with people I chose, have parties and take part in life! A part of this was the opportunity to make my own decisions, make mistakes and learn from them and be successful.” ²

“The process of realising the dream was a very gradual one, with a steep learning curve. Bits of the puzzle fell into place one by one ...”

(Mother of an adult son with a disability) ³

“What acting on this vision has meant for Mena is that she has been able to fulfil her dreams, build her own life, to have a job, to have her own home, her own social life.”

(Mother of an adult daughter with a disability) ⁴

2. M. Nicoll, CRUcial Times, March 2008, Issue 40, p.4

3. www.supportedliving.org.au/resources/stories/david.html

4. www.supportedliving.org.au/resources/stories/mena.html



A network of family, friends and supporters

Having a network of caring and supportive friends and family is an important part of people's lives. Some individuals and families are able to build up a network of friends and supports around the person for whom the community living option is being developed whereas others may require specific assistance to build and sustain these relationships. Sometimes it is necessary to intentionally gather a supportive network around the person with a disability. It is important that this is done with deliberate care so the right people are in the network, that is, those who will enhance the life of the person with the disability. Sometimes these supportive networks are called circles of support; another term used is personal networks.

“A support person visits Simon once a week to help him form new relationships in the community Simon's mum also made a connection with a really nice bloke at a local church, who together with his wife and their friends, have included Simon in their lives in a freely given way.” ⁵

Appropriate technical assistance with information and planning

When people consider making a major change in their lives, they often seek information/advice and make intentional plans to ensure a smooth transition to their new situation. This is particularly relevant when a person has additional challenges in their lives. Information and planning are critical elements of a successful transition from home to new living arrangements. Often we turn to family, friends and those who support us for the information and planning required. However, from time to time, other sources of information and support are required.

“Over the years, Simon's mum attended the Independent Living Group (ILG) meetings and heard a number of examples and ideas of how independent living for Simon may be possible. The ILG is a LAC initiative in the southern suburbs where families are invited every six weeks to hear about ideas, models, services, examples and anything else which relates to independent living with a view to each family building a reserve of knowledge which they can apply to their own circumstances.” ⁶

5. Local Area Coordinator

6. Local Area Coordinator



The Disability Services Commission provides a statewide Local Area Coordination (LAC) Program. A key role for a LAC is to provide timely, relevant and culturally appropriate information in accessible formats. The LAC can provide a range of planning processes that draw family, friends and supporters together to assist the person to explore their vision and create practical strategies for their future living arrangements.

There are also numerous non-government agencies, incorporated community groups and local government organisations in Western Australia who provide support to the community. These organisations can also be useful in providing information and assistance in planning for future community living.

Clarity in and support for decision making and governance

Wherever possible, decisions should be made by the person for whom the community living arrangement is being developed. It is important to recognise that people with disabilities have the capacity to make informed decisions for themselves. Where a person with

a disability needs support to make decisions, or where typically decisions are made for them, every effort should be made to ensure the person is involved in the decision making process.

It is important to note, two of the core values of the Community Living Plan are that each person:

- is valued and respected for their uniqueness and capacity to make decisions; and
- has a right to real choices and ongoing opportunities for challenge and growth.

Families are often in the best position to assist their family members in decision making and have a natural authority to do so. Families typically care about and love their relative more than would be true of others, they often have a stake in outcomes, are expected to advocate for their own members, are witness to the performance of professionals and systems, are best positioned to see how everything, in its entirety, adds up in a person's life. These qualities make family involvement in decision making and governance an important component of the Community Living Plan approach.



Cameron enjoying an outing at Kings Park in Perth with family and friends



Opportunities to imagine better and explore new alternatives

“People have trouble imagining better as they often rely on what has gone before or have become conditioned over time to think only certain models of support are possible.”⁷

Frequently society, and even family and friends, put limits on what might be possible for a person with a disability. For example, people may not consider that a person with an intellectual disability could own their own home, or attend university, or that a person with very high support needs could live in his or her own home in the community with some supports. There are a growing number of examples where people have indeed achieved these very things.

Having opportunities to imagine better and try out new things starts to melt artificial barriers that restrict the choices, contribution, opportunities and achievements of people with disabilities. These limits are often imposed because of others good intentions of wanting to protect the person with a disability or prevent them from trying and failing. However, most people learn as much, if not more, from their mistakes (big and small) as from their successes.

A key theme that emerged through the Community Living Plan consultations is

the importance of individuals and families sharing their stories and examples of achievements with each other. This was seen as an insightful way of assisting people to imagine better for themselves and/or their family member.

Planning for participation, contribution and community engagement

When asked about what makes a good life, valued relationships, security for the future and making a contribution are high on everyone’s list. Sometimes it is difficult for a person with a severe or profound disability to be included in and feel they really belong in their community.

“It is not enough to be physically in the community, people have a right to be part of it.”⁸

“Community inclusion is when you are known by name, know others by name and your contribution is acknowledged, valued and supported.”⁹

To enable a person with a disability to participate in their community in ways that are important to them, and to have their strengths and qualities recognised and valued, it is often necessary to plan how the person is going to participate. This can involve identifying what is available in the community that the person would

8. Big Plan resource material, Edinburgh Development Group, UK, no date, p12

9. Michael Kendrick as cited in <http://www.family-advocacy.com/conference/docs>



like to be involved in, work out the best ways for the person to connect with these activities and the people involved, and work out what opportunities, support or mentoring the person may require to successfully contribute. Some of the typical ways people contribute to their communities are through work, clubs and volunteer activities.

