



Gawler River Flood Recovery

VIRGINIA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT REPORT



Developing Lifestyles, Achieving Community Goals, Sharing
Skills and Abilities through Community Based Activities



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Special Acknowledgement - Mary Ireland



The contribution of Mary Ireland in the successful completion of this project is acknowledged and applauded. Mary was conscious of the diversity of the community and worked tirelessly to build networks across cultural groups. Mary combined her significant community development experience, personal commitment and genuine concern for people and the Virginia Community. As a result Mary was highly respected and achieved a range of successful outcomes for the community.

Other Acknowledgements

The completion of the Gawler River Flood Recovery Virginia Community Development Project was made possible with funding provided by the South Australian Government.

The Virginia Community Development Project was supported by the Department for Families and Communities (DFC) - State Recovery Office. In a spirit of collaboration and cooperation many organisations at a community, local and state government level contributed to the project's successful outcomes including:

Virginia Horticulture Centre

Vietnamese Farmers' Association

Vietnamese Women's Association

Hoa Hao Buddhist Association of South Australia

Virginia and Districts Community Bank and Financial Services

Virginia Residents' Action Group

Virginia Country Women's Association

City of Playford

Families SA – Department for Families and Communities

Central Northern Area Health Services – Playford

Multicultural SA

Department of Education and Children's Services – Virginia Primary School

South Australia Police

State Emergency Service

Virginia Country Fire Service

Rural Solutions SA

Centrelink Multicultural Services SA

The project's outcomes were made possible by the goodwill, participation and vision of the people of Virginia. Their willingness to work with the Community Development Officer (CDO) on a road to recovery and hope for the future is to be commended and celebrated.

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List of Acronyms

Department for Families and Communities	DFC
Community Development Officer	CDO
Virginia Community Development Project	VCDP
Virginia Horticulture Centre	VHC
Vietnamese Farmers' Association	VFA
Vietnamese Women's Association	VWA
Virginia Residents' Action Group	VRAG
State Recovery Office	SRO
State Recovery Committee	SRC
Community Reference Group	CRG
South Australian Community Health Research Unit	SACHRU
Department for Education and Children's Services	DECS
State Emergency Service	SES
Country Fire Service	CFS
Metropolitan Fire Service	MFS
Primary Industries and Resources South Australia	PIRSA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2005 the community of Virginia was affected by a 1 in 20 year flood.

The impact of the floods on households and the region's valuable horticultural production resulted in the event being declared a major incident under the section 22(1) of the State Emergency Management Act 2004.

Sue Vardon was appointed Assistant State Coordinator Recovery on the 9th November 2005 pursuant to the Act section 16 (1).

Martin Breuker, who was involved in recovery coordination following the Eyre Peninsula Bushfire was seconded from Housing SA on January 9 2005 to establish recovery operations.

On the 23rd November 2005 Barry Windle, an agricultural specialist, was appointed to coordinate the Gawler River and Virginia Flood Recovery Effort.

In November 2005 the State Government announced an allocation of \$3.975 million to assist the horticulture industry and local community recovery from the Gawler River flooding. On the 7th December 2005 a further \$1.4m assistance package to assist with longer term recovery was announced by the Premier Mike Rann.

In January 2006, the State Recovery Office (DFC) appointed Mary Ireland as Senior Community Development Officer (CDO) to lead the Virginia Community Development Recovery Project.

A governance structure was developed to ensure effective delivery and project accountability. This included a project steering committee, a local project team and a community reference group, all of which were linked to the State Recovery Committee through Ronnie Faggotter, Director of the State Recovery Office.

The following comprehensive range of activities was undertaken by the project which included community engagement, community participation and community empowerment:

- Establishing Contact with the Community
- Farm Visits
- Recovery Effort Reflection Morning
- Virginia Be Active Program
- Imagine Virginia in Recovery Program
- Virginia Safety in Emergencies Project
- Assistance to State Emergency Relief Fund Distribution
- Virginia Remembers – First Anniversary Event

- Virginia Celebrates Harmony Day
- Cinema under the Stars Project
- Food, Culture, Ethnicity and Migration
- Grant Writing Workshop
- Recipes from the Virginia Community Project
- Virginia Harvest Community Newsletter Project.

A community grants program was also established to stimulate community recovery activity.

At the conclusion of the project an evaluation was conducted with community representatives and members of the various governance structures.

Key Highlights

- Future preparedness activities can successfully be incorporated into a recovery project.
- Communities can emerge stronger if they understand the change and challenges they face. Community capacity, resilience and leadership development are vital components of the emergency management and recovery process.
- Stimulating activity at a community level is beneficial to its recovery; the flood recovery project has given people more belief in the town and that change is possible.
- Community involvement has identified a number of people with different skills, personalities and passions to offer the community.
- As a result of the project, the community understands the benefit of community development work and expressed desire to have a continuing community development worker beyond the life of the project.

The success of the project is attributed to:

- The appointment of a professional community development practitioner
- The use of established community development principles
- The use of emergency management 'Community Development in Recovery' principles
- A sound governance structure.

INTRODUCTION

Project Background

The Gawler River Flood Recovery Virginia Community Development Project was developed in response to a flood event in November 2005. The flood, affecting 300 – 350 growers, had a significant impact on the lives of local market gardeners, their families, the local economy and the vegetable supply to South Australia.

An emergency recovery process is part of South Australia's emergency management arrangements to enable a response to a community impacted by an event such as a flood. Recovery processes are managed by the State Recovery Committee. A coordinator was appointed to facilitate responses from relevant state government, local government and community resources. In establishing and facilitating the recovery process, it soon became evident that communication with the Virginia community was complex and that leadership and forums for discussion on recovery actions were needed.

In December 2005 a comprehensive \$1.4 million assistance package for Virginia market growers, small business and the community was announced by the State Government. The package was to provide continuing technical support and training to assist growers to enhance their technical and business skills; assist with marketing and new product development; natural resource information; and to implement a project to help the community recover and prepare for future emergencies.

The Emergency Management Act 2004 makes provision for recovery activities and recognises recovery as a developmental process. The State Recovery Office also recognised that community development activities in the disaster recovery context would need to have a vision for enhancing community resilience, social justice, equity, and sustainability.

The State Recovery Office (DFC) appointed a Community Development Officer for two years to assist community groups in addressing flood recovery issues and to facilitate community events.

With this in mind the Virginia Community Development Project was initiated to:

- Provide leadership in community capacity building in the Virginia community
- Establish collaborative networks across government and non-government and community groups to assist with community recovery
- Develop social infrastructure that would endure beyond the term of the project
- Develop a community risk management plan and community awareness of floods and other natural disasters.

Report Purpose

This report was undertaken for two purposes:

- To provide the DFC State Recovery Office and the community with a record of the project's activities
- To consider the project in relation to the key outcomes determined by Emergency Management Australia listed below. These outcomes provide a national benchmark for assessing the effective implementation of community development in recovery projects;
 - An informed community
 - Access to services and facilities
 - A sense of community safety
 - A healthy community
 - Participation in community life
 - A sense of belonging
 - Community cohesion
 - Community identity
 - Economic recovery.

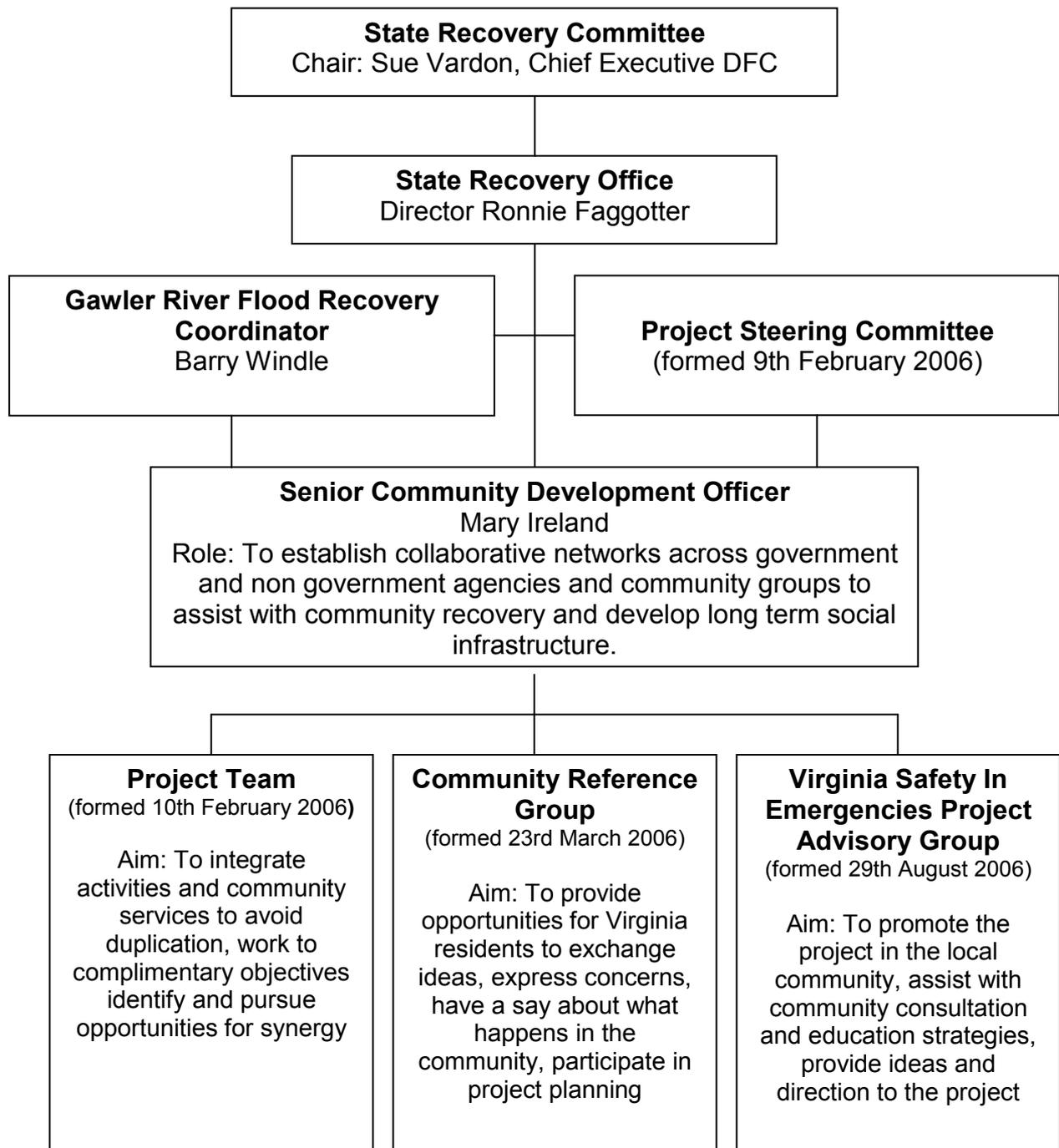
Current best practice community development principles such as inclusiveness, collaboration, capacity building, equity and responsiveness were integrated into the Virginia project where possible.

This report provides an overview of project activities and outcomes. The evaluation includes community feedback on outcomes and lessons learnt that may be useful when implementing future community development in recovery projects, with a discussion of factors that contributed to the success of this project.

Project Description

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Community participation and the establishment of supportive governance structures were an important aspect of the Virginia Community Development Project.



State Recovery Committee

The State Recovery Committee (SRC) comprises representatives of federal, state, local and non-government agencies. The SRC reports to the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC). When there is no event the SRC undertakes planning and preparedness activities.

State Recovery Office

The State Recovery Office (SRO), within the Department for Families and Communities, works across government and the non government sector to increase the State's disaster recovery capability.

Project Steering Committee

The Project commenced with the establishment of a Project Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee's role was to:

- Ensure the project was properly managed, accountable and able to achieve project goals, strategies and milestones
- Provide access to support at a senior level from relevant government agencies
- Assist with the resolution of local and operational issues.

The Steering Committee became the decision making body for the approval and dispersal of small grants to local community groups.

Membership included the Director of the State Recovery Office, the Gawler River flood Recovery Coordinator (chair), a representative of Families SA, the General Manager of the Virginia Horticulture Centre, a senior management representative from the Central Northern Adelaide Health Service, the Mayor of the City of Playford and representatives of both the Education Department and Multicultural SA.

Meetings were initially held monthly and then bi monthly as the project established.

Project Team

Prior to the flood in 2005 a collaborative project 'Access to Services Day' designed by the City of Playford was developing in the community. The agencies involved in this project recognised the isolation, and needs of the Virginia people, in particular the Vietnamese community, for access to everyday services. The flood temporarily interrupted the development of the 'Access to Services Day' project. It was from the membership of this pre flood collaborative agency project that the Virginia Community Development Project Team was formed.

