

Mental Wellbeing Impact Assessment: a case study

Greenway

Wellbeing Centre for public housing residents

The Greenway complex in Kirribilli is the oldest and one of the largest public housing estates in NSW. With a diverse population of 360 residents who between them speak about 29 languages “it’s like a little city of its own and it’s a very interesting place to live”, says Bryce Gunn, the president of the Greenway Tenants Group. Most of the people who live at Greenway are over 60 - the oldest is 108 - and many are frail, with complex needs. Mental health issues are commonplace.

“There are a lot of good, decent people here and, as a housing commission estate, I think Greenway is probably one of the best,” says Terry Kemp, also a resident. “But of the 360 people, we only see about a third. So there are more than 200 people we are not seeing, they are reclusive, which is a real concern of mine. Loneliness and depression, those things are real issues here. We need help with that.”

“To me, wellbeing means feeling safe, feeling as though somebody cares, feeling as though you are looked after. And I want to see everybody getting a bit of that.”

Terry Kemp

Greenway”. They organise social barbecues and market days, raise money to improve the facilities, pack and deliver OzHarvest food to about 60 residents and lobby for better maintenance of the property. They have recently transformed the unloved “dust bowl” at the centre of the estate into a well-kept garden, complete with lawn, furniture, flowers and an elegant sandstone retaining wall

Empowerment and self-sufficiency are important to the small group of residents who, alongside Bryce, work as volunteers to “improve the welfare and wellbeing of the residents of

which was constructed by a resident. It’s now a well used and cared for part of Greenway.

The group’s prize project, however, is its Wellbeing Centre, an onsite resource for which they have been lobbying for some time. Aimed at meeting the priority needs of Greenway’s residents, as described by the residents themselves, the centre will employ two service co-ordinators and a Registered Nurse who will play a key role, arranging for the provision of simple, non-invasive health services onsite or helping to determine next steps. Counselling services are also planned and there are hopes the centre will both improve wellbeing and result in fewer ambulance call-outs. Its launch is imminent.



Bryce Gunn and Terry Kemp, Greenway residents

Bryce and Terry will particularly welcome support around mental health issues.

“Neither Terry nor I are trained in any way whatsoever to help people who have mental health issues. We see it, but we can do nothing. We see people deteriorating, but we can do nothing,” says Bryce. “It’s agonising sometimes. There is a need here for a trained person who can keep an

eye on people, recognise deterioration and step forward with advice and suggestions.”

A number of government organisations, key among them NSW Family and Community Services (FACS), are collaborating with the Greenway Tenants Group to bring its Wellbeing Centre to life. Having recently been trained in the use of the Mental Wellbeing Impact Assessment (MWIA) toolkit, FACS has taken the opportunity to trial it on the Greenway proposal. Bryce, Terry and a number of other Greenway residents took part in the stakeholder workshop.

FACS staff found the assessment enlightening, credible and useful as a framework for analysis.

“The MWIA methodology breaks down the fuzzy policy goal of improved ‘wellbeing’ into something we can talk about in terms of its component parts,” said one training participant. “It provided a structured approach which focused attention on key issues and concepts rather than an assumption or personal opinion approach ... the tool also assisted in streamlining the strategic direction of the project.”

Some FACS staff noted that what they presumed a group of older, disadvantaged people would want onsite was not in fact what Greenway’s residents wanted. Meals on Wheels services, for example, were not a priority. Medical and counselling services were.

The literature review, FACS reports, provided important information about formal structures and staffing levels for the Wellbeing Centre while the stakeholder workshop also encouraged Greenway residents to think more about what wellbeing means to them.

“To me, wellbeing means feeling safe, feeling as though somebody cares, feeling as though you are looked after. And I want to see everybody getting a bit of that. That’s what we are working on,” says Terry.

Another FACS staff member said “I think it is important that the MWIA is evidence based so the recommendations are taken more seriously by funding sources.”

Terry would certainly agree.

“The wellbeing impact statement really confirmed what a lot of us knew about what was going on at Greenway. I think the most important thing is that it showed the powers that be in government what is going on. Those people don’t know because they’re not here on a daily basis. Now, as a result of the statement, everybody has taken the research on board, there is documented evidence. Before it was just hearsay.

“If we had not had the impact assessment, I don’t think we would be sitting here now. It has helped bring the situation to a head. It has got the story across and we now have support,” he says.



This fact sheet has been produced by the Wellbeing Collaborative. Find out more about wellbeing and how it can be applied to your work.



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