People contribute through their talents and gifts, and just being who they are. Michael Kendrick, an international consultant on community living, in describing contribution, asks us to think about “what gifts of the head (knowledge and experience) does this person bring, what gifts of the heart (passions/beliefs) does the person bring and finally what gifts of the hand (skills) does the person bring.”¹⁰

A practical plan, including any resources required to support community living

A successful community living experience will, in part, rely on a practical documented plan. The plan can include long term goals and strategies as well as daily and weekly activities. Plans may look different from person to person however, they should have a number of common elements. The planning process should include, where possible, family/ carer, friends and supporters and, where possible, establish a network of people who will be involved in supporting the person in the community. Plans should also have a holistic focus that identifies strategies to ensure the person involved has choice in where they live, who they live with and how they are supported. There also should be attention to the

person’s wellbeing, their lifestyle, relationships and social connections. The plan should be clear about what resources are needed to enable the plan to be put into action including any transitional requirements. Resources can include technical assistance and support to build capacity, for example, assisting with developing plans, information regarding creating a network, and using individual community links more effectively. Funding if required, should also be considered as a resource. Further information on funding can be found in the section on Community Living Support Funding and also in the Community Living Support Funding Guidelines which are available on the Commission’s website: www.disability.wa.gov.au

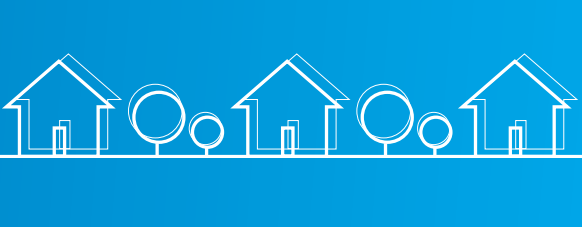
In recognition that people’s lives are dynamic, and their circumstances, support networks and communities in which they live change over time, plans should also include opportunities for reflection and review on a regular basis.

A place to live that is home

“Home means not only the bricks and mortar of a house, but the unique environment within which we all seek to create, that which is ours, a place that gives us a sense of security, a sense of pride, a place of privacy, retreat and sanctuary and, an accepted place in the community.”¹¹

10. <http://www.family-advocacy.com/conference/docs>

11. Community Living Project Inc, South Australia



Creating a home involves the person having real choices and control over decisions on: where to live, who to live with and the supports required to live the lifestyle they choose.



“Most people grow up imagining that one day they might have their own place, maybe they’ll rent, maybe they’ll share for a while, and maybe one day they might even achieve the great Australian dream of owning their own home. Having a home is important to us all because it gives one a sense of belonging, security, identity and control. These are important yet unrecognised needs of people with disabilities.”¹²

People who have created homes in the community that have been sustainable, supportive of the person and welcoming of the person and their family/carer and friends have been open to exploring and considering a range of accommodation possibilities and have intentionally built partnerships to help create the right accommodation arrangement.

Partnerships and shared responsibility

A strong sense of shared responsibility involving the person, their family and friends, community, business, government and services increases the likelihood of a successful community living arrangement. It is not just a case of one party having all the answers or all of the responsibility, but of each party adding value to the overall situation.





Effective partnerships usually focus on the strengths and contributions that each party brings to the partnership. There are different types of collaborative efforts/partnerships. For example:

- individuals/families can form alliances with each other, with community groups, with business, and/or with government; or
- government can form partnerships with the community, businesses, family groups and other government agencies and levels of government.

Partnerships don't necessarily have to be large and complex. Many individuals and families naturally form informal partnerships when they help each other in various ways. Individuals and families can also create more formalised partnership arrangements with people within their social and community networks, such as, forming a Microboard. Microboards are an innovative approach based on intentionally building a support network around a person with a disability and formalising this network with a constitution. Further information on Microboards can be found at the Vela Microboards Australia website: www.microboard.org.au

An example of a more complex partnership, that was formed through individuals, families and other stakeholders coming together for a common purpose, is the housing project for people with disabilities in Leongatha, Victoria which was funded through the Victorian Government innovative accommodation

grants. The project grew from a partnership between the Disability Housing Trust (a non-government charitable trust established in 2006 in Victoria to enable innovative and affordable housing for people with a disability), Yooralla (a non-profit community service provider in Victoria) and a local community group, DAWN (Disability Accommodation Working Network). Further information on partnerships and the innovative accommodation grants can be found in the Information Resource for the Community Living Plan located on the Commission's website: www.disability.wa.gov.au Further information on the Disability Housing Trust can be found on the Trust's website: www.dht.org.au

Safeguards

Underpinning all the building blocks are the safeguards – the precautions and safety measures – that are put in place to protect the person at the centre of the community living arrangement from exploitation and harm, and provide protection against foreseeable unintended events, while at the same time enabling the person to make choices and to live a life that reflects their personal preferences.

Safeguards include measures put in place around financial decision making, health and medical decisions and personal care decisions. They focus on addressing issues such as the person's unique vulnerabilities as well as the possibility of provided supports breaking down.



