



## 2. ACCESSIBILITY

---

**POLICY NO:**

**2.2**

**POLICY TITLE: COMMUNITY WELLBEING**

**FILE NO:** 4695

**ADOPTED:** 23 June 2003

**MINUTE NO:** 070/03

**PREVIOUS POLICY** ACCESS & EQUITY

**ADOPTED:** 23/10/95

**MINUTE:** 393/95

---

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

**SEE OVER PAGE.**

# CAMDEN COUNCIL COMMUNITY WELLBEING POLICY

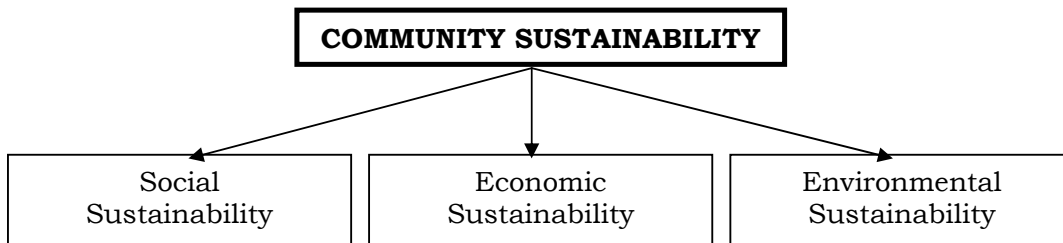
## INTRODUCTION

Camden Council is committed to enhancing and building the well being of its community, and acknowledges that this is vital for long term sustainability.

Sustainability is about ensuring quality of life both now and in the future.

A sustainable community is a balanced one. A sustainable community resembles a living system in which all elements are interdependent and draw strength from one another.

There are three key elements that are crucial to the overall sustainability of a community that are interrelated and must be balanced to achieve overall sustainability.



A sustainable community seeks a better quality of life for everyone – now and in the future – by creating supportive communities where there are adequate work, health and recreational opportunities, by protecting and enhancing the environment and by managing local resources to improve economic prosperity.

Community sustainability – Camden’s sustainability – is about making life better and making sure it stays that way.

Council’s aim is to foster and advance social sustainability (community wellbeing) in the Camden Local Government Area by developing and promoting the following interrelated **principles that underpin community well being**:

1. **Social justice** – social justice is the achievement of equal access to power, resources, information, opportunities, participation, choices and outcomes.
2. **Social capital** – social capital is "community connectedness," the extent to which people are involved with other people in social networks and relationships that are characterised by norms of trust and reciprocity, and lead to mutually beneficial outcomes.
3. **Democratic governance** – good local governance exists where there is a strong, democratically elected and pro-active council, dedicated to the interests and progress of the community.
4. **Active citizenship and participation** – active citizenship is about making contributions to the community. It is about being informed, participating, creating ownership of community issues, safety and security, and providing local solutions to local issues.

Further, Council acknowledges that there are a number of key components that influence improvements in the wellbeing of the community, and are key responsibilities of local government. These are:

- Arts and cultural development
- Community safety
- Economic development
- Environmental sustainability
- Housing
- Recreation and leisure
- Public and environmental health

In its pursuit of overall sustainability for the community of the Camden local government area, Council aims to appropriately plan for and develop each of these components as part of its policy and practice.

## PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY WELLBEING

### 1. SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice in terms of equal access to power and resources, equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes, is influenced by and dependent upon society acknowledging and adhering to a range of interrelated rights. These political, legal, civil, industrial, economic, cultural and environmental rights are the entitlement of all people.<sup>ii</sup>

#### **Equity**

Social justice is fairness in the distribution of resources, particularly for those most in need, and a more inclusive society, which is promoted through recognising diversity as strength and breaking down barriers which prevent access to services.

#### **Rights**

Social justice is greater equality of rights and accountability for decision-makers.

#### **Access**

Social justice is equal access for all people to the economic resources, services and rights essential to improving quality of life.