The Project Team provided valuable early links to and information about the local community. The Team's primary role was to integrate activities and services in the community to avoid duplication, ensure complementary objectives and opportunities for synergy were identified and pursued, and to develop with the community a shared vision for the future involving key stakeholders.

The Project Team, chaired by the CDO, met fortnightly in the early stages of project development moving to monthly meetings in the later stages.

Community Reference Group (CRG)

Community participation is a key element in community development projects providing:

- Opportunity for community members to get involved and have a say about what happens in their community
- Opportunity for members to learn about people or aspects of the community they did not know previously
- Opportunity for the exchange of ideas, expression of concerns and a conduit of information to the broader community
- A basis on which to build a project.

To satisfy these ideals a Community Reference Group was formed from within the local community completing the project's governance and accountability structures.

The CRG was formed following a project information session held on Thursday 23rd March at the Virginia Horticultural Centre. Approximately 25 people who responded to a community mail-out attended this meeting.

Virginia Safety in Emergencies Project Steering Committee

An additional governance structure was introduced to the project in August 2006. This followed a successful collaborative venture by the City of Playford and the State Recovery Office (DFC) for funding from the Australian Government Attorney General's Department Working Together to Manage Emergencies – Local Grants Funding Scheme. The funding application was prepared by the Virginia Community Development Project CDO. A steering committee was formed for the purpose of managing this project.

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Goal

At the commencement of the project its goals were listed as:

- Identify community development opportunities and provide leadership in community capacity building activities in the Virginia community.
- Work with the disaster affected community in a way that would support and encourage community self reliance and empowerment, and where possible add to the sustainable social infrastructure of the community.
- Support and assist in the design, implementation and evaluation of strategies and actions that would lessen the social/health impact of further disasters on the community.

These were later modified into the following statement:

To enhance community development and community capacity building opportunities identified in the Virginia community in order to lessen the social and health impact of further disasters on the community.

Objectives

- To facilitate the development of a community risk management plan and community awareness of the risk of floods and other natural disasters
- Contribute towards the planning, coordination, implementation and evaluation of community development initiatives
- To develop community action plans and leaders
- To encourage/develop an informed community
- To recognise achievement and success.

See Appendix 1 for a copy of the Project Plan (appendices on CD)

Target Population

The project's target population was described as the community of Virginia who were impacted directly and indirectly by the flood waters of November 2005.

The 2006 census recorded the population of Virginia as 1,434 persons, 52.3% of these were male and 47.7% were female. 34.5% of the total population was born overseas.

Virginia has a very diverse population; the main cultural groups represented are Vietnamese, Greek, Italian and Khmer.

There are many religious groups in Virginia with the largest representations being Catholic, Buddhist and Orthodox.

At the time of the project there were 377 families in Virginia, 51.5% being couple families with children and 31% couple families with no children.

The median weekly household income of \$735 is below the national average of \$1000 - \$1199.

The Area

The settlement of Virginia dates from the 1850s. The area is known for market gardens, many of which were established by post war overseas migrants, a process aided by the transfer of many farms from Fulham Gardens in Adelaide's west during the 1950s. The area also features a rural living estate in Buckland Park. Major features of the area include Virginia Horticultural Centre, Virginia Oval and Community Centre, Virginia Residential Park, Virginia Primary School, SA International Sports Shooting Park, the Salt Crystallisation Pans on Gulf St Vincent and the Adelaide International Raceway.

Virginia is located in the Northern Adelaide Plains Horticultural region consisting of approximately 7000 ha of land on the northern side of metropolitan Adelaide. It is roughly bordered by the metropolitan area to the south and east, the ocean to the west and poorer land, rural living zones and townships of Two Wells and Gawler to the north. Horticulture is a major employer and the region is strategically placed for future expansion.

History of Flood Emergencies

The area has a history of flooding with records of floods dating back to August 1851.

Flooding in Virginia can be divided into two categories. Flooding can occur when rainfall over the Virginia district exceeds the design capacity of the drainage networks - this is likely to be around 5 to 10 year ARI (Average Recurrence Interval) rainfall events.

The second category of flooding occurs when the Gawler River capacity is exceeded, and flood water breaks the levee banks to the south of the river. The Gawler River is a 'perched' river channel, and its capacity reduces between the Gawler Township (~400m³/s) and the outfall (~70m³/s at Port Wakefield Road, and less through Buckland Park).



Entrance to Virginia Oval, November 2005
Floods

So in general, if the peak flow in the river exceeds 70m³/s, at least some water must "break out" of the channel and flood across the plains. The river could break to the north or to the south (or both), depending largely upon the condition of the levee banks at the time of the flood. In 1992, flooding occurred predominantly to the north, but in November 2005 it was largely to the south.

The November 2005 floods were recorded as a 1 in 20 year event resulting in more than a \$40m crop loss, affecting 440 land parcels and the flooding of 33 homes. The response effort included 69 nights of emergency accommodation, 207 people registering at the recovery centre, 108 properties with septic tanks being pumped several times with pumping occurring for 20 days. 10 pallets of bottled water and 2 tankers of potable water for tanks were provided to the community.

Communication Strategy

The project's communication mission was to encourage community participation and facilitate the active involvement of different community groups and stakeholders in the project's objectives. A communication plan was developed which included a variety of methodologies including community briefings, conversation groups, events, information boards, the development of a community newsletter together with fliers and brochures. Minutes and records of meetings and discussions were also utilised as communication between key agency stakeholders and community groups.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

- To raise awareness and understanding of the project throughout its development
- To communicate key messages and content of the project to identified stakeholders
- To provide the project steering committee with a framework detailing which communication methods would be most appropriate for the project
- To encourage involvement in and assistance in "selling" the project to key stakeholders and the broader community

THE STARTING POINT

Establishing contact with the local community: February 9th 2006

The CDO arrived in Virginia on a hot summer's day in January 2006. The flood waters of November 2005 had subsided and the people were trying to restore their lives and livelihoods. The Recovery Centre established at the local Institute was still operational, with several government funded agencies providing services to community members. In the main people were attending for financial and moral support.

The CDO attended the Recovery Centre each Friday in an attempt to establish a working relationship with the workers there and to become familiar with and knowledgeable about local community issues.

A community BBQ organised by the City of Playford was held on February 9th providing the CDO an opportunity to meet with flood affected families, to hear their stories and aspirations for the future. Approximately 50 people attended this event.

The CDO entered into conversation with the people asking "can you tell me what you like about living in Virginia, what you don't like and what you'd like to change" People spoke freely about the country atmosphere of a quiet town, friendly locals, community diversity and community spirit. The availability and proximity of a good primary school close to home was an identified community asset.

People spoke about the need for footpaths, adequate street lighting, a pedestrian crossing, something for their young people to do. They also spoke about community health issues like mosquitoes and flies present in the aftermath of the flood, social issues like racism and the growing of and use of drugs.

The flood stories, though still vivid in people's memories, were not the main focus of their conversations; their aspirations were for a better and safer community for themselves and their children.

Participants wanted to see a playground for their children, a holiday program for children, concerts in the local park, better transport, a school crossing on the main street, a fresh fruit and vegetable store in the town, drains, improvements to roads and a variety of recreational activities particularly for the young.

Conversations about how the community might be better prepared for future disasters provided the following suggestions:

- Education and community awareness programs
- Early warning when a flood was imminent
- Provision of information in a pamphlet through the school newsletter

- Community Safety Day involving emergency services
- Strengthening of the river banks
- Cleaning out the river
- More local emergency services.

In the following weeks, conversations were also held with identified community leaders, whose thoughts mirrored the thoughts and ideas of the community.

Here was a community that had a future vision that required nurturing and the community's capacity to realise that vision strengthened. The community development agenda was beginning to emerge.

Farm Visits

A major barrier to flood response and recovery observed at Virginia has been cultural difference and language difficulties particularly of the Vietnamese and Khmer Communities. These groups are traditionally socially isolated and not used to communicating outside of their immediate group of family and friends.

The flood was a new experience for many people. The lack of local knowledge and the inability to understand the English language (e.g. instructions from emergency services) made the experience more difficult.

The CDO accompanied community health workers on their visits to farm and town properties that had been affected by the floods. This provided information about people's individual experiences and also provided emotional support for some who were trying to deal with the flood impact on their livelihoods and families.

In many instances women were faced with picking up the pieces particularly in families where the male (traditional bread winner) had not been able to come to terms with the effects of the flood, leaving the women to try and support their family when their source of income had been all but wiped out.

The ability to seek support was not as well developed in this community as it is in other communities, so the community as a whole was less likely to seek support from a whole range of services including health and welfare.

Restoring a livelihood became the priority for many. The farm being the first priority, many women worked extra long hours in farming activities which had an impact on the traditional role of caring for family, children and home.

Business debt continued to have a devastating effect for some time. Farmers were in situations of having huge debts with no foreseeable income to service them. Women were conscious that their families were running into debt, increasing the pressure to get things growing again.

Establishing contact with local community workers; Virginia Recovery Effort Reflection Morning March 10th 2006

The Recovery Centre operated from 9th November 2005 until June 2006. By about mid March it was clear that the Recovery Centre workers had a story to tell about their experience. An opportunity to share information, to express their views and for those views to be taken into account was needed. A reflection morning was arranged on 10 March 2006. For the majority of workers involved, this was a first time experience with a natural disaster recovery. The opportunity to debrief with peers in a non threatening environment was described as "much needed and overdue".

Each agency had held its own internal debrief but the cross sharing of the "on the ground workers" experience had not been undertaken.

This activity provided valuable information about the community and assisted to bond project team members who had been involved in the early recovery activities.

Key recommendations put forward from that event included the clarification of roles, staff training, and enactment of legislation to provide for information sharing between agencies allowing a holistic approach to services for victims when large scale disasters occur.

The event facilitated by Dr. Fiona Verity from the Flinders University School of Social Work was a positive relationship building strategy, providing an opportunity for workers to share their experience and learning leading to ongoing collaborative working for the life of the Virginia Community Development Project.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Virginia Safety in Emergencies Project

The Virginia Safety in Emergencies Project was a collaborative venture of the City of Playford and the Department for Families and Communities - State Recovery Office.

The project was made possible with funding provided under the Working Together to Manage Emergencies Local Grants Scheme 2006-2007. The Working Together to Manage Emergencies grants program was announced by the Australian Government in 2004 in recognition of the need to develop self reliance at both the community and local government level in order to enhance community safety. The local grants scheme is intended to enhance the capability of communities to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters and emergencies arising from any source of risk.

The project goal was to facilitate a community emergency risk management analysis and education process within the Virginia community, so as to create a greater understanding of risks to the community arising from emergency events.



Community members participating in project

THE PROJECT'S OBJECTIVES WERE

- To develop an inclusive approach to preventing, preparing for, responding to and recovering from an emergency event in the Virginia area
- To increase involvement and awareness of all sectors of the Virginia community in developing and implementing a local community emergency risk management plan/guide
- To identify and analyse hazards that have the potential to become major incidents for the community
- To promote individual and neighborhood responsibility for disaster safety
- To enhance the future post disaster and response capacity of the community
- Develop relationships between emergency response agencies and the community.

ACTIVITIES INCLUDED

- The implementation of a Community Emergency Risk Management (CERM) planning process. CERM planning is a process which brings people together in an interactive process to define those adverse events, both manmade and natural that may impact on the community
- The production of a multi language resource - Virginia Flood Safety DVD
- The implementation of education and awareness raising strategies
- A community safety day.

Approximately 400 people participated in various aspects of this project

See Appendix 2 for a copy of the Virginia Safety in Emergencies Project Report (Appendices on CD)

OBSERVATIONS

Having the flexibility to work with the community by providing both formal and informal opportunities for local people to increase their dialogue and interaction with each other assisted in the development of a number of initiatives that were attractive and community led. It was interesting to note that while the community had suffered a significant flood event, their recovery aspirations were to generate opportunities for cross cultural integration and for the improvement of community facilities which they perceived other communities took for granted and which were sadly lacking in the Virginia area.

It was also important to provide technical expertise and to support people to develop skills that would carry the community forward in the future.

The diversity of the community meant that it was really important to develop a sound respect for the various cultural groups in the area, their past experiences and their existing support networks.

Creating opportunities to publicly acknowledge people for their contribution to the community was also important in growing and maintaining community effort.



Classroom activities

Virginia Be Active Program April 2006 – December 2007

Virginia Be Active was first designed as a community engagement strategy for the purpose of raising awareness and encouraging public participation in the Virginia Community Development Project. The program was also planned in response to community conversations held from January – March 2006 which indicated the lack of activities for young people in the Virginia area, particularly during school vacation time. The Virginia Be Active community engagement strategy was chosen because recreation and sport are important activities in rural areas which bring people together.