“Safeguards range from very practical strategies through to less tangible elements like relationships and networks. The level of safeguarding may also change over time as the person becomes more aware and independent and able to manage their own affairs.”¹³

One of the most important safeguards is to ensure that the person at the centre of the community living arrangement has a number of freely given relationships. The involvement of family/carers, friends and community is an essential component of ensuring the sustainability of the arrangement and a good life for the person involved. Regular review, that includes the person at the centre of the arrangement, is also an important safeguard. Regular review can ensure the person has a voice regarding choice and that everyone involved understands the role they play in maintaining the arrangement.

“What is most effective at keeping us safe is exactly what makes life interesting and fulfilling for us. It’s the connections we make, the relationships we have with others which make our lives safe and secure... People have found that really effective safety and security comes from knowing the neighbours, having friends and family who visit, and being part of a community whose eyes are watching what happens.”¹⁴



13. Disability Services Commission, All in a Life’s Design, 2007, p.32

14. Bob Lee, CRUcial Times, March 2008, Issue 40, p.12



Models of community living support

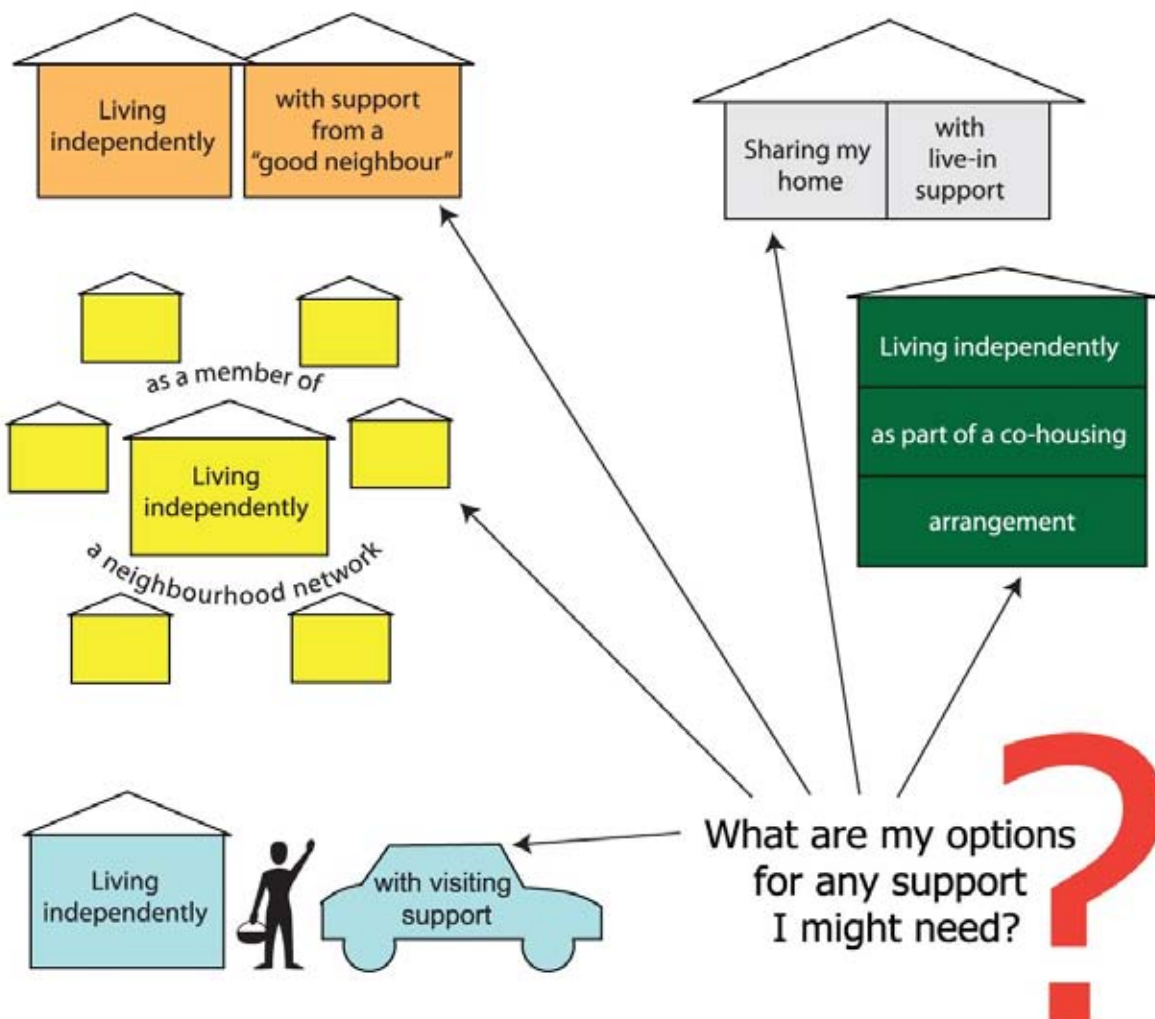
Models of community living are many and varied. No two community living arrangements are identical as they are “custom built” to suit the aspirations, goals and needs of each individual involved.

Despite the individual and organisational variations, the myriad of community living support arrangements that have been developed around the world can be loosely categorized into five models that illustrate the primary focus of support:

- Independent living with visiting support
- Independent living with neighbour support
- Independent living as a member of a neighbourhood network
- Independent living as part of a co-housing development
- Sharing my own home with live-in support

The figure below illustrates each of these models:

Figure 2: Models of community living support





The Community Living Concept Plan – Stage 1 Report and Information Resource which are both available on the Commission’s website (www.disability.wa.gov.au) describe key elements of each of the models of community living.

