

## **ACCREDITATION FROM A COMMUNITY HOUSING PROVIDERS PERSPECTIVE**

### **BY SHOALHAVEN COMMUNITY HOUSING SCHEME**

#### ***About Shoalhaven Community Housing Scheme***

- Non-profit to provide affordable appropriate housing to persons on low to moderate income
- Allocated on the basis of need
- Incorporated as a public company September 1983 - 30 properties
- Selected for growth in 1995
- Currently 330 properties under 5 programs
- Includes 100 houses transferred from Department of Housing in housing
- Manages stock on estates
- Services cover three major town centres
- Increasing population with little social housing
- Low median annual income with considerable reliance on government benefits.
- 4% population Aboriginal

#### ***STANDARDS — NATIONAL & NSW***

- NSW Federation of Housing Associations Code of Practice
- NSW Consultation Process

#### ***WHY BECOME ACCREDITED?***

- Ongoing support from government
- Recognised as organisation with professional standards
- Build on existing Code of Practice of the NSW Federation of Housing Associations

- Evaluate our service in the light of recent changes to the organisation
- Build on our local profile in the community
- Increase confidence in our ability with our local community support agencies

### ***WHO DID THE ACCREDITATION IN NSW?***

- Based on the National Community Housing Standards
- Evaluation Team of three persons
- A representative from the NSW Standards and Accreditation Unit of the Office of Community Housing
- A representative from the Queensland Standards and Accreditation unit.
- One representative from a peer organisation

### ***WHAT DID THE PROCESS INVOLVE?***

- Plenty of hard work for everyone
- For us:
  - Accessing our organisation against a 103 page Self Study Report
  - NSW Federation of Housing Associations Code of Practice base
  - Reviewing our policies and procedures
  - Updating or instigating new policies or procedures
  - Audits of office facilities and equipment, property and tenancy files
  - Survey of tenants and stakeholders
  - Discussions with other organisations just evaluated to help determine gaps in provision
  - Completing the pre-evaluation questionnaire
  - Organisation of timetables for evaluation team to meet the staff, tenants, committee members, external stakeholders etc.

- For the evaluation team:
  - Review of our documentation
  - Interviews with staff, management, tenants, stakeholders
  - Inspections of office facilities and equipment
  - Assessment of policies and procedures
  - Assessment of property and tenancy audit reports
  - Review the tenant survey and other organisation questionnaires

### ***DID WE PASS?***

- Yes with flying colours:
  - 26 indicators
  - 21 met, 1 surpassed and 4 partially met
- The Accreditation Report gave an evaluation against each of the indicators and highlighted our achievements:
  - Recognised to have an excellent service for clients
  - Property management is excellent and well regarded
  - High profile and well respected organisation
  - Promoting social housing sector
  - Fostering relationships with organisations to advise interests of tenants and applicants
  - Encouragement of tenant participation
  - Well run and efficiently functioning organisation
- And more
  - Recognised areas for improvement

Relatively minor

Critical of office premises

### ***THE OUTCOMES FOR US***

- We moved office
- Benefits for both applicants, tenants, staff and management
- We had a celebration
- We received great positive media coverage
- Raised public confidence in our organisation
- Approached by local St Vincent da Paul to manage properties
- Gave government confidence in our organisation
- Received funding for a two new proposals
- BUT most importantly we improved our service to tenants and applicants which gives us a good feeling