

SEMINAR P – FUNDING & FINANCE

Jigsaws, Juggling and Joining-up: The challenges and rewards of inter-agency and inter-sectoral relationships

Key themes / issues / questions arising from discussion:

Colin Penter

- Partnership between social movement, social activists and ngos
- Notion of corporations, neo liberalism and so on now driving social policy
- There is a need for countervailing power to challenge this
- The times we face require us all to forge strong alliances particularly between activists, ngos and governments
- Civil society predominantly populated by ngos and broad social movements (not just ngos)
- Civil society has been under attack: govt tries to coopt civil society to achieve their own ends through regulation etc; ngos now see social activism as “risky”
- Social movements, activists and ngos need to start working together
- Areas that we can start working together: neoliberalism and growth of corporate power; assault on ngos; lack of protection around human rights
- We can be and should be the countervailing power: we stand for justice. We need to find common causes that bind us. We need to develop activist networks learning from environmental movements. We need to create new sorts of organisations.
- The NGO sector needs to reclaim and exercise its power

Professor Sherry Siggers

- Drivers of their research: a whole of government approach service delivery; shared services a combination of govt and ngo delivering services
- Project seeks to understand the histories, cultures and institutional arrangements of diverse agencies (eg. Local govts, ngos) in relation to community development/ community services
- Local govt is becoming increasingly involved in community services – by topping up funds to ngos or direct service provision.
- No framework for the delivery of community services by local government leading to much confusion about what their role is.
- Moving towards notion of community development discourse.
- WACOSS has had historically a very different agenda to local govt
- NGO sector is very diverse – these groups and their practitioners all come from very different orientations
- Trend towards shared services is calling for an evaluation of their values base
- All players come to the table with different backgrounds and ways of operating.

Dr Richard Dennis

- Corporations by law are only able to give money away if it is the interest of their shareholders
- The sector has difficulty prioritising what it will do and more importantly what it won't do? By trying to do something about many issues we are not doing justice to any of them
- Our own guilt and trying to do the best we can, silences our dissent. We need to make the Govt feel the impact of the decisions and priorities they have chosen rather than the NGO sector bearing the impact.
- How are we kept busy? Red tape – accountability. To get funding NGOs are not allowed to speak out against the Govt.
- The only way forward is to work collectively. The only way to protect against these strategies is to grab on to machinery of government changes to disable these mechanisms for controlling the sector.
- We're not at the table because we too busy helping people

Shawn Boyle

- What's the problem? Compartmentalism of community services; complex society; managerialism; competition policy; individual versus community; theory and practice disconnect
- Join up what? Policy, services, structures, people
- Have created holistic silos around different issues e.g. Gordon Inquiry
- Some challenges: everyone and no one's responsibility; culture starts from the top down; frontline first "get out of the office"; "Community good-government bad".

Why are non government not there from the beginning? It's almost if ngo's are invited to contribute after the fact.

Resolution

The delegates in attendance at the WACOSS Conference 2006 propose the following resolution...

- the state government be requested to consider the appt of a minister to the community sector and/or a commissioner for the community sector;
- We request the state govt. to develop a process where a rationale is developed which underpins the nature of service delivery and which sector of society (public, private, community) should deliver it.