The following short stories further illustrate in a practical way each of the five models of community living support.

Living independently with visiting support



Amy is a 22 year old woman who loves socialising, shopping, and having her hair done. Amy has spina bifida and uses a wheelchair to get about.

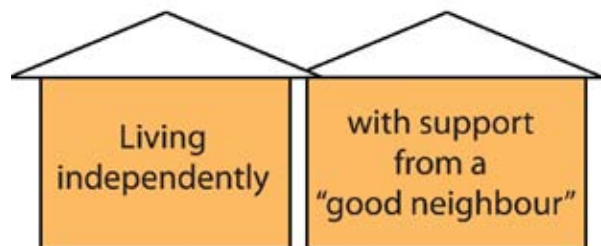
Until recently Amy lived with her mum, her sister and young niece. Two months ago Amy was offered a suitable one bedroom unit and she moved in right away.

Amy had dreams of having her own place since she was 18 and longed to move out of home like many of her friends had done. Two years ago her LAC helped Amy develop a plan for her future using person centred planning. Amy’s plan included exploring housing options, applying for public housing, and identifying what supports she needed to live independently and how she might obtain these supports. Amy’s plan also included her hopes of having a boyfriend, getting her driver’s licence and buying and modifying a car.

While living at home, Amy was receiving a small amount of Intensive Family Support Funding to pay for a support worker to assist her with personal care and transport when Amy’s mum or sister were not available to collect her from work. When Amy moved out of home, she contacted the Disability Services Commission and has been able to retain her funding and uses it to employ the same support worker. Amy’s mum and sister help Amy with some of the cooking and cleaning and her best friend takes her shopping each Saturday.

Amy is loving her new home and filling it with things that are special to her. She regularly has her friends over and is happier than she has been in a long time. Amy has also noticed that her relationships with her mum and sister have improved since she moved into her own place.

Living independently with neighbour support



Todd is a 35 year old man who loves watching his favourite TV programs (Neighbours, Home and Away, and Australian Idol), listening to music, and animals.

Todd has an intellectual disability and some physical limitations, and until four years ago, lived with his mum and dad in the family home.



Todd was offered the opportunity to move into a unit, which is part of a community complex of 10 units, when his service provider negotiated a long term lease deal with the Department of Housing and Works regarding the unit and the unit next door.

Through word of mouth, the service provider identified Ella, a local woman in her late 20s who was interested in being Todd's 'good neighbour'. A 'good neighbour' is someone who lives next door and is readily on hand to provide support and companionship in exchange for subsidised rent.

Ella has been Todd's 'good neighbour' for the past four years. Their shared love of animals has helped forge a strong bond between them. Occasionally Ella goes away for a weekend, and during these times, Todd looks after Ella's cat. He also keeps a general eye on her place and makes sure everything is okay if anything seems amiss.

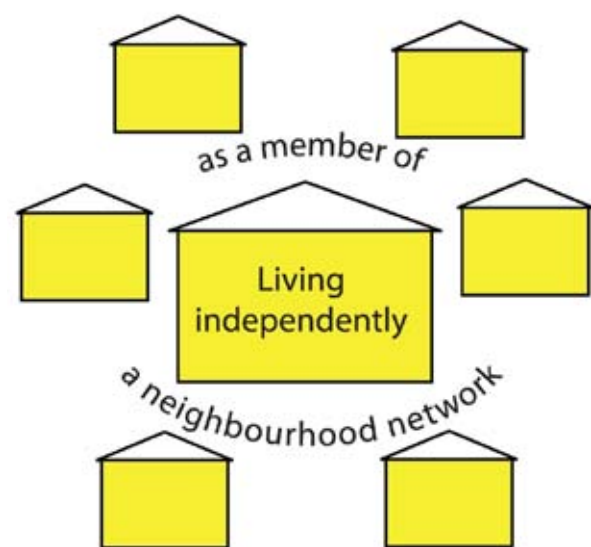
When Ella goes away or is not able to assist Todd, his family provide additional support and the service provider also arranges other paid supports as required.

The other neighbours in the complex have also come to know Todd and stop and have chats with him. One neighbour in particular helps Todd maintain his garden, and another often invites Todd to listen to live bands or go to outdoor concerts with him and his girlfriend.

Todd's extended family are still a large part of his life and his mum and dad still provide a lot of support, however over the past four years, the level of support has reduced and

the type of support has changed as Todd has developed his independence and has other caring and supportive people now playing a larger role in his life.

Living independently as a member of a neighbourhood network



Jacinta first moved out of home to live with her boyfriend when she was 19. When the relationship ended eight months later she found herself moving back in with her parents. She learnt a lot from this experience including how vulnerable living situations can be, especially when the lease is in someone else's name.

The second time Jacinta moved out of home was two years after her accident in which she received a permanent brain injury. This time she moved into a unit on her own. Jacinta loved having her own place but she relied heavily on her family for social support, and when her mum and dad took an overseas holiday, Jacinta was unable to manage on her own. This shook



Jacinta's confidence and she moved back home again when her lease expired.

The support group to which Jacinta's family are connected found out about Keyring Neighbourhood Network, a community living model in the United Kingdom. Last year the support group began seriously exploring how they could have something similar in their local area.