The aim of the Virginia Be Active program was to engage recent flood affected families in a variety of activities. Whilst originally planned for the benefit of children and young people, promotion to families was seen as a key strategy to meeting the community development project's objectives.

THE PROGRAM OBJECTIVES WERE

- To raise awareness of the Virginia Community Development Project across the Virginia community
- To engage the community and provide a venue for collecting contact details of people who would be willing to participate in future community decision making and volunteerism
- To provide an opportunity for young people and families to participate in health promoting active recreation.

Ongoing community engagement was difficult. It was clear from the outset that the community had to be offered something to encourage their participation. Taking the time to build relationships and trust with the local community was important. It was equally important to show that conversations lead to activity.



Spirit of the Coorong



Gumeracha Toy Factory



Family activities

The Virginia Be Active program provided a non threatening opportunity for the community to engage in the community development process.

In the first instance activities were advertised by letters of invitation to flood affected families and via the school networks. Fliers were also placed in the local shopping centre attracting residents who had no link to the local primary school and others from the nearby townships of Two Wells and Angle Vale.

The first outing planned for children was supported by the YMCA with activities being held at Loftia Park, Stirling. A small group of 10 children and 4 adults participated in this activity.

The second was a family outing to Green Hills Park, Victor Harbor. A group of 47 children and 6 adults participated in this event. Following this outing a survey was completed by the participants providing suggestions for future activities. The results were as follows:

- Excursions: visit the zoo, Greenhills Adventure Park again, and other day trips
- Sports events: Soccer, swimming, sports day, archery, bowling, sports day with prizes, boating, BMX, football competition, golf, go-karts, slides
- Other: anything, anything different and adventurous, anything together, youth group, family activities, community function.

Subsequent outings and activities were planned with the participation of community members and were well attended, doubling in numbers at the conclusion of the project.

A day out for women was held in July 2006 visiting Adelaide Hills attractions including The Olde Apple Shed, Melba's Chocolate Factory, and the Gumeracha Toy Factory. 47 children and 43 women attended this event.

By 2007 men from different cultural groups joined the activity providing valuable cross cultural connections in the community.

In April a bus trip to Goolwa, visiting the Coorong on the Spirit of the Coorong; and in July a trip to Mannum were planned in response to participant's requests to learn about and understand the River Murray system.



Some Virginia community members on an outing.

A visit to the Lobethal Lights on the 14th December 2007 provided a finale for the program.

The Virginia Be Active program served as an innovative community engagement strategy which created opportunities for providing participants with information, consulting on broader community issues, involving participants in ongoing project planning and to introduce community members to service providers from other agencies thereby strengthening and broadening community networks.

Imagine Virginia in Recovery Project 26 – 28th July 2006

The Imagine Virginia in Recovery project was a consultative strategy including the following components:

- A ½ day Workshop (Participation is the Key) for government and non-government service providers, providing background information to asset based community development and community development in the context of recovery
- Conversation groups using the appreciative inquiry method with selected local groups including primary school children, young people, Vietnamese groups, elderly citizen groups and the Institute Management Committee
- Business dinner for local businesses and primary producers
- Community planning session to prioritise activities for a community action plan.

From February to May 2006, as a lead up to this event conversations were held with several identified key community leaders, local residents and young people and the local upper primary schoolchildren. Approximately 50 adults, 10 youth and 100 school children overall participated in the preliminary process responding to the following questions:

- What do you like about living in Virginia?
- What don't you like about living in Virginia?
- What changes would you like to see in Virginia in the future?

Responses included change and development ideas in the following categories:

- Social and recreational opportunities and infrastructure
- Community relationships and trust
- Facilities for young people
- Health, wellbeing and safety
- Community infrastructure
- Environmental issues
- Community expansion.

PARTICIPATION IS THE KEY – CONFERENCE JULY 26TH 2006

The primary aim of “Participation is the Key”, a mini conference for agency workers, was to explore community development activity in a context of recovery. Two key speakers were invited to share their knowledge and experience with the attendees. This event attracted sixty participants from a broad range of state, local and non government agencies.

Andrew Coghlan from the Australian Red Cross spoke about community development in the context of recovery, providing insights into a wide range of disasters and the importance of including community in any decision making process related to planning in this context.

Peter Kenyon spoke about Building Strong and Healthy Rural Communities sharing his experience and insight with asset based community development and appreciative enquiry. The mini conference provided a networking opportunity for agencies and the opportunity for the Virginia Community Development Project team to develop a common understanding of asset based community development and community development in a recovery context.

A representative of Rural Solutions SA facilitated a workshop discussion focused on collaboration between agencies and continuing engagement of community in collaborative processes.

The question, *how do we continue to collaborate between agencies?* generated the following key themes:

- Networking and developing relationships between agencies
- Partnerships and roles clarification between agencies
- Formal memorandums of understanding between agencies
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Responding to community voice
- Creating sustainable systems
- Leadership and perseverance.



Classroom sessions with local children

To the question, *how do we continue to engage the community in the collaborative process?* the following responses were given:

- Building relationships
- Working together
- Communication
- Valid roles for community members
- Empowerment
- Commitment
- Celebration

These principles were then included in the ongoing development and implementation of the Virginia Community Development Project.



The dinner

CONVERSATION GROUPS WITH PETER KENYON 26-27TH JULY 2006

Peter Kenyon founder of the BANK of I.D.E.A.S (Initiatives for the Development of Enterprising Actions and Strategies) was engaged to facilitate further conversation activities as part of the "Imagine Virginia in Recovery" consultation process. Peter was chosen for this task because of his vast experience in facilitating community planning sessions and his strong asset based community development philosophical base.

Conversation groups were held with upper primary school children, young people, the project steering committee and the community reference group. Ideas generated from these sessions mirrored responses from earlier consultation.



The consultation process

IMAGINE VIRGINIA BUSINESS DINNER JULY 26TH 2006

The purpose of this event was to engage representatives from local businesses within the town and the farming community in the Imagine Virginia process. Invitations to the dinner were sent to a random sample of 100 local business people, including members of the Vietnamese Farmers' Association, the Mayor and the local elected member. Fifty six people participated in this event contributing their ideas to the consultation process.

COMMUNITY PLANNING SESSION TO PRIORITISE ACTIVITIES FOR A COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

On Friday 28th July 2007 a community planning morning was held to begin the process of developing a community action plan. Twenty people, representative of the local community and agencies providing services to the area, attended the event.

Participants at the planning morning were invited to spend some time looking over and discussing change ideas with each other and voting for change ideas that would become the basis of a community development action plan. The results were as follows:

- Transport issues– Community expansion
- Town entrance statement– Community expansion

- Community gym– Community assets
- Youth activities– Community assets
- Multicultural women’s program and centre in Virginia - Community health and wellbeing.

As a prelude to these events the project team undertook a number of community consultation activities during the months of June and July 2006. These included 2 days of interviews at the town shopping centre and focus groups with an additional 4 groups representative of the community’s diversity.

The Imagine Virginia consultation process had been designed to engage a representative cross section of the community and every effort was made to speak with people across cultures and age groupings to involve as many people as possible.

Approximately 200 people (13% of the population) participated in the process establishing a foundation to:

- Work with the Virginia community to maintain and enhance their unique strengths and quality of life
- Develop identified priority areas into practical, achievable and realistic community development activities
- Enthuse, skill and resource local people to actively enhance their community’s future and quality of life
- Access potential government funding and private enterprise, sponsorships for the community
- Create greater unity and celebrate success.

See Appendix 3 for a copy of the Imagine Virginia in Recovery Consultation Report (appendices on CD)

Imagine Outcomes

Small working parties were initially established to give priority status and plan for the development of the following projects. In developing the projects consideration was given to the human and financial resources available to generate success. Priority was given to projects that had a likelihood of achievement.

Transport Issues– Community Expansion

Although a major concern to the community, addressing transport issues was viewed as a project not likely to succeed within the timeframe of the project. Transport was viewed as a regional issue which would require a regional approach and therefore no further action was taken.

Town Entrance Statement – Community Expansion

During the Imagine Virginia Consultation process in July 2006 community members said that Virginia needed something to identify it, to draw people in, to promote the town and the area.

People said they would like to:

- Provide recognition for Virginia
- Sell their community to the rest of the world
- Promote community interest and pride in the region
- Build a recognisable entrance “that would identify the whole community in one statement or icon”

Several community meetings were held from October 2006 – October 2007, with participants putting forward design ideas for an entrance statement. A landscape architect was engaged to work with the community to develop a design concept.

A major challenge to the success of this project was community vision and priority versus local council priorities. The proposed site for the entrance statement was on council owned land and therefore required the active partnership of council and community in developing, funding and constructing the feature.

The community members have learnt that desire does not always mean outcome, that there are many challenges and obstacles to overcome to develop a project and take it to fruition. However the Virginia Residents’ Action Group (VRAG) will continue to work with the local council to secure an entrance statement for the town in the future, involving further community consultation negotiations and the acquisition of funding for the project.

Community Gym– Community Assets

A meeting to establish a community gym working party was held in September 2006 with 21 community members in attendance. Issues discussed included:

- Lobbying council for a purpose built building
- Entering into a joint funding arrangement
- Finding a commercial operator to rent the space
- Developing a business plan
- Looking for private sponsors
- Forming a working party to set achievable goals
- Considering a short term versus long term project (short term project - introducing new activities to the community centre and finding out if it would really work; long term project – purpose built gymnasium which would require additional funding of \$300,000)

- Developing realistic time schedules for the working group as many people were already balancing family and community commitments.

A small group of eight people agreed to meet again to consider these issues. A meeting was held in October 2006 and principles for the operation of a gym were discussed and recorded as:

- Affordable
- Accessible by family and people from outside the community
- Appropriate facilities and equipment.

At this meeting a decision was made to move forward by providing one or two fitness activities in the community centre on a weekly basis to gauge community interest in such activities. The aim was to have a 6 week program up and running by November 2006.

Several ideas were put forward including – yoga, various dance types, Pilates, aerobics, kick boxing and fit ball. The decision was to start with an activity that did not require equipment and to try Latin dancing as a first program. Fifteen participants attended this activity. A second round of Latin dance classes did not commence due to a lack of instructors.

Establishing a Community Gym was considered as a long term project which would provide equipment in the community centre as opposed to constructing a purpose built facility.

Concerns about the need for both passive and structured recreation activities for all ages were expressed and the need for a playground with equipment to suit all ages was also raised.

A further meeting was held in November 2006. This meeting focused on the development of a new playground in the Virginia area with a decision to undertake further community consultation to ensure that a new playground would satisfy the community. The consultation, a collaborative activity of the Virginia Community Development Project and the City of Playford, was planned for and took place in March 2007.

Youth Activities– Community Assets

The Virginia Community Development Project had articulated the development, support and mentoring of youth leadership as one of its key outcomes. Strategies to engage young people commenced in April 2006 with a youth speak event. Young people from the area were invited to become members of a group that would look at local youth issues and how they could be best addressed.

Young people were viewed as valued members of the community with unique and diverse gifts, knowledge and skills with a valuable and significant contribution to make to their community.

Several attempts were made to bring young people together to share their views

and ideas. Attendances at meetings were small. During the Imagine Virginia process 20 young people contributed to the process and in response to the request for more activities for young people, a small working group was established. New partnerships were made with specified youth workers from the local community health service and Anglicare Community services who were keen to establish connections with young people in the area. A group of 6 young people began meeting to plan events. Although marketing and financial support was provided to the group the events failed to attract young people's participation.

Feedback from the young people indicated that many were busy assisting their families and many were already participating in activities outside the local community. It was also determined that youth engagement was a lengthy process and required the skills of a dedicated youth worker. Youth activities were no longer pursued with young people being included in the Virginia Be Active program which targeted families.

Multicultural Women's Program and Centre in Virginia - Community Health and Wellbeing

Work with multicultural women was largely undertaken by introducing group activities, events and linking with an existing multicultural women's program organised by the community health service. A walking group was formed. Women were introduced to the Country Women's Association and participated in the Virginia Be Active program. In the early stages these initiatives were supported by a Vietnamese speaking project officer. The development however was slowed when that resource was no longer available to the group. Participating women preferred a multicultural program rather than a specific women's program and joined in activities like the Virginia Be Active program.

The local health service will continue to work with existing groups to support women from the area.

State Emergency Relief Fund (SERF) Distribution June – August 2006

In June 2006 members of the project team were invited to assist Barry Grear Chair of SERF committee with developing criteria for the dispersal of relief funds collected by public donation.