#### **Participation**

Social justice is the fullest opportunity to genuinely participate in the community and be consulted on decisions.

#### **Community Ownership**

Social justice is a sense of ownership and intrinsic belonging, having a valued and central place in the community and opportunities available within the community – concepts of inclusion and greater empowerment.

#### **Empowerment**

Social justice is being empowered, which is a process that respects, values and enhances the ability for people to have control of their lives. It is a process that promotes in people an opportunity to meet their needs and aspirations by being self-aware and informed, takes advantage of their skills, experience and potential, and is self-directed.

## **Quality Outcomes**

Social justice is receiving a level of outcome or service that is meaningful and valuable to all people. The experience results from an opportunity to meet the expectations and needs of all members of the community and are consistent and of similar standard across the diversity present in a community.

## **2. SOCIAL CAPITAL**

Social capital is the bond of trust and relationship that communities build and renew when people interact with each other in families, work places, neighbourhoods, and a range of informal and formal meeting places and situations. These relationships are characterised by norms of trust and reciprocity, and lead to mutually beneficial outcomes.

Social capital is seen as one of the essential ingredients of sustainable communities, as it facilitates regional growth and enables community renewal.

Where there are high levels of social capital in a community people will:

- Feel they are part of the community;
- Feel useful and be able to make a real contribution to the community;
- Participate in local community networks and organisations;
- Pull together for the common good in during times of crisis, such as bush fires;
- Welcome strangers; and
- All help out with something without one person doing everything.<sup>iii</sup>

There are a number of key elements of social capital - there are the elements that are about participation and connections in the community and those that are the building blocks from which social capital can be developed.

### **Participation and Connections:**

1. Participation in the life of the local community, such as volunteering, attendance at community events, membership of sports clubs, and being involved in community action.
2. Neighbourhood connections, such as knowing people in the local area, and being able to ask neighbours for assistance.
3. Family and friends connections, such as eating outside the home with friends/family, talking to friends, seeking support from friends/family.
4. Work connections, such as feeling part of a team at work, and feeling part of the local geographic community at work.

### **Building Blocks:**

5. Proactivity in a social context, such as picking up rubbish in a public place, obtaining the information needed for decision-making, and seeking mediation to settle disputes with neighbours.
6. Feelings of trust and safety, such as safety in the local area at night, ability to trust most others, and feeling that the local community is "home".
7. Tolerance of diversity, such as feeling that multiculturalism is a good thing for the local community and enjoying living among people from different cultural backgrounds.
8. Value of life, such as feelings of value as a person in the community and satisfaction with what life has meant.

### **3. DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE**

Good local governance exists where a strong, democratically elected and pro-active council, dedicated to the interests and progress of the community. Good governance is marked by the following characteristics:<sup>iv</sup>

#### **Leadership and Advocacy**

Leads, inspires, responds to, effectively represents and acts as advocate for the community, engendering its active interest, support and participation.

#### **Is Understanding and Responsive**

Understands the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the municipality and acts effectively to turn them into community advantage.

#### **Is Consultative and Visionary**

In consultation with the community, develops a clear and shared sense of direction.

#### **Is Outcomes-Focussed**

A focus on outcomes desired by and for the community and provides the strategies, funds and services to achieve them.

#### **Is Well Administered**

Backed by an effective administration, works in partnership with the community, business, voluntary organisations and other spheres of government for these purposes.

#### **Constantly Reviews Services**

Reviews objectives, policies and programs in the lights of the experience and views of the community.

#### **Strives For Excellence**

Continuously monitors performance of all aspects of the organisation, its projects and personnel, and the levels of achievement of objectives and community satisfaction.

#### **Is Transparent and Accountable**

At all times is open with and fully accountable to the community.

### **4. ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP**

An active citizen is someone who not only believes in the concept of a democratic society but is also willing and able to translate that belief into action. A community based on active citizenship and participation takes the project of shaping the future into their own hands.

Active citizenship and participation reflects a commitment to one's chosen community, and this supports the creation of knowledge, responsibility, common identity and shared culture.