After having initial discussions with the LACs and then with interested others, a working group involving the nine families in the support group, local area coordination, a local service provider, the local housing association, Department of Housing and Works and two local businesses was formed. The working group are committed to establishing a Neighbourhood Network model of community living for the nine families.

Although Jacinta and her family knew the other families involved, working together to develop this model has enabled the people who will be receiving support through this model (network members) to get to know each other better. The network members soon found out that Jacinta is really good with computers and likes to keep her place and things tidy and clean. In turn, Jacinta found out about what the other network members are good at and ways they can support each other. The network members get together on a monthly basis where they share their ideas and have a say on how the Neighbourhood Network model will work best for them. Each member takes a turn in organising and hosting the monthly meetings.

The working group have been making good progress with getting all the aspects to putting this model into place sorted out. There has been a lot of community interest in the Neighbourhood Network model and three suitable people have put their hands up to be the community living volunteer. This unpaid position involves providing 10 hours of support each week to network members in exchange for a rent free place to live. This position is in addition to the paid community living worker position.

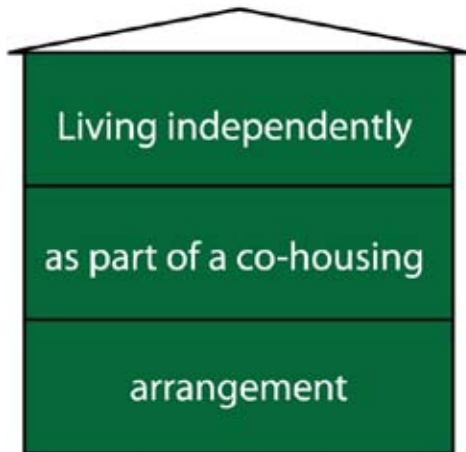
The model will be coordinated by the local service provider and part of the Community Living Support Funding received by each of the families, will go towards the costs of coordinating and managing this model and the costs of a paid community living worker who will be available to provide support to each of the network members as needed and to help each person be included in the community.

Jacinta has already found a place to move into and can't wait. Her netball coach from when she played netball as a teenager has offered Jacinta the granny flat at the back of her house and Jacinta will move in once the Neighbourhood Network model is up and running.

In the meantime Jacinta and her family are working closely with their LAC to work out strategies that will help Jacinta gain more confidence and further skills to live independently. Jacinta also has a small amount of Flexible Family Support funding which pays for a support worker to help her link in to leisure activities that she enjoys and where she can meet people and make friends.



Living independently as part of a co-housing arrangement



Alan's parents thought Alan would always live with them, but when Alan was 32, his mum suddenly died. Alternative housing arrangements needed to be made very quickly as his dad was unable to care for Alan. Alan moved into temporary accommodation and eventually a group home where he lived for three years.

Alan found it hard to adjust to the group home living arrangement and, despite the best efforts of staff, frequently became withdrawn or angry.

When Alan's dad passed away, Alan received an equal share of the family's inheritance. In the midst of the discussion with his sisters over how Alan could invest his inheritance, Alan said he wanted his own home.

Two years on, Alan now lives in his own unit which is part of a co-housing arrangement of 10 co-located dwellings in a metropolitan suburb. Within the co-housing community of approximately 20 people, Alan is one of four people with severe disabilities who live there. There

is a strong community spirit within the co-housing community, and willingness on most people's part to get along together and help each other out. Alan gets on really well with Bob and Bernice, his direct neighbours, and with their adult son, Adrian, who no longer lives in the co-housing community but visits regularly, and sometimes takes Alan beach fishing (which he loves).

Alan also has a good friendship with Freda, and her sister Anita, who share a dwelling in the complex. They help him out with shopping, and take him with them to the local recreation centre for fitness classes. Alan likes to cook and often with Freda and Anita's help, puts on a great meal for the three of them.

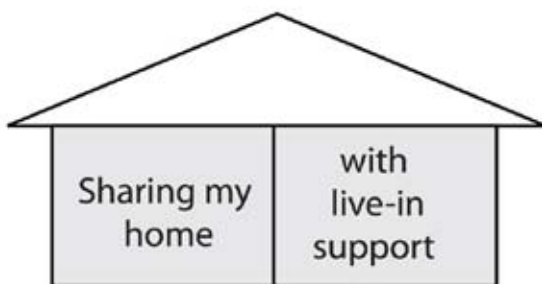
Alan's sisters are also a big part of Alan's life and help him manage his money and bills. On top of this, Peter, another resident within the complex, is a paid support worker who checks on Alan each day to make sure everything is going well, and helps Alan out with practical help. Peter also provides support to the three other people with disabilities within the complex and is on-hand overnight should anyone need his assistance.

Not long after moving into his own place, Alan got a job in the laundry of a nearby hospital. Alan enjoys his job and has made two good friends at work. Occasionally Alan's friends go to his place to watch TV or a movie. Alan likes his friends visiting him, but sometimes one of his friends over-stretches his welcome. When this happens, Alan asks Peter or a neighbour to help him out. Peter has also been helping Alan with other strategies to deal with this situation.



When Peter asked Alan recently about what he likes about his life now, Alan said he is proud of having his own home and likes having nice people as friends and neighbours.

Sharing my own home with live-in support



Simon is a 29 year old man who lived with his mum until last year. Moving out of home had been on the agenda for a number of years, however the timing hadn't been right.

Over the years, Simon's mum heard a number of examples and ideas of how independent living for Simon may be possible. Together with the LAC, Simon and his mum were able to toss around ideas and take the first steps towards independent living for Simon. One of these steps involved Simon staying at home on his own for a few days per week. Simon took up the challenge and showed he could manage this well.

Simon has high functioning autism and has found it hard to make lasting friendships. As he did not have a lot of supports or friendships in his life, a small amount of Flexible Family Support funding was secured to support Simon to become involved in community activities and help him form relationships. In addition,

a Commission social trainer supported Simon to develop living skills.

Simon's family had a house that was being rented, and after much consideration, Simon and his mum decided he would live in the rental property. The other bedrooms would be rented out to people *without* disabilities. In exchange for cheap rent, the other housemates would provide Simon with basic support and companionship.

Simon and his mum along with the LAC brainstormed ideas on where to find suitable housemates and pursued a number of possibilities such as church groups, universities and putting the word out through the existing network of people they knew. As it happened it was the latter idea which proved most successful with three local young people coming forward to share with Simon.

Eventually the day came and Simon and the housemates moved in together. Some one-off discretionary funding was allocated by the LAC to pay for extra support for Simon for the first month to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Simon's mum also set about meeting people who lived in his street and engaged a neighbour to call in a few days a week to ensure the house was tidy, Simon was up and ready for work and to check things were going okay. This has meant that issues can be identified early and dealt with and has helped to keep Simon's relationship with his housemates intact.

Simon has a busy life and has multiple supports which have played a key role in making this arrangement a success. Simon works four days week for a few



hours each day. He also participates in an Alternatives to Employment (ATE) program once a week as well as a Home and Community Care (HACC) funded group which provides social support. Another HACC agency has been engaged to assist Simon to do his weekly shopping while a privately engaged support person visits Simon once a week to help him form new relationships in the community (using Flexible Family Support funding through the LAC). Simon's mum also made a connection with a really nice bloke at a local church, who together with his wife and their friends, have included Simon in their lives in a freely given way. Simon's mum also has a friend who lives in the same street who drops around occasionally to say hello and is also a backup in case of an emergency.

Community living options development and funding

What are some of the ways that community living options can be funded and developed?

There are a number of ways that assistance and support can be provided through the Community Living Plan, including:

- Support with information, planning and other technical assistance for people who have their own funds;
- Support and technical assistance to move from a more traditional accommodation support model to a community living arrangement for people who are receiving other disability funding; and
- Support with information, planning and other technical assistance and, where required, funding through the Community Living Support Funding Strategy.

Regardless of the person's source of funds, the Community Living Plan aims to build on the strengths of people with disabilities and their families/networks, to encourage sound planning for the future, and the development and maintenance of supportive partnerships.



Independent Funding Source

The Community Living Plan recognises there are individuals and families who have their own source of funds, such as a Special Disability Trust or a compensation payout and who want to develop a community living option. People in these situations, who are eligible for specialist disability services, can access community living information, planning and other technical assistance provided through their LACs or through non-government agencies that are able to assist with planning for community living.

Accommodation Support Funding

The Community Living Plan also aims to provide support and technical assistance to individuals receiving Accommodation Support Funding who are currently living in a more traditional accommodation support model and wish to move to a community living arrangement. The support provided through the Community Living Plan can include assisting the person to create or re-build their close personal network of family and friends and to assist the person and their network to develop a personalised plan for community living, including the transition from their current living arrangement into a community living arrangement of their choice.

Community Living Support Funding Strategy

One of the strategies of the Community Living Plan is the Community Living Support Funding Strategy, which has dual aims of broadening and evaluating the range of flexible and innovative community living options available to people with disabilities in Western Australia.

The support arrangements available through this funding strategy will be built on community supports and may be complemented by some funding (up to a maximum of \$20,000 recurrent per annum for community living support) in 2008-09. The upper limit of funding available will be confirmed on an annual basis.

Community Living Support Funding can be combined with a small amount of Accommodation Support Funding, Intensive Family Support, LAC tied funding, Flexible Family Support or Commission provided HACC packages. Note: Alternatives to Employment (ATE) and Post School Options (PSO) funding does not affect the Community Living Support Funding allocation.

Further information on the Community Living Support Funding Strategy is contained in the Community Living Support Funding Guidelines, which can be located on the Disability Services Commission website (www.disability.wa.gov.au) and are also available through a LAC. These funding guidelines are updated each year.



Further information

How do I find out more about the Community Living Plan and community living?

The Commission has produced a comprehensive report on the Community Living Plan. The Community Living Concept Plan – Stage 1 Report contains information on:

- an overview of innovative examples from around the world;
- examples of models of community living;
- information on alternative planning pathways and partnerships;
- themes from the public workshops; and
- summaries of the public submissions and invited presentations.

The Stage 1 Report also contains the new Framework for Community Living and an Information Resource on best practice in community living.

The Information Resource also exists as a stand-alone document. It provides easy access to information on community living and examples of community living from Western Australia, Australia and overseas. The aim of the Information Resource is to connect people to a range of information that can provide guidance and/or inspiration on how they might create and sustain a richer range of possibilities and options for community living.

The Information Resource has the following sections:

- planning and transition resources;
- program and project examples;
- policy, funding and coordination;
- leadership and training; and
- partnerships and capacity building.

The Information Resource contains electronic links to primary sources of information within each of these sections. It also contains a set of Frequently Asked Questions.

People using the Information Resource can go to the Index and click on the section they are interested in or click on any of the Frequently Asked Questions and they will be taken directly to that part of the Resource document. While the Information Resource can be used by people on their own or within their own networks, it is also an important resource that people can use with the support of a Local Area Coordinator (LAC), and/or other support staff.

The Community Living Concept Plan – Stage 1 Report and the Information Resource are available on the Commission's website www.disability.wa.gov.au

See also Appendix 2 of this booklet for a listing of the documents/resources relating to the Community Living Plan.

In addition, information on community living and support to explore this further can be obtained through the Commission's Local Area Coordination program.



LACs operate as service coordinators, assisting people with disabilities and their families/carers to plan, select and receive needed supports and services. LACs can provide families with information on a range of supports. In some areas, such as Albany and the south metropolitan area of Perth, LACs have brought together groups of families to explore and develop innovative ways families can create a community living option for their relative with a disability.

Two very useful books that provide practical information on planning the transition to independent living, particularly for young people moving out of home for the first time, have recently been prepared by LACs. The books *All in a Life's Design* and *Spread Your Wings* are available on the Commission's website under publications and links, general information: www.disability.wa.gov.au

Another Community Living Plan strategy is the establishment of the **Community Living Resource Team**, which sits within the Disability Services Commission. One of the key roles of the Community Living Resource Team is to provide technical assistance to LACs and agencies on planning, developing and establishing community living options for people in Western Australia. The Community Living Resource Team can be contacted on: telephone: 9426 9200 or by email: communityliving@dsc.wa.gov.au

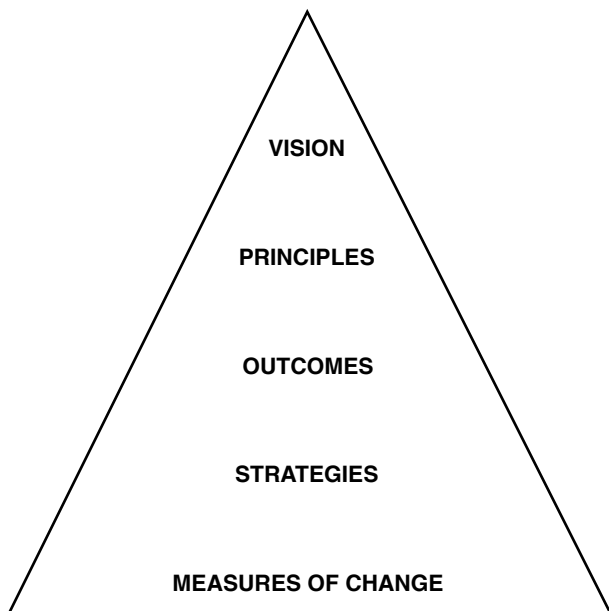


Appendix 1 – Framework for Community Living

The conceptual framework for the Community Living Plan which includes a vision statement, principles, strategies and broad measures of change, was developed by a diverse group of people from across the State comprising individuals and families, representatives from service providers, community based organisations, peak bodies and Commission staff.

The components of the Framework for Community Living are set out in figure 3 below:

Figure 3: Key components of the new Framework for Community Living



The Framework for Community Living needs to be considered as a whole as each of the components are interconnected. For example, the Vision Statement establishes the importance of choosing your own lifestyle, living in your own home, and being a part of the various communities that are important to you, and this vision then flows through to each level of the Framework.

Vision statement for the Community Living Plan

“All Western Australians to have the same opportunity: my own life, my own home, in communities where we all belong.”

“**Home** means not only the bricks and mortar of a house, but the unique environment within which we all seek to create, that which is ours, a place that gives us a sense of security, a sense of pride, a place of privacy, retreat and sanctuary and, an accepted place in the community.”¹⁵

Community is about people coming together in many different ways and in many different places. Community is about common and shared interests, such as life experiences, tradition/history, culture and core values/beliefs. It is also about belonging and not being excluded. Community embraces social inclusion, the importance of informal relationships, diversity and members being welcomed, valued, respected, recognised and making a contribution.



Project Director Eddie Bartnik facilitating the writing workshop discussion on the Framework for Community Living. (Photo courtesy of Ron Olsen).

Principles

The key principles of the Community Living Plan are grouped in a number of major theme areas as follows:

1. Core values

Some fundamental beliefs underpinning community living are that each person:

- is valued and respected for their uniqueness and capacity to make decisions; and
- has a right to real choices and ongoing opportunities for challenge and growth.

2. Person centred approach

Community living must focus on:

- getting to know the person well, honoring their life so far, their strengths, gifts, goals, fears and dreams; and
- understanding the person in the context of their family, friends, culture, beliefs and community networks, and the primary importance of valued relationships in each person's life.



3. Information and high quality planning processes

In planning for a life in the community, people should have access to:

- timely, accurate and culturally relevant and accessible information from a variety of sources to enable people to consider alternatives and to make decisions about how and where to live;
- other individuals and families who can speak with authority and relevant experience about community living; and
- a range of planning processes that draw family, friends and supporters together to support the person to explore their vision and create practical strategies.

4. Partnerships for action

Transforming plans into action will require:

- shared responsibility from the person, family, friends, community, business, government and services; and
- practical and technical support in areas such as communication, planning facilitation and network development.

5. Systems to support each person

To establish a good life in the community each person should have access to:

- flexible support and resources as needed to strengthen and complement personal and community networks; and
- a range of measures to keep people safe and secure.

6. Reflection and review

To sustain a good life over time each person should be able to:

- have confidence that their home and supports are secure; and
- have control over the review and change of their living and support arrangements.

Outcomes

The Commission, in collaboration with the disability sector, has developed a set of outcome statements for Accommodation Support Services. These sector-wide outcome statements will therefore be used for the Community Living Plan, with modifications and enhancements over time as the Community Living Plan is further developed.

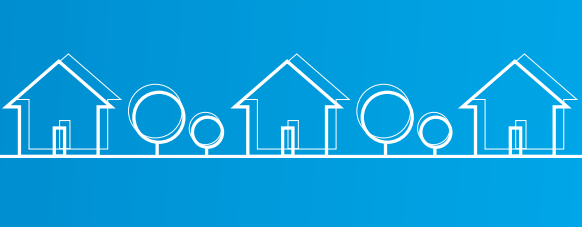
The current outcomes and performance indicators are as follows:

Wellbeing

Outcome: Maintenance and/or improvement of the social, mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, sexual and cultural aspects of the individual.

Performance indicators:

- Individuals make informed choices.
- Individuals' health status.
- Maintenance and/or improvement of the individual's well being.
- Individual's satisfaction with their health and well being.
- Satisfaction of the individual's family/ carers/advocates with the individual's health and well being status.



Relationships and Social Connection

Outcome: Relationships are diverse and contribute to the individual's life and social connections.

Performance indicators:

- Opportunities to establish new relationships.
- Range of relationships with emphasis on family, friends and intimate relationships.
- Maintenance of relationships and social connections.
- Satisfaction with relationships and social connections.

Lifestyle

Outcome: Participation in a lifestyle of the individual's choice.

Performance indicators:

- Individuals make informed lifestyle choices.
- Individuals are safe and secure from neglect and abuse.
- Individuals are supported to have lifestyles that they choose.
- Individual's satisfaction with lifestyle choices.

Home

Outcome: The place where a person lives is safe, secure and comfortable, and where they can be themselves.

Performance indicators:

- Individuals identify where they live as their home.
- Individuals have a sense of ownership and dominion.
- Individuals have their own space.
- Individuals are safe, secure and comfortable.
- Individuals are able to make informed choices and be themselves.
- Individual's satisfaction with their home.



Denise in her own home.
(Photo courtesy of All in a Life's Design's authors)



Strategies

The strategies for the Community Living Plan listed below are at a high level. More detailed strategies are being developed further, making full use of all the ideas generated in the Community Living Plan consultation process with individuals and families, the disability sector, community organisations and others who are interested in the Community Living Plan. The detailed strategies will be provided in the Community Living Implementation Plan, which will be available in early 2009.

1. Establishing a clear point of focus and 'glue that will hold all the efforts together';
2. Investing in the vision and core values that underpin community living;
3. Strengthening family support and family leadership;
4. Developing new partnerships around transition and community living;
5. Engaging communities and improving community infrastructure;
6. Changing systems to create improved community living options; and
7. Strengthening safeguards around the vulnerability of people with disabilities and community living arrangements.



Appendix 2 – Community Living Plan Resources

The Community Living Plan has produced a number of documents/resources including:

- Documents containing background and general information on the Community Living Plan;
- Policy/strategy documents;
- Practical booklets/reports for guiding the planning and development of community living arrangements; and
- Documents on how to apply for Community Living Support Funding.

The Community Living Plan documents/resources are grouped below under each of the above bulleted headings:

General information documents

- Community Living Concept Plan – Stage 1 Report
- Community Living Plan Bulletins

Policy/strategy documents

- Community Living Concept Plan – Stage 1 Report
- Community Living Implementation Plan
- Community Living Support Funding Strategy Guidelines

Practical resources for planning and developing community living arrangements

- Information Resource for the Community Living Plan
- Looking Forward to Community Living booklet
- Community Living Concept Plan – Stage 1 Report

Community Living Support Funding Strategy documents

- Community Living Support Funding Strategy Guidelines
- Community Living Support Funding Strategy Application Form
- Community Living Plan Bulletins

The Commission also intends to produce further community living resources in a range of formats including a plain English version of this booklet and culturally appropriate publications.

Each of the documents/resources produced through the Community Living Plan, when completed, can be found on the Commission's website: www.disability.wa.gov.au

Where to get assistance

For more information on the Community Living Plan, please contact:

Community Living Resource Team

Tel: 9426 9200

Email: communityliving@dsc.wa.gov.au

Or

Local Area Coordinator

To contact a Local Area Coordinator in your area, phone the Disability Services Commission.

Metropolitan Community Supports

Tel: 9426 9371

Fax: 9226 2310

TTY: 9426 9315

Country Community Supports

Tel: 9426 9792

Freecall (Country): 1800 998 214

Disability Services Commission

146-160 Colin Street

West Perth WA 6872

www.disability.wa.gov.au



This document is available in alternative formats and other languages on request.