Principles to guide the distribution of these funds included:

- Gaining input from the affected community by consulting with service providers who had been in contact with some flood affected families
- Ensuring assistance would be accessible, equitable and timely
- Ensuring guidelines are well publicised and timely.

The Virginia Community Development Project team provided valuable assistance to the committee by distributing information to members of the flood affected community. Many of the applicants were known to the project team who were able to assist with the application process.

Virginia Remembers – First Anniversary November 25th 2006

Relief workers, service staff, volunteers and emergency personnel from the November 2005 Virginia floods joined the local community on 25 November 2006 to commemorate its one year anniversary.

The event was planned to celebrate survival and emphasise the importance of community strengths during times of adversity and rebuilding. It assisted in acknowledging the community's growth and journey forward since the disaster.

Outstanding community members were also honored as part of the celebrations, with the inaugural Virginia Making a Difference Awards being presented to local citizens for their contributions to the community.

Approximately 200 people attended this event. The event included a multicultural shared meal, entertainment and activities for children.

Virginia Celebrates Harmony Day March 21st 2007

Harmony Day celebrations were planned in Virginia at the invitation of the City of Playford Harmony Day committee. The CDO joined the committee to facilitate the Virginia celebration. Harmony Day, which began in 1999, is celebrated nationally on the 21st March each year. The day celebrates Australia's success as a diverse society united by a common set of values. The Virginia event focused on fostering harmony and understanding between cultures for the common good of the community.

The event featured multicultural food, music, national costumes and a display of children's art work.



Local community groups participated in the event by providing refreshments and entertainment.

The community was fortunate to be visited by Drati Khangsten Buddhist Monks from Tibet who performed spectacular dances and rituals calling for blessings on the community.

Harmony Day; approximately 150 people attended this event.

Cinema Under the Stars March 9th 2007

In response to requests for activities that contribute to community building, the project's CRG in 2006 identified an outdoor movie night as a project for 2007. Knowing that an outdoor movie night would be welcomed by the community the committee agreed that this event would be planned with a local group so that if it were successful it could be sustained in the future. The Virginia Sporting Bodies Association agreed to participate in the planning and running of the event.

Local community groups accepted an invitation to provide catering and refreshments as a fundraising activity for their organization. The Virginia Football Club, the Virginia Tennis and Basketball Club and the Virginia United Soccer Club participated in this activity. Road Show Movies were contracted to ensure all legalities and copyright issues were addressed.

Approximately 400 people attended this event and due to its success the Virginia Sporting Bodies Association decided to continue this activity as an annual event. They applied for and were successful in gaining funding through the City of Playford to hold an event in 2008 and are confident that they will be able to sustain this event into the future.

See Appendix 4 – Media Stories (Appendices on CD)

Food, Culture, Ethnicity and Migration, April 20, 2007

In February 2007 the CDO received a call from Kaye Metha of the University of South Australia requesting a student visit to the Virginia community. The visit was to provide an opportunity for the students to see food production from its source and to speak to people from different cultural groups about "the role of food in their lives".

In April the students visited a broad acre farm and glass house property.

Following this they met with approximately 20 people, representative of the cultural groups of Virginia, to discuss food, diet and cultural issues. The event provided students with first hand information from people in the field about how they manage the problems they encounter, e.g. flood, and how that influences food availability. The students also gained a greater understanding of immigrant cultures and food consumption.

The event provided an opportunity for community members to dialogue and share information with people from outside the community, and take pride in their achievements.



Visit to the glasshouse



Discussing food, diet and cultural issues

Grant Writing Workshop July 24th 2007

An introduction to grant writing workshop was planned in collaboration with the City of Playford's Grants officer.

Representatives from Community Benefit SA, Multicultural SA, the Office for Recreation and Sport and the City of Playford attended providing community members with valuable information about grant writing, upcoming grant programs and a commitment to ongoing support with future applications.

30 people attended this activity.

Recipes from the Virginia Community April – October 2007

In an effort to strengthen the recovery process it was important to create opportunities for conversation and activity across cultural groups within the community.

The Virginia Community recipe book project aimed to bring community members together breaking down cultural barriers and isolation through social contact.

Virginia has many market gardeners who, as well as growing their own produce, take pride in cooking. The idea of combining recipes with the long history of the families' settlement in the area was seen as a way to celebrate community history and for people to learn more about each other's individual cultures.

Playford Community Health Service was a major contributor to this project collecting and documenting recipes for publication. The project, which took six months to complete, was partially funded through a Multicultural SA grant and involved 44 participants. 500 recipe books were produced.

Virginia Harvest Newsletter

On the 18th May 2006 a small group of people met to discuss the development of a local community newsletter. Local communication was largely reliant on word of mouth and there was no organised way of informing the community about local activities, events or community issues. The small group decided that a local newsletter would benefit the community by:

- Increasing community involvement in local activities
- Providing information to the local community
- Providing local advertising opportunities for the community
- Promoting the positive aspects of Virginia
- Increasing understanding and recognition of Virginia's history
- Celebrating current activities or events
- Generating community pride and unity
- Promoting diversity.

The group agreed that the newsletter would be published at the beginning of each season. If successful and accepted by the community then increased regularity would be considered. Local businesses were invited to fund the cost of production through sponsorship and advertising.

Four editions were produced in the first year. The production, editing and distribution of the newsletter were maintained by enthusiastic community members. 1300 copies of each edition of the newsletter were distributed through the local primary school, post

office and the nearby Palms Residential Village. The newsletter was funded through local business advertising and sponsorship.

Production of the Virginia Harvest Newsletter continues to be maintained by the Virginia Harvest Group, a sub committee of the Virginia Residents' Action Group (VRAG). The VRAG contributes to the financial management of the newsletter's production. Previously the Virginia Harvest Group were part of the Virginia Community Development Project CRG with funds managed for the group by the Virginia Horticulture Centre. The Virginia Harvest Group received funding from the community grants program to purchase IT equipment to enable ongoing preparation and formatting of the newsletter.

Stimulating Community Improvement and Community Recovery

The Virginia Community Development Grants Program was established by the project steering committee in February 2006. The committee developed a project proposal proforma, reporting requirements and a project register to ensure accountability for the grants allocated. The purpose of the program was to support community development projects that would assist community recovery. Funds were contributed to small and larger projects.

See Appendix 5 for a copy of the grant application forms.

Applications were considered for projects that would:

- Foster a revitalisation of community spirit to assist the community to help itself
- Improve the quality of life through community development projects requested by community groups
- Enhance community pride and involvement
- Enable local community groups to provide programs they determined important but were unable to fund.

A total of 19 projects were funded to the value of \$127,031.00

Projects funded:

- Vietnamese Women's Association; \$880 funding for transport assistance for Vietnamese women to attend "Past Experiences – Future Initiatives" 7th National Conference of Vietnamese Women held in Adelaide, March 2006.
- Vietnamese Farmers' Association; \$5,500 funding to secure 'English as a Second Language' classes for Vietnamese Farm workers 2006.
- Virginia United Soccer Club; \$5,500 funding to assist with the purchase and installation of flood lights to enable night training.
- Virginia Primary School; \$5,000 funding to purchase a community notice board and school communication sign.

- Vietnamese Farmers' Association youth group; \$9,785 funding to purchase new sound equipment and musical instruments for the Tinh Thoung Leisure Club.
- Playford Community Health Service; \$1,455 funding to purchase a flat screen television with built-in VHS and DVD players to be installed in the Virginia Community Centre Meeting Room for use by community groups
- Vietnamese Farmers' Association; \$3,300 funding assistance for the staging of the 2007 TET Festival in Virginia.
- Virginia Sporting Bodies Association; \$5,555 funding for new tiling and the purchase of new fridge and dish washer for their club rooms.
- Vietnamese Farmers' Association; \$6,725 funding of a 25% contribution to Workplace English Language and Literacy funded project to implement English classes for 30 Vietnamese Farm workers.
- Maria SS di Crochi Association; \$10,000 funding as a contribution to the construction of a permanent flat roof shed to enhance and support the work of the organisation's volunteers.
- Virginia Residents' Action Group; \$8,000 funding to purchase aluminium bench seating, trestle tables chairs and window tinting for the Virginia Community Centre.
- Greek Parents and Guardians Society of Virginia and Districts; \$1,128 funding to purchase books for the Greek Language School.
- Virginia Harvest Group; \$2,340 funding to purchase a laptop, printer and software to support the ongoing publication of a local community newsletter.
- Virginia Uniting Church; \$3,060 funding for the connection of mains water supply to the Uniting Church Hall and Kitchen.
- Virginia Rams Netball Club; \$3,793 funding to purchase netball uniforms.
- Virginia Cricket Club; \$1,850 funding to provide regulation playing surfaces, to enable additional competitive playing opportunities during the season.
- SA Hoa Hao Buddhist Association; \$3,660 funding to purchase tables and chairs for events.
- Virginia Horticulture Centre on behalf of the Virginia Community Centre Management Committee; \$25,000 funding to promote the community centre and employ a centre coordinator for 12 months. See below for more detail.
- The City of Playford; \$25,000 funding to assist with the Virginia Playground Redevelopment Project, see next page for more detail.

Community Centre Coordinator

A proposal was put forward by the Virginia Community Centre Management Committee to partly fund the employment of a person to coordinate and facilitate patronage and use of the community centre for community events. The proposal also included a component for the development and delivery of healthy lifestyle, recreation and sporting activities at the centre.

The Virginia Residents' Action Group, the City of Playford and the Virginia Horticulture Centre also contributed funds to this project.

This proposal was developed in response to community concern which indicated that the centre was underutilised, not easily accessible and had undeveloped potential.

The project was funded for a 12 month period.

The objectives of the project were:

- To change an underutilised space into a supportive and welcoming meeting and recreation space
- To support, encourage and increase community participation in physical activity for all ages
- To minimise social isolation
- To enable local groups and businesses to hold major events locally.

By implementing this project the Virginia Community Centre Management Committee hoped to achieve the following outcomes from its business plan (2005-2007):

- Maximum use of the centre through effective promotion, marketing and programming
- Safe and enjoyable indoor sports and community activities provided on a regular basis
- Increased opportunities for local people to join in a range of activities and social networks
- Strengthened partnerships within the community and between community groups and organisations
- A supportive and welcoming community meeting place.

Outcomes

Over the year, a variety of passive and active recreational activities were introduced to the community centre, including yoga, school holiday craft classes, scrap booking, Pilates, mixed netball and adult craft classes. Attendance in classes has varied with the most popular being yoga and Pilates.

A number of primary schools that participated in the Grab 5! Healthy Lifestyle program developed by the Virginia Horticulture Centre used the Community Centre as part of their excursion to Virginia to learn about food from its source of origin. The students participated in both passive and active recreational activities related to food and healthy lifestyles.

Maximising usage of the centre proved challenging as the centre was already booked most evenings and day time activities had to be coordinated with the Virginia Primary School that have prearranged usage of the centre during school hours. Other issues affecting the introduction of activities were finding teachers, or instructors, who were willing to travel to Virginia and who had the appropriate public liability cover for their activity.

A number of promotional strategies were tried to attract people to the activities including the local community newsletter, fliers in post boxes and through school and business networks. In terms of gaining sufficient numbers for particular activities these promotional methods were not very successful, however, it is believed that the main barrier to interest was the day and time of the activity rather than the advertising methods.

The project officer was successful in gaining an additional \$17,573.00 in funding to purchase necessary equipment and resources to successfully run recreational activities at the Virginia Community Centre. Funding was received from Community Benefit SA – Virginia Activities Project (\$11,198), the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (\$2,000) and a City of Playford Community Development Grant (\$4,375).

Virginia Playground Redevelopment

The Imagine Virginia in Recovery consultations had identified the need for existing open space to be re-developed to include playgrounds, shade and BBQ areas. Many references were made to the condition and location of the current playground; adults and young people requesting an upgrade or redevelopment. People also asked that new recreation and unstructured sporting facilities be introduced for young people and that consideration be given to developing a playground in the local Institute grounds along with a pergola and BBQ area. These ideas were further explored in a community survey undertaken in March 2007. The purpose of the survey was to



Aerial view of the proposed playground location



The foundation for the playground being laid down New playground equipment

identify preferred locations, usage of and type of activities or amenities required. There were two potential sites for open space redevelopment:

- Land adjacent to the Virginia Oval
- The grounds surrounding the Virginia Institute.

The survey results indicated the preferred playground location was the existing site adjacent to the oval and that considerable upgrade including child proof fencing, enlargement and shade provision to improve safety and comfort would also be necessary.

It was expected the project would provide unstructured recreation opportunities for the community by;

- Making better use of and enhancing existing open space by providing areas for picnicking, walking and jogging
- Installing a 1/3 size basket ball court, new playground and fitness equipment
- Installing park benches, a BBQ and Gazebo.

The project was also to include the following conservation elements;

- The planting of advanced trees and native vegetation that enhance and incorporate with the surrounding environment
- The installation of artificial grass
- The installation of a water catchment system to re use water for landscaping purposes.

Funding was to be provided through the City of Playford's Parks and Gardens fund and from the Virginia Community Development Project fund. A proposal was developed with the CDO in collaboration with the City of Playford, and submitted to the Virginia Community Development Steering Committee, for a funding contribution to the redevelopment of the Virginia Playground.

Value adding funding was sought and received through the Regional Open Space Enhancement Subsidy Program (ROSES) administered by Planning SA. The Vietnamese Farmers' Association held a special fundraising event which contributed approximately \$6000 to the project.

The community continued to be involved in the development of this project initially through the CRG and then the Virginia Residents' Action Group. Construction of the playground commenced in mid October 2007. The Target Works program, an initiative of the Department of Education and Children's Services, was engaged to provide practical skills training opportunities for local youth in a variety of trades like carpentry, paving, landscaping and irrigation which assisted with the playground's construction.

Students from 4 schools in the region participated in the construction process.

The playground redevelopment was made possible by people and agencies working together. The playground will provide a space for families and children to engage in recreational activities and perhaps attract visitors to this community. It will contribute to growing the social capital of this community. The playground will be officially opened in 2008.

Observations

The community grants program was an effective strategy in stimulating and mobilising community activity. Many of the recipient groups continued to become involved in broader community development programs and also developed confidence to seek funding from external sources. Approximately \$50,000 funding from other sources was leveraged for community projects as a result of this initiative.

See Appendix 4 for copies of Media Stories (Appendices on CD)



Completed playground

COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

There are a number of community organisations and groups working in the Virginia community. Many are long standing and connected to the sporting and recreational activities of the community. Others like the Country Women's Association exist to improve the conditions for country women and children and try to make life better for women and their families. The CWA provided considerable financial support to local families in the aftermath of the November 2005 floods.

The community development project activities with 3 of these organisations are described to illustrate the scope of the project work.

Vietnamese Farmers' Association (VFA)

The Vietnamese Farmers' Association's role is:

- To facilitate a close link between the Vietnamese farming community, the government and Australian agriculture industry
- To create opportunities for members to help each other in times of natural disaster or individual hardship
- To supply an environment where members can learn and share agricultural techniques and experiences with others
- To assist members to effectively use government services such as health, education and social services
- To support cultural, social, educational and recreational activities so that the Vietnamese tradition could be maintained and developed in an environment of multicultural Australia.

Recognising an opportunity to contribute to the above objectives, the Vietnamese Farmers' Association established links with the Virginia Community Development Project in the very early stages of its development. The CDO was able to assist with the following:

FESTIVALS

In order to maintain cultural traditions and bonds within the Vietnamese community the association offers regular social activities for its members. Among these is the annual TET or Vietnamese New Year Festival.

TET epitomises the identity of the Vietnamese Culture providing an opportunity to mark the end of the lunar calendar and celebrate the New Year ahead.



TET festivities

Outcomes

The Virginia Community Development project was able to offer support for the staging of the 2007 Festival and in so doing provide access to funding and assistance with the development of a risk management process and documentation of the Association's events which will provide a template for future activity.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES

On December 5 2005, Technical and Further Education (TAFE) SA's program Leader, Vocational Preparation and Equity, met with Hon Trish White MP and two representatives from the Vietnamese Farmers' Association to discuss training and development opportunities for Vietnamese farmers based in Virginia. Specifically the target group comprised of 10 – 15 Vietnamese farm workers who, in the main, were women.

The concept of tailoring a training program for the proposed target group was considered beneficial, particularly in areas relating to safety, handling dangerous chemicals and knowledge of general farm work.

The Virginia floods served to highlight that the language/literacy/communication skills of the farmers and their families posed a significant risk in terms of personal safety and risk management practices.

It was considered that developing language, literacy and numeracy skills contextualised to 'farm work'; Occupational, Health Safety and Welfare would contribute to improving workplace productivities and efficiencies and empower participants to take responsibility for managing their own safety, having a positive impact on the community.

A course "English for Farmers" ran from May – Dec 2006 with funding made available from TAFESA Vocational Preparation and Equity Programme and the Virginia Community Development Project. This course fostered a warm and friendly learning environment, and provided an opportunity for isolated women farm workers to have social contact on a weekly basis.

Course participants reported feeling much more confident in using spoken and written English. As a result of this positive community feedback, TAFESA successfully accessed Commonwealth funding from the Department of Education, Science and Technology Workplace English Language and Literacy Programme and the Virginia Community Development Project small grants program on behalf of the Vietnamese Farmers' Association for additional courses in 2007.

Classes were held from April to November in 2006 and 2007.

The project was delivered in 2 phases:

A Training Needs Analysis was conducted during the first session of the course, revealing that participants wanted to study an English language program that would develop their speaking and listening skills. Before embarking on farm safety and business topics, the participants were keen to learn everyday conversational English.

In the second phase of the project, both farmers and farm workers learnt Language

Literacy and Numeracy (LLN)skills to enable them to actively participate as members of their local farming community.

This included the following:

- Preparing evacuation plans
- Responding to evacuation plans
- Identifying and responding to hazards both on the farm and in the community
- Listening to and giving instructions in English
- Reading safety signs and codes
- Accessing and understanding extreme weather warnings.

The course also provided participants with the opportunity to observe farming practices and horticultural techniques outside the local area when participants visited the Food Forest, a Permaculture Farm at Gawler, north of Adelaide. The participants were able to compare horticulture techniques used at the Food Forest with their own farming practices, in particular, the use of farm chemicals and food safety.

The visit gave the participants the opportunity to develop their LLN oral/aural skills by asking questions and listening to responses. Reading and writing skills were developed by adapting written texts obtained from the Food Forest.

A visit to the local Country Fire Service and the State Emergency Service enabled the participants to fully appreciate the roles of the CFS and the SES in the local community. Again participants asked questions and listened to responses in English to identify key points on managing and responding to hazards associated with natural disasters such as floods and bush fires. This activity enhanced their knowledge of emergency services as well as developing flood safety plans for their farms and practising the use of English instructional language.

Outcomes

A total of 35 people participated in the English language classes. The participants were small business owners and farm workers from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities with very little formal education.

Topics in the course included: Occupational, Health Safety and Welfare, safe systems of work, chemical handling and responsiveness to natural disasters.

The projects equipped both farmers and farm workers with language, literacy and numeracy skills to be able to understand and actively participate in the wider farming community.

TAFESA and the Vietnamese Farmers' Association have developed an alliance and are continuing to seek opportunities to extend the English Language Skills Program into the community.

VIETNAMESE CULTURAL CENTRE

The Vietnamese Farmers' Association (VFA) has endeavored over the past ten years to raise funds and gain support for the building of a Vietnamese Cultural Centre in Virginia. They purchased a sizeable parcel of land and had been trying with little success to raise funds required for the development of the Cultural Centre. The CDO was asked to assist with this project.

In developing the project the Vietnamese Farmers' Association hope to establish a community based Vietnamese Cultural Centre in Virginia for the preservation, promotion and dissemination of Vietnamese culture and social networks in Virginia and the broader South Australian Community.

Dream to reality has not been easy. Cultural differences, differing business practices and little understanding of how to access funding in the Australian context have contributed to this difficulty.

Outcomes

Members of the Association have developed their capacity and understanding of grant application and building development requirements. New linkages have been made with various City of Playford departments including assets, planning and community development to assist with the acquisition of funding and the completion of the project.

ENVIRO FUND PROJECT

The VFA are also conscious of farming practices on the local environment. Discussions with the Virginia Horticulture Centre resulted in the development of an industry and government task group to develop a concept for the project and subsequently a successful application to the Australian Government's Enviro Fund.

The purpose of the project is to:

- Contribute to the sustainability of regional natural resource management by planning and implementing individual environmentally focused land management plans for 10 Vietnamese Farmers' Association members owned or operated properties
- Increase the knowledge and capacity of the Vietnamese farmers to manage their properties through environmentally focused strategies to reduce the impact of agricultural production on the local and regional natural resources.

\$37,000 has been granted for this project from the Australian Government's Enviro Fund.

There will be many challenges to the implementation of this project including the need for the Vietnamese Farmers' Association to build relationships with the Virginia Horticulture Centre, the Natural Resource Management Board and the City of Playford to assist with implementing the project for the benefit of the Vietnamese farming community.

Maria Santissima di Crochi Association

The Maria Santissima di Crochi Association was established in Virginia in the 1980s for the purpose of commemorating a religious festival and providing social and recreational gatherings for members of the Italian community. The Association succeeded in its endeavors through volunteer effort and community financial support. As the Association developed it commenced fundraising activities to support charitable institutions and causes.

The Association applied for funding from the Virginia Community Development small grants program to construct a permanent flat roofed shed to enhance and support the work of the Association's volunteers, in June 2007. By July the Association members had raised the required funds from community donation and sponsorship. In August 2007 the shed structure was erected in time for the Association's Annual Festa on the 9th September. The shed structure has become an important addition to the market environment providing undercover facilities for most stall holders and patrons. Funding was granted on a dollar for dollar basis and within a few weeks the committee had raised the remaining amount of funds required through local sponsorship.

See Appendix 4 Media Stories for more information.

The Association's committee was forward thinking and keen to work to support the local community.

VIRGINIA MULTICULTURAL MARKETS

Early in 2006 planning commenced for the development and implementation of the Virginia Multicultural Markets Project.

The purpose of the Virginia Multicultural Produce and Craft Market was to help local growers and community members to sell their goods direct to the public, near their source of origin, creating benefits to both the market participants and the local community.



Market stalls with local produce

The primary aim of the market was to develop a friendly, cooperative and social environment where customers and producers would be brought together in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

The first market was held in June 2007. This was seen as an enormous success with many local growers donating produce to the association for sale. Other individual stall holders also reported satisfaction with the first market day.



The market grounds

In preparation for the market's operation a number of business protocols were required, including development approval from the local council, development of a risk management plan, the development of booking forms, and market rules of operation. Public liability insurance cover was also purchased by the Association.

Markets have been held on a monthly basis with approximately 8 stall holders, 200 buyers attending and an average of \$1000 per month being raised for the Association's programs.

Virginia Residents' Action Group (VRAG)

The Virginia Residents' Action Group was formed and incorporated in April 1992 with the following objectives:

- Development of the Virginia region with respect to facilities and services in the area
- To develop and maintain links with council and its representatives
- To act as a lobby group for the community of Virginia
- To foster a healthy community spirit
- To promote social, recreational, educational, health and welfare projects and activities which meet the needs of the community
- To act as a forum for community issues to be raised
- To be non profit making and that all monies raised be distributed within a two year period
- To actively involve the children of the Virginia region in community activities and issues.

The VRAG have been instrumental in accessing resources for the local community, their main achievement being the building of the Virginia Community Centre.

The VCDP Steering Committee and the VCDP CRG were keen to find a way to sustain community development activity in the area and began negotiations with the VRAG in May 2007. An agreement to amalgamate the Reference Group and VRAG was reached. An Annual General Meeting of the VRAG was convened in October 2007 with 25 people attended the meeting. The combined groups have made a commitment to work together for the local community as the new Virginia Residents' Action Group.

Observations

At the commencement of the VCDP, it became evident that there were a number of community organisations and groups operating in the Virginia area, with very little joint activity between them. The various cultural groups that exist in the area predominately work to support their own community members. This has led to little understanding about each other's cultures and needs. By engaging these groups in the VCDP activities, it has been possible to facilitate linkages between the groups leading to better understanding and cooperation. The Virginia Playground Redevelopment Project is a good example where the VFA were able to mobilise not only their community members but people from other cultural groups into a successful fundraising effort for the project.

EXIT STRATEGY

The Virginia Community Development project provided financial and technical support, empowerment and capacity building activities to the community of Virginia.

It was important that a planned withdrawal from the community be developed so that the community would be adequately informed and prepared to continue the work without the CDO facilitation and have an opportunity for participation in closure of the project.

The nature of the exit strategy was discussed at governance levels of the project with the resulting objectives:

- Working with VRAG to assist its reform into an active, representative and ongoing community development group which could take responsibility for continuing a community development project into the future
- Training community groups to access grant opportunities and to prepare grant applications
- Assisting groups such as the Community Reference Group and Virginia Harvest newsletter group to transform into properly constituted ongoing community groups.

These objectives were achieved by:

- Amalgamating the project community reference group and the Virginia Harvest group into the Virginia Residents' Action Group
- Holding a grants writing workshop for the community
- Working with the VRAG committee to rebuild its membership, hold an annual general meeting and develop a vision for the future.

EVALUATION

Several approaches to evaluation were discussed by the project team, steering committee and reference group. Whilst all groups recognised the value of engaging external evaluators, due to funding restraints a decision was made to conduct the evaluation internally. However some informal discussions with external evaluators were held. An informal discussion with a research officer from the South Australian Community Health Research Unit (SACHRU) resulted in rewriting the project's goal and objectives in an endeavor to capture the intent of the project in measurable terms. Increased social capital and social cohesion in the Virginia community in order to lessen the impact of further disasters reflected the projects aims, with the objectives being stated as:

- Increase number and effectiveness of community leaders
- Increase collaborative working between social services in the region
- Increase skills and knowledge in disaster prevention, preparedness and management
- Increase levels of community engagement with social services/local government
- Improve physical and social environment
- Increase and sustain culture of collaboration, community engagement and leadership
- Increase and strengthen community networks and linkages.

Two sets of evaluation questions were developed:

- Process evaluation questions to measure the strategies and activities of the project including project quality and project reach.
- Impact evaluation questions to measure the immediate effects of the project as an indicator of the project objectives being achieved.

The evaluation process allowed for the participation and involvement of all key stakeholder groups including the project team, the steering committee and the community.

Evaluation Methodology

In consultation with the SACHRU, structured questionnaires were developed to gather the required data. These were then modified to suit the project's needs and were implemented by face-to-face interviews with community members, discussion with the project team and by email survey to members of the project Steering Committee. Other data gathering methodology included an analysis of project documentation (minutes, consultancy records, photos, feedback sheets and records of activity). In undertaking the evaluation the project team were also looking for indicators of achievement of the

following EMA benchmark outcomes for community development in recovery projects:

- Informed community
- Access to services and facilities
- Sense of community safety
- Healthy community
- Participation in community life
- Sense of belonging
- Community cohesion
- Community identity
- Economic recovery.

Evaluation Results

The process evaluation questions were developed to gauge how well the project had performed in relation to stakeholder commitment, engagement, participation, communication and administrative processes. Stakeholders were considered as anyone who had an interest in the project and its outcomes.

Respondents to the Process Evaluation questionnaires and discussion by the project team indicate the following;

RESPONSES - COMMITMENT TO THE PROJECT

Commitment to the project at all stakeholder levels was seen as strong and maintained for the duration of the project. Steering committee membership was maintained either by direct contact or electronic participation. Out of session approvals were an important component of the decision making process particularly in relation to the small grants administration process. The steering committee met on 15 occasions.

Local agency commitment to the project was equally as strong with agencies committing time to attend meetings, workshops, project activities, face-to-face contact and home visits. The project team met on a fortnightly basis in the first year of the project's development and then monthly for the duration of the project. Human and financial resources were provided by: Centrelink Multicultural, Playford Community Health Service, Rural Solutions SA, Families SA, the City of Playford and the Virginia Horticulture Centre.

Community involvement through the CRG was maintained on a monthly basis for the duration of the project. This group also gave of their time and skills to engage the broader community in the project's activities.

"Because of the time frame people worked hard to achieve what could be possible to achieve in this set time."

(Community member)

The Vietnamese Farmers' Association also committed their networking skills within the Vietnamese community to ensure that the project reached as many growers or residents as possible demonstrating a willingness to work with and for the benefit of the broader community.

RESPONSES - ENGAGEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT

Stakeholder and community engagement was actively pursued in the development of the project. Initially the strategy was to develop a governance structure allowing for participation across three levels of decision making, i.e. senior managers with delegated authority, service providers who were in contact with the community and community representatives who would bring local knowledge and information to the project. These groups were engaged by invitation to participate in the initial project planning process. Terms of reference were established with each group to ensure that roles and responsibilities were clearly understood.

For some members community development theory and principles were new knowledge. Early project presentations and discussions were focused on developing an understanding of the community development process.

The Steering Committee reviewed the ongoing development of the project work plan and the administration of the community grants process. Members supported and accepted the community development approach which allowed the project to evolve from the community, noting that:

"The project outcome will come from the community"
(Steering Committee minutes 9th February 2006)

The community reference group was instrumental in setting the agenda for the development of the project. Ideas put forward by the community reference group were also discussed by project team members who provided their advice and experience to the initiative's development.

Participants and stakeholder roles in the project were clearly defined and reviewed on a regular basis. Roles were complementary, with participants generating project ideas and activities, and the project team and steering committee reflecting, providing advice and enabling activities to proceed.

"I am so pleased with the playground. It shows something visible can be done when people work together."
(Community member)

RESPONSES - PARTICIPATION

The active participation and involvement by all in shared decision making was a valued project component based on deliberative processes, action and authentic collaboration. At a community level people became involved in tasks or project activities that were of interest to them. There were two types of involvement, formally through committees or working groups and informally as participants in project activities.

“the community development officer enables representatives from special interest groups to get involved etc – it provides a focus – a non biased focus – and assists with the balanced view”

(Community member)

“I am on top of the world. I can ask the CDO anything. She invites people to join in - helps us come together so we don't have to be by ourselves”

(Community member)

“The involvement of the community has highlighted a number of people with different skills, personalities, and passions to offer to the community”

(Community member)

From the outset, community reference group members were keen to implement an activity that would be do-able and visible once the community development project came to an end.

Some identified projects required broader consultation;

“Community Gym The group agreed that it would be important to consult further on this project”

(Community Reference Group Meeting, August 2006)

There were many consultation processes during the life of the project. These included;

- Conversation groups to identify community issues and aspirations
- Focus groups to explore community issues and aspirations more fully
- Face to face interviews for issue identification, clarification of community aspirations and activity feedback
- Self completion questionnaires for issue identification, clarification of community aspirations and activity feedback

The Project Team were actively involved in all aspects of the process including community surveys and consultations, referrals to other agencies, assistance with flood recovery specific initiatives e.g. providing advice on distribution of SERF relief funds, the sharing of information and assisting with the survey analysis and the evaluation process.

RESPONSES - COMMUNICATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES

Open and transparent communication was maintained in meetings and during project review processes allowing the project to develop organically.

Mutually acceptable processes for decision making were identified and agreed. Most decision making was based on a consensus model. Where decisions had to be made quickly an out of session approval system was used. Participants were provided with the necessary information required to assist with decision making.

Process and outcomes of activity were documented in meeting minutes, and summarised in quarterly reports to the steering committee.

Meeting agendas allowed for the review of processes and actions from previous meetings. The circulation of minutes and email correspondence enhanced and enabled the development and implementation of project activities.

Record keeping was also an important component of the project processes.

Initiatives undertaken by the project were implemented after discussion with the community reference group and the project team and written proposal to the steering committee. This enabled the committee to have the necessary information to support the initiative.

From a community perspective the processes adopted by the project were seen as inclusive and described as “exceptionally good”. (Evaluation questionnaire comment received from Steering Committee Member)

Achievements were recognised and celebrated with the community affirming that community ownership and involvement in the project were key to its success. Community events were popular and well attended.

Impact Evaluation

Interviews were conducted and focus group discussions held to identify and gauge the project’s impact and achievement against the specified benchmark outcomes for community development in recovery projects. 15 people participated in this process. The findings are reported as quotations which support a topic statement.

INFORMED COMMUNITY

A community that is informed and aware through provision of timely and accurate information. (EMA Manual Community Development in Recovery From Disaster Vol 3)

Providing information to and consulting with the Virginia community enabled projects and programs to be developed that were responsive to community needs.

Information was provided through a number of strategies, including attendance at gatherings, fliers, focus groups and community newsletters.

“The funding of a community notice board in the main shopping mall and an elevated changeable sign at the primary school has added another information provision strategy that benefits both the school and local community

Comments from parents and others interested in the school have been positive about the installation of the adjustable school sign. It has enabled the school to announce curriculum news, community events and general important happenings around the school”

(Small grant evaluation report)

Whilst the complexity of the Virginia community often made the information giving process difficult, community members reported their satisfaction with the information

process. Community members were particularly supportive of the Virginia Harvest newsletter because there was no previous broad community information provision or communication strategy.

"The Harvest – great for the community..... it improves communication"
(Community member)

"The CDO has helped get the word out. She comes and visits us and tells us information, phones us, organises fliers. She helps with the grapevine"
(Community member)

Translated information was provided to members of linguistically diverse groups either in mass publication or in face to face contact ensuring that people understand the information that was being given.

Additional support and guidance was provided when community members needed support. People were given information and assisted to find solutions to their issues.

"The CDO helps us through the red tape. I can't read the English version, the CDO helps out with forms, letters etc. it is very important"
(Community Member)

ACCESS TO SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Community members and groups have access to appropriate services, facilities and resources. (EMA Manual Community Development in Recovery From Disaster Vol 3)

Members of the community were introduced to local services and encouraged to make use of them. People became more willing to challenge and look for extra support, and the linkages between agencies meant that people's issues could be followed up. Referrals were made and services received. People became more aware of other things happening in their community and have subsequently become involved in activities that provide for their needs.

The introduction of English language classes at the Virginia Horticulture Centre led to the development of an alliance between TAFESA and the VFA which will see these continue into the future.

Virginia is a small town with a number of dedicated community facilities. Many people however do not make use of these facilities e.g. the Community Centre and the Town Institute. During the Imagine Virginia consultative process it became apparent that many people residing in the area did not know of the Community Centre or its location or how to access it. The CDO worked with VRAG to actively promote the centre and its usage to the community. The VCDP project held many events at both the community centre and the institute to ensure that a greater proportion of the community could learn about these facilities and how to access them. This has led to enquiries about bookings of the community centre for community events. The addition of new facilities to this resource will attract more community use over time.

“The facilities in the community centre are greatly improved and will encourage community members to use the centre in the future.”

“The addition of bench seating, tinted windows and tables and chairs has increased the versatility of the community centre, so that it can be used not only as a sporting facility but a function centre for all community groups.”
(Community grants evaluation report)

SENSE OF COMMUNITY SAFETY

A community in which people feel safe in the pursuit of their daily lives. (EMA Manual Community Development in Recovery From Disaster Vol 3)

Trust is an essential element in creating a sense of community safety. Much was done to create this in the community bringing people together to share their common experiences and learn more about each other.

“The CDO has contributed to the coming together of cultures, holding events and inviting people, making people aware and also making people feel welcome”
(Community Member)

Whilst the issue of trust between neighbors has been identified and challenged, the community is aware of many issues that impact on its safety and wellbeing. As indicated by the following respondent:

“We would like to have a permanent CDO – to be here 5 days a week. There is always someone wanting help. There are no footpaths it is very dangerous. The street corners are very dangerous. The council comes along and digs holes for water drainage. It is very dangerous at night as there are no street lights”
(Community Member)

Safety from natural disasters and emergencies is also valued by the community. Through the Virginia Safety in Emergencies Project participants were able to identify issues of major concern to the community including fire, flood and extreme weather. Education and awareness sessions to address these were developed and implemented for the most vulnerable sectors of the community, namely, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and new residents to the community. The community welcomed these initiatives:

“The Flood Safety DVD is good for people coming into the town who don’t know what to do; it will have a huge impact on safety”
(Community Member)

HEALTHY COMMUNITY

A community which lives and promotes healthy lifestyles, through its primary health care system, preventative health measures and environmental health practices. (EMA Manual Community Development in Recovery From Disaster Vol 3)

A healthy community has been described as one which practices ongoing dialogue, generates leadership, shapes its future, embraces diversity and connects people and resources.

The CDO worked to develop these ideals in the Virginia community. By introducing opportunities for both formal and informal conversation by seeking out and nurturing community members who displayed leadership qualities through their participation in the CRG. People were encouraged to embrace and celebrate the diversity of their unique community by attending community events planned to reflect the population of the area.

Respondents to the evaluation process have commented on new life and signs that the community is recapturing its identity as a healthy community:

“Project has brought life to the community, didn’t see that before, activities gave the community life, people are healthier because they got involved”
(Community member)

“The CDO had a very important role to play.....has been able to identify the politics around the place – local, state and community. The community is very complex. The CDO was a pivotal element for new faces to come out and participate in the community. The CDO gave voice to new leaders in carrying the community forward”
(Senior Manager)

PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY LIFE

A community where the development of cooperative partnerships is encouraged and actively promoted. (EMA Manual Community Development in Recovery From Disaster Vol 3)

Participation in community life has many benefits for the individual and the community. Through participation people develop and maintain relationships, make choices and experience differences, learn new skills and gain dignity and respect. Enabling the people’s participation in community life is a key component of a community development program. Encouraging involvement in sporting or other social activities also assists to build a strong cohesive community. Many strategies were employed to develop cohesiveness in the Virginia community including events, outings and special activity days for children.

Respondents to the evaluation surveys reported the following:

“Project helped us to join in activities and events; encouraged different cultures to be involved in these activities, activities were always successful”
(Community Member)

“The project instilled a sense of trust in the community. People were offered encouragement and if something didn’t work encouraged exploring options and persevering. People felt safe with this model”

(Community Member)

“Eighteen months on we notice many differences now when we work with residents. Different cultures work together on the projects identified in the early consultative process of rebuilding following the disaster. They take pride in the community and work towards what is best for Virginia”

(Community Health Nurse)

SENSE OF BELONGING

Pride, care and involvement in the unique, distinct physical, social and cultural characteristics of a community. (EMA Manual Community Development in Recovery From Disaster Vol 3)

A sense of belonging might also simply be described as social capital or the glue that binds a community together. Social capital has been described as being about trust and doing things together, a process which is nourished by conversation and giving people opportunities to participate and contribute so they know they are valued.

An individual can belong to a number of communities that may or may not be geographically based. These communities are defined in a number of ways e.g. by our interests, relevant demographic features as well as by location. Virginia is one community where the mosaic of communities to which people belong is clearly evident. While many reside and work in the area there are others who commute to their farms from their homes outside the area on a daily basis.

Community building was a key element of the VCDP promoting, creating and enhancing a sense of community between the residents and cultural identities of the area.

Respondents to the survey have indicated that a sense of belonging is growing in the Virginia community.

“The flood recovery project has given people a bit more belief in the town”

(Community member)

“I liked the bus trips. They were important because it is important to socialise – good company, meet friends, and go in a group regardless of having a family”

(Community member)

“Groups are now working together for common goals for the benefit of the community”

(Community member)

“Virginia is a good place to live – it is still good. Everyone says hello”

(Community Member)

COMMUNITY COHESION

The capacity of a community to work together with respect for differences among people. (EMA Manual Community Development in Recovery From Disaster Vol 3)

Community cohesion recognises, supports and celebrates diversity. Diversity considered as difference in age, gender, culture and differing abilities. An environment where there is mutual respect and appreciation of the similarities and differences between people can be described as a cohesive community. Immediately following the November 2005 flood the community was described as “fragmented and fractured”. This is not unusual in a post disaster situation as people go about ensuring their own survival.

There was an agreement between service providers and members of the community that something needed to be done to address the situation.

A task of the Community Development Project was to address these issues. The evaluation process would indicate that change has occurred and that community cohesion is now much better than it was before the flood event occurred.

An indication that community cohesion is gaining momentum is demonstrated by the following anecdotes:

“Now we understand each other better than before, barriers to working together are breaking down, involvement in whole of community benefit projects e.g. the playground has helped this”
(Community member)

“It seems to me that cultural groups are coming together more now since the flood”
(Community member)

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Expression of the life and character of a community through elements of tradition and history. (EMA Manual Community Development in Recovery From Disaster Vol 3)

Community identity includes location, history, industry and people. Essentially it is people taking pride in their community acknowledging their past and present history and their community cultural and recreational resources.

The issue of community identity was raised in the Imagine Virginia consultative process. People were proud of their community and wanted to provide further recognition for the area and its contribution to the State of South Australia. They were keen to promote local community pride and interest in the area and attract people to their community.

During the Imagine Virginia process, people described their community as being a good place to live, quiet and with a country atmosphere free of the hassles of city living. They were proud of their community.

The VCDP project activities assisted in raising the profile of the community by fostering a sense of belonging and encouraging people to work together to develop initiatives that would promote the uniqueness of the community e.g. Cinema Under the Stars and the Multicultural Craft and Produce Markets were an attempt to develop local attractions that people could identify with the community of Virginia.

"Maybe the cinema night raised the profile of the community. Many people attended who did not work or live near Virginia"

(Community Member)

However there are many other examples of identity expressed through the life of this community e.g. the annual Vietnamese New Year Festival, various sporting functions and the celebration of cultural traditions by various Virginia groups.

One aspect of this community is that while they share a common interest in promoting the identity of their community they also work to preserve the identity and interests of the number of individual cultural groups in the area, maintaining their heritage and traditions.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Development of a community's economic capacity. (EMA Manual Community Development in Recovery From Disaster Vol 3)

The Virginia Community Development Project contributed in a small way to the development of the community's economic capacity largely through the community grants program and the attraction of additional grant funds to the community.

The injection of funds into the community provided for the upgrade and development of many facilities which will bring long term economic benefits to the community. Examples of this include the upgrade to the Virginia Sporting Bodies Association premises and purchase of resources (tables and chairs, DVD/TV) for the community centre which will increase usage of these facilities.

"The CDO has given a great deal of assistance to groups to attract grant money"

(Community Member)

"I would like to acknowledge an appreciation of the office of recovery for putting resources into recovery. Without the CDO's input the community would have struggled..."

(Community Member)

What worked well?

Reflection on project activity and process was a consistent theme in all governance structure group meetings. The project team at its June and July 2007 meetings spent some time discussing what enabled the project and what challenges it faced. The findings are reported as follows and include some quotes from the stakeholder evaluation interviews.

LEADERSHIP AND SKILLS

Leadership can be as diverse as the people who are engaged in it. Community leadership is about assisting community members by providing the direction and support required to achieve community goals. The CDO's leadership style could be best described as charismatic and empowering, displaying openness, fairness and consistency in dealing with community members. All of the above required patience, non directive leadership, flexibility and a willingness to delegate and surrender or share, where appropriate leadership roles.

The following anecdotes demonstrate these skills:

"Highlighted leaders by coming to meetings, their interest have been recognised. There are both formal and informal leaders. The CDO has been able to nurture those informal leaders building their confidence etc"
(Community member)

"The process that the CDO has used will influence change sustainability. There is a valuing of community effort and confidence that the right focus will bring changes"
(Senior Manager)

"Having a person located in Virginia – working for the community makes it easy to keep going in the direction that is in the best interest of the general community"
(Community Member)

"People have responded really well to the CDO, giving voice to local projects, visions and empowering people. The CDO has been able to give community members a 'role as their future unrolls'"
(Community Member)

"The CDO has remained relatively distant from power groups, political interests and strong personalities. The CDO has kept the community in the fore ground of everything"
(Senior Manager)

MANAGEMENT SUPPORT FOR THE DIVERSE WAYS OF WORKING TO ACCESS THE COMMUNITY

From the outset management noted that there was no specific template for the VCDP, only guiding principles. There was acknowledgement that community development and recovery were a relatively new combination. Management together with the project steering committee was supportive and challenging of the projects methodology, providing opportunities for both discussion and reflection. Commitment and flexibility to achieving the project's outcomes were clearly evident.

COMMUNITY GRANTS FUND TO SUPPORT LOCAL PROJECTS

The community grants fund established early in the project's development provided community members with the opportunity to get involved in community projects.

There were many benefits to this program:

- it served as a foundation to building the capacity of local groups to acquire grants from external sources
- it acquired for the community resources and facilities that would not be funded from main stream funding programs
- it inspired community project ownership and vision
- it enabled participants to make a short time commitment to a time limited project
- it linked recipients to other avenues of funding support for their project.

Grant recipients reported the following:

'Additional funds provided by the approval of the grant, as club funds provided insufficient funds to complete the project

The grant was the biggest financial help we had received and helped us to purchase exactly what was required

We are most grateful for the opportunity to extend the teaching and learning of the Greek language'

Many of the grant recipients became involved with broader community activities.

EMPLOYMENT OF A VIETNAMESE SPEAKING PROJECT ASSISTANT

Language is a known barrier to access to services and participation in community life.

Community development is dependent on building trusting relationships and rapport with the local community. Of the Virginia population, 22.55% of the population is Vietnamese speaking. The November 2005 floods exposed a number of community issues in relation to natural disaster awareness response and recovery. Engaging a project assistant who was fluent with the Vietnamese language was beneficial to the project, enabling the

participation of the Vietnamese community in the community development process.

Members of other cultural groups, for example, the Cambodian community were encouraged by their Vietnamese neighbors to participate in the project's activities despite the language barriers. The CDO's knowledge of the Italian language assisted the participation of older people from this group.

LEADERS OF DIFFERENT CULTURES COMING TOGETHER FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE COMMUNITY

It would appear that prior to the November 2005 flood there were very few opportunities for leaders from the different cultural groups to come together to learn about each other and work together for the benefit of the community. Whilst some gains have been made in this area, there is still much to be done. In the Vietnamese culture it seems that participation is achieved by personal invitation, or this is how it occurred in the VCDP. Finding ways to include and respect community leaders for what they could contribute to the project also assisted in developing cross cultural working.

Creating further opportunities for people to work together and across cultures will contribute to greater cohesion in the future.

BUILDING ON EXISTING NETWORKS

Building on existing networks was extremely important in the Virginia community. Being a small community it seemed most people knew someone else or how to access a certain group or organisation. Tapping into these existing networks enabled the CDO to learn about different facets of the local community from the people who know best, the locals themselves. In terms of gaining support for the project and its activities, building on existing networks helped collaborative working and networking.

Working with existing networks has led to a more informed community and sustainability for some of the smaller project initiatives, such as the Cinema under the Stars program.

Perhaps the more important networking contribution however has been the creation of ties among people from different ethnic backgrounds and ties between the community and people in positions of influence e.g. the VFA and the City of Playford.

Lessons Learnt

There are many lessons to be learnt from the Virginia Community Development Project which confirm or add to the existing body of knowledge and experience in developing effective post disaster community development activities.

The following were highlighted by respondents during the evaluation process.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COOPERATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Collaboration and cooperation between agencies and community groups enabled more to be done with the time available. It also developed new networks and new possibilities for the community itself. Stronger partnerships were formed between agencies and cultural groups in the area. This enabled the growth of both bridging and linking social capital which will contribute to the resilience capacity of the community.

“Regular meetings of various committees committed to the process of strengthening this community”
(Senior Manager)

The project team identified that the community needed the support of other agencies, particularly those it is likely to come in contact with on a regular basis. Agencies also needed to understand the community and support its vision to achieve a successful outcome.

THE IMPACT OF TIME

Time was a significant factor in developing the project. Time was required to develop an understanding of the community and to develop a relationship with it. Once the community was engaged, time was required to build capacity at both a community, group or organisational level.

Many references were made by the community about the project’s time frame and the benefits of having a designated CDO in the area:

“The two year notional time frame has been set in terms of the recovery period. We could of done with a CDO for at least half time ongoing”
(Community Member)

“The intensive input over a short period of time 2 years restricts the potential development that could happen if the position was ongoing”
(Community members)

“It provides the dedicated time to do the leg work. CDO has done a great job. If we were to push for someone – having someone dedicated to doing this would bring the town forward”
(Community Members)

“We would like a CDO – perhaps 2.5 days per week – someone with good people skills, good at drawing people in – getting involved. Being able to encourage and promote what is happening in a positive light”
(Community Members)

We learnt that once the community was exposed to external assistance they would develop some confidence to move forward on their own. It was important for the CDO to continually express confidence in the community’s ability to move forward.

We learnt the importance of being honest about the duration of the project, and the need to prepare exit strategies that would ensure sustainability for community driven programs.

THE FLEXIBILITY TO BE ABLE TO WORK WITH A COMMUNITY TO REALISE ITS ASPIRATIONS

As previously stated community development comes with no prescribed plan and the processes employed to achieve outcomes will be different and dependent on the community’s willingness to become engaged in the development and planning of activities. The VCDP began with the people’s interests and engaged people in a visioning process for the future.

Following an assets based approach to community development which focused on strengths, skills and abilities enabled the community to work towards its aspirations. We learnt that bringing people together resulted in the development of achievable tasks, establishing a sense power in the community which led to the tackling of larger projects.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Adopting a whole of community approach with the flexibility to work with people’s interests helped to ensure that community members were able to participate in activities that interested them. This assisted with strengthening social interactions between age groups and across cultures by bringing people together in a variety of non threatening environments, helping them to talk to each other and interact more in their everyday lives.

“I have been here 47 years in Virginia and never had any bus trips to no where until the CDO came along”
(Community member)

RE-ENFORCEMENT OF EFFORT AND DEVELOPMENT

A significant contributor to the ongoing success of the community development project was the public recognition of community participation through the presentation of certificates. Premier’s Volunteer Recognition Certificates were presented on a number of occasions, firstly at the first anniversary event acknowledging the contribution of local residents to the response effort; secondly at a fundraising event for the playground organised by the VFA; and thirdly at the opening of the Maria Santissima di Crochi shed

which was partly funded by the project. State Government Ministers (Hon Trish White, Minister Jay Weatherill and Minister Jennifer Rankine) were present at this event which indicated to the community that their efforts were well received.

Certificates were also organised for the participants of the English Language course. The certificates were provided to acknowledge the time and effort required by participants to include the English classes in their horticultural production diaries.

Project challenges included working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Respecting people's culture and communicating where possible in their language, using existing networks and meeting with them in an environment they were accustomed to, was a particular challenge. The diversity of groups meant that a number of strategies had to be used to meet them.

These included:

- Employing a Vietnamese speaking project officer
- Finding community champions with specific language skills
- Developing and producing information and materials in a variety of different languages Vietnamese, Khmer, Greek and Italian
- Working with an inclusive mentality.

The number of activities generated through the community visioning process presented a challenge in prioritising and working within a restricted 2 year time frame. These were met by;

- Working with community interest and bringing one large project to fruition
- The community expressed a desire to have something visible at the conclusion of the project
- Engaging the support and contribution of other agency staff
- Acknowledging success.

Ensuring sustainability of community activity presented another challenge, the outcomes of which were not evident at the close of the project. However there was evidence that some programs would be continued by the community through the VRAG and that members of the VRAG were keen to explore options for future activity.

To ensure community development activity, VRAG would:

- Look for a way forward leading to the amalgamation of the VRAG and the project CRG into one body
- Develop skills in the areas of grant seeking, grant reporting and risk management for community groups
- Reflect on what had been and celebrating publicly the community's achievements
- Link into existing community structures.

DISCUSSION

Recovery is described as a complex social and developmental process, recognising that where a community has experienced a significant emergency or disaster there is a need to supplement the personal, family and community structures which have been disrupted.

Recovery activities seek to empower individuals and communities by providing developmental opportunities for the community through representative, collaborative and cooperative processes which lead to increased social resilience and the minimisation of similar consequences in the event of another disaster.

Community development in recovery seeks to use the “window of opportunity” following a disaster for adaptive change which will assist to develop a resilient community with a high level of preparedness for the future.

Whilst outcomes will differ between events and communities, successful community development activities in a disaster recovery context address sustainability, social justice, economic, environmental and equity issues.

Community Development in Recovery from Disaster programs “are relevant to the affected community and evolve through a process of partnership, recognising community expertise and challenging pre-existing inequities so that individual and community ownership of the process and ultimately a successful recovery process is assured.” 1. (EMA Manual Series 3 pg3)

Community development practitioners facilitate the participation of people in this process enabling connections to be made between communities and with the development of wider policies and programs.

Community engagement is a key strategy in this process involving a series of activities appropriate to the decisions being made and includes information, consultation, collaborative action and ultimately community empowerment.

The standard definition of community is the people who live in a particular place or region and usually linked by some common interest. In reality communities are complex: they can be a group of people linked together by a shared location, experience or function. Everyone belongs to one or more forms of community whether it is a family community, religious community, sporting community, workplace community, residential community or rural district community. These elements were all evident in the Virginia community. Community is enhanced when there is an interaction of people within and across different communities within a community. The VCDP worked with the community to increase interaction of people within and across different communities within one broad community.

A disaster such as the November 2005 Gawler River Floods brings some temporary changes to a community – changes that can create opportunities to build back in a better way. In developing the project it was important to combine best practice in community development with best practice in recovery theory and the development of community resilience.

The Virginia Community Development Project can be seen as successful because it worked with the local community of Virginia to create programs and initiatives that would have both immediate and lasting impacts.

Contributors to the project's success included;

- Being mindful of, working with and supporting the diversity of the community to reduce fragmentation and develop stronger networks between cultural entities and community groups
- Developing community confidence in the principles of community development so that they became active participants in all aspects of the project
- Recognising local expertise and knowledge
- Developing partnerships between local groups and organisations including local government
- Developing and formalising governance structures to ensure the principles of community participation and local empowerment were adhered to.

Like community development, good governance is also based on principles of participation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness and equality. Developing a tier of governance structures for the VCDP resulted in the effective and efficient implementation and administration of project activities.

Working with the Virginia community and engaging them in the community development process enabled the development of an active role and ownership in decisions that were made for and on behalf of the community. Programs and initiatives were created that would have both immediate and lasting impacts in the community, e.g. the community newsletter, the markets and improvements to the community centre and local playground facilities.

An enhanced future for the community was also facilitated by being mindful of, working with and supporting the diversity of the community to reduce fragmentation and developing stronger networks between cultural entities and community groups.

The VCDP became a strong advocate for community infrastructure change assisting locals to bring their needs to the attention of local government and other funding bodies. This resulted in plans for the development of new facilities in the community, e.g. the development of new playground facilities in the town and the development of a Vietnamese Cultural Centre.

The project resulted in the empowerment of new and emerging community leaders by working with local residents to implement small projects that helped unify the community across cultures e.g. Virginia Be Active program, Harmony Day celebrations, and Cinema Under the Stars. Participants in these activities acquired new knowledge and acquired or developed new skills.

Engaging people in the more general aspects of the VCDP resulted in a broad cross

section of community participation in the Virginia Safety in Emergencies Project funded through the Australian Government Working Together to Manage Emergencies fund.

This initiative recognises the need to develop self reliance at both the community and local government level in order to enhance community safety. The Australian Government considers engaging local communities in emergency management and increasing involvement and awareness at a grass roots level as a critical step in improving preparedness. This philosophy contributed to the development of the Virginia Safety in Emergencies Project.

The Virginia Safety in Emergencies Project was aimed at the residents of Virginia with the particular vulnerabilities of culturally and linguistically diverse communities taken into account. A particular emphasis was made to engage the participation of the Vietnamese community as they had been identified as the most vulnerable group during the Nov 2005 flood event. 42 Vietnamese speaking people, approximately 17.5% of the Vietnamese population of Virginia participated in the risk identification process with approximately 8% of the population participating in education and awareness sessions about the identified sources of risk.

Mechanisms were developed for cross cultural networking and exchange of information including the employment of a Vietnamese speaking project officer, engagement of the Vietnamese Farmers' Association, translation of project information into Vietnamese, engagement of the Vietnamese English as Second Language Class and other community groups in the process.

The project contributed to the improvement of community safety in the emergency management environment in the following ways:

- Engaging the community in understanding the nature of the emergency risk management process
- Enabling community members to identify the sources of risk
- Addressing community identified risks through education and awareness strategies
- Developing a multilingual resource
- Engaging local government and emergency service providers in conversation with local community members
- Influencing local government to pursue further emergency risk management projects within the council area.

The post disaster and response capacity of the community have been enhanced through education and awareness activities, including activities involving emergency service personnel and volunteers.

Involvement of the project steering committee in the project planning process proved to be an important strategy in ensuring key stakeholder and community issues were addressed. The steering committee worked with the project officers to adapt the AS/NZS 4360 emergency risk management process to suit the Virginia community with a

particular focus on raising an awareness of risks to the community and preparedness for future events.

Community development principles were also incorporated into this project ensuring that as it evolved it would be responsive to community concerns.

A communication plan was developed which included use of the local community newsletter, information to post office letter boxes and minutes of meetings as the key strategies. Whilst these were in part successful, the most successful communication strategy proved to be the use of informal community networks which utilised word of mouth as the information transfer vehicle. The Adelaide Weekly Vietnamese Newspaper was also used. The most successful communication strategy in the Vietnamese community was what is commonly called the "telephone tree", neighbor passing message to neighbor.

Partnerships were created by bringing people and agencies to work together in collaboration in response to community needs and aspirations.

Capacity building became a two way process as agencies and community members learnt more about each other's characteristics and worked together to strengthen community and build resilience.

The VCDP was innovative in that it combined recovery activities with future preparedness extending the emergency risk management process to grass roots community participation including capacity building and the participation of non English speaking communities.

As a result the community believes that the VCDP represented their voice and that they were being listened to in a variety of forums.

It became evident that working with the Virginia community and engaging them in the community development process enabled the development of an active role and ownership in decisions that were made for and on behalf of the community.

From the smallest to the largest initiative the Virginia Community Development Project was successful by involving the public, coordinating with other agencies and groups in the area, identifying opportunities for change, setting goals, planning for action, implementing, evaluating and revising strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered as a guide to community development leaders in the implementation of future community development in recovery projects:

- The community development process may commence some weeks after the initial response and recovery phase. Find out what happened during this period, who was involved and how they and the community were affected.
- Develop a working relationship with agencies already working in the area as this will be the gateway to the community.
- Identify community leaders, community concerns and aspirations early to establish a broad knowledge of the community so that the community development process will be about people defining their needs, in order to have them met.
- Strengthen the social interactions within the community, bring people together and help them to communicate with each other in a way that can lead to genuine dialogue, understanding and community action.
- Maximise people's choices in order to increase their power over decisions involving their personal futures by starting where they are and organising around what interests them.
- Create opportunity for the stimulation of community activity through the development of a community grants program that is based on a matching fund proposition and delegate the administration of the community grants program to a local committee.
- Provide whatever technical expertise and support may be necessary to assist people to make decisions about their priorities and create opportunities for people to acquire the skills necessary to carry their community forward.
- Advocate for community organisations that represent Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities so that they can effectively achieve their mission.
- The Virginia Safety in Emergencies Project raised community awareness about flood safety and preparedness. It created an opportunity for the State Emergency Service and the Vietnamese Farmers' Association to provide continuing education and training for the local Vietnamese community. It is recommended that the SES continue to develop this alliance.
- Facilitate linkages between and across community organisations to create collaborative and cooperative working relationships.
- Facilitate linkages between community organisations and government agencies who are in a position to value add to the work community organisations undertake
- Develop structures so people become more dependent on each other to get things done
- Create opportunities to publicly acknowledge and value the contribution each person makes

CONCLUSION

In the 21st Century disasters and emergencies appear to be more common place. Disasters - natural, structural and manmade including acts of terrorism - are increasing the potential for loss of life and damage to physical and environmental structures and affecting economic and community well being.

In this climate the field of emergency management is developing greater sophistication in an effort to minimise the damage to life and property that results from these events. Community participation is now actively encouraged in all aspects of the emergency management planning process.

Successful community involvement however, takes a lot of time and effort, particularly in building trust between communities and outsiders.

'Community Development in Recovery' projects will be as unique as the events and the communities impacted by them. If response and recovery are to be seamless activities then processes need to be developed that will enable community development projects to be implemented quickly.

Community development practitioners skilled in their field would benefit greatly by understanding the emergency management process and the social and psychological impacts of a disaster on communities before they become involved in a disaster recovery program.

Consideration could be given to developing the emergency management knowledge and skills of local community development workers in high risk areas when there is no event so as to develop a body of expertise that can be readily called upon when required. This would need to be an ongoing activity, dedicated to developing a body of expertise around the State of South Australia ensuring that there was preparedness within state, local and non government organisations to undertake this work.

Identifying a local person with community development skills will also have benefits as the person will have established networks both at a community and organisational level that will enhance the more rapid development of community development processes and place the community at another level of preparedness.

In identifying high risk areas consideration needs to be given to vulnerable communities in those areas and how their participation will be developed to enable a holistic community approach to disaster recovery.

Community development processes inevitably facilitate community activities which are embraced and enacted on by the community. Inevitably a disaster event is likely to occur at some time in the future in the Virginia community. Whilst there have been physical mitigation works undertaken to reduce the impacts of such a disaster, the importance of community building activities in responding to and recovering from a flood event should not be underestimated.

Whilst it is difficult to engage mainstream communities in the emergency risk management process, of which recovery is a part, the process of engaging culturally and linguistically diverse communities brings further challenges. Community capacity building through education and skill development are important strategies and need to be viewed as long term rather than short term activities in disaster prone communities.

Key stakeholder participation along with local community participation is also a significant challenge. Professionals working in the field are at risk of developing a 'we know best' mentality and can be threatened by emergent community groups who also wish to understand and be part of the Emergency Risk Management process.

The Gawler River Flood Recovery Virginia Community Development Project worked with a community at a particular point in time. The benefits of the project have been acknowledged by local people and agencies who have been involved. Over time the community will change, people will come and go, leaders will emerge and change and the community development process will undoubtedly be required again.

Reference Sources

The following references support the content of this report.

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Communities, Manual 44
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Creating Community Alternatives – Vision, Analysis and Practice Jim Ife
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Neighbour Power Building Community the Seattle Way Jim Diers
University of Washington Press 2006

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Appendices

Appendices are provided on CD accompanying this report:

- Project Plan
- Virginia Safety in Emergencies Report
- Imagine Virginia in Recovery Consultation Report
- Media articles
- Community Grants Process and Application Form
- Evaluation Questionnaires

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