Active citizenship involves two factors - **being informed and being involved**.

People's ability to be informed and be involved relies on there being a number of important conditions in the community:

#### **Social inclusion and cohesion**

The extent to which individuals and groups feel a sense of attachment to the societies and communities in which they are a part, and feel that they have a stake in the future of the community.

#### **Access to information, knowledge and learning**

The extent to which people are able to access the necessary information and knowledge they need to take action, and do so with confidence.

**Equality of access and opportunity**

The extent to which all people have equal access to the necessary knowledge, information, resources, networks, support and decision-making.

**Democratic and participatory governance**

The extent to which government at all levels encourages and values the active involvement of citizens in decision-making, policy development, strategic planning, program design and funding priorities.

**Opportunities to participate in community life**

The extent to which individuals and groups are able to participate in the life of the community, both formally (eg. in decision-making) and informally (eg. in community events).

<b>POLICY STATEMENT</b>
-------------------------

**Camden Council will lead the community in promoting and achieving well being in the Camden community.**

Specifically, Council will do this by:

- Ensuring the provision of all its goods, services and facilities are accessible to all members of the community.
- Removing, as far as possible, all practices that result in discrimination against any member of the community.
- Recognising and identifying that there is a wide range of needs within the community and advocating on behalf of the community to secure services, programs and facilities that meet local needs.
- Undertaking community consultation processes using a wide variety of methods to ensure that all members of the community are consulted appropriately and equally in a consistent and transparent manner.
- Offering a wide range of opportunities for the community to contribute effectively to Council decision-making, and being informed by community feedback when making decisions.
- Providing opportunities and support for the community to come together and build networks, both at a local neighbourhood and whole of community level.
- Developing a vibrant and culturally thriving community life that encourages maximum participation in and ownership of activities and events.
- Developing and supporting initiatives that celebrate difference within the community and foster greater acceptance and valuing of this difference, including cultural diversity, lifestyle choices and generational gaps.
- Providing professional advice to the community, government, non-government and business organisations, where appropriate, to assist in their activities and decision making.
- Providing high quality and accessible information to the community, including all aspects of Council's structure and function.

- Designing and building open space and community facilities that encourage interaction and wide use within the community by being safe, friendly, vibrant and functional for a wide range of uses.
- Encouraging the community to accept responsibility for issues affecting the local area, and enhancing participation by all members of the community in problem solving and decision-making.
- Striving to implement best practice in all aspects of Council's structure and function.
- Ensuring that all Council policies and practices are congruent with and responsive to the needs of both the community and Council.
- Developing a wide range of partnerships with government, business, community groups and individuals to maximise the use of resources and opportunities to achieve sustainable community outcomes.
- Facilitating and participating in innovative programs and initiatives.
- Seeking funding opportunities to enhance local services and programs and develop new initiatives.
- Encouraging and supporting developments that promote and enhance community wellbeing, inclusion and cohesion.
- Designing and maintaining the built environment in ways that promote and enhance the quality of life of the community, and have particular regard for community safety, accessibility and the health of the community.
- Careful planning and use of all funding, such as development contribution (S94) funding, to develop programs, facilities and services that improve wellbeing in the Camden LGA, particularly in new release areas.

---

<sup>i</sup> Wills, J. (2001) *Just, Vibrant and Sustainable Communities: A Framework for Progressing and Measuring Community Wellbeing*. Local Government Community Services Association of Australia, Townsville.

<sup>ii</sup> Atkins, C and McCaughey, J. (1999) *Social Justice Report Card – Women: Balancing Social Justice with Economic Efficiency*. People Together Project, Victoria.

<sup>iii</sup> Bullen, P and Onyx, J (1999) *Social Capital: Family Support Services and Neighbourhood and Community Centres in NSW*. Management Alternatives, Coogee.

<sup>iv</sup> Hunt, A et al (1999) *Doing It Ourselves: Showing the Way*. Final Report of the Good Governance Panel. Victorian Local Governance Association, Melbourne.