

### **MAKING SENSE OF PARTNERSHIPS: A STUDY OF POLICE AND PUBLIC HOUSING DEPARTMENT COLLABORATION FOR TACKLING DRUG AND RELATED PROBLEMS ON PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES.**

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**Jacobs, Burke, Green, Siggers, Mason, & Barclay (2007).**

Plain English summary and implications for police prepared by Roger Nicholas.

#### **Methodology**

The researchers examined partnerships between police and housing agencies which were established to tackle problems associated with illicit drug activity and anti-social behaviour (ASB) on three public housing estates. The estates were in East Devonport (Tasmania), Girrawheen (Western Australia) and Collingwood (Victoria). The project was conducted in two stages. The first involved the initiation of meetings between police and housing departments in order for them to agree to a memorandum of understanding on partnership protocols. The second stage reported on existing and new activities undertaken by both departments over a twelve month period. This stage involved participant observation, secondary data collection and qualitative interviews with key personnel.

#### **Key findings:**

- While police and housing departments share a common concern about illicit drug-related activities, in reality, initiating partnerships to address these problems is complex and challenging.
- To initiate these partnerships, there has to be a shared understanding of the problems that require attention, as well as agreement about the type of interventions that are required.
- The major barriers to the establishment of partnerships are: bureaucratic impediments; having overly ambitious or unrealistic targets; a high turnover of participants; having an insufficient budget allocated for program implementation; lack of commitment from senior officers; and differences between organisations as far as philosophies and structures are concerned.
- For partnerships to be sustained: they need to involve highly motivated and proactive staff; have realistic expectations and targets; and have a budget to meet the required outcomes and commitment from senior staff.
- Partnerships that are imposed from the outside are less likely to be effective.
- Partnerships can create networking opportunities and cooperation, establish rapport, and lead to new and imaginative approaches to long standing problems.
- It is important to be mindful of the differing philosophies that housing and policing organisations bring to these partnerships.

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## **Implications for police**

Interagency partnerships cannot be easily imposed on front line staff.

Before establishing partnerships it is important to have a convincing internal rationale as to why the partnership is required. This stems from the additional work that is associated with establishing and maintaining these partnerships.

Interagency partnerships that are formed to address difficult issues require an input from people with a high level of skill. They also need an ongoing commitment from high level staff.

A useful strategy to initiate partnership working is to deploy staff who can act as policy champions. These staff can play a vital role in generating enthusiasm and energy among their colleagues.

Police (and other agencies involved in these partnerships) have a range of learning needs concerning some of the issues and principles that underpin successful partnerships. These learning needs include problem solving, risk assessment and networking.

There is a pressing need to embed shared knowledge within organisations to address problems arising from staff turn-over.

Policing and housing partnerships are made easier and potentially more effective if they are paralleled by related social and resident partnerships which address some of the broader causes of drug misuse and crime.

A full copy of this report is available on the NDLERF website at [www.ndlerf.gov.au](http://www.ndlerf.gov.au